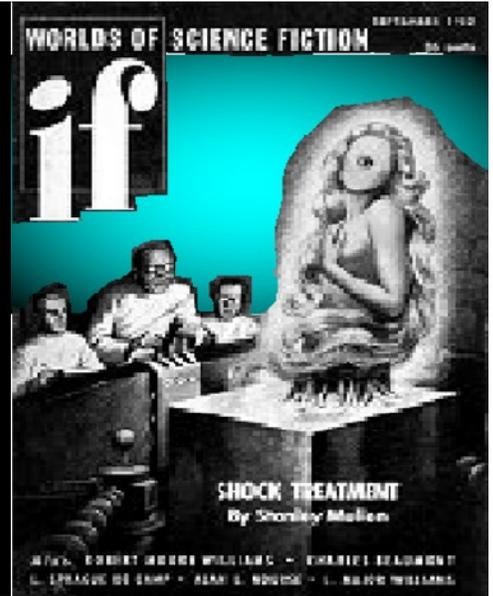


# The SKULL



BY

**Phillip K. Dick**

With changes and contributions by [Lin Stone](#)

Conger had agreed to kill a stranger he had never seen. But he would make no mistakes because he carried the stranger's skull under his arm.

It is science that claims we can only live once, and it is science too that says we can't change anything when we go back in time.

Conger knew that science proves itself wrong 140 times a year. Therefore he wrapped the skull up in a towel and thrust it into a bag for safe keeping. The skull was all he had for identification; but it didn't matter, he always got his man when a contract came his way.

"What is this opportunity?" Conger asked.  
"Go on. I'm interested."

The room was silent; all faces were fixed on Conger—still in the drab prison uniform. The Speaker leaned forward slowly.

"Before you went to prison your trading business was paying well—all illegal—all very profitable. Now you have nothing, except the prospect of another six years in a cell."

Conger scowled.

"There is a certain situation, very important to this Council, that requires your peculiar abilities. Also, it is a situation you might find interesting. You were a hunter, were you not? You've done a great deal of trapping, hiding in the bushes, waiting at night for the game? I imagine hunting must be a source of satisfaction to you, the chase, the stalking—"

Conger sighed. His lips twisted. "All right," he said. "Leave that out. Get to the point. Who do you want me to kill?"

The Speaker smiled. "All in proper sequence," he said softly.

The car slid to a stop. It was night; there was no light anywhere along the street. Conger looked out. "Where are we? What is this place?"

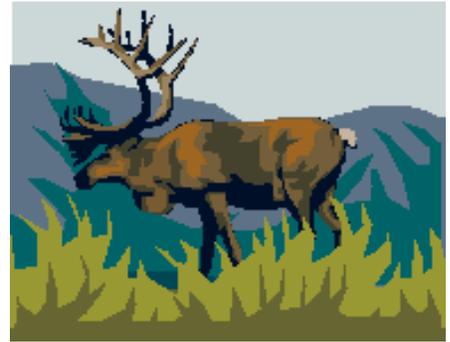
The hand of the guard pressed into his arm. "Come. Through that door."

Conger stepped down, onto the damp sidewalk. The guard came swiftly after him, and then the Speaker. Conger took a deep breath of the cold air. He studied the dim outline of the building rising up before them.

# THE SKULL

By  
Phillip K. Dick

With Changes and Contributions  
By Lin Stone



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# THE SKULL

By

Phillip K. Dick

With Changes and Contributions

By Lin Stone

"I know this place. I've seen it before." He squinted, his eyes growing accustomed to the dark. Suddenly he became alert. "This is—"

"Yes. The First Church." The Speaker walked toward the steps. "We're expected."

"Expected? Here?"

"Yes." The Speaker mounted the stairs. "You know we're not allowed in their Churches, especially with guns!" He stopped. Two armed soldiers loomed up ahead, one on each side.

"All right?" The Speaker looked up at them. They nodded. The door of the Church was open. Conger could see other soldiers inside, standing about, young soldiers with large eyes, gazing at the ikons and holy images.

"I see," he said.

"It was necessary," the Speaker said. "As you know, we have been singularly unfortunate in the past in our relations with the First Church."

"This won't help."

"But it's worth it. You will see."

They passed through the hall and into the main chamber where the altar piece was, and the kneeling places. The Speaker scarcely glanced at the altar as they passed by. He pushed open a small side door and beckoned Conger through.

"In here. We have to hurry. The faithful will be flocking in soon."

Conger entered, blinking. They were in a small chamber, low-ceilinged, with dark panels of old wood.

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# THE SKULL

By

Phillip K. Dick

With Changes and Contributions

By Lin Stone

There was a smell of ashes and smoldering spices in the room. He sniffed. "What's that? The strange, exotic smell."

"Cups on the wall, dirty carpet? I don't know." The Speaker crossed impatiently to the far side. "According to our information, it is hidden here by this—"

Conger lingered long enough to look around the room. He saw books and papers, holy signs and images everywhere. A strange low voltage shiver went through him.

"Does my job involve anyone of the Church? If it does—"

The Speaker turned, astonished. "Can it be that you believe in the Founder? Is it possible, that you, a hunter, a killer—"

"No. Of course not." Conger assured him. "All their business about resignation to death, non-violence— it's just —"

"Speak up, what is it, then?"

