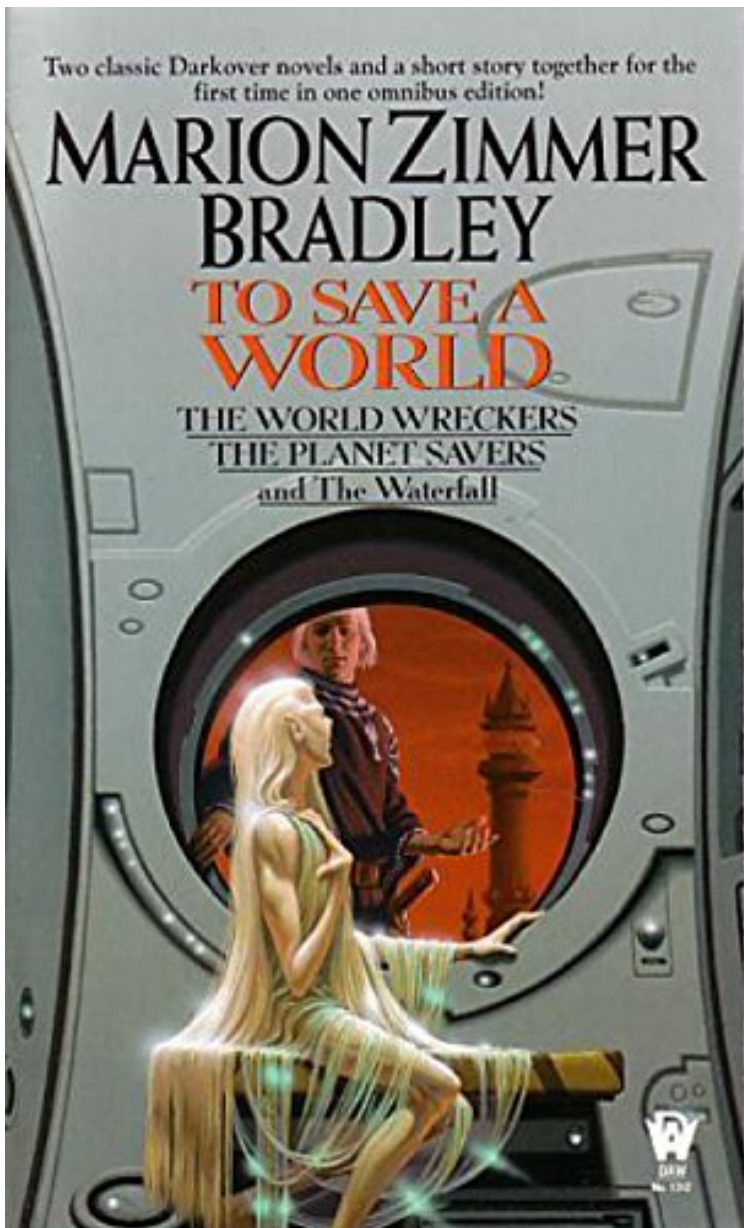


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To Save A World (Darkover Omnibus #7)



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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurAn omnibus volume of two of Marion Zimmer Bradley's classic, long-unavailableDarkovernovels, including the first Darkover novel ever written! To Save a WorldincludesThe World Wreckersand the Planet Savers, plus the short story "The Waterfall."The Planet Savers: Originally published in Amazing Stories in December 1958, The Planet Savers was the very firs Darkover novel to see print. It was here readers were first introduced to the now legendary world of Cottman IV, at a time when the Terrans are desperately seeking a cure to a disease of epidemic proportions that threatens the lives of Terrans

and Darkovans alike. For every forty-eight years, Trailmens fever, a childhood illness among this native and venerable race, becomes pandemic, decimating the human population of this rustic planet. Now, one brave

Terran doctor must join a Darkovan expedition into the wild mountainous terrain of the Trailmen in a desperate attempt to create a vaccine and eradicate this terrible plague once and for all. The World Wreckers: Planetary Investments Unlimited that was the companys official name, but unofficially it was known as Worldwreckers, Inc. For a fee, its agent would infiltrate any world unwilling to give up its independence, and do enough damage that the natives would be forced to allow Terran investors to step in and salvage their planet. And now, once again, its agents were at work. In the 78 years since the planet Cottman IV called Darkover by its natives was rediscovered by the Terran Empire, all efforts to colonize and industrialize this exotic world had failed. And the person in charge of Worldwreckers, Inc. a centuries-old being who appeared to be a woman had decided to take on this particular assignment herself. After all, she had special insight into this world, for long ago lifetimes ago she had called Darkover home. Extrait The Critics Hail Marion Zimmer Bradleys Darkover Novels: A rich and highly colored tale of politics and magic, courage and pressure... Topflight adventure in every way! Lester Del Rey in Analog (for The Heritage of Hastur) May well be [Bradleys] masterpiece. New York Newsday (for The Heritage of Hastur) Literate and exciting. New York Times Book (for City of Sorcery) Suspenseful, powerfully written, and deeply moving. Library Journal (for Stormqueen!) A warm, shrewd portrait of women from different backgrounds working together under adverse conditions. Publishers Weekly (for City of Sorcery) I dont think any series novels have succeeded for me the way Marion Zimmer Bradleys Darkover novels did. Locus (general) Delightful... a fascinating world and a great read. Locus (for Exiles Song) Darkover is the essence, the quintessence, my most personal and best-loved work. Marion Zimmer Bradley

