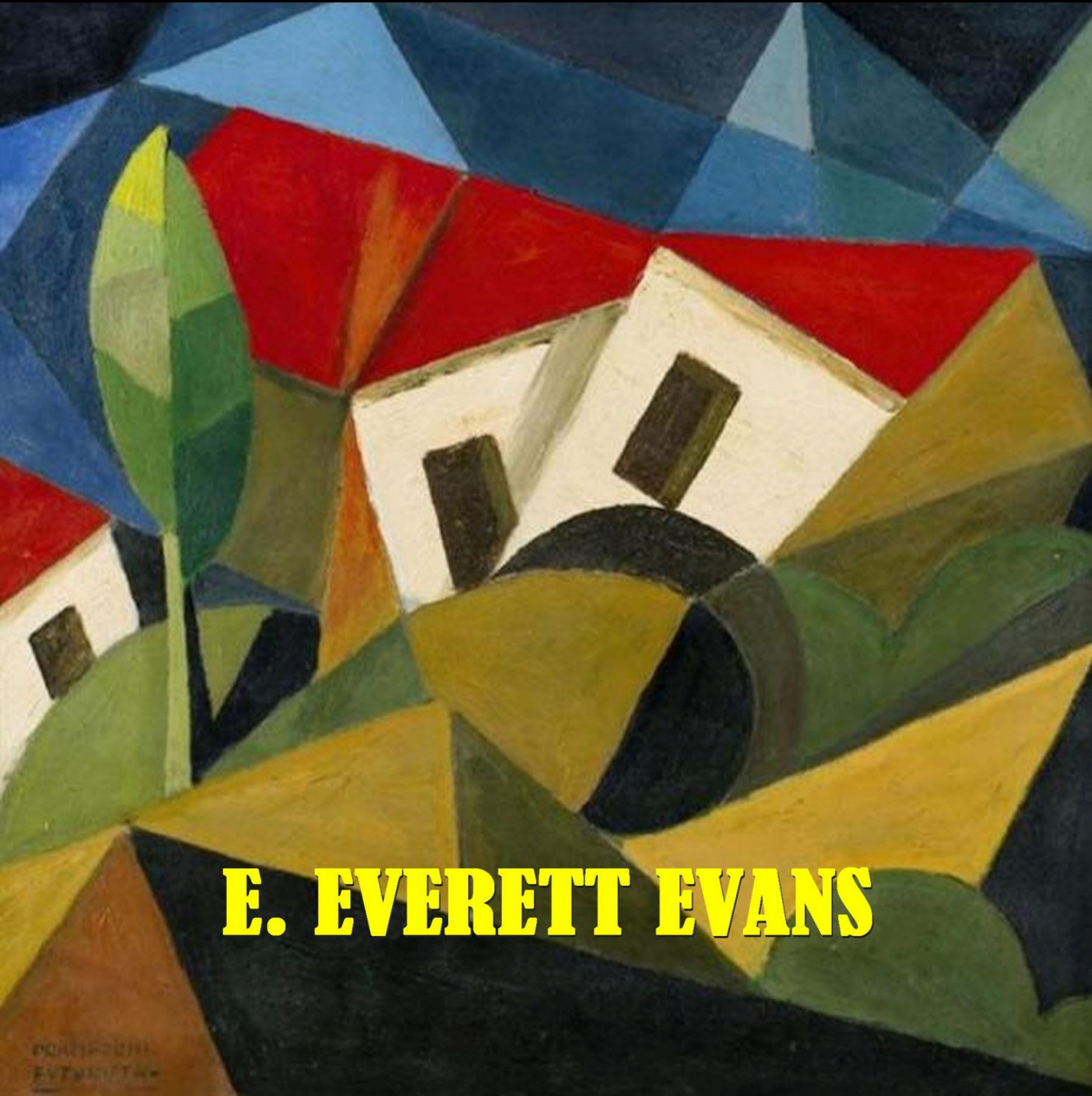


# ALIEN MINDS



**E. EVERETT EVANS**

EVANS  
EVANS

# **ALIEN MINDS**

by E. Everett Evans

*The novel concerns the adventures of George Hanlan,  
a secret service agent who has the ability  
to read minds, on the planet Estrella.*

by E. Everett Evans

Man of Many Minds

The Planet Mappers

Alien Minds

For  
Mother  
to whom I owe so much

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# ALIEN MINDS

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## CHAPTER 1

"Were you looking for a roch, nyer?" An oily voice spoke up just by the elbow of George Hanlon. "I have some excellent ones here, sir."

