

THE INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS

a retelling of the novel by Jack Finney

It began around 6:00 a few years ago. Someone knocked on the door to my office. The nurse had gone home. So I opened the door.

It was Becky Driscoll. She was no longer 17. She was well into her 20's. But she was still the girl I had dated in high school. And she was single.

"Miles," she said. "I've come about my cousin Wilma. She thinks her Uncle Ira isn't her uncle."

"Can't she tell?" I asked.

"No. I'm worried sick about her."

"Well, let's go see them."

I opened the closet to get my hat. It was where I always put it, on Fred's head. Fred is a skeleton. I kept him in the closet, along with a female skeleton. After all, I didn't want them scaring my patients.

For the record, my name is Miles Bennell. At that time, I was 28 years old. I had just begun practicing medicine in Santa Mira, California.

Becky and I drove to the house where Wilma lived with her aunt and uncle. Ira was outside. "Evening, Becky," he said. "Hi, Miles."

Becky went inside the house. "Evening, Mr. Lentz," I said.

"How's business, Miles? Kill many patients today?" Ira grinned, as if the joke were new.

Of course it was Ira. I began to worry about Wilma.

Becky and Wilma came out of the house. I went over to Wilma and said, "It's your uncle, all right."

"It's not," Wilma said.

"Your Aunt Aleda couldn't be fooled."

"She's not my Aunt Aleda, either! This —

this Uncle Ira — has the same habits and memories. But he doesn't have Uncle Ira's feelings. Miles, am I going crazy? Should I see a psychiatrist?"

I said I would make an appointment for her with Dr. Manfred Kaufman in Valley Springs. Then I drove Becky home.

The next morning, a woman was waiting at my office. She said her husband *wasn't* her husband. "He looks and talks like my husband," she said. "But it isn't him."

I phoned Mannie Kaufman and made two appointments. A week later, I had sent five more people to Mannie. Then he called me.

"What's going on?" he asked. "Wilma Lentz, for example. I'd say she is very normal. But it's not possible for her uncle *not* to be her uncle. And it's strange for seven people to have the same problem suddenly."

THE BODY IN THE BASEMENT

That evening, Becky came over to my house for supper. After supper, we were going to go to a movie. But Jack Belicec, who lives just outside of town, phoned.

"Miles," he said. "Can you come to our house? It's important. Theodora is very upset."

Theodora is Jack's wife. Becky and I drove to their house. When we got there, Jack led us to the basement. He turned on the light over the pool table.

A man's body was on the table. It looked unreal. I could see no cause of death.

"See anything strange?" Jack asked.

I studied the body. "There *is* something odd," I said. "You can't live an ordinary life without getting scratched or scarred. But this body doesn't have a mark on it."

"And there are no lines on the face," Jack said. "It's a blank face."

"Who is he?" I asked.

"I don't know. I found him in a closet down here."

"I don't think this body has ever been alive." Then I added, "Have you noticed that it's your size and build?"

"You're right. But it doesn't look like me."

"Or anyone else," I said. Then I had an idea. I put ink on the body's fingertips. I pressed them on paper. But no fingerprints appeared.

I told the Belicecs what I thought they should do. "Jack, try to sleep. Theodora, you must stay awake. Every hour, go and look at the body. If you see any change, get Jack up."

Then I drove Becky home. She said, "This has something to do with Wilma's case. Doesn't it?"

"I think so."

"Miles, since this morning, I've felt that my father isn't my father!"

She began to cry. I tried to comfort her. When she stopped crying, she went inside her house.

Much later that night, my doorbell rang. It was Jack and Theodora. Theodora's eyes were wild. She couldn't speak. Jack and I helped her into the guest room.

Then Jack explained, "Theodora woke me. She was terrified. She led me out to the car. I'm not sure what she had seen. But I can guess. And so can you."

I ran outside. I kept running until I got to Becky's house. I broke a basement window and climbed inside. With my flashlight, I looked around. Inside a closet, I found it. It was a body beginning to look like Becky. The mouth was taking the shape of Becky's mouth. So was the nose. And the chin.