Conger shrugged. "I've been taught not to mix with such as these. They have strange abilities. And you can't reason with them."

The Speaker studied Conger thoughtfully for a long moment. "You have the wrong idea, Conger. It is no one here that we have in mind. We've found out the hard way that killing them off is a waste of ammunition and it only tends to increase their numbers."

Conger shivered again. "Then why must we come here? Let's leave."

"No. We came for something important. Something you will need to identify your man. Without it you won't be able to find

him." A trace of a smile crossed the Speaker's face. "We can't have you killing the wrong person. It costs too much, and it's much too important."

"I don't make mistakes." Conger's chest rose. "Listen, Speaker—"

"This is an unusual situation," the Speaker admitted. "You see, the person you are after—the person that we are sending you to find—is known only by certain objects here. They are the only traces, the only means we have of identification. Without them—"

"What are they?"

He came toward the Speaker. The Speaker moved to one side. "Look," he said. He drew a sliding wall away, showing a dark square hole. "In there."

Conger squatted down, staring in. He frowned. "A skull! A skeleton!"

"The man you are after has been dead for two centuries," the Speaker said. "This is all that remains of him. And this is all you have with which to find him."

For a long time Conger said nothing. He stared down at the bones, dimly visible in the recess of the wall. How could he kill a man that had been dead for two centuries? How could he be stalked, brought down?

Conger was a hunter that usually loved the shadows. But there came times when the shadows were alive, and talked in deadly whispers. He had kept himself alive by trading, bringing furs and pelts in from the Provinces on his own ship. riding at high speed through secure barriers.

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He had hunted in the great mountains of the moon. He had stalked through empty Martian cities. He had explored—

The Speaker said, "Soldier, take these objects and have them carried to the car. Don't lose any part of them."

The soldier went into the cupboard, reaching gingerly, squatting on his heels.

"It is my hope," the Speaker continued softly, to Conger, "that you will demonstrate your loyalty to us, now. All we ask of you is to show your devotion to society. This is a very good chance for you. I seriously doubt that a better one will come. And for your efforts there will be quite a restitution, of course."

The two men looked at each other; Conger, thin, unkempt, the Speaker immaculate in his uniform.

"I understand you," Conger said. "I mean, I understand this part, about the chance. But how can a man who has been dead two centuries be—"

"I'll explain later," the Speaker promised.

"Right now we have to hurry!" The soldier had gone out with the bones, wrapped in a blanket held carefully in his arms. The Speaker walked to the door. "Come. They've already discovered that we've broken in here, and they'll be coming at any moment."

They hurried down the damp steps to the waiting car. A second later the driver lifted the car up into the air, above the house-tops.

# THE SKULL

By  
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With Changes and Contributions  
By Lin Stone

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The Speaker settled back in the seat.

"The First Church has an interesting past," he said. "I suppose you are familiar with it, but I'd like to speak of a few points that are of relevancy to us.

"It was in the twentieth century that the Movement began—during one of the periodic wars. The Movement developed rapidly, feeding on the general sense of futility, the realization that each war was breeding greater war, with no end in sight. The Movement posed a simple answer to the problem: Without military preparations—weapons—there could be no war. And without machinery and complex scientific technocracy there could be no weapons.

"The Movement preached that you couldn't stop war by planning for it. They preached that man was losing to his machinery and science, that it was getting away from him, pushing him into greater and greater wars. Down with society, they shouted. Down with factories and science! A few more wars and there wouldn't be much left of the world.

"The Founder was some obscure person from a small town in the American Middle West. We don't even know his name. All we know is that one day he appeared, preaching a doctrine of non-violence, non-resistance; no fighting, no paying taxes for guns, no research except for medicine. Live out your life quietly, tending your garden, staying out of public affairs; mind your own business. Be obscure, unknown, poor. Give away most of your possessions, leave the city. Well, at least that was what developed from what he told the people."

# THE SKULL

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The car dropped down and landed on a roof.

"The Founder preached this doctrine, or the germ of it; there's no telling how much the faithful have added themselves. The local authorities picked him up at once, of course. Apparently they were convinced that he meant it; he was never released. He was put to death, and his body buried secretly. It must have seemed to them that the cult was completely finished. Instead they turned him into a martyr"

The Speaker smiled. "Unfortunately, some of his disciples reported seeing him alive and in person after the date of his death. The rumor spread; he had conquered death, he was truly special, he was divine. The idea took hold, grew. And here we are today, with a First Church, obstructing all social progress, destroying society, sowing the seeds of anarchy all around the world —"

"But the wars," Conger asked. "What about them?"

"The wars? Well, 30 - 50 years later his followers numbered in the millions and there were no more wars. It must be obvious that the elimination of war is the goal of every hippie that ever lived and it is always a direct result of non-violence practiced on a broad scale. But scientists can take a more objective view of war today. We were brave enough to ask the question – What was so terrible about it? – War had a profound selective value, perfectly in accord with the teachings of Darwin and Mendel and countless others. When George C. Marshall was in charge of military forces in the Second World War only a handful of the new warriors made it through the first 3 days of real

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combat. The rest were slaughtered by enemy bullets. Without war the mass of useless, incompetent mankind, without training or intelligence, is permitted to grow and expand unchecked. There is always some patriotic fool urging them to get sobered up long enough to get out and vote. War acted to reduce their numbers; like storms and earthquakes and droughts, war was nature's way of eliminating the unfit in our society.