"Yes, nyer, I want several, if I can find ones to suit me," the young man replied. Nor could anyone, glancing at him, know he was not a native of this planet, Szstruyyah, which the Inter-Stellar Corpsmen, in self-defense, called "Estrella." For the cosmetic-specialist who handled the secret servicemen's disguises had done a marvelous job in transforming the blond young Corpsman into an Estrellan native.

Hanlon continued looking into the outside cages containing these tailless roches, the Estrellan equivalent of wild dogs. "I want eight, all as near the same size, coloring and age as possible."

"Eight, did you say?" the merchant looked at him in astonishment. Hanlon, carefully reading the surface of the man's mind, sensed the conflict there between the ethics his religion and philosophy had taught him, his natural love of haggling, and a desire to make as much profit as possible. But he could not sense the slightest suspicion that the man confronting him was not another Estrellan.

This was a great relief to Hanlon, for he was still afraid he might be recognized as a stranger and an alien. In his disguise he was still humanoid in shape, and still his five feet eleven inches in height. But in addition to the ragged beard and longish hair, he had undergone outward structural differences that made him seem almost totally unhuman.

"That's right. Eight. I want them to be about two years old, in good health. Can you supply them?"

"I can if you can pay for them," the native looked somewhat questioningly at

Hanlon's cheap clothing.

The young secret serviceman smiled, and jingled coins in his pocket. "I can pay."

"Then come with me, nyer, and we will find the ones you want."

Hanlon followed him inside the peculiar little open-faced stall that was one of the hundreds surrounding the great market square of this city of Stearra, largest on the West Continent of Estrella. His nose wrinkled against the stench of the uncleaned kennels.

The roches, seeing a stranger and, perhaps, being somewhat upset by his strange, alien effluvia, set up the peculiar, frenzied yelping that was their customary sound. To Hanlon, it was reminiscent of the wail of earthly coyotes.

The young Corpsman was on a very hair-trigger of caution and tenseness. Despite his splendid disguise, he had plodded through the crowd of the market place with a great deal of trepidation.

He had seemingly come through all right so far, and he began to relax a bit, yet was still somewhat fearful that he might give himself away by some difference of action, or speech, or by breaking one of their customs or taboos about which he knew all too little, despite his briefing and study before coming here.

"Have you decided which ones you want, nyer?" the proprietor asked, waving his hand toward the various cages, hardly able to believe he was to make such a large sale.

Hanlon said nothing, continuing to scan closely the roches, for his thoughts were still very much on this, his first prolonged venture into the streets and among the crowds of this strange new world to which he had been assigned on his second problem.

His mind was constantly contacting others, for George Spencer Newton Hanlon was the only member of the secret service who was at all able to read minds. But he could read only their surface thoughts—and these Estrellans had such peculiar mental processes, so different from those of the humans with whom he was familiar, that they were almost non-understandable.

So he was still a bit hesitant to start the bickering he knew he must engage in to stay in character. To delay a bit further he continued examining the animals in the cages, not only with his eyes but mentally scanning the brain of each, that he might be sure of finding those in perfect health, with minds he could most easily control.

"Though how I can expect to find healthy ones in a filthy dump like this, I don't know," he thought. But he finally did.

While he was doing this, however, he was reminded of the time he had discovered this ability to "read" animal minds, and how his subsequent studies had enabled him to control their minds and bodily actions with amazing skill. It was this ability that had led him to this market place on his unusual quest.

"I'll take that one, and that, and that," he said at last, pointing out, one after another, the eight animals he wanted.

"Yes, nyer, yes," the puzzled but delighted proprietor said, as he transferred the indicated animals to a single, large cage. "That will cost you ..." he eyed Hanlon carefully to see if he could get away with an exorbitant price. Something seemed to tell him the stranger did not know just how much roches customarily sold for, and he decided to raise his asking price considerably. "... they will be seven silver pentas each, nyer, and believe me, you are getting a fine price. I usually get ten each,"—he was lucky to get two, Hanlon read in his mind—"but since this is such a large sale I can afford to make you a bargain."

Hanlon grinned to himself as he computed quickly. Five iron pentas, he knew, made one copper penta, five coppers one tin penta, five of these one silver penta, and five silvers a gold one. This made the silver piece worth about one-half a Federation credit. The price seemed ridiculously low, even with this big mark-up. Hanlon would willingly have paid it, but he had learned from the briefing tapes, and again now from his reading of this merchant's mind, that they loved to haggle over their sales—made a sort of game of it—so he turned away, registering disgust.