I ran upstairs and found Becky asleep. I got her out of there as fast as I could. When we got to my house, I called Mannie Kaufman. He said he'd meet us at Jack's house.

IS IT A DELUSION?

I left Becky with Theodora. Then I drove Jack to his house. Mannie was waiting outside. The three of us went into the basement. But there was no body on the table. There was just some thick, gray dust.

"It was there, Mannie!" Jack shouted.

Mannie said, "A week ago, a woman thought her uncle was not what he seemed. Other people heard about it. The delusion spread. It's like flying saucers. Someone reports seeing one. Then, suddenly, lots of people see them.

"Jack, you found a body. It was your size.

The delusion got to you and Theodora."

"Listen," Jack said. "Theodora saw —"

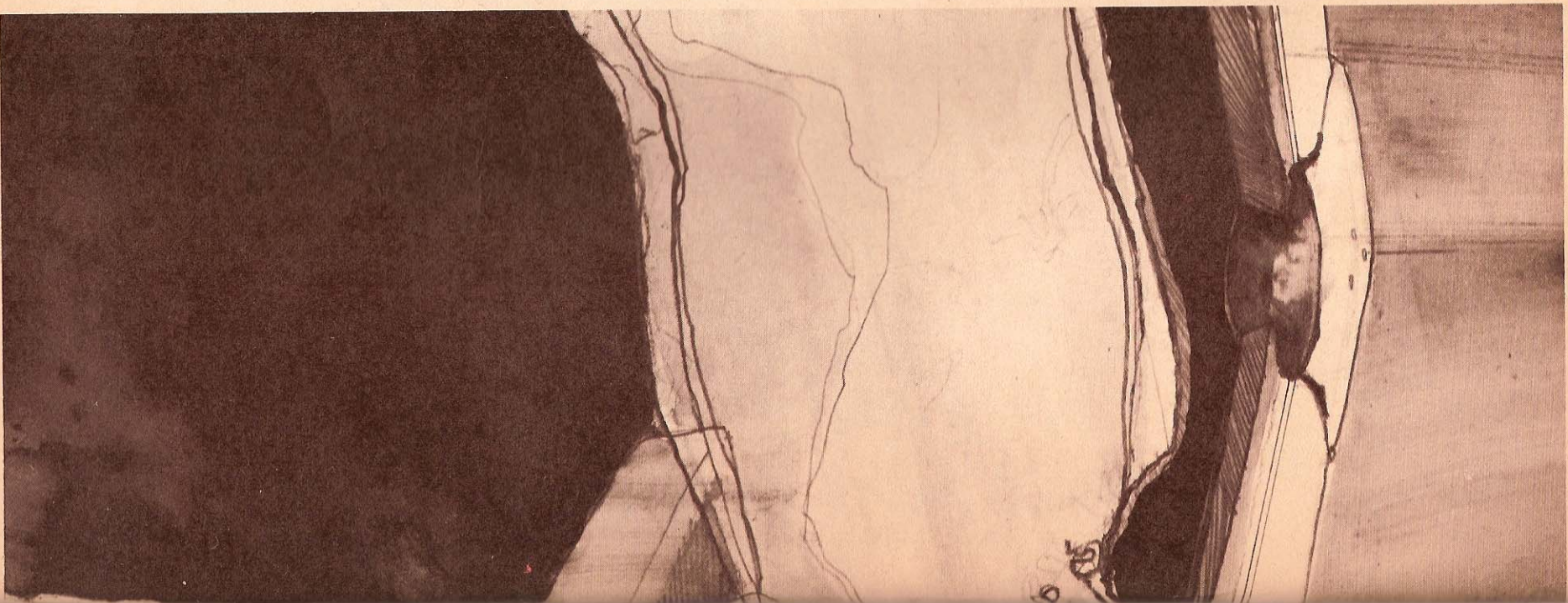
"Just what she *expected* to see!"

