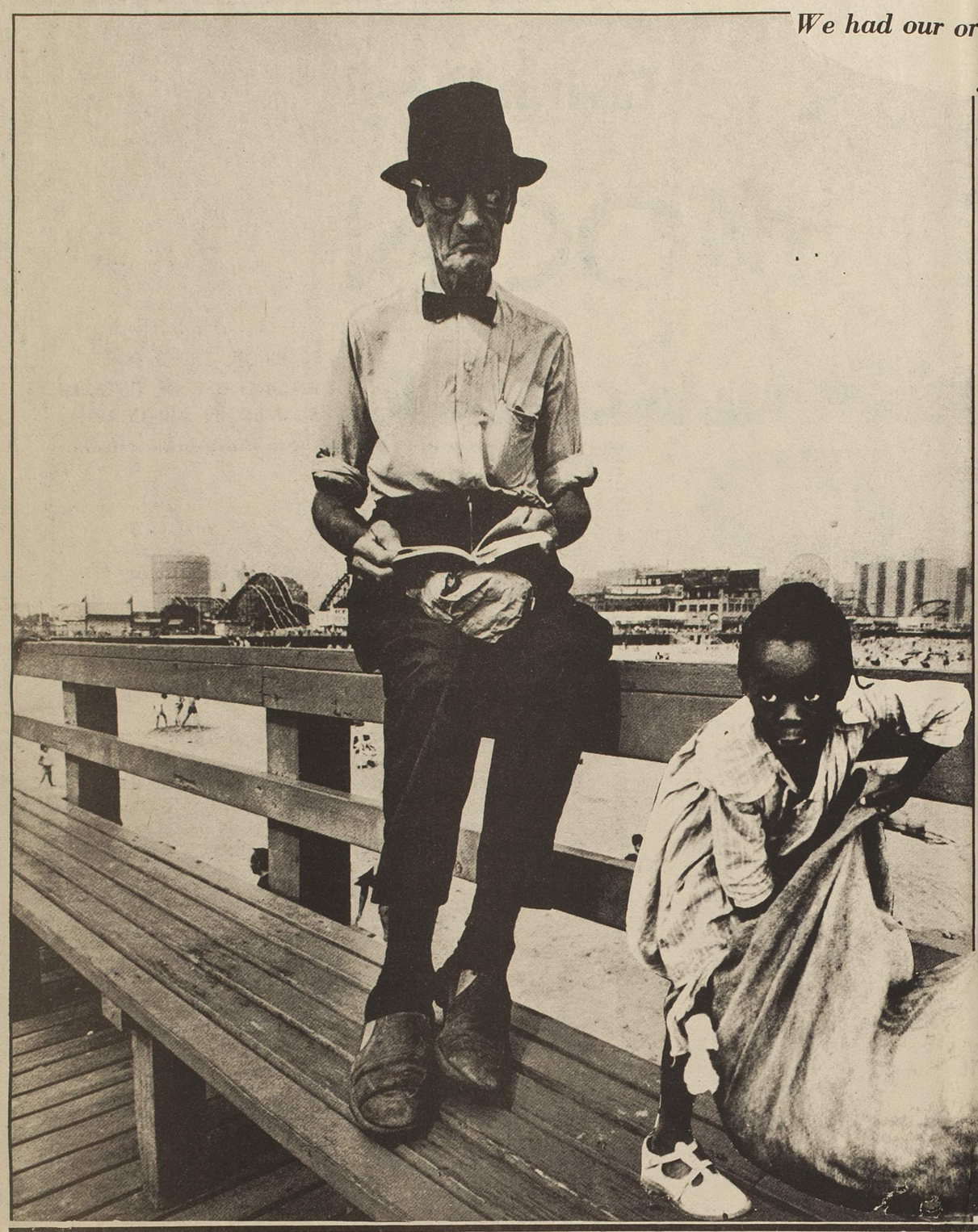


We had our orders: a quick reconnaissance job, and then wipe out this strange planet earth. I risked my life to change the plan. Here's why:

MY NAME IS WILLIAM BURRIS. I am 100 years old. My daughter, Salmonella, is 50. For five days, we had been scavenging on the beach at far Rockaway. Salmonella had put many edibles in her sack, as well as a few baubles and trinkets.