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LeGuin and Randall Garrett The Planet Savers is dedicated to Paul Zimmer AUTHORS NOTE There is a momentum to every operation of growth. The Terran Empire, like every process of human endeavor, was geometric rather than linear in this progression. It began with a few isolated star systems and planets; they in turn developed, put forth colonies, and then began to burgeon, effloresce, grow in wild and unrestrained proliferation. Within a thousand years a detached scientist might compare their growth from a perspective of millennia to that of the spread of the water hyacinth on Earth in the pre-space days; first an isolated phenomenon, then a study in wild growth, finally a menace that threatened to encompass and crowd out everything else. Something of the same momentum can be seen in the isolated progress of the Terran Empire on a single planet. First a small scientific outpost, then a colony, a Trade City Darkover, isolated at the edge of a galaxy, with a sun so dim that its name was known only in star catalogs, had halted in the first stages of this isolation for a hundred years. But now look out, Darkover! For the worldwreckers are

coming. M.Z.B. THE PLANET SAVERS CHAPTER ONE By the time I got myself all the way awake I thought I was alone. I was lying on a leather couch in a bare white room with huge windows, alternate glass-brick and clear glass. Beyond the clear windows was a view of snow-peaked mountains which turned to pale shadows in the glass-brick. Habit and memory fitted names to all these. The large office, the orange flare of the great sun, the names of the dimming mountains. But beyond a polished glass desk, a man sat watching me. And I had never seen the man before. He was chubby, and not young, and had ginger-colored eyebrows and a fringe of ginger-colored hair around the edges of a forehead which was otherwise quite pink and bald.

He was wearing a white uniform coat, and the intertwined caduceus on the pocket and on the sleeve proclaimed him a member of the Medical Service attached to the Civilian HQ of the Terran Trade City. I didnt stop to make all these evaluations consciously, of course. They were just part of my world when I woke up and found it taking shape around me. The familiar mountains, the familiar sun, the strange man.

But he spoke to me in a friendly way, as if it were an ordinary thing to find a perfect stranger sprawled out taking a siesta in here. Could I trouble you to tell me your name? That was reasonable enough. If I found somebody making himself at home in my office if I had an office I'd ask him his name, too. I started to swing my legs to the floor, and had to stop and steady myself with one hand while the room drifted in giddy circles around me. I wouldn't try to sit up just yet, he remarked, while the floor calmed down again. Then he repeated, politely but insistently, Your name? Oh, yes. My name. It was I fumbled through layers of what felt like gray fuzz, trying to lay my tongue on the most familiar of all sounds, my own name. It was why, it was I said, on a high rising note, This is damn silly, and swallowed. And swallowed again. Hard. Calm down, the chubby man said soothingly. That was easier said than done. I stared at him in growing panic and demanded, But, but, have I had amnesia or something? Or something. What's my name? Now, now, take it easy! I'm sure you'll remember it soon enough. You can answer other questions, I'm sure. How old are you? I answered eagerly and quickly, Twenty-two. The chubby man scribbled something on a card. Interesting. In-ter-est-ing. Do you know where we are? I looked around the office. In the Terran Headquarters. From your uniform, I'd say we were on Floor 8 Medical. He nodded and scribbled again, pursing his lips. Can you tell me what planet we are on? I had to laugh. Darkover, I chuckled, I hope! And if you want the names of the moons, or the date of the founding of the Trade City, or something He gave in, laughing with me. Remember where you were born? On Samarra. I came here when I was three years old my father was in Mapping and Exploring I stopped short, in shock. He's dead! Can you tell me your father's name? Same as mine. Jay Jason the flash of memory closed down in the middle of a word. It had been a good try, but it hadn't quite worked. The doctor said soothingly, We're doing very well. You haven't told me anything, I accused. Who are you? Why are you asking me all these questions? He pointed to a sign on his desk. I scowled and spelled out the letters. Randall Forth Director Department and Dr. Forth made a note. I said aloud, It is Doctor Forth, isn't it? Don't you know? I looked down at myself, and shook my head. Maybe I'm Doctor Forth, I said, noticing for the first time that I was also wearing a white coat with the caduceus emblem of Medical. But it had the wrong feel, as if I were dressed in somebody else's clothes. I was no doctor, was I? I pushed back one sleeve slightly, exposing a long, triangular scar under the cuff. Dr. Forth by now I was sure he was Dr. Forth followed the direction of my eyes. Where did you get the scar? Knife fight. One of the bands of those-who-may-not-enter-cities caught us on the slopes, and we the memory thinned out again, and I said despairingly, It's all confused! What's the matter? Why am I up on Medical? Have I had an accident? Amnesia? Not exactly, I'll explain. I got up and walked to the window, unsteadily because my feet wanted to walk slowly while I felt like bursting through some invisible net and striding there at one bound. Once I got to the window the room stayed put while I gulped down great breaths of warm sweetish air. I said, I could use a drink. Good idea. Though I don't usually recommend it. Forth reached into a drawer for a flat bottle; poured tea-colored liquid into a throwaway cup. After a minute he poured more for himself. Here. And sit down, man. You make me nervous, hovering like that. I didn't sit down. I strode to the door and flung it open. Forth's voice was low and unhurried. What's the matter? You can go out, if you want to, but won't you sit down and talk to me for a minute? Anyway, where do you want to go? The question made me uncomfortable. I took a couple of long breaths and came back into the room. Forth said, Drink this, and I poured it down. He refilled the cup unasked, and I swallowed that too and felt the hard lump in my middle began to loosen up and dissolve. Forth said, Claustrophobia too. Typical, and scribbled on the card some more. I was getting tired of that performance. I turned on him to tell him so, then suddenly felt amused or maybe it was the liquor working in me. He seemed such a funny little man, shutting himself up inside an office like this and talking about claustrophobia and watching me as if I were a big bug. I tossed the cup into a disposal. Isn't it about time for a few of those explanations? If you think you can take it. How do you feel now? Fine. I sat down on the couch again, leaning back and stretching out my long legs comfortably. What did you put in that drink? He chuckled. Trade secret. Now, the easiest way to explain would be to let you watch a film we made yesterday. To watch I stopped. It's your time were wasting. He punched a button on the desk, spoke into a mouthpiece. Surveillance? Give us a monitor on he spoke a string of incomprehensible numbers, while I lounged at ease on the couch. Forth waited for an answer, then touched another button and steel louvers closed noiselessly over the windows, blacking them out. The darkness felt oddly more normal than the light, and I leaned back and watched the flickers clear as one wall of the office became a large vision-screen. Forth came and sat beside me on the leather couch, but in the picture Forth was there, sitting at his desk, watching another man, a stranger, walk into the office. Like Forth, the newcomer wore a white coat with the caduceus emblems. I disliked the man on sight. He was tall and lean and composed, with a dour face set in thin lines. I