"Without war to thin them out the lower elements of mankind have increased all out of proportion. They threaten to overturn all the progress of the educated few, those with scientific knowledge and training, the ones equipped to direct society for good. They have no regard for science or a scientific society, based on reason. And the—"

Conger snorted that he'd had enough.

The Speaker was startled. After a long moment the glowing lights in his eyes died out and he looked at his watch. He kicked the car door open. "I'll tell you the rest as we walk."

They crossed the dark roof. "Doubtless you now know whom those bones belonged to, and who it is that we are after. He has been dead just two centuries, now, this ignorant man from the Middle West, this Founder, as they call him. The tragedy is that the authorities of the time acted too slowly. They allowed him to speak, to get his message across. He was allowed to preach, to start his cult. And once such a thing is under way, there's no stopping it.

# THE SKULL

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"But scientists have asked the question, what if he had died before he preached a word? What if none of his doctrines had ever been revealed to the lowest rank and files of human society? It took only a moment for him to utter them, that we know. They say he spoke just once, just one time. Then the authorities came, taking him away. He offered no resistance; he went with a smile, and the incident was so small, so tiny."

The Speaker glanced at Conger. "So small, but we're reaping the consequences of it today."

They went inside the building. Inside, the soldiers had already laid out the skeleton on a table. The soldiers stood around it, their young faces intense.

Conger went over to the table, pushing past them. He bent down, staring at the bones. "So these are his remains," he murmured. "The Founder. The Church has hidden them for two centuries?"

"Quite so," the Speaker said. "But now we have them. There is nothing to them, now, but they give great power to The Church. Come along down the hall."

They went across the room to a door. The Speaker pushed it open. Technicians looked up. Conger saw machinery, whirring and turning; benches and retorts. In the center of the room was a gleaming crystal cage.

The Speaker handed a Slem-gun to Conger. "The important thing to remember is that the skull must be saved and brought back—for comparison and proof. Aim low—at the chest."

# THE SKULL

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Conger weighed the gun in his hands. "It feels good," he said. "I know this gun—that is, I've seen them before, but I never used one."

The Speaker nodded. "You will be instructed on the use of the gun and the operation of the cage. You will be given all data we have on the time and location. The exact spot was a place called Hudson's field. About 1960 in a small community outside Denver, Colorado. And don't forget—the only means of identification you will have will be the skull. There are visible characteristics of the front teeth, especially the left incisor—"

Conger listened absently. He wrapped the skull in a white towel then placed it in a plastic bag. He tied it to his wrist. "And if I should make a mistake?"

"You? Pick the wrong man?" The Speaker shrugged. "Then keep killing them until you do find the right one. Don't come back until you succeed in reaching this Founder. And you can't wait for him to start speaking either; that's what we must avoid! You must act in advance. Take chances; shoot as soon as you think you've found him. He'll be someone unusual, probably a stranger in the area. Apparently he wasn't known."

Conger listened dimly.

"Do you think you have it all now?" the Speaker asked.

"Yes. I think so." Conger entered the crystal cage and sat down, placing his hands on the wheel.

"Good luck," the Speaker said.

# THE SKULL

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"We'll be awaiting the outcome. There's some philosophical doubt as to whether one can alter the past. With you behind the sights this should answer the question once and for all."

Conger fingered the controls of the cage.

"By the way," the Speaker said. "Don't try to use this cage for purposes not anticipated in your job. We have a constant trace on it. If we want it back, we can yank it back here in a hurry. Good luck."

Conger said nothing. With a touch of his finger the cage was sealed. He raised the same finger and touched the wheel control. He turned the wheel carefully.

He was still staring at the plastic bag when the room outside vanished.

For a long time there was nothing at all. Nothing beyond the crystal mesh of the cage. Thoughts rushed through Conger's mind, helter-skelter. How would he know the man? How could he be certain, in advance? What had he looked like? What was his name? How had he acted, before he spoke? Would he be an ordinary person, or some strange outlandish crank?

Conger picked up the Slem-gun and held it against his cheek. The metal of the gun was cool and smooth. He practiced moving the sight. It was a beautiful gun, the kind of gun he could fall in love with. If he had owned such a gun in the Martian desert—on the long nights when he had lain, cramped and numbed with cold, waiting for things that moved through the darkness—

He put the gun down and adjusted the meter readings of the cage. The spiraling mist was

beginning to condense and settle. All at once forms wavered and fluttered around him.

Colors, sounds, movements filtered through the crystal wire. He clamped the controls off and stood up.

He was on a ridge overlooking a small town. It was high noon. The air was crisp and bright. A few automobiles moved along a road. Off in the distance were some level fields. Conger went to the door and stepped outside. He sniffed the air. Then he went back into the cage.

He stood before the mirror over the shelf, examining his features. He had trimmed his beard—they had not got him to cut it off—and his hair was neat. He was dressed in the clothing of the middle-twentieth century, the odd collar and coat, the shoes of animal hide. In his pocket was money of the times. That was important. Nothing more was needed.

Nothing, except his ability, his special cunning. But he had never used it in such a way before.

He walked down the road toward the town.