"A fool you think me, perhaps," he said witheringly. "Seven silver pentas, indeed. One would be a great price for such ill-fed, scrawny, pitiable animals as those."



The merchant raised his hands and voice in simulated rage—which did not prevent him from running around to face Hanlon's retreating figure, and bar his way. "'Robber', he calls me, then tries to rob me in turn. Six?" he suggested hopefully.

Hanlon was now enjoying the game, and threw himself into it with vigor. "I call on Zappa to witness that you are, indeed, the worst thief unhung," he also spoke loudly, angrily, largely for the benefit of the crowd of natives that was swiftly gathering to watch and listen to this sport. "Look, that one is crooked of leg, this one's hair is ready to fall out, that one is fifteen years old if a day. I'll give you two."

Yet he knew all the animals were in perfect health, and all about two years old. He had carefully selected only such.

"I ask anyone here," the seller wailed as he waved toward the crowd that was watching and listening with huge enjoyment, "I ask anyone here who knows roches to examine these you have chosen. They are all exceptional, all perfect. The best in my shop. Five and a half."

Hanlon turned away again. "I'll go find an *honest* dealer," he started to push through the crowd, but the merchant hurried after him and grasped his smock. "Wait, nyer, wait. It breaks my heart to do this. I'll lose a month's profit, but I'll sell them to you for five pentas each. To my best friend I wouldn't give a better price."

"That shows why you have no friends. Three even, take it or leave it," Hanlon was still pretending indifference.

"I'm ruined; I'll be forced out of business," the dealer screamed. "They cost me more than that. Oh, why did I rise this morning. Give me four?"

Hanlon grinned and dug out a handful of the pentagonal-shaped gold and silver pieces. He counted into the merchant's quivering but dirty hands the agreed-upon thirty-two pentas.

The native looked at them, wordlessly, but his face was a battleground of mixed emotions. Finally he reluctantly counted out half of them into his other hand, and held them out to Hanlon. "No, nyer, I cannot over-charge you. Two is the price."

"You're an honest man after all, and I apologize," Hanlon said, smiling, as he pushed back the outstretched hand. "Those I chose are fine animals, perfect, and the best in your shop. So keep the money. Send them to my room this midday," he commanded. "It's on the street of the Seven Moons, at the corner of the street of the Limping Caval—the house painted pink in front. Second floor to the rear. My name—Gor Anlo—is on the door."

He had taken that name on this planet since it most nearly corresponded to his own from among the common Estrellan names.

The roch-dealer, well pleased with the outcome, bobbed obsequiously. "It shall be done as you say, nyer, and I shall include feeding and drinking dishes. What about food for them?"

"That's right, they'll need dishes, and thank you. Let's see your meat." But after examining the poor quality food the merchant displayed, he would not buy.

"I'll get something elsewhere, if this is the best you have," Hanlon told the man with a disarming smile. "Such fine roches deserve the best."

"Yes, my food is poor," the dealer moved his hand deprecatingly. "I'm glad the roches are to have such a considerate master."

And Hanlon could read in his mind that the merchant actually was pleased. The S S man felt that he had passed this first public test with high grades.

In one of the better-class food stalls Hanlon found some good, clean meat, and the other foods such animals ate. After the customary game of haggling, he ordered a two days' supply to be delivered at once, and the order duplicated every other day until further notice.

Then he hunted up a suit-maker. Here it took a lot of persuasion, and the showing of his money, before the tailor would even believe that Hanlon really meant what he said when he tried to order nine uniforms, eight of them of such outlandish shape and size. For one of them was for himself, the others for his newly-bought roches.

It was only when Hanlon finally lost patience and said sharply, "You stupid lout, I want them for a theatrical act," that the uniform-maker realized the reason for such an unusual order. Then things ran smoothly. The design was sketched, and material of a red to harmonize with the grayish-tan of the

roches was chosen. The tailor consented also, for an added fee, to rush the job.

Hanlon's way home led through part of the district where the larger, better-class shops were located. He stopped in front of one of these.

He knew from his studies and from what he had seen here, that Estrella was just at the beginning of a mechanical culture. What sciences and machines they had were unbelievably crude and primitive to him, accustomed as he was to the high technologies of Terra and the colonized planets.