guessed that he was somewhere in his thirties. Dr. Forth-in-the-film said, Sit back, doctor, and I drew a long breath, overwhelmed by a curious sensation. I have been here before. I have seen this happen before. (And curiously formless I felt. I sat and watched, and I knew I was watching, and sitting. But it was in that dreamlike fashion, where the dreamer at once watches his visions and participates in them...) Sit down, doctor, Forth said. Did you bring in the reports? Jay Allison carefully took the indicated seat, poised nervously on the edge of the chair. He sat very straight, leaning forward only a little to hand a thick folder of papers across the desk. Forth took it, but didn't open it. What do you think, Dr. Allison? There is no possible room for doubt. Jay Allison spoke precisely, in a rather high-pitched and emphatic tone. It follows the statistical pattern for all recorded attacks of forty-eight-year fever by the way, sir, haven't we any better name than that for this particular disease? The term forty-eight-year fever connotes a fever of forty-eight years duration, rather than a pandemic recurring every forty-eight years. A fever that lasted forty-eight years would be quite a fever, Dr. Forth said with a grim smile. Nevertheless that's the only name we have so far. Name it and you can have it. Allison's disease? Jay Allison greeted this pleasantry with a repressive frown. As I understand it, the disease cycle seems to be connected somehow with the once-every-forty-eight-years conjunction of the four moons, which explains why the Darkovans are so superstitious about it. The moons have remarkably eccentric orbits. I don't know anything about that part, I'm quoting Dr. Moore. If there's an animal vector to the disease, we've never discovered it. The pattern runs like this; a few cases in the mountain districts, the next month a hundred-odd cases all over this part of the planet. Then it skips exactly three months without increase. The next upswing puts the number of the reported case in the thousands, and three months after that, it reaches real pandemic proportions and decimates the entire human population of Darkover. That's about it, Forth admitted. They bent together over the folder, Jay Allison drawing back slightly to avoid touching the other man. Forth said, We Terrans have had a Trade compact on Darkover for a hundred and fifty-two years. The first outbreak of this forty-eight-year fever killed all but a dozen men out of three hundred. The Darkovans were worse off than we were. The last outbreak wasn't as bad, but it was bad enough, I've heard. It had an eighty-seven percent mortality for humans, that is. I understand the trailmen don't die of it. The Darkovans call it the trailmen's fever, Dr. Forth, because the trailmen are virtually immune to it. It remains in their midst as a mild ailment taken by children. When it breaks out into a virulent form every forty-eight years, most of the trailmen are already immune. I took the disease myself as a child maybe you heard? Forth nodded. You may be the only Terran ever to contract the disease and survive. The trailmen incubate the disease, Jay Allison said. I should think the logical thing would be to drop a couple of hydrogen bombs on the trail cities and wipe it out for good and all. (Sitting on the sofa in Forth's dark office, I stiffened with such fury that he shook my shoulder and muttered Easy, there, man!) Dr. Forth, on the screen, looked annoyed, and Jay Allison said, with a grimace of distaste, I didn't mean that literally. But the Trailmen are not human. It wouldn't be genocide, just an exterminator's job. A public health measure. Forth looked shocked as he realized that the younger man meant what he was saying. He said, Galactic Center would have to rule on whether they're dumb animals or intelligent nonhumans, and whether they're entitled to the status of a civilization. All precedent on Darkover is toward recognizing them as men and good God, Jay, you'd probably be called as a witness for the defense! How can you say they're not human after your experience with them? Anyway, by the time their status was finally decided, half of the recognizable humans on Darkover would be dead. We need a better solution than that. He pushed his chair back and looked out the window. I won't go into this political situation, he said. You aren't interested in Terran Empire politics, and I'm no expert either. But you'd have to be deaf, dumb, and blind not to know that Darkovers been playing the immovable object to the irresistible force. The Darkovans are more advanced in some of the non-causative sciences than we are and, until now, they wouldn't admit that Terra had a thing to contribute. However and this is the big however they do know, and they're willing to admit, that our medical sciences are better than theirs. Theirs being practically nonexistent. Exactly and this could be the first crack in the barrier. You may not realize the significance of this, but the Legate received an offer from the Hasturs themselves. Jay Allison murmured, I'm to be impressed? On Darkover you'd be damn well better be impressed when the Hasturs sit up and take notice. I understand they're telepaths or something. Telepaths, psychokinetics, parapsychs, just about anything else. For all practical purposes they're the Gods of Darkover. And one of the Hasturs a rather young and unimportant one, I'll admit, the old man's grandson came to the Legate's office, in person, mind you. He offered, if the Terran Medical would help Darkover lick the trailmen's fever, to coach selected Terran men in matrix mechanics. Good God, Jay said. It was a concession beyond Terra's wildest dreams; for a hundred years they had tried to beg, buy, or steal some knowledge of the mysterious science of matrix mechanics that

