

THE OBSESSION

by George Barry

Nirvana Gates' search had lasted a long time and spanned many light years of travel. He had encountered many a peril and suffered many a hardship, but finally it was done, his quest was over. A deeply religious person, he had spent forty-five years of his life wandering throughout the vast expanses of the universe, tracking down the one person who held the answer to life, the only being in all the cosmos who was in true contact with reality. They called him "The Prophet", "The Right Hand of God", "He Who Sees", and numerous other things, the name depended on the particular race of creature with whom he was in contact with at the time. Yes, the Great One (that's what Nirvana liked to call him) had come in contact with a great many races in his day. And the word he had spread varied from people to people. The word had caused some races to rebel, others to submit, and still others to carry out seemingly senseless holy wars, but it was all part of the Great Ones' divine plan, and it was Nirvana who was going to find out what that divine plan was.

He surveyed the ships' control console that surrounded him and eyed the navigational instrumentation with particularly keen interest. The information he received from this check was all as it should be. He was on course for the Great One's planet. It had taken years of searching but now it was done. There had been times when he had questioned his sanity. After all, he had been set upon by pirates and thieves of every shape and description, he had lost one of his arms in a battle with a religious zealot who claimed that he was committing an act of heresy, he had contracted over a dozen horrible diseases each of which had come close to killing him, he had been spat upon by those who hated him for the life he led and worshipped, by those who envied him for it. But now it all seemed worth it. All the trials and tribulations were now made meaningless for he had reached his goal. He was going to sit at the feet of a truly wise man, and he was going to learn the truth, the meaning to life that he so deeply believed in but could never hope to understand. He was going to be in actual contact with God, the answers were going to be his. This is what he had dreamed of, what he had lived for and what he had searched for, and now it was actually within his grasp. His euphoria was such that he could hardly maintain control over his ship for his body was shaking from the pounding in both his heart and his mind. He forced himself into a more relaxed state, though, he was just too close to have his years of work ruined by some idiotic piloting error.

The Great One's planet loomed large on all his forward screens. His ship would soon be entering its atmosphere and Nirvana decided to strap himself in and let his copilot take it in. The sigh of relief he expelled as he settled into his seat seemed to express his thoughts completely.

His ship had landed and he was wandering through a cluster of thatch huts one of which, his research told him, contained the Great One. The jungle topography of this planet was not exactly to Nirvana's liking but he didn't really notice it. He was too busy running from hut to hut and peering in the doors to find the one in which the Great One was located. Eventually a curious native walked up to him and asked, "Hey mon, what is it you lookin' for?"

"I...I'm lookin' fo', I mean I'm looking for the Great One's hut," stated Nirvana, considerably agitated.

"Great One? Mon, have you got da' wrong place!" stated the native. "Nobody's great around heah, mon. We got a few people who are sorta' mediocre, but nobody great."

"no, no! You don't understand!" cried Nirvana, even more agitated now. "A man came here in a spaceship about twenty years ago. He stayed here, if my information is correct he should be here right now. And I have no reason to doubt the validity of my information."

"Well, mon somethin' is wrong with you infohmation because...", the native stopped short, "Now wait justa minute, deah was some meatball who landed in a shitbox..."

"Shitbox?", interrupted Nervana.

"Dat's what we call a spaceship," explained the native, "Well annawheah, dis meatball landed heah abou' twenny yeah ago. He livin jus' outside of town, but I'd be cahful if I wuz you. Dat man is crazy as an Oomqah in heat, and maybe just as dangerous."

With this information, Nirvana made his way towards the edge of the village which the native had gestured towards during his conversation. He raced up to the doorway of the hovel and crawled quickly inside. Sitting in a darkened corner was a grizzled old man in a worn and tattered, old tunic. "Who are you?" he asked, pointing at Nirvana.

"I am a devoted disciple of yours, oh Great One, and I have come to worship and to study at your feet", stated Nirvana, grovelling before the old man. "I have come to you to discover the meaning of life."

"The meaning of life? Ah yes, the meaning of life," began the old man somewhat dazedly, "The meaning of life lies in three things: the radish, the kumquat and the pimento. Without these all life is meaningless."

"But...but Great One, I don't understand," stated a confused Nirvana.

"Your mother was a whore and your father was a bedwetter, you are a chocolate eclair and I suck eggs for a living. Don't cross the street unless the lights are with you and don't fly a spaceship without a pilot's licence," babbled the Great One.

"You're...you're crazy!" cried Nirvana.

"And you piss against the wind," replied the Great One.

Nirvana climbed out of the hut and walked slowly towards the village. The curious native approached him again, "Hey mon, wheah you goin'? You look jus' awful."

"I'm looking for an Oomqah, preferably one in heat," replied Nirvana.