This display he was scanning featured their means of personal transportation. There were, of course, no moving slideways, nor even automobiles nor ground cabs nor copters. Instead, the Estrellans used motorized tricycles. Even the smallest of these was heavy, cumbersome, crude and inefficient, but they were speedier and easier than walking—when they worked.

The tricycles had large wheels, about three feet in diameter, with semi-hard, rubber-like tires. There were two wheels in back and one in front, steered by a tiller lever. Because of the weight of the engine and tank for the gas, even the smallest trike weighed several hundred pounds.

The fuel was acetylene gas, Hanlon found to his dismay. Electricity had been discovered here, but as yet they knew only direct current. No AC—no vacuum tubes—no telephones—no radios—no television—"ner nothing," Hanlon snorted in disgust.

But the native scientists and technicians had found how to use their D C to manufacture calcium carbide. Thus, they had plenty of acetylene gas, and many ways of using this for power.

"I'd lots rather have a good two-wheeled bike," Hanlon thought to himself, but decided, "guess I'd better buy one of these. Probably have to do a lot of chasing around, and since there's no 'for hire' ground cabs, I don't want to have to walk all the time. Besides, I might have to get somewhere in a hurry."

The salesman had first tried to sell him one of the larger three- or four-place family-sized tricycles that steered with a wheel. But Hanlon finally made the man understand that he wanted only a one-man machine, and the purchase was haggled into completion—at a price so low it surprised the young secret serviceman.

"Sure is one screwy world," he shook his head as he rode back toward his apartment, after learning how to operate his new machine and its tricky engine.

Back in his room, Hanlon reviewed the situation to date on this, his second assignment for the secret service of the Inter-Stellar Corps. He had been at the head of the commission sent to Algon where he (Hanlon) had been largely instrumental in freeing from slavery the strange, vegetable-like people, the Guddus.[\[1\]](#) The commission had helped them make a treaty with the Federated Planets by which the natives allowed the humans to mine certain valuable metals from their planet, and to maintain the spaceship-yards that had been built by the men who had formerly enslaved them, in return for protection from exploiters, and for certain cultural assistance. Just as his work there was about finished, a message had come for Captain Hanlon to report back to the planet Simonides.

There he met his father, Regional Admiral Newton, second in command of the secret service. (This discrepancy of names was due to the fact that after young Spencer Newton's mother died, and his father "disappeared"—at the time he joined the secret service—the boy was adopted by George Hanlon, an ex-Corpsman, and his wife, and had taken his foster-father's name.)

"We're not getting anywhere on Estrella," his father had begun abruptly once they had warmly greeted each other. "I've come to the conclusion, and the Council agrees, that we need your special mental abilities there. But take it easy, Spence ... er, I never can seem to get used to calling you 'George'. Don't try to go it alone ... and you can wipe that cocky smirk off your face, mister," he commanded sternly. "This time it's an official order from the top brass. Those Estrellans are distinctly alien—not humans gone wrong."

Hanlon sobered down a bit, but secretly could not entirely shake off his attitude, feeling sure he was more than a match for any trouble he might run into. Hadn't he proved it, on Algon and right here on Simonides? Sure he had. Great Snyder, he wasn't a kid any more. He was a secret serviceman of the Inter-Stellar Corps, whom they called in when the rest of them, even his adored dad, failed.

"Just what's the problem there?" he asked, trying not to let these thoughts show in his face.

"The people of Estrella are not colonists from Terra or any of the colonized planets," the admiral explained slowly. "They are native to that world—the first such, by the way, that we have discovered who are advanced enough to be asked to join the Federation with equal status. They are quite man-like in shape, and of a high order of civilization. Their culture is much like Earth's was two hundred and fifty or three hundred years ago."

"Just beginning their real introduction to scientific and mechanical technologies on a planetary scale, eh?"

"That's it. Their system was discovered and mapped a few years ago. The Colonial Board immediately sent psychologists and linguists there to learn their language and study the natives and their form of government, their economics and general advancement. What they found, although far different from our own, was so surprisingly high that we sent them a formal offer to join the Federation. But ..." he stopped, frowning.

"Yes?" Hanlon was interested now, and paying close attention. "But what?"

"That's what we don't know. At first they seemed very pleased with the offer. They studied it carefully and, at our suggestion, sent a picked group of statesmen, scientists and merchants on a trip to our various worlds in one of our ships. These men and women seemed delighted with what they found, and enthusiastic about their world joining us. But, shortly after their return home and before the final treaties were signed, opposition began to develop."