curious discipline which could turn matter into raw energy, and vice versa, without any intermediate stages and without fission by-products. Matrix mechanics had made the Darkovans virtually immune to the lure of Terran advanced technologies. Jay said, Personally I think Darkovan science is overrated. But I can see the propaganda angle. Not to mention the humanitarian angle of healing. Jay Allison gave one of his cold shrugs. The real angle seems to be this: can we cure the forty-eight-year fever? Not yet. But we have a lead. During the last epidemic, a Terran scientist discovered a blood fraction containing antibodies against the fever in the trailmen. Isolated to a serum, it might reduce the virulent forty-eight-year epidemic form to the mild form again. Unfortunately, he died himself in the epidemic, without finishing his work, and his notebooks were overlooked until this year. We have 18,000 men, and their families, on Darkover now, Jay. Frankly, if we lose too many of them, we're going to have to pull out of Darkover. The big brass on Terra will write off the loss of a garrison of professional traders, but not of a whole Trade City colony. That's not even mentioning the prestige we'll lose if our much vaunted Terran medical sciences can't save Darkover from an epidemic. We've got exactly five months. We can't synthesize a serum in that time. We've got to appeal to the trailmen. And that's why I called you up here. You know more about the trailmen than any living Terran. You ought to. You spent eight years in a Nest.*** (In Forth's darkened office I sat up straighter, with a flash of returning memory. Jay Allison, I judged, was several years older than I, but we had one thing in common; this cold fish of a man shared with myself that experience of marvelous years spent in an alien world!) Jay Allison scowled, displeased. That was years ago. I was hardly more than a baby. My father crashed on a Mapping expedition over the Hellers. God only knows what possessed him to try and take a light plane over those crosswinds. I survived the crash by the merest chance, and lived with the trailmen so I'm told until I was thirteen or fourteen. I don't remember much about it. Children aren't particularly observant. Forth leaned over the desk, staring. You speak their language, don't you? I used to. I might remember it under hypnosis, I suppose. Why? Do you want me to translate something? Not exactly. We were thinking of sending you on an expedition to the trailmen themselves. (In the darkened office, watching Jay's startled face, I thought, God, what an adventure! I wonder I wonder if they want me to go with him?) Forth was explaining. It would be a difficult trek. You know what the Hellers are like. Still, you used to climb mountains, as a hobby, before you went into Medical. I outgrew the childishness of hobbies many years ago, sir, Jay said stiffly. We'd get you the best guides we could, Terran and Darkovan. But they couldn't do the one thing you can do. You know the trailmen, Jay. You might be able to persuade them to do the one thing they've never done before. What's that? Jay Allison sounded suspicious. Come out of the mountains. Send us volunteers, blood donors we might, if we had enough blood to work on, be able to isolate the right fraction, and synthesize it, in time to prevent the epidemic from really taking hold, Jay. It's a tough mission and it's dangerous as all hell, but somebody's got to do it, and I'm afraid you're the only qualified man. I like my first suggestion better. Bomb the trailmen and the Hellers right off the planet. Jay's face was set in lines of loathing, which he controlled after a minute, and said, It didn't mean that. Theoretically I can see the necessity, only he stopped and swallowed. Please say what you were going to say. I wonder if I am as well qualified as you think? No, don't interrupt. I find the natives of Darkover distasteful, even the humans. As for the trailmen (I was getting mad and impatient. I whispered to Forth in the darkness Shut the goddam film off! You couldn't send that guy on an errand like that! I'd rather Forth snapped, Shut up and listen! I shut up.) Jay Allison was not acting. He was pained and disgusted. Forth wouldn't let him finish his explanation of why he had refused even to teach in the Medical College established for Darkovans by the Terran empire. He interrupted, and he sounded irritated. We know all that. It evidently never occurred to you, Jay, that it's an inconvenience to us that all this vital knowledge should lie, purely by accident, in the hands of the one man who's too damned stubborn to use it? Jay didn't move an eyelash, where I would have squirmed. I have always been aware of that, doctor. Forth drew a long breath. I'll concede you're not suitable at the moment, Jay. But what do you know of applied psychodynamics? Very little. I'm sorry to say. Allison didn't sound sorry, though. He sounded bored to death with the whole conversation. May I be blunt and personal? Please do. I'm not at all sensitive. Basically, then, Doctor Allison, a person as contained and repressed as yourself usually has a clearly defined subsidiary personality. In neurotic individuals this complex of personality traits sometimes splits off, and we get a syndrome known as multiple, or alternate, personality. I've scanned a few of the classic cases. Wasn't there a woman with four separate personalities? Exactly. However, you aren't neurotic, and ordinarily there would not be the slightest chance of your repressed alternate taking over your personality. Thank you, Jay murmured ironically, I'd be losing sleep over that. Nevertheless I presume you do have such a subsidiary personality, although he would not normally manifest. This subsidiary lets call him Jay would embody all the