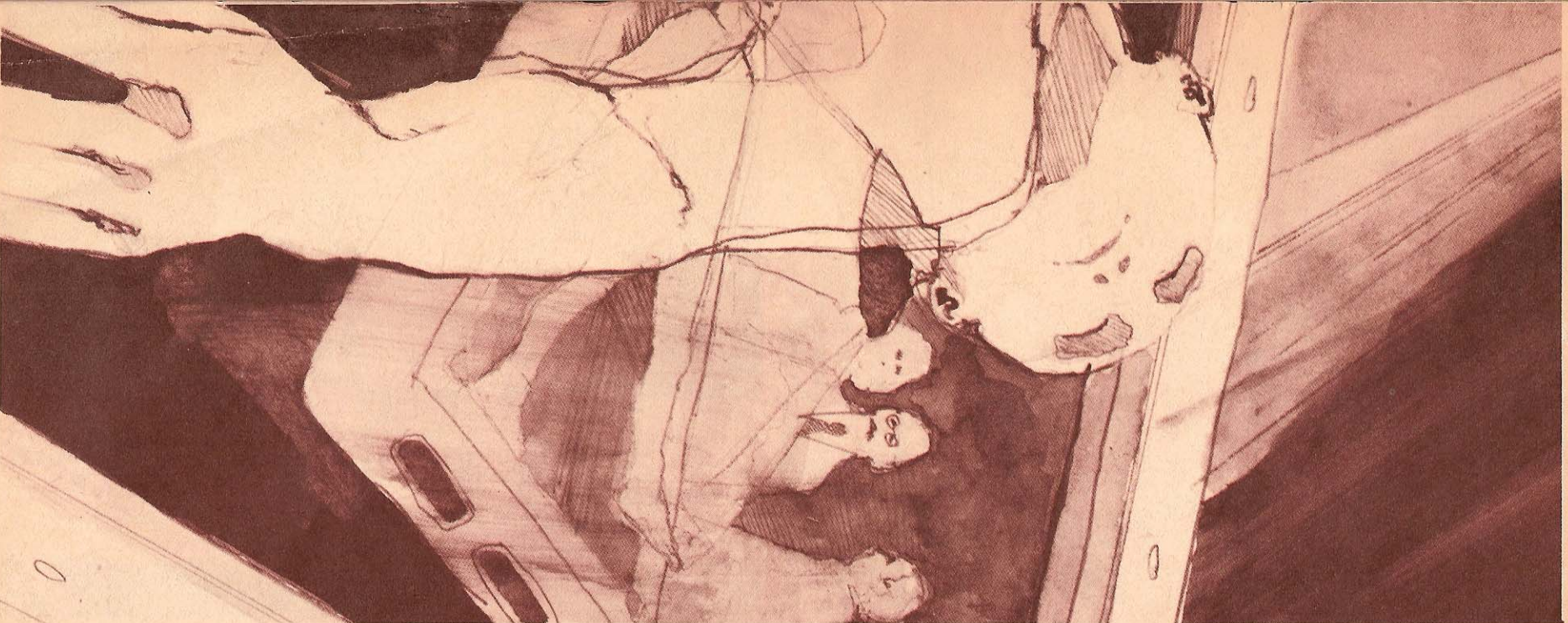
I began to feel that Mannie was right. The sun was starting to come up. Somehow, it made things seem normal again.

Jack and I drove back to my house. On the way, I stopped at Becky's house. I looked for the body in the basement. All I found was a pile of gray dust. My mind must have made me see it as a body. Mannie was right. That was the only explanation that made sense.

Theodora and Becky were having coffee when Jack and I got to my house. As I took a cup from the shelf, I saw a scrap of newspaper. An article caught my eye.

Strange seed pods were found on a farm outside town. A college professor said they may have "come from outer space."





I showed it to the others. "Maybe strange things *can* happen."

"I don't know," Jack said.

"The body with the blank fingerprints!" I said. "It was no ordinary body. It had no fingerprints!"