"What kind of...?"

"All kinds. Enough to make the plans slow down and halt. The embassy sent there couldn't discover the reason—we have trouble enough understanding their way of thinking at all—and they yelled for help. We sent a couple of S S men there, and when they failed, I went there myself, to help them, and the embassy came home."

He shook his head. "I can't find a thing, either, that seems significant. Oh, the surface opposition is easily discernable. Papers, handbills, inflammatory speeches by spellbinders, whispering campaigns, all calling for keeping Estrella for the Estrellans and running out all foreigners bent on plundering the planet for their own enrichment—that sort of thing."

"Maybe some natives who want to take over, themselves," Hanlon ventured.

"Could be. We've thought of that, but have found no proof. We have no proof of anything except the opposition. Only one thing, that may or may not have something to do with this. We've discovered that almost simultaneously with this opposition an unprecedented crime wave started there—every type of criminal activity imaginable, and that is almost unheard of on that world. But we can't even get the first leads as to *who* is behind it all. That's why I suggested you be called in, and the staff agreed."

The admiral paused and his piercing gray eyes bored earnestly into the blue ones of his son. "Keep this in mind at all times, Spence, for it is most important. We *must* succeed there. This is the first non-Terran world we've found equal in cultural advancement to ours. But surely it won't be the last. And we must win them over. All civilized worlds must band together for mutual growth and well-being. So this is our most important project just now."

"Yes," seriously, "I can see that. Also, that if we do get them to join us, we can point out that fact to any other planets we may discover and try to bring into the Federation in the future."

*And lying at ease on a heavily-padded bench before the control board of a space cruiser, a stranger looked deeply into a multiphased scanner that worked on scientific principles not yet discovered by humans.*

*For long, long months its mind had been studying this new world and its inhabitants. The language had been learned, after a fashion, as had much of the planetary economics and governmental intricacies. Now the minds of the people were being studied; it was searching, always searching, for certain types.*

*But part of that mind remained continually in that of one certain Estrellan it had long ago selected.*

## CHAPTER 2

So now SSM George Hanlon was here on this planet they called Estrella, trying to see what he could find out. It was hard, devilishly and maddeningly hard, to discern what these people were really thinking. It wasn't their language—that had been fairly easy to sleep-learn from the reels. No, it was their mental processes—the way they thought. He was not too sure of himself yet, even with his ability to read their surface thoughts, for so often those thoughts held connotations he was not sure he understood.

For the Estrellan mind was so different from those of humans—its texture was coarser, for one thing, and the thought-concept symbols largely non-understandable to him so far. He had studied—he winced to think how hard he had studied—and he had practiced assiduously since arriving here. But he still could get only an occasional thought-idea of whose meaning he felt at all sure ... it was far worse than with humans. True, he was making some progress, but it was so—he grinned mirthlessly—"fast like a turtle." Yet he did not allow discouragement to keep him from continuing with his work.

For during the week he had been here he had managed to pick up some facts of which he felt sure. He decided his best method of approach lay with this new criminal element, for he was convinced from his study of the problem that they were, somehow, tied in with whoever was behind all the opposition to Estrella's joining the Federation of Planets. The tremendous increase in crime, so foreign to the general nature of these high-principled beings, and coming simultaneously with the development of that opposition, was not, he felt sure, coincidental. Working from the inside against a criminal gang had worked on Simonides—it might be equally successful here.

He had found what he felt was proof that a certain Ino Yandor, this world's greatest purveyor of entertainment, was actually a ring-leader in the criminal web, in this city, at least. And he had figured that the best way to get acquainted with this man was to pose as an entertainer.

Because of his ability to control the minds and muscles of animals, he decided to be an animal trainer. Hence his apparently strange action in buying eight Estrellan roches, or dogs. He had figured out an act that he thought was a dilly.

"At least," he grinned to himself, "it would knock 'em in the aisles on Terra or the human planets. But with these folks ..." he shrugged away the doubts.

Suddenly, as Hanlon was sitting there thinking all these things, he heard a tremendous commotion outside the house. There were the excited yells of many children, a terrific uproar of yelps and whines that he recognized as made by his roches, and the shrill complainings of the elders living in this and the adjacent houses.