characteristics which you repress. He would be gregarious, where you are retiring and studious; adventurous where you are cautious; talkative while you are taciturn; he would perhaps enjoy action for its own sake, while you exercise faithfully in the gymnasium only for your health's sake; and he might even remember the trailmen with pleasure rather than dislike. In short a blend of all the undesirable characteristics? One could put it that way. Certainly, he would be a blend of all the characteristics which you, Jay, consider undesirable. But if released by hypnotism and suggestion, he might be suitable for the job in hand. But how do you know I actually have such an alternate? I don't. But it's a good guess. Most repressed Forth coughed and amended, most disciplined personalities possess such a suppressed secondary personality. Don't you occasionally rather rarely find yourself doing things which are entirely out of character for you? I could almost feel Allison taking it in, as he confessed, Wellyes. For instance, the other day, although I dress conservatively at all times he glanced at his uniform coat, I found myself buying he stopped again and his face went an unlovely terracotta color as he finally mumbled, a flowered red sport shirt. Sitting in the dark I felt vaguely sorry for the poor gawk, disturbed by, ashamed of the only human impulses he ever had. On the screen Allison frowned fiercely. A crazy impulse. You could say that, or say it was an action of the suppressed Jay. How about it, Allison? You may be the only Terran on Darkover, maybe the only human, who could get into a trailman's Nest without being murdered. Siras a citizen of the Empire, I don't have any choice, do I? Jay, look, Forth said, and I felt him trying to reach through the barricade and touch, really touch, that cold, contained young man. We couldn't order any man to do anything like this. Aside from the ordinary dangers, it could destroy your personal balance, maybe permanently. I'm asking you to volunteer something above and beyond the call of duty. Man to man what do you say? I would have been moved by his words. Even at second hand I was moved by them. Jay Allison looked at the floor and I saw him twist his long well-kept surgeon's hands and crack the knuckles with an odd gesture. Finally he said, I haven't any choice either way, doctor. I'll take the chance. I'll go to the trailmen. CHAPTER TWO The screen went dark again and Forth flicked the light on. He said Well? I gave it back, in his own intonation, Well? and was exasperated to find that I was twisting my own knuckles in the nervous gesture of Allison's painful decision. I jerked them apart and got up. I suppose it didn't work, with that cold fish, and you decided to come to me instead? Sure, I'll go to the trailmen for you. Not with that Allison bastard I wouldn't go anywhere with that guy but I speak the trailman's language, and without hypnosis, either. Forth was staring at me. So you've remembered that? Hell yes, I said. My Dad crashed in the Hellers, and a band of trailmen found me, half dead. I lived there until I was about fifteen, then their Old-One decided I was too human for em, and they took me out through Dammerung Pass and arranged to have me brought here. Sure, it's all coming back now. I spent five years in the Spacemen's Orphanage, then I went to work taking Terran tourists on hunting parties and so on, because I liked being around the mountains. I I stopped. Forth was staring at me. Sit down again, won't you? Can't you keep still a minute? Reluctantly, I sat down. You think you'd like this job? It would be tough, I said, considering. The People of the Sky (using the trailman's name for themselves) don't like outsiders, but they might be persuaded. The worst part would be getting there. The plane, or the copter, isn't built that can get through the crosswinds around the Hellers, and land inside them. We'd have to go on foot, all the way from Carthon. I'd need professional climbers mountaineers. Then you don't share Allison's attitude? Dammit, don't insult me! I discovered that I was on my feet again, pacing the office restlessly. Forth stared and mused aloud, What's personality anyway? A mask of emotions, superimposed on the body and the intellect. Change the point of view, change the emotions and desires, and even with the same body and the same past experiences, you have a new man. I swung around in mid-step. A new and terrible suspicion, too monstrous to name, was creeping up on me. Forth touched a button and the face of Jay Allison, immobile, appeared on the vision-screen. Forth put a mirror in my hand. He said, Jason Allison, look at yourself. I looked. No, I said. And again. No. No. No. Forth didn't argue. He pointed, with a stubby finger. Look he moved the finger as he spoke. Height of forehead. Set of cheekbones. Your eyebrows look different, and your mouth, because the expression is different. But bone structure the nose, the chin I heard myself make a queer sound; dashed the mirror to the floor. He grabbed my forearm. Steady, man! I found a scrap of my voice. It didn't sound like Allison's. Then I'm Jay? Jay Allison with amnesia? Not exactly. Forth mopped his forehead with an immaculate sleeve and it came away damp with sweat, God, no, not Jay Allison as I know him! He drew a long breath. And sit down. Whoever you are, sit down! I sat. Gingerly. Not sure. But the man Jay might have been, given a different temperamental bias. I'd say the man Jay Allison started out to be. The man he refused to be. Within his subconscious, he built up barriers against a whole series of memories, and the subliminal threshold Doc, I don't understand the psycho talk. Forth stared. And you do remember the trailman's language.