The first things he noticed were the newspapers on the stands. April 5, 1961. This was the beginning of the Peace Movement. He was only a few days off his mark. He glanced around him. There was a filling station, a garage, some taverns, and a ten-cent store. Down the street was a grocery store and some kind of public buildings.

A few minutes later he mounted the stairs of the little public library and passed through the doors into the warm interior.

# THE SKULL

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The librarian looked up, smiling. "Good afternoon," she said.

He smiled, not speaking because his words would not be correct; accented and strange, probably. He went over to a table and sat down by a heap of magazines. For a moment he glanced through them. Then he was on his feet again. He crossed the room to a wide rack against the wall. His heart began to beat heavily.

Newspapers—weeks on end. He took a roll of them over to the table and began to scan them quickly. The print was odd, the letters strange. Some of the words were unfamiliar.

He set the papers aside and searched farther. At last he found what he wanted. He carried the Cherrywood Gazette to the table and opened it to the first page. He found what he wanted:

## **PRISONER HANGS HIMSELF**

An unidentified man, held by the county sheriff's office for suspicion of criminal syndicalism, was found dead this morning, by—

Conger finished the item. It was vague, uninforming. He needed more information. Impatiently, he carried the Gazette back to the racks and then, after a moment's hesitation, approached the librarian.

"More?" he asked. "More papers. Old ones?"

She frowned. "How old? Which papers?"

"Months old. And—before."

# THE SKULL

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"Of the Gazette? This is all we have. What did you want? What are you looking for? Maybe I can help you."

He was silent, thinking.

"You might find older issues at the Gazette office," the woman said, taking off her glasses. "Why don't you try there? But if you'd tell me, maybe I could help you—"

He went out.

The Gazette office was down a side street; the sidewalk was broken and cracked. He went inside. A heater glowed in the corner of the small office. A heavy-set man stood up and came slowly over to the counter.

"What did you want, mister?" he said.

"Old papers. A month. Or more."

"To buy? You want to buy them?"

"Yes." He held out some of the money he had. The man stared.

"Sure," he said. "Sure. Wait a minute." He went quickly out of the room. When he came back he was staggering under the weight of his armload, his face red. "Here are some," he grunted. "Took what I could find. Covers the whole year. And if you want more—"

Conger gave a happy nod then carried the papers outside. He sat down by the road and began to go through them.

He found what he wanted, four months back, in December. It was a tiny item, so small that he almost missed it. His hands trembled as he scanned it, using the small dictionary for some of the archaic terms.

## MAN ARRESTED FOR UNLICENSED DEMONSTRATION

An unidentified man who refused to give his name was picked up in Cooper Creek by special agents of the sheriff's office, according to Sheriff Duff. It was said the man was recently noticed in this area and had been watched continually. It was—

Cooper Creek? December, 1960? His heart pounded. That was all Conger needed to know. He stood up, shaking himself, stamping his feet on the cold ground. The sun had moved across the sky to the very edge of the hills. He smiled. Already he had discovered the exact time and place. Now he needed only to go back, perhaps to November, to Cooper Creek—

He walked back through the main section of town, past the library, past the grocery store. It would not be hard; the hard part was over. He would go there; rent a room, prepare to wait until the man appeared.

He turned the corner. A woman was coming out of a doorway, loaded down with packages. Conger stepped aside to let her pass. The woman glanced at him. Suddenly her face turned white. She stared and the packages tumbled from her hands..

Conger hurried on. He looked back. What was wrong with her? The woman was still staring; she had dropped the packages to the ground. He increased his speed. He turned a second corner and went up a side street. When he looked back again the woman had come to the entrance of the street and was starting after him. A man joined her, and the two of them began to run toward Conger.

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He lost them and left the town, striding quickly, easily, up into the hills at the edge of town. When he reached the cage he stopped. What had happened? Was it something about his clothing? His dress?

He pondered. Then, as the sun set, he made the decision to leave and he stepped into the cage. But even then, Conger sat long before the wheel, his hands resting lightly on the control. Then he turned the wheel, just a little, following the control readings carefully.

The grayness settled down around him as he zeroed in on his target.

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The man looked him over critically. "You better come inside," he said. "Out of the cold."

"Thanks." Conger went gratefully through the open door, into the living-room. It was warm and close from the heat of the little kerosene heater in the corner. A woman, large and shapeless in her flowered dress, came from the kitchen. She and the man studied him critically.

# THE SKULL

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"It's a good room," the woman said. "I'm Mrs. Appleton. It's got heat. You need that this time of year."

"Yes." He nodded, looking around.

"You want to eat with us?"

"What?"

"You want to eat with us?" The man's brows knitted. "You're not a foreigner, are you, mister?"

"No." He smiled. "I was born in this country. Quite far west, though."

"California?"

"No." He hesitated. "In Oregon."

"What's it like up there?" Mrs. Appleton asked. "I hear there's a lot of trees and green. It's so barren here. I come from Chicago, myself."

"That's the Middle West," the man said to her. "You ain't no foreigner."

"Oregon isn't foreign, either," Conger said. "It's part of the United States."

The man nodded absently. He was staring at Conger's clothing.

"That's a funny suit you got on, mister," he said. "Where'd you get that?"

Conger was lost. He shifted uneasily. "It's a good suit," he said. "Maybe I better go some other place, if you don't want me here."