Theodora's eyes became wild again. "Jack, I can't go into our house again. That body was turning into *you!*"

"Then stay here," I said. "Both of you. I can use some company. You, too, Becky."

I had to go to work. When I got to my office, someone was waiting for me. It was the woman who had worried about her husband.

"My delusion is gone," she said. "Dr. Kaufman explained everything to me."

I called Wilma. "Mannie helped me," she said. "The delusion is gone."

Mannie seemed to be right. Then I had an awful thought. This Mannie wasn't the Mannie I had always known!

That night, Jack found four seed pods in my basement. They had burst open. White fluff was spilling out.

"Seed pods," Jack said. "Like in that news story."

The fluff was turning into shapes, like rough dolls. The dolls grew — until they were as big as adults. There was one for me, one for Jack, one for Theodora, and one for Becky. I had to stop them from turning into us.

I got my doctor's bag. I shot air into the bodies' veins.

"Dead?" Jack asked.

"If you can say that about something that was never alive."

"They're turning into dust," Jack said.

"Mannie was wrong."

"This may be a threat to the whole human race," Jack said. "Let's call the FBI."

Jack looked up the number in the phone book. He dialed. The operator cut in to ask what number he was calling. Jack told her.

"Your party doesn't answer," she said.

He hung up. "They won't let the call go through. They've taken over the telephone office. And who knows what else?"

In the morning, the Belicecs went home to pick up some clothes. It was Saturday, so I had no office hours. Becky and I took a walk.

Suddenly, Becky said, "This street looks dead. No one is working on their houses or lawns. No children are out playing."

"You're right."

On Main Street, there were few cars or shoppers. Many stores were empty. The street was filled with paper and litter.

"The town is dying," I said.

THE INVASION SPREADS

Main Street was filled with people. They seemed to be waiting for something. Some open trucks drove up. They were filled with seed pods. Wally Eberhard, a real-estate salesman, stepped into the street.

"Sausalito!" he called out. "If you have relatives in Sausalito, step forward!"

He called the names of other nearby towns. One by one, people went to the trucks. Each person took one or two pods, then left.

Finally, the crowd was gone. The trucks were empty, except for one. It had two pods left over. Were they for Becky and me?

The whole town must have been taken over — except for Becky and me and maybe the Beliecs. And now other towns were being invaded.

I heard a key in the door. Four men came in. One of them was Mannie. I felt hope again. Then, staring at his face, I knew.

Mannie said, "Yes, Miles. I've been this way for a long time."

I didn't know two of the men. The fourth was Wally Eberhard. He smiled at us.

Mannie said, "It doesn't hurt. When you wake up, you'll feel the same."

"Why not let us leave town?" I asked.
"You must go through the change. The pods



We walked back to my house. Nick Grivett, the police chief, was on the porch.

"Anything wrong, Nick?" I asked.

"No. But I'd like you to come to the station. To answer a few questions."

"Okay," I said. "My car?"
"I'd rather use mine, Miles. I parked it in your garage."

Something was wrong. Why hadn't he parked the car in the street? Had he thought the police car would scare us away?

I let Nick go first. I got an arm around his neck. I took his gun and pressed it against his back. Then I took him into the garage. He didn't look angry. His eyes were empty of feeling.

Becky followed us into the garage. "We've got to leave," she said.