I thought so. Allison's personality is suppressed in you, as yours was in him. One thing, Doc. I don't know a thing about blood fractions or epidemics. My half of the personality didn't study medicine. I took up the mirror again and broodingly studied the face there. The high thin cheeks, high forehead shaded by coarse, dark hair which Jay Allison had slicked down, now heavily rumpled. I still didn't think I looked anything like the doctor. Our voices were nothing alike either. His had been pitched rather high. My own, as nearly as I could judge, was a full octave deeper, and more resonant. Yet they issued from the same vocal chords, unless Forth were having a reasonless, macabre joke. Did I honest-to-God study medicine? It's the last thing I'd think about. It's an honest trade, I guess, but I've never been that intellectual. You or rather, Jay Allison is a specialist in Darkovan parasitology, as well as a very competent surgeon. Forth was sitting with his chin in his hands, watching me intently. He scowled and said, If anything, the physical change is more startling than the other. I wouldn't have recognized you. That tallies with me. I don't recognize myself, I added, and the queer thing is, I didn't even like Jay Allison, to put it mildly. If he can't say he, can I? I don't know why not. You're no more Jay Allison than I am. For one thing, you're younger. Ten years younger. I doubt if any of his friends if he had any would recognize you. You're ridiculous to go on calling you Jay. What should I call you? Why should I care? Call me Jason. Suits you, Forth said enigmatically. Look, then, Jason. I'd like to give you a few days to readjust to your new personality, but we are really pressed for time. Can you fly to Carthor tonight? I've hand-picked a good crew for you, and sent them on ahead. You'll meet them there. I stared at him. Suddenly the room oppressed me and I found it hard to breathe. I said in wonder, You were pretty sure of yourself, weren't you? Forth just looked at me, for what seemed a long time. Then he said, in a very quiet voice, No. I wasn't sure at all. But if you didn't turn up, and I couldn't talk Jay into it, I'd have had to try it myself. *** Jason Allison, Junior, was listed on the directory of the Terran HQ as Suite 1214, Medical Residence Corridor. I found the rooms without any trouble, though an elderly doctor stared at me rather curiously as I barged along the quiet hallway. The suite bedroom, minuscule sitting-room, compact bath depressed me: clean, closed-in, and neutral as the man who owned them. I rummaged through them restlessly, trying to find some scrap of familiarity to indicate that I had lived here for the past eleven years. Jay Allison was thirty-four years old. I had given my age, without hesitation, as twenty-two. There were no obvious blanks in my memory; from the moment Jay Allison had spoken of the trailmen, my past had rushed back and stood, complete to yesterday's supper (only had I eaten that supper twelve years ago?). I remembered my father, a lined, silent man who had liked to fly often, taking photograph after photograph from his plane for the meticulous work of Mapping and Exploration. He'd liked to have me fly with him and I'd flown over virtually every inch of the planet. No one else had ever dared fly over the Hells, except the big commercial space craft that kept to a safe altitude. I vaguely remembered the crash and the strange hands pulling me out of the wreckage and the weeks I'd spent, broken-bodied and delirious, gently tended by one of the red-eyed, twittering women of the trailmen. In all, I had spent eight years in the Nest, which was not a nest at all, but a vast sprawling city built in the branches of enormous trees. With the small and delicate humanoids who had been my playfellows, I had gathered the nuts and buds and trapped the small arboreal animals they used for food, taken my share at weaving clothing from the fibers of parasite plants cultivated on the stems, and in all those eight years I had set foot on the ground less than a dozen times, even though I had traveled for miles through the tree-roads high above the forest floor. Then the Old-Ones' painful decision that I was too alien for them, and the difficult and dangerous journey my trailmen foster-parents and foster-brothers had undertaken, to help me out of the Hells and arrange for me to be taken to the Trade City. After two years of physically painful and mentally rebellious readjustment to daytime living (the owl-eyed trailmen saw best, and lived largely, by moonlight) I had found a niche for myself, and settled down. But all of the later years (after Jay Allison had taken over, I supposed, from a basic pattern of memory common to both of us) had vanished into the limbo of the subconscious. A bookrack was crammed with large microcards; I slipped one into the viewer, with a queer sense of spying, and found myself listening apprehensively to hear that measured step and Jay Allison's shrill voice demanding what the hell I was doing, meddling with his possessions. Eye to the viewer, I read briefly at random, something about the management of compound fracture, then realized I had understood exactly three words in a paragraph. I put my fist against my forehead and heard the words echoing there emptily; laceration...primary effusion...serum and lymph...granulation tissue... I presumed that the words meant something and that I once had known what. But if I had a medical education, I didn't recall a syllable of it. I didn't know a fracture from a fraction. In a sudden frenzy of impatience I stripped off the white coat and put on the first shirt I came to, a crimson thing that hung in the line of white coats like an exotic bird in snow country. I went back to rummaging through

the drawers and bureaus. Carelessly shoved in a pigeonhole I found another microcard that looked familiar, and when I slipped it mechanically into the viewer it turned out to be a book on mountaineering which, oddly enough, I remembered buying as a youngster. It dispelled my last, lingering doubts. Evidently I had bought it before the personalities had forked so sharply apart and separated, Jason from Jay. I was beginning to believe. Not to accept. Just to believe it had happened. The book looked well-thumbed, and had been handled so much I had to baby it into the slot of the viewer. Under a folded pile of clean underwear I found a flat half-empty bottle of whisky. I remembered Forth's words that he'd never seen Jay Allison drink, and suddenly I thought, The poor fool! I fixed myself a drink and sat down, idly scanning the mountaineering book. Not till I'd entered medical school, I suspected, did the two halves of me fork so strongly apart so strongly that there had been days and weeks and, I suspected, years when Jay Allison had kept me prisoner. I tried to juggle dates in my mind, looked at a calendar, and got such a mental jolt that I put it facedown to think about when I was a little drunker. I wondered if my detailed memories of my teens and early twenties were the same memories Jay Allison looked back on. I didn't think so. People forget and remember selectively. Week by week, then, and year by year, the dominant personality of Jay had crowded me out; so that the young rowdy, more than half Darkovan, loving the mountains, half homesick for a nonhuman world, had been drowned in the chilly, austere young medical student who lost himself in his work. But I, Jason had I always been the watcher behind, the person Jay Allison dared not be? Why was he past thirty and I just twenty-two? A ringing shattered the silence; I had to hunt for the intercom on the bedroom wall. I said, Who is it? and an unfamiliar voice demanded, Dr. Allison? I said automatically, Nobody here by that name, and started to put back the mouthpiece. Then I stopped and gulped and asked, Is that you, Dr. Forth? It was, and I breathed again. I didn't even want to think about what I'd say if somebody else demanded to know why the devil I was answering Dr. Allison's private telephone. When Forth had finished, I went to the mirror, and stared, trying to see behind my face the sharp features of that stranger, Doctor Jason Allison. I delayed, even while I was wondering what few things I should pack for a trip into the mountains, and the habit of hunting parties was making mental lists about heat-socks and windbreakers. The face that looked at me was a young face, unlined and faintly freckled, the same face as always except that I'd lost my suntan; Jay Allison had kept me indoors too long. Suddenly I struck the mirror lightly with my fist. The hell with you, Dr. Allison, I said, and went to see if he had kept any clothes fit to pack.