They both raised their hands protestingly. The woman smiled at him. "We just have to look out for those Reds. You know, the

# THE SKULL

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Phillip K. Dick

With Changes and Contributions

By Lin Stone

government is always warning us about them."

"The Reds?" He was puzzled.

"The government says they're all around. We're supposed to report anything strange or unusual, anybody doesn't act normal."

"Like me?"

They looked embarrassed. "Well, you don't look like a Red to me," the man said. "But we have to be careful. The Tribune says—"

Conger half listened. It was going to be easier than he had thought. Clearly, he would know as soon as the Founder appeared. These people, so suspicious of anything different, would be buzzing and gossiping and spreading the story. All he had to do was lie low and listen, down at the general store, perhaps. Or even here, in Mrs. Appleton's boarding house.

"Can I see the room?" he asked.

"Certainly." Mrs. Appleton went to the stairs. "I'll be glad to show it to you."

They went upstairs. It was colder upstairs, but not nearly as cold as outside. Nor as cold as nights on the Martian deserts. For that he was grateful.

Later he went down to the general grocery store. He was walking slowly around the store, looking at the cans of vegetables, the frozen packages of fish and meats shining and clean in the open refrigerator counters.

Ed Davies came toward him. "Can I help you?" he asked. He couldn't help smiling. His smile was much more visible when

# THE SKULL

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Conger answered in his funny voice. "Just looking."

"Sure," Ed said. He walked back behind the counter. Mrs. Hacket was wheeling her cart up. "Who's he?" she whispered, her sharp face turned, her nose moving, as if it were sniffing out clues by the thousands. "I never seen him before."

"I don't know him," Ed admitted. "He's a man – a little oddly dressed, and he has a beard!

"He looks suspicious to me. Why does he wear a beard? No one else wears a beard. Must be something the matter with him."

"He might be hiding Hitler behind his beard. Or, maybe he just likes to wear a beard. I had an uncle who—"

"Wait." Mrs. Hacket stiffened. "Didn't that—what was his name? The Red—that old one. Didn't he have a beard? Yeah, yeah the name was Marx. He had a beard."

Ed laughed at her. "I garinteayuh, this guy ain't Karl Marx. I saw a photograph of gooney bird once."

Mrs. Hacket was staring at him. "You did?"

"Sure." Ed flushed a little. "What's the matter with that?"

"I'd sure like to know more about him," Mrs. Hacket said. "I think we ought to know more, for our own good."

# THE SKULL

By  
Phillip K. Dick

With Changes and Contributions  
By Lin Stone

"Hey, mister! Want Want to take a ride in a Packard?"

Conger turned quickly, instinctively dropping his hand to his belt. Then he relaxed. Two young kids in a car, a girl and a boy. He smiled at them. "A ride? Sure."

Conger got into the car and closed the door. Bill Willet pushed the gas and the car roared down the highway.

"I appreciate a ride," Conger said carefully. "I was taking a walk between towns, but it was farther than I thought."

"Where are you from?" Lora Hunt asked. She was pretty, small and dark, in her yellow sweater and blue skirt.

"From Cooper Creek."

"Cooper Creek?" Bill said. He frowned. "That's funny. I don't remember seeing you there before."

"Why, do you come from there?"

"Why, I was born and raised there. I know everybody there."

"I just moved in. From Oregon."

"From Oregon? I didn't know Oregon people had accents."

"Is that right? Do I have an accent?"

"You use your words funny at least."

"How?"

"I don't know. But, he does. Doesn't he, Lora?"

# THE SKULL

By

Phillip K. Dick

With Changes and Contributions

By Lin Stone

"You do slur them," Lora said, smiling. "Talk some more. I'm interested in dialects any way." She glanced at him, white-teethed. Conger felt his heart constrict.

"I have a speech impediment that I'm working on, pebbles in the mouth, all that, you know what I mean."

"Oh." Her eyes widened. "I'm sorry."

They looked at him curiously as the car purred along. Conger for his part was struggling to find some way of asking them questions without seeming curious. "I guess people from out of town don't come here much," he said. "Strangers don't, maybe?"

"No." Bill shook his head. "Not very much."

"I'll bet I'm the first outsider for a long time."

"Well, yeah, I guess so."

Conger hesitated. "A friend of mine— someone I know, might be coming through here. Where do you suppose I might—" He stopped and desperately searched his tongue for the right words. "Would there be anyone certain to see him? Someone I could ask, make sure I haven't already missed him?"

They were puzzled. "Just keep your eyes open. Cooper Creek isn't very big."

"No. That's right."

They drove in silence. Conger studied the outline of the girl. Probably she was the boy's mistress. Perhaps she was his trial wife. Or had they developed trial marriage back so far? He could not remember. But surely such an attractive girl would be someone's mistress by this time; she would be sixteen

# THE SKULL

By

Phillip K. Dick

With Changes and Contributions

By Lin Stone

or so, by her looks. He might ask her sometime, if they ever met again.

The next day Conger went walking along the one main street of Cooper Creek. He passed the general store, the two filling stations, and then the post office. At the corner was the soda fountain.

He stopped. Lora was sitting inside, talking to the clerk. She was laughing, rocking back and forth.

Conger pushed the door open. Warm air rushed around him. Lora was drinking hot chocolate, with whipped cream. She looked up in surprise as he slid into the seat beside her.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "Am I intruding?"