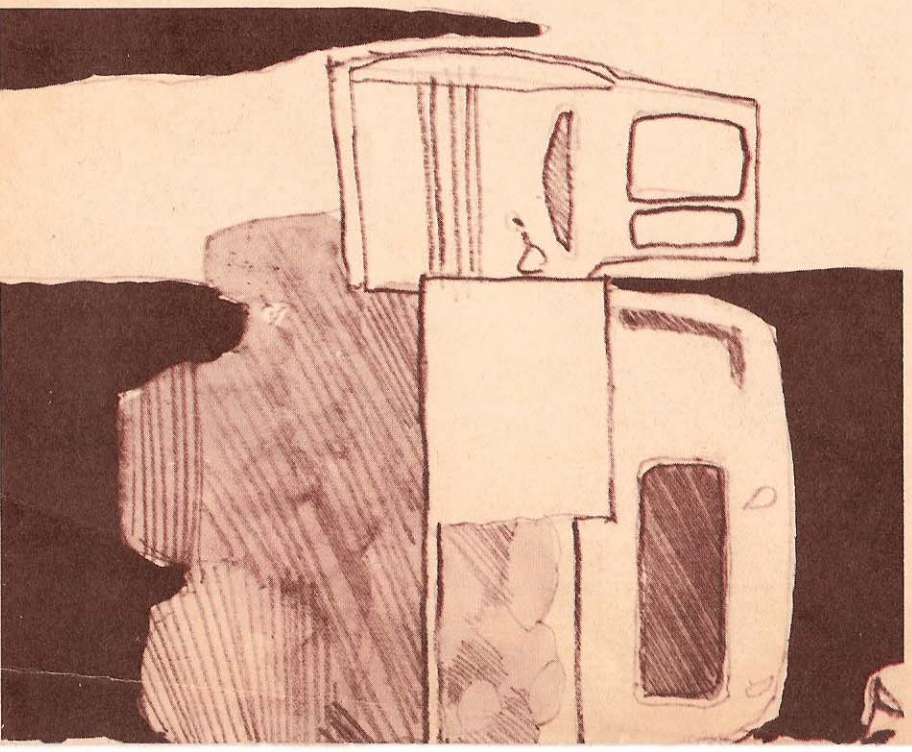
"Take my car," I said. "I'll stay here and fight. But I want you safely out of this town."

She shook her head. "What good is safety without you?"

"All right." I handcuffed Grivett to his steering wheel. Then we left.

The only hiding place I could think of was my office. We walked down side streets to the back door of the building.

Upstairs in my office, I locked the door. Becky and I sat by the window. I lifted a slat in the blinds so we could see out.



came here through space. Their purpose is to survive. They do it by taking over and copying the life on this planet."

"What are you waiting for?" I asked. "Are you torturing us?"

"No. We must wait till you're asleep."

One of the men said, "Let's lock them in the jail until they fall asleep."

Mannie said, "No. They're my friends. Well, they *were*."

"How did it happen?" I asked.

Mannie said, "The pods drifted down in this area. Some people were curious and took them home. Those who were changed brought in pods for the rest of their families. It was their duty. Most people didn't even notice the difference."

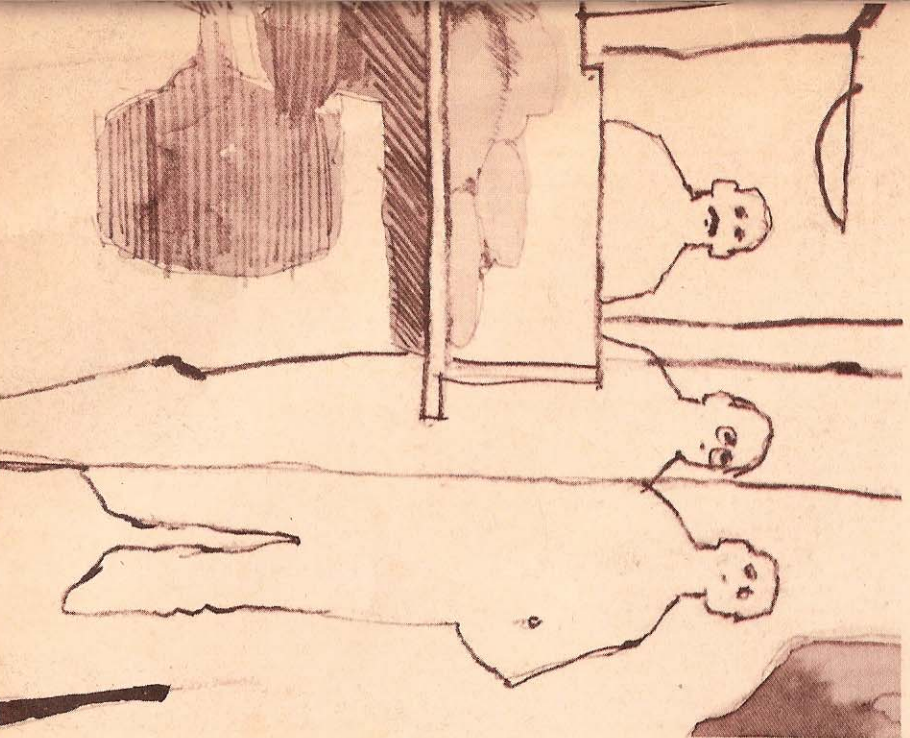
"But there is a difference," I said. "Wilma knew it wasn't Ira because he had no *feelings*. You don't have your old feelings, either. No joy or fear. No excitement or anger."