"Oh, oh, my pups are being delivered," Hanlon grinned, and ran out to meet the messenger. As soon as he was in sight of the crowd, he began touching one rochian mind after another, sending them calming thoughts, and quieting their frenzied yelpings. By the time the eight dogs were in his rooms, they were well under control, and lay down as soon as they were inside.

Hanlon good-naturedly answered many of the questions hurled at him by the inquisitive youngsters; assured the apprehensive neighbors that he would see to it that the roches did not bother them; dismissed the man who had delivered the animals, with thanks and a gold penta, then hurriedly closed the door against the crowd still in the hallway.

He then settled down into a comfortable seat, and proceeded to get acquainted with his new pets. He first had to learn the texture of their individual minds, which were like yet different from those of earthly animals. Then each roch's individual characteristics had to be studied and learned, and the animal's wild nature more or less tamed and subdued, which last he found quite easy to do—from within.

The animals, in turn, had to become used to Hanlon's taking control of their minds and bodily functions, and of allowing him to handle them mentally without fighting back or trying not to obey.

This was eminently tricky work, but Hanlon's previous practice with many animals, birds and insects, both here and on Simonides and Algon, had given him facility so he was able to do it fairly easily.



"Why, they're really just nice little pooches at heart, in spite of that snout that looks like a pig's, set in that flat face. But I like 'em, and I think this'll work out OK." He fed and watered his pseudo-dogs, then let them go to sleep, as he was preparing to do.

Right after he and the roches had breakfasted the next morning, he set to work in earnest on their training for the special routines he had planned. As the day sped swiftly by he found his ideas working out even more satisfactorily than he had hoped. It would not be too long before he was ready to make contact with that Ino Yandor, the theatrical agent.

The following day Hanlon stayed in his room again, working with the animals, training them in group maneuvers, having learned how to handle them individually. It was a weird feeling, dissociating part of his mind and placing it in that of a roch, and with that portion of his mind consciously controlling the animal's brain to direct its nerves and muscles to do what he wanted done. And when he did this to eight roches simultaneously—well, even though he had done similar things before, it was still hard to get used to the idea that it was possible.

So hard had he been working that he was surprised when he happened to notice how dark it was getting. He went over and looked out of the window in his room, and saw it was night outside. A glance at the Estrellan time-teller on the wall, and he saw it was the dinner hour.

He rose and stretched, yawning vigorously. "Better get out and get some fresh air," he thought. He took the dogs for a half hour's run outside, then brought them back, fed and watered them. He impressed on their minds that when they were finished they were to go to sleep. Then again he left the building.

He couldn't help grinning a bit as he was walking down the street, thinking of the screwy way these people handled the problem of where to live. For the common, ordinary, not-too-rich people, there were apartment buildings, such as the one in which he lived, owned and operated by the government. When anyone wanted a room or an apartment, he merely hunted around in the district in which he wished to live until he found an empty place that suited him, then moved in. There was no landlord, no rent. Taxes paid for it.

You were supposed to take care of your own cleaning and minor repairs, or

any special decorating you wanted done. Major repairs were handled upon request, by men paid by the government. If your furniture wore out, or no longer suited you, you simply moved to a place you liked better—and some other poorer person had to take what you had left, if all other rooms were occupied. Yet so considerate of others were the average Estrellans, that they seldom did this, preferring to replace the worn-out things themselves, if financially able to do so.

"Imagine the average Terran doing that," Hanlon had thought, wonderingly, when he first heard of it.

He had been lucky enough to find a three-room apartment fairly close to the downtown section of the city, yet far enough away so the crowd-noise did not bother him. The building in which he lived was of four stories, and he was on the second floor, near the back.

It was the third place he had looked at when he first came to Estrella. He could not at first make himself believe that all the rooms had such bad smells in them. But he soon found it to be true, largely because these natives had nothing that could be called efficient plumbing. When he had finally picked these rooms, he spent a full day airing them out, cleaning them thoroughly, and using what disinfectants and smell-eradicators he was able to find and buy in the stalls here.

The peculiar-looking, five-sided rooms were comfortably furnished, by Estrellan standards, and not too bad even from Earthly ones. The walls and ceilings and floors were painted in fairly harmonious colors, and there was a sort of half-matting, half-carpet rug on the floors. What corresponded to the living room contained two of their low, backless stools, and one quite comfortable lounging chair. There was a large and a small table, and an empty case where one could store any reading scrolls he might possess.