"No." She shook her head. Her eyes were large and dark. "Not at all."

The clerk came over. "What would you like to have?"

Conger glanced lovingly at the chocolate. "Same as she has, maybe?"

Lora was watching Conger and listening closely, her arms folded, elbows on the counter. She smiled at him. "By the way. You don't know my name. Lora Hunt."

She was holding out her hand. He took it awkwardly, not knowing what to do with it. "Conger is my name," he murmured.

"Conger? Is that your last or first name?"

"Last or first?" He hesitated. "Last. I'm Omar Conger. I grew up as a military brat."

"Omar?" She laughed. "That's like the poet, Omar Khayyam."

"I don't know of him. I know very few of poets. We restored very few works of art. Usually only the Church has been interested enough—" He broke off because she was staring. He flushed. "Where I come from," he finished.

"The Church? Which church do you mean?"

"The Church." He was confused. The chocolate came and he began to sip it gratefully. Lora was still watching him.

"You're an unusual person," she said. "Bill didn't like you, but he never likes anything different. He's so—so prosaic. Don't you think that when a person gets older he should become—broadened in his outlook?"

Conger nodded.

"He says orientals ought to stay where they belong, but you're not so foreign. He really hates orientals; you know."

Conger nodded.

The screen door opened behind them. Bill came into the room. He stared at them.

"Well," he said. "What move have we here?"

Conger turned. "Hello."

"Well!" Bill sat down across from them.

"Hello, Lora." He was still looking at Conger though. "I didn't expect to see you here."

Conger tensed. He could feel the seething hostility of the boy. "Do you have a brand on this filly?"

"No. Nothing like that."

# THE SKULL

By

Phillip K. Dick

With Changes and Contributions

By Lin Stone

# THE SKULL

By

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With Changes and Contributions

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There was silence. Suddenly Bill turned to Lora. "Come on. Let's go."

"Go?" She was astonished. "Why? Where?"

"I said, Let's go!" He grabbed her hand.

"Now, Come on! The car's outside."

"Why, Bill Willet," Lora said. "You're jealous!"

"Who is this guy?" Bill said. "Do you know anything about him? Look at him, his beard—"

She flared. "So why are you picking on him? It's just because he doesn't drive a Packard and go to Cooper High!"

Conger sized the boy up. He was big—big and strong. He imagined the boy was part of some civil control organization.

"Sorry," Conger said. "It must be time for me to go."

"NO! You wait a minute, I want to know what your business in town is?" Bill roared.

"What are you doing here? And, why are you hanging around Lora?"

Conger turned and peered at the girl. "She looks okay to me." Lora giggled and so did a few others. Conger shrugged. "No real harm done, I don't think. Let me past and I'll see you later."

He turned back around and froze. Bill had moved into a blocking position and the blazing eyes and bulge of chin told Conger there was a real confrontation going on here. His fingers went to his belt. Half pressure, he whispered to himself. No more. Just use half pressure.

# THE SKULL

By

Phillip K. Dick

With Changes and Contributions

By Lin Stone

He squeezed. The room leaped around him as if an earthquake was shaking it up and down. He himself was protected by the lining of his clothing, the plastic sheathing inside.

"My God—" Lora put her hands up to shield her eyes and face. Conger whispered a few bitter curse words. He hadn't meant any of it for her. But all the damage would wear off from all of them. That disruption was the result of only a half-amp. It would barely tingle. Well, barely tingle, and paralyze.

Conger walked out the door without looking back. He was almost to the corner when Bill slowly slowly emerged from the fountain store. He was holding onto the wall for support like a much drunken man will do. Conger turned and walked on out of town.

Restlessly, Conger walked across meadows and pastures until daylight began to disappear. His thoughts were still racing as he came upon one of the city streets. In the darkness, a large form loomed in front of him. Conger stopped, holding his breath, waiting for the obstruction to dissolve.

"Who is it?" a man's voice barked imperiously. Conger waited, tense and uncertain.

"Who are you?" the voice demanded again. Conger heard a click, saw the hand move. A blindingly bright light flashed in his face.

Conger stepped forward. "It's only me," he said.

"Who? Who is 'me'?"

"Conger is my name. I'm staying at the Appleton's place. And, who are you, sir?"

# THE SKULL

By

Phillip K. Dick

With Changes and Contributions

By Lin Stone

The man came slowly up to him. He was wearing a leather jacket. There was a gun at his waist.

"I'm Sheriff Duff. I think you're the person I want to talk to. You were in Bloom's today, about three o'clock?"

"Bloom's?"

"The sody fountain place. You know, where the YOUNG kids hang out." Duff came up beside him, shining his light into Conger's face. Conger blinked. "Turn that thing away," he said.

A pause. "All right." The light flickered to the ground. "You were there. Some trouble broke out between you and the Willet boy. Is that right? You had a beef over his girl—"

"We merely had a discussion," Conger said carefully. "Then something happened, shook the place up."

"Something shook the place up, you say?"

"Yeah."

"What do you think it was?" Asked the sheriff.

"Oh, kind of like an earthquake, or maybe the foundation shifted, I don't know. "Why are you asking me?"

"Well, they say you did something."

"Me? I did something? Did they say what I did?"

"No. That's what I'm wondering. They saw a flash, and something seemed to happen. They all blacked out. Couldn't move."