"Daddy," she said, "it sure look ugly, this planet. What they call it? Urf? Mars? Sufnr? Iskcon? This beach is bad."

"Patience," I said. "We have our orders. A quick reconnaissance job, and then wipe out this strange planet Earth."

We decided to have supper and then get busy wiping.

We boiled a horseshoe crab in a hubcap, cracked it open with an old beer bottle and ate the oily meat. Soon it was night. We built a fire of old beach rags and a shoe. Salmonella complained that her ankles were swelling up.

"Let's blow this planet and get home," she said. I had the device in an ordinary lunch bag, and these Rockaway swimmers were dumb to our plot. Big-bellied Americans walked by, a few as thin as ghosts.

We made a hole.

"We blow at midnight," I said, and buried the bag.

The roller coaster coaxed us and we made toward it. We had a few hours to kill. We had a few bucks in American OPECs to spend. We had a few thrills left to wring from this planet.

Salmonella commented, "This coaster like a big old caterpillar back home on Sufnr. It good."

"It is a bit of cracking fun," I said. "Let's try another ride."

We strolled leisurely along the boardwalk. Under it, Salmonella saw lovers on a blanket.

She asked me what they were doing.

"These Americans call it wang-dang-doodle," I said. "By it, they reproduce. Some call it love. Others, just lust."

A vendor of peanuts approached, wearing a coat of empty shells. It was Dru Carter, my contact on Earth.

"What new, Dru?" asked Salmonella.

Whispering, he said, "Don't blow the joint.

"Susnr needs it for its bauxite, molybdenum, natural gas and algal matter. We've signed a treaty, wise or not. Where is your device, Burris?"

"That thing be buried good, jus' like a flounder in the sand. Ain't no way we can find it," Salmonella said.

"By midnight," I said, "the moon will be a lonesome traveler."

From a booth, we telephoned Hauerholt, the agent in Reno. "We've got Condition Blue, boss. The bag is buried," I said.

There was a bit of static as though someone were pouring rice from bowl to bowl. Then the line went dead.

(This thrilling story will continue next issue, if there is one. It will surprise and amaze you. Its turns of events are very, very innovative. Write Box 591, Susnr.

----------Happy Trails----------

ERA DAWNS

Dawn: Day One

On Horseshoe Hill, a mushroom village of odd little white houses has sprouted up in recent weeks. Some are hemispherical, some barrel-shaped, oblong, round-topped, and at the topmost point of each is a bio-mechanical eye, forever gazing at the welkin. Is this the dawning of an era? On earth, as on Susnr, we found little clucking people out on the edges of Reno, giving water in the ditches. But compared to these ingeniously bleached houses, the cluckers shrink.