The bedroom had a low, foot-high, five-sided bed, but it was hard and uncomfortable until Hanlon figured how to make it softer, and more to his liking. There were several pegs on the wall from which to hang his clothing, two more of the backless stools, and the open place—a sort of well running from roof to basement—that was the toilet. Hanlon found a large piece of heavy cloth something like canvas, in one of the stalls, and made a hanging to cover this in lieu of a door, which shut out some of the smell-source.

The kitchen had shelves, a stove, and table and backless stools. In one corner, suspended through the ceiling, was an open water pipe with a sort of concrete drain beneath. This was both the source of water for cooking or drinking, and the bathing place—a primitive shower.

The reels furnished by Survey had told Hanlon that few of the Estrellan buildings were more than five stories high. "Some, in the business districts, may run to six or seven stories. We have concluded that the main reason for this is that the natives do not have elevators, except a few crude rope-and-pulley freight elevators in some of the stores and office buildings."

Now Hanlon sauntered slowly along the street, enjoying the fresh night air, warmed to about sixty-five degrees Fahrenheit, while he worked the kinks out of his tension-wearied body. This business of controlling the roches demanded such intense concentration that his mind and body were highly keyed up when he finished, and he had trouble relaxing.

He saw, almost without noticing this time, the primitive street lighting system that made flickering lights and shadows on the tree-shaded walks and roads. These people used natural gas for their nighttime outdoor illuminating—just semi-ornate standards with the flames rising a foot or so above them. Men went around at dusk to light them, and again at dawn to turn them off.

Hanlon had walked slowly for several blocks when he saw a native approaching him. When they came abreast the man stopped him.

"I do not remember seeing you about here before," he said, looking closely at Hanlon in the flickering light. "I am the peace keeper for this district," he added as he saw Hanlon's questioning look.

"No, I just moved in a few days ago," Hanlon answered.

"What do you do here? Do you have a job?"

"He thinks I'm a vag," Hanlon grinned to himself, and said aloud, in a courteous voice, "I just came from the Eastern Continent, nyer, and hope to become a public entertainer. I have enough money to support myself until I can earn more."

"That is good. If I can ever be of service in helping you to get acquainted, please look me up. I like to see all the people in my district happy and busy."

"I shall do that, nyer, and thank you for your courtesy." And as the man moved to one side, Hanlon gave him a cheery half-salute, and went on his way. "Darned nice people, really," he said to himself. "They'll make good Federation citizens."

When Hanlon had started out on this stroll he had had no special destination—was merely out for a breather. But as he ambled along a thought came to him, and he quickened his pace and walked more purposefully toward the downtown section and a certain building he had previously spotted.

It was a small "place where men drank," and his investigations had convinced him that many of this city's criminal element went there for relaxation. The cafe occupied the street floor of a small two-storied building that was, as were almost all the Estrellan buildings, a five-sided one.

For *five* was the sacred number of the native religion and philosophy. Hanlon had learned that the number five was consistently used wherever possible, even in their architecture, their ornaments, and their coined money.

Their religion was based on five basic Truths taught by He Who Died For Them. These were: Love, Faith, Brotherliness, Honor, and Loyalty. Their philosophy (they called it their "Code of Living") was also composed of five parts: to be religious; to attain the highest possible mentality; to live physically clean lives; to be considerate of others always, and to be honest in all dealings.

The Terrans had found that while, of course, there were individuals who did not subscribe either to their religion or their Code of Living, that on the whole the race held a very high standard of ethics.

Now, as he walked inside the drinking place, the young S S man saw that the pentagonal room was brilliantly lighted, rather than kept dim as were most Terran and Simonidean cafes.

"Probably because they can't turn 'em low," he thought. For the lights were lamps burning a carbide compound, that gave out a harsh but very bright light.

As Hanlon took a seat at a small table, he looked about him interestedly. There was a bar across the back or third side, where the drinks were mixed. On the other four sides, except where the windows or doors interfered, were

several small booths, with drawn curtains across their entrances for privacy. The balance of the floor was filled with two-, three- and five-place pentagonal tables, and their chairs, or rather, backless stools.

"What is your wish?" an attendant came to Hanlon's table.

"Glass of mykkyl, please."

While the waiter was bringing the barely-intoxicating but very popular drink, and later as Hanlon was slowly sipping it, the S S man let his mind roam throughout the small room, touching mind after mind, seeking and hoping to find those he had come here trying to locate.