CHAPTER THREE

Dr. Forth was waiting for me in the small skyport on the roof, and so was a small copter, one of the fairly old ones assigned to Medical Service when they were too beat up for services with higher priority. Forth took one startled look at my crimson shirt, but all he said was, Hello, Jason. Here's something we've got to decide right away; do we tell the crew who you really are? I shook my head emphatically. I'm not Jay Allison; I don't want his name or his reputation. Unless there are men on the crew who know Allison by sight. Some of them do, but I don't think they'd recognize you. Tell them I'm his twin brother, I said humorlessly. That wouldn't be necessary. There's not enough resemblance. Forth raised his head and beckoned to a man who was doing something near the copter. He said under his breath, You'll see what I mean, as the man approached. He wore the uniform of Spaceforce black leather with a little rainbow of stars on his sleeve meaning he'd seen service on a dozen different planets, a different colored star for each one. He wasn't a young man, but on the wrong side of fifty, seamed and burly and huge, with a split lip and weathered face. I liked his looks. We shook hands and Forth said, This is our man, Kendrick's. He's called Jason, and he's an expert on the trailmen. Jason, this is Buck Kendrick's. Glad to know you, Jason. I thought Kendrick's looked at me half a second more than necessary. The copters ready. Climb in, Doc. You're going as far as Carthor, aren't you? We put on zippered windbreakers and the copter soared noiselessly into the pale crimson sky. I sat beside Forth, looking down through pale lilac clouds at the pattern of Darkover spread below me. Kendrick's was giving me a funny eye, Doc. What's biting him? He has known Jay Allison for eight years, Forth said quietly, and he hasn't recognized you yet. But we let it ride at that, to my great relief, and didn't talk any more about me at all. As we flew under silent whirring blades, turning our backs on the settled country which lay near the Trade City, we talked about Darkover itself. Forth told me about the trailmen's fever and managed to give me some idea about what the blood fraction was, and why it was necessary to persuade fifty or sixty of the humanoids to return with me, to donate blood from which the antibody could be first isolated, then synthesized. It would be a totally unheard-of thing, if I could accomplish it. Most of the trailmen never touched ground in their entire lives, except when crossing the passes above the snow line. Not a dozen of them, including my foster parents, who had so painfully brought me out across Dammerung, had ever crossed the ring of encircling mountains that walled them away from the rest of the planet. Humans sometimes penetrated the lower forests in search of