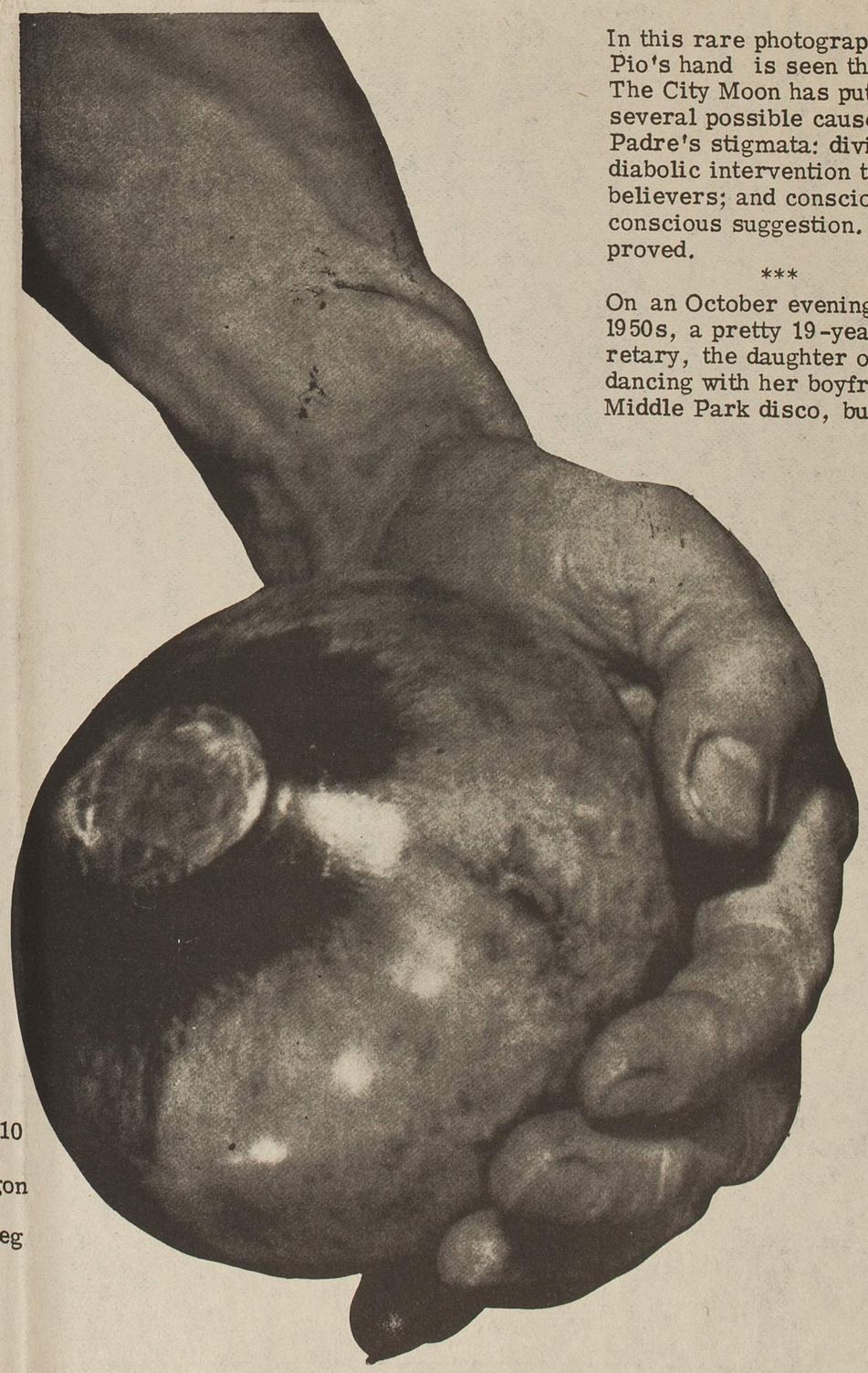
Dawn: Day Two

A color named pink appeared in the sky. The Atwood Fat Boy is finally dead. Pokey neuts languish in the gutters. There are paper cars. Upright man has made a great advance. Harry Harriet has been arraigned in a giggle death. Our president, Dru Carter, was drowned in a public bath. The fearful live longest now. People in Boise are sitting on their la-las, waitin' for their ya-yas.

Who needs it

The End: Day Three

The flight recorder of the great airship DIAXLE 1010 is found in the silt of the Houston Ship Channel. Pentagon decoders transliterate the message in no time. "We beg this information from earth. Can you point the way to San Jose?"



In this rare photograph of Padre Pio's hand is seen the stigmata. The City Moon has put forward several possible causes for the Padre's stigmata: divine revelation; diabolic intervention to confuse believers; and conscious or unconscious suggestion. None can be proved.

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On an October evening in the late 1950s, a pretty 19-year-old secretary, the daughter of Padre Pio, dancing with her boyfriend, in a Middle Park disco, burst into flame.