"What's so good about excitement or anger — and the worry that goes with them? It's peaceful this way, Miles."

"Mannie, can you and the others who have been changed have children?"

"No. The copying isn't perfect. We'll be dead within five years. Then the pods will move on."

"Where do the pods keep coming from?"



"We grow them," Eberhard said.

"Mannie, you said we're friends. Leave us alone in here until we fall asleep."

"All right," Mannie said.

They went out. Before they locked the door, I saw them put two pods outside.

TRAPPED

For a while, we were silent. Then I said, "I love you, Becky. I've been wanting to marry you."

"I've been wanting to marry you, Miles."

"If only we could make those pods out there waste themselves on something else."

Then I had an idea. I took the two skeletons out of the closet. I put them on the floor beside the door.

"They *were* alive once," I said.

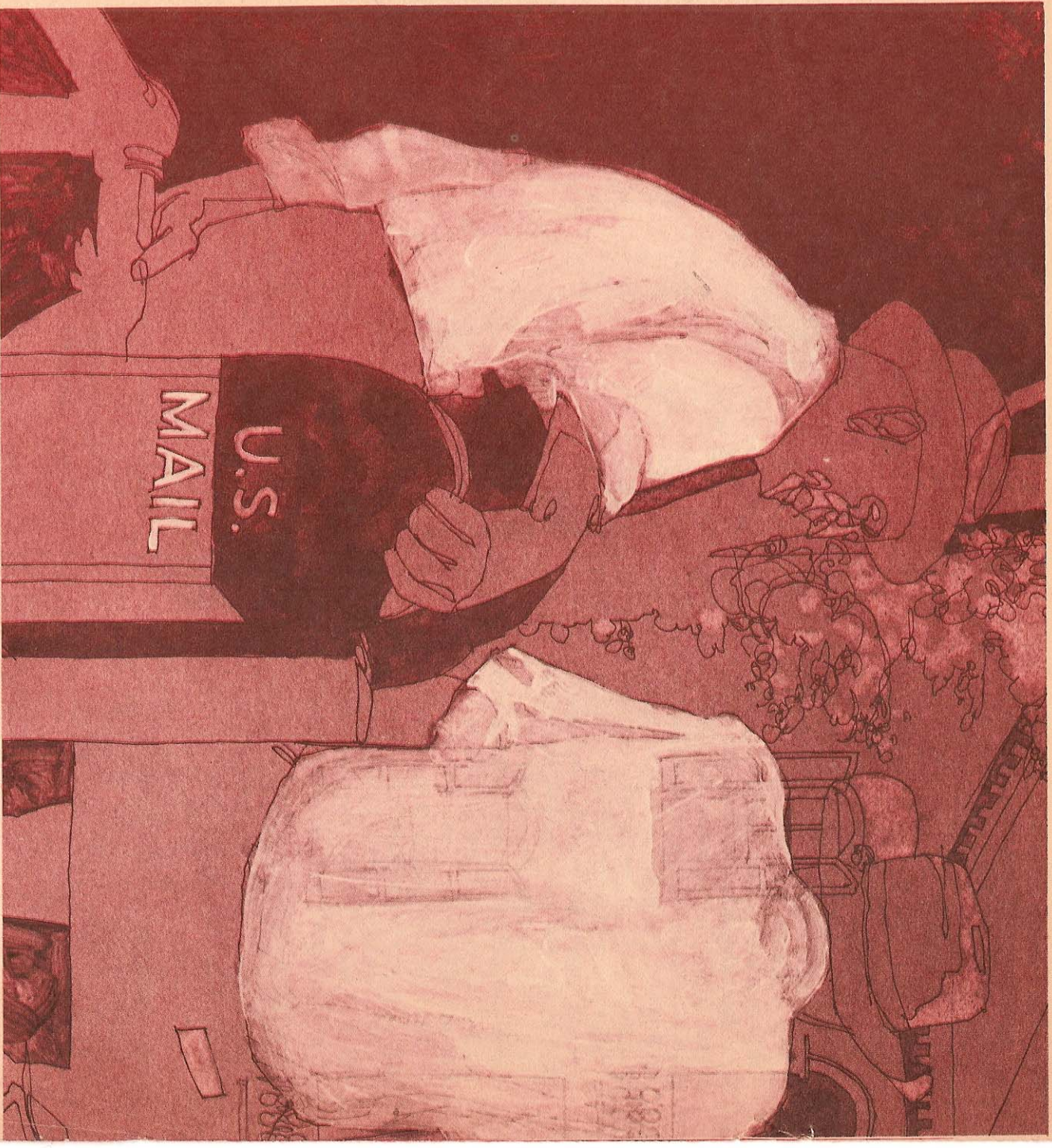
Then Becky thought of a way we might escape. I thought it was worth trying. So I got out the equipment we would need.