He had to grit his teeth to keep from showing the frustration he felt on this world when trying to understand what these people were thinking. For he had long since found that, whatever a human might be speaking in words, his thoughts showed his true feelings simultaneously with and despite what he was saying. And Hanlon could usually read those surface thoughts and understand them fully.

But with the Estrellans, he had found this was not always true. There was sometimes an ... an *obliqueness* ... that could not be directly translated by one no more used to their thought-patterns than he was so far.

George Hanlon was the only member of the Inter-Stellar Corps' secret service who could read minds at all—one of the very few humans ever to possess this ability to any demonstrable extent. And he was still young enough to feel occasionally that he was being badly treated by his inability to read these native minds at will.

While he was on that Simonidean assignment, and on the planet of Algon, he had even learned to telepath with the natives, the Guddu "Greenies," or plant-men. But here he could not do that at all. He could read and control animal minds, "and these lousy Estrellans are almost animals," he had growled beneath his breath at first, "so why can't I handle their minds?"

But even through this rude shock to his vanity he did not entirely lose his ability to think and reason logically. He had studied the problem intensively for these past days, and had come to certain preliminary conclusions.

"It's not, after all, that they're lower in the evolutionary scale than we Terrans are," he finally concluded. "It's just that they haven't advanced as far in

scientific and technological knowledge. They may look like apes, but they sure aren't. Probably, when we get to really know them—if we ever do—we'll find they are 'way ahead of us in many things. They certainly, as a whole, practice their 'Code of Living' far better than most of our people do their professed religion."

This conclusion was another shock to his confident young mind. For he had more than half expected, when he first came here, to have an easy time of it in solving the problem on which he and the other secret servicemen were working.

Yet how quickly he had been disabused.

And now, in this little place where men drank, he was finding it out anew. None of the minds he was scanning with all the ability he possessed, was quite of the calibre he sought, although most of them displayed leanings toward larceny and other criminal tendencies. For this drinking place was not one which the more generally law-abiding and decent people of Stearra cared to patronize.

Maddeningly meager were the thoughts he could interpret, but when he finally came to scan the minds of four natives who were seated at a five-place table near the back, close to the bar, he made an almost unconscious exclamation of surprise and delight.

He "listened in" more closely to the four, who were leaning toward each other, talking together in low, earnest tones. Hanlon could read the surface thoughts in each mind, but only occasionally at first could he understand what they were discussing. However, as he became more accustomed to their individual peculiarities of thought, he began to get enough to convince him that these were the ones he was seeking. At least, they were planning some deviltries, and one spoke as though he had received orders as to what they were to do.

Hanlon even finally got their names, although of the latter he soon became interested mainly in that of the slender, blondish-hairy native with the steely blue eyes. That one, Ran Auldin, was their leader, Hanlon decided.

More intently now, Hanlon studied their minds, paying no further attention to the others in the room. He lingered over his drinks for nearly an hour,

"listening in" on the conversation of these mobsters, and learning quite a bit about their criminal activities, and better how to interpret their thoughts.

Suddenly he stiffened in even closer attention.

"The leader," Auldin was saying to his henchmen, but Hanlon knew from his side thoughts that the fellow meant Ino Yandor, "wants us to start a series of fires and wreckings about the city. We'll get a list of places tomorrow or next day, and that night we'll do the job."

"In the name of Zappa, why?" one of the men asked. "Why would he want us to do that?"

"Who cares why?" Auldin shrugged. "The leader, he tells us 'do this', and we do it, that's all."

"Sure," another chimed in. "We get paid for our work, and good pay, too. So let the big fellows worry about why they want certain things done."

"That's the way to look at it," Auldin said. "We'll meet here tomorrow evening, and I'll probably have the list. If not tomorrow, then next day. But meet here tomorrow, anyway."

So, Hanlon thought swiftly. Just like small-time crooks everywhere. Somebody with brains does the bossing, and they stupidly follow orders, interested only in the pay they receive, caring nothing about who or what gets hurt.

These fellows were certainly worth watching, he decided. Even if it did not lead him to the larger goal he was seeking—and he felt sure it would—he would spike their plans somehow.

He felt he had heard enough for the time being, so he rose and left the drinking place before they should notice him. He walked slowly back to his apartment, thinking about this new plan, wondering, as the mobster had done, why such orders were given. It made no sense to him, unless it was that the chief criminals were merely intent on spreading a reign of terror and destruction.

"Or are they," he thought suddenly, "planning later to make it seem as though we Terrans are doing it? Perhaps planning to start a whispering campaign of such rumors?"