# THE SKULL

By

Phillip K. Dick

With Changes and Contributions

By Lin Stone

"I didn't see a flash, and everyone was still bouncing around when I scooted out of there. How are those people now?" Conger asked, thinking of Lora.

"Ah, they're all right," said the Sheriff. He turned the light off.

There was a long silence.

"Well?" The Sheriff said. "What was it you did? Throw a bomb?"

"A bomb?" Conger laughed at the absurdity.

"No, I didn't have anything and I didn't do anything."

"Why did they all pass out then?"

"Did they pass out? In all that ruckus? It must have happened after I left. No, I didn't have anything and I didn't do anything but scoot out of there as fast as I could. But, it was funny though,,,"

The Sheriff waited a few moments then asked, "Funny? What was funny?"

"Well, I didn't see anything bouncing up and down outside. By the time I got to the edge of town,, By that time I started thinking that I had imagined everything," said Conger.

Silence. Conger shifted, waiting. His fingers moved slowly toward his belt. The Sheriff watched Conger's hand go down, watched the hand slow, then clasp the top of his trousers. He grunted. "A couple of the other kids said that too," he said. "Anyhow, there wasn't any real harm done." He stepped back from Conger. "Besides that Willet brat has been a trouble-maker for years."

# THE SKULL

By

Phillip K. Dick

With Changes and Contributions

By Lin Stone

"Good night, then," Conger said. He started past the Sheriff.

"One more thing, Mr. Conger. Before you go. You don't mind if I look at your identification, do you? I don't want you to think I'm singling you out or anything."

"No. I don't mind. Not at all." Conger reached into his hip pocket. He held his whole wallet out. "Look through all of it; I don't mind."

The Sheriff took it gingerly and shined his flashlight on it. "We've got to be careful any more, what with the hippie movement moving in and through. All that long hair, sometimes it's hiding a millionaire." Conger watched, breathing shallowly. They had worked hard on the wallet, studying historic documents, relics of the times, all the papers they felt would be relevant.

Sheriff Duff handed it back. "Okay. Sorry to bother you Mr. Conger." The light winked off.

When Conger reached the house he found the Appletons sitting around the television set. They did not look up as he came in. He lingered at the door.

"Can I ask you something?" he said. Mrs. Appleton turned slowly. "Can I ask you— what's the date?"

"The date?" She studied him. "The first of December."

"December first! Why, it was just November!"

They were all looking at him. Suddenly he remembered. In the twentieth century they still used the old twelve-month system. November fed directly into December; there was no Quartermonth sandwiched between.

# THE SKULL

By

Phillip K. Dick

With Changes and Contributions

By Lin Stone

He gasped. Then it was tomorrow! The second of December! Tomorrow!

"Thanks," he said. "Thanks."

He went up the stairs. What a fool he was, forgetting. The Founder had been taken into captivity on the second of December, according to the newspaper records.

Tomorrow, only twelve hours hence, the Founder would appear to speak to the people and then be dragged away.

The day was warm and bright. Conger's shoes crunched the melting crust of snow. On he went, through the trees heavy with white. He climbed a hill and strode down the other side, sliding as he went.

He stopped to look around. Everything was silent. There was no one in sight. He brought a thin rod from his waist and turned the handle of it. For a moment nothing happened. Then there was a shimmering in the air.

The crystal cage appeared and settled slowly down. Conger sighed. It was good to see it again. After all, it was his only way back.

He walked up on the ridge. He looked around with some satisfaction, his hands on his hips. Hudson's field was spread out, all the way to the beginning of town. It was bare and flat, covered with a thin layer of snow.

Here, the Founder would come. Here, he would speak to them. And here the authorities would take him.

Only he would be dead before they came. He would be dead before he even spoke. Conger had never missed a contract. He never would.

# THE SKULL

By

Phillip K. Dick

With Changes and Contributions

By Lin Stone

Conger returned to the crystal globe. He pushed through the door and stepped inside. He took the Slem-gun from the shelf and screwed the bolt into place. It was ready to go, ready to fire. For a moment he considered. Should he have it with him, before he needed it?

No. When he saw the Founder coming toward the field, then he could go and get the gun. Conger looked toward the shelf. There was the neat plastic package. He took it down and unwrapped it.

He held the skull in his hands, turning it over. In spite of himself, a strange feeling rushed through him, like a cold wind coming off a frozen lake. This was the Founder's skull, who was still alive, who would come here, this day, who would stand on the field not fifty yards away.

What if he could see this, his own skull, two centuries old, yellow and eroded? Would he still say his peace? Would he have the nerve to speak if he could see his own, grinning, aged skull? What would he be doing different? If he knew in advance that he was going to die, what great, priceless gem of wisdom would there be for him to say from right out of his own brain? Nah, that was stupid; there might be some people with immortal words to splash in their last seconds of life, but not Conger. "I wouldn't have nothing to tell the people. Why here I am from way in the future and what message could I bring? Here I am a murderer and all I can think of to say is WARS ARE WRONG?" He laughed, must be a million people that have already said that. "Well, wars are wrong and if I knew my words would launch a

huge movement that changed history, that's exactly what I'd say. WAR IS WRONG, just like killing is wrong."