the trailmen. It was one-way traffic. The trailmen never came in search of them. We talked, too, about some of those humans who had crossed the mountains into trailmen country—those mountains profanely dubbed the Hellers by the first Terrans who had tried to fly over them in anything lower or slower than a spaceship. What about this crew you picked? They're not Terrans? Forth shook his head. It would be murder to send anyone recognizably Terran into the Hellers. You know how the trailmen feel about outsiders getting into their country. I knew. Forth continued, Just the same, there will be two Terrans with you. They don't know Jay Allison? I didn't want to be burdened with anyone—not anyone who would know me, or expect me to behave like my forgotten other self. Kendrick's knows you, Forth said, but I'm going to be perfectly truthful. I never knew Jay Allison well, except in line of work. I know a lot of things from the past couple of days which came out during the hypnotic sessions, which he'd never have dreamed of telling me, or anyone else, consciously. And that comes under the heading of a professional confidence—even from you. And for that reason, I'm sending Kendrick's along and you're going to have to take the chance he'll recognize you. Isn't that Carthon down there? Carthon lay nestled under the outlying foothills of the Hellers, ancient and sprawling and squatty, and burned brown with the dust of five thousand years. Children ran out to stare at the copter as we landed near the city; few planes ever flew low enough to be seen, this near the Hellers. Forth had sent his crew ahead and parked them in an abandoned huge place at the edge of the city which might once have been a warehouse or a ruined palace. Inside there were a couple of trucks, stripped down to framework and flatbed, like all machinery shipped through space from Terra. There were pack animals, dark shapes in the gloom. Crates were stacked up in an orderly untidiness, and at the far end a fire was burning and five or six men in Darkovan clothing—loose-sleeved shirts, tight-wrapped breeches, low boots—were squatting around it, talking. They got up as Forth and Kendrick's and I walked toward them, and Forth greeted them clumsily in badly accented Darkovan, then switched to Terran Standard, letting one of the men translate for him. Forth introduced me simply as Jason, after the Darkovan custom, and I looked the men over, one by one. Back when I'd climbed for fun, I'd liked to pick my own men; but whoever had picked this crew must have known his business. Three were mountain Darkovans, lean swart men enough alike to be brothers; I learned after a while that they actually were brothers, Hjalmar, Garin, and Vardo. All three were well over six feet, and Hjalmar stood head and shoulders over his brothers, whom I never learned to tell apart. The fourth man, a redhead, was dressed rather better than the others and introduced as Lerrys Ridenow—the double name indicating high Darkovan aristocracy. He looked muscular and agile enough, but his hands were suspiciously well-kept for a mountain man, and I wondered how much experience he'd had. The fifth man shook hands with me, speaking to Kendrick's and Forth as if they were old friends. Don't I know you from someplace, Jason? He looked Darkovan, and wore Darkovan clothes, but Forth had forewarned me, and attack seemed the best defense. Arent you Terran? My father was, he said, and I understood; a situation not exactly uncommon, but ticklish on a planet like Darkover. I said carelessly, I may have seen you around the HQ. I can't place you, though. My name's Rafe Scott. I thought I knew most of the professional guides on Darkover, but I admit I don't get into the Hellers much, he confessed. Which route are we going to take? I found myself drawn into the middle of the group of men, accepting one of the small, sweetish Darkovan cigarettes, looking over the plan somebody had scribbled down on the top of a packing case. I borrowed a pencil from Rafe and bent over the case, sketching out a rough map of the terrain I remembered so well from boyhood. I might be bewildered about blood fractions, but when it came to climbing I knew what I was doing. Rafe and Lerrys and the Darkovan brothers crowded behind me to look over the sketch, and Lerrys put a long fingernail on the route I'd indicated. Your elevations pretty bad here, he said diffidently, and on the Narr campaign the trailmen attacked us here, and it was bad fighting along those ledges. I looked at him with new respect; dainty hands or not, he evidently knew the country. Kendrick's patted the blaster on his hip and said grimly, But this isn't the Narr campaign. I'd like to see any trailmen attack us while I have this. But you're not going to have it, said a voice behind us, a crisp authoritative voice. Take off that gun, man! Kendrick's and I whirled together to see the speaker, a tall young Darkovan, still standing in the shadows. The newcomer spoke to me directly. I'm told you are Terran, but that you understand the trailmen. Surely you don't intend to carry fission or fusion weapons against them? And I suddenly realized that we were in Darkovan territory now, and that we must reckon with the Darkovan horror of guns or of any weapon which reaches beyond the arms length of the man who wields it. A simple heat-gun, to the Darkovan ethical code, is as reprehensible as a super-cobalt planetbuster. Kendrick's protested, We can't travel unarmed through trailmen country! We're apt to meet hostile bands of the creatures and they're nasty with those long knives they carry! The stranger said calmly, I've no objection to you, or anyone else, carrying a knife for self-defense. A knife? Kendrick's drew

breath to roar. Listen, you bug-eyed son of a who do you think you are, anyway? The Darkovans muttered. The man in the shadows said, Regis Hastur. Kendricks stared pop-eyed. My own eyes could have popped, but I decided it was time for me to take charge, if I were ever going to. I rapped, All right, this is my show. Buck, give me the gun. He looked wrathfully at me for the space of seconds, while I wondered what I'd do if he didn't. Then, slowly, he unbuckled the straps and handed it to me, butt first. I'd never realized how undressed a Spaceforce man looked without his blaster. I balanced it on my palm for a minute while Regis Hastur came out of the shadows. He was tall, and had the reddish hair and fair skin of Darkovan aristocracy, and on his face was some indefinable stamp of arrogance, perhaps, or the consciousness that the Hasturs had ruled this world for centuries long before the Terrans brought ships and trade and the universe to their doors. He was looking at me as if he approved of me, and that was one step worse than the former situation. So, using the respectful Darkovan idiom of speaking to a superior (which he was) but keeping my voice hard, I said, There's just one leader on my trek, Lord Hastur. On this one, I'm it. If you want to discuss whether or not we carry guns, I suggest you discuss it with me in private and let me give the orders. One of the Darkovans gasped. I knew I could have been mobbed. But with a mixed bag of men, I had to grab leadership quickly or be relegated to nowhere. I didn't give Regis Hastur a chance to answer that, either; I said, Come back here. I want to talk to you anyway. He came, and I remembered to breathe. I led the way to a fairly deserted corner of the immense place, faced him and demanded, As for you, what are you doing here? You're not intending to cross the mountains with us? He met my scowl levelly. I certainly am. I groaned. Why? You're the Regent's grandson. Important people don't take on this kind of dangerous work. If anything happens to you, it will be my responsibility! I was going to have enough trouble, I was thinking, without shepherding along one of the most revered personages on the whole damned planet! I didn't want anyone around who had to be fawned on, or deferred to, or even listened to. *Revue de presse* Praise for *Darkover*: Suspenseful, powerfully written, and deeply moving. *Library Journal* A warm, shrewd portrait of women from different backgrounds working together under adverse conditions. *Publishers Weekly* Forsheer skill in storytelling and worldbuilding, for wit, for strikingly intelligent development of the concept of telepathy, above all, for continuous concern for people, Bradley has put some more famous sagas in the shade. *Chicago Sun-Times* A rich and highly colored tale of politics and magic, courage and pressure.... *Topflight* adventure in every way! *Analog Magazine*, Lester Del Rey Delightful... a fascinating world and a great read. *Locus* Literate and exciting. *New York Times Book* May well be [Bradley's] masterpiece. *New York Newsday*