"Miles, look!" Becky said. "The skeletons are turning into dust."

The four men came into the office. Outside, on the floor, were two skeletons. They were where the two pods had been.

"All right," Mannie said. "We must put you in jail until we get more pods."

We started down the stairs. The two strang-



ers were in front of us. Mannie and Eberhard were in back. I reached into my sleeves. In each hand I now held a needle filled with morphine.

I plunged the needles into the two men in front of me. They turned and started swinging. Mannie and Eberhard came at me, too. As we fought, Becky backed off. Unseen, she took two needles out of her sleeves. Then she plunged them into Mannie and Eberhard.

In seconds, the first two men passed out. Then Mannie and Eberhard passed out.

Becky and I ran down the stairs and out the back door. We ran along side streets. Then we started climbing into the hills.

We were heading toward the highway. We hoped to hitchhike to the "outside world." But

first, we had to cross two miles of hills, fields, and farms.

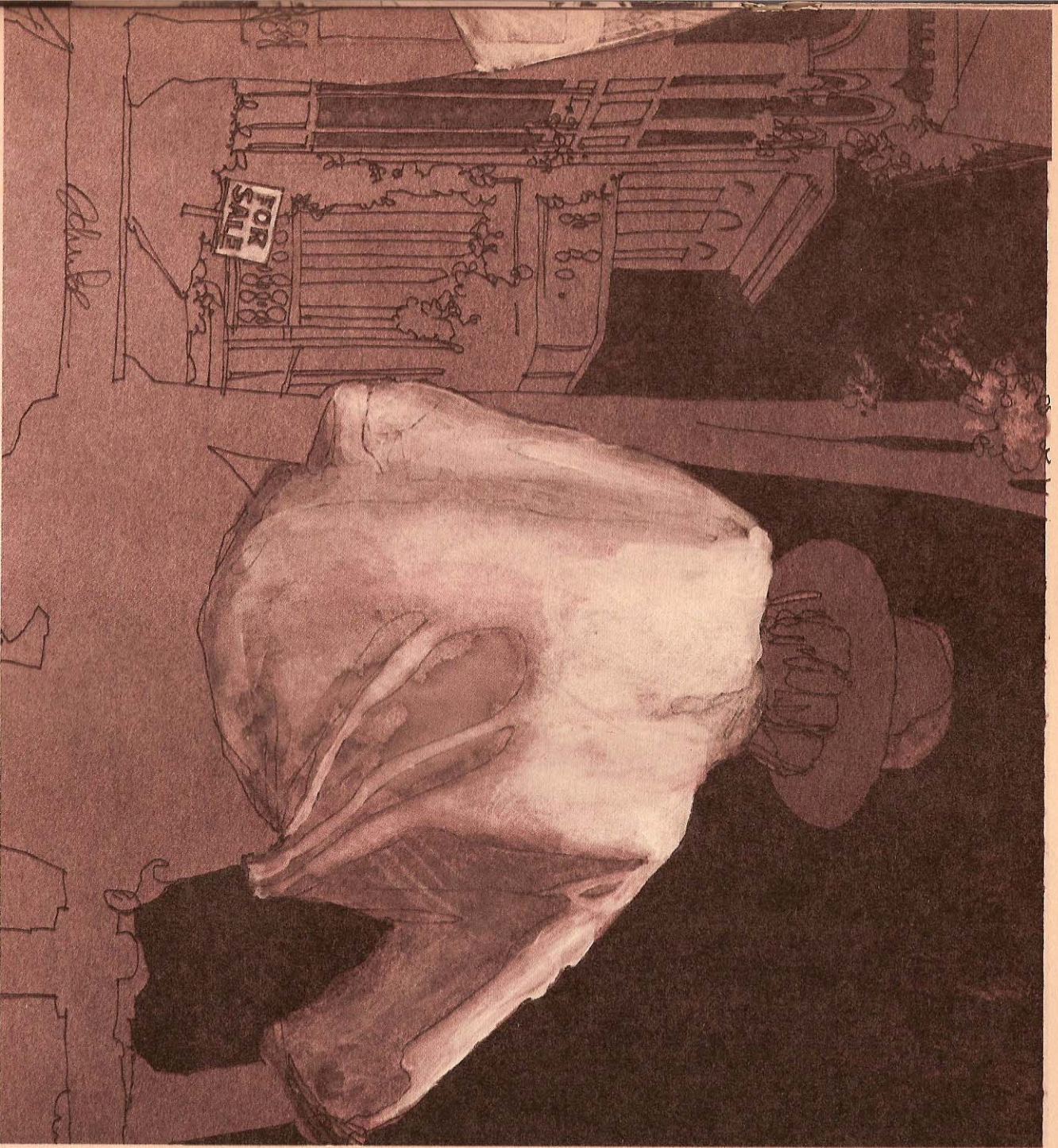
We heard the town fire signal. We knew people would start looking for us. So we hid in the tall weeds of a field.

Soon we heard voices. Then they faded away. We waited until it got dark. Then we started walking.

Fog covered the hills. After we walked about a mile, the fog cleared. In the moonlight, we could see a barn. And something else. Pods, thousands of them, were growing in a field!

I realized that a crowd must be waiting for us along the highway. We would be caught. First, though, maybe we could destroy these pods.

We found six drums of gasoline in the barn.



We rolled them to the irrigation ditches. We opened the drums. Gasoline ran into the ditches.

I lit the gasoline with a match. The flame spread along the rows of pods. Dozens, then hundreds, caught fire. But there wasn't enough gasoline. The flames were dying. And we saw a crowd of people moving toward us.

THE DEPARTURE

Suddenly, the pods started moving. They broke off from their stems and rose into the sky. Everyone watched until they disappeared.

The pods had left because this planet would not accept them. Becky and I had fought them. Others must have fought them, too. And the

pods understood that the human race would not give up. The pods' purpose was to survive, so they left.

The crowd went back toward town. They were not interested in Becky and me now.

We found the Belicecs at their house. They had been held there. But they had fought to stay awake. They had not been changed.

The story was never in the papers. If you drive into Santa Mira today, you'll see an ordinary town. Many houses are empty and for sale. And it's often hard to know what to write on death certificates. But people are moving in.

A young couple have moved in next door to Becky and me. In a few years, Santa Mira will be no different from any other town.