Conger stared at his hands, then the skull. What action would not be futile, when the man that spoke must look upon his own aged, yellowed skull? Watch the jawbone that no longer worked, lick clean the pate with words that stirred men's souls to action? No, it would be better by far if they should simply lean back to enjoy their temporary lives, while they still had their lives to enjoy.

Conger felt like he was really onto something profound. A man who could hold his own skull in his hands and see what the worms left when they were finished would believe in few causes, few movements. Rather, he would preach the opposite—

The opposite? Would he really? In history's crumbling tome were tales of many men, yes and women too, they that knowingly stood on the brink of extinction and refused to step back. Not all of them were great, not all of them were wise, few of them were even realistically bold or courageous.

What kind of courage would be required to hold your own skull in your own hand and realize that in the end it all came down to this moldering module of prehistoric intelligence.

A sound from outside tumbled the lock of his inner ear. Quickly, Conger dropped the skull back on the shelf and took up the gun. Outside something was moving. He went quickly to the door, his heart racing. Was it the Founder, wandering by himself in the cold, looking for a place from which to speak? Was he meditating over his words, choosing

# THE SKULL

By

Phillip K. Dick

With Changes and Contributions

By Lin Stone

his sentences and arranging his paragraphs?  
What if he could glimpse the skull that  
Conger had so surely held?

He pushed the door open, the gun raised.  
Then he beheld Lora! He stared at her. She  
was dressed in a wool jacket and boots, her  
hands in her pockets. A cloud of steam came  
spurting from her mouth and nostrils. She  
was gasping for breath. Her breast was rising  
and falling like an overworked bellows. She  
paused, staring at him.

Silently, they looked at each other. At last  
Conger lowered the gun. "What is it?" he  
asked. "What are you doing here?"

She pointed back down the hill into the  
meadow. He frowned; what was wrong?

"What is it?" he asked. "What do you want?"  
He looked more carefully in the direction she  
had pointed. "I don't see anything Lora."

At last she got enough air to stay in her lungs  
long enough to form words.. "They're  
coming."

"They?" he asked. "Who? Who are coming?"

"They are. The police. During the night the  
Sheriff had the state police send cars. All  
around, everywhere. Blocking the roads on  
every side. There's about sixty of them  
coming to surround you. Some are coming  
from town, some around behind you." She  
stopped, gasping again and again. "They  
said—they said—"

"What?" He asked angrily, for in truth what  
could the whole country throw at him that he  
couldn't melt and throw back at them. But

# THE SKULL

By

Phillip K. Dick

With Changes and Contributions

By Lin Stone

this young fool didn't know that. She had risked everything she had in order to warn him so he might could get away.

**"They said you were some kind of a Communist. They said—"**

Conger went down and cradled her in his arms for a moment, then he turned and walked back into the cage. He put the gun down on the shelf and came back out. He leaped down and went to the girl again.

"Thank you.

"You came here to warn me? Does that mean that you don't believe it?"

She trembled in his arms. **"I don't know."**

As honest an answer as he was ever going to get in this century. "Did you come alone?"

"Uh, No! Joe brought me in his truck as far as it would bring us, you know, from town."

Conger nodded, "Joe? Who's he?"

"Joe French. The plumber. He's a friend of Dad's."

Conger loosened his arms and let her step back. "Let's go down and meet this brave young man that I owe half my life to."

Lora giggled. She felt safe again and burrowed herself into his arms. Then they turned and crossed the loosely fluttered snow, up the ridge and onto the field. "Farmers flood their fields here right after harvest so that ducks and geese will have a place of refuge."

Joe nodded and led the way to the little panel truck that was parked half way across the

# THE SKULL

By

Phillip K. Dick

With Changes and Contributions

By Lin Stone

# THE SKULL

By

Phillip K. Dick

With Changes and Contributions

By Lin Stone

partially frozen and thawed field. Joe French was a short, heavy man was kneeling on a patch of ice, trying to get a chain of some kind around the wheel that was dangling in the air. He was calmly smoking his pipe. He stood up when he glimpsed the two of them coming toward him. "Ah, so you be the one that has stolen the heart of our sweet Bessie?"

"Yes. And I do appreciate your efforts to warn me."

The plumber shrugged. "Now I am the one in need of help, so I shall be grateful to some of those that have trailed us out, all thanks for that going to the sandy haired youth in the tan colored Packard.

"But you? I don't know anything about you. I am no judge of men but Lora says you're all right." He turned around and stared at his truck. "I've never had her stuck this badly before."

Conger smiled. "Why you're just barely stuck man. Balanced so precariously as it is I could toss it out of that mud hole with just one hand, and my left one at that."

"Do you really think so? You don't look that stout to me."

Conger grinned again. "Tell you what. You get behind the wheel, and give it some, uh, gas, when I give you the word. Lora here will stand right over there so she can pass the word along. Now I'm just going to give it a little shove to give you some new traction. You and your truck will have to do the rest."

Still looking dubious Joe went to his station and made sure everything in the truck was still working. He nodded to Lora who then

# THE SKULL

By  
Phillip K. Dick

With Changes and Contributions  
By Lin Stone

made a circle motion over her head for Conger's benefit.

Conger leaned over and clutched the bumper with his left hand. He nodded for Lora and just as soon as she turned her head to communicate with Joe he brought the bumper up a few inches and then shoved the truck half way around in its tracks. Mud, fresh mud, was spurting in every direction as the wheels took new traction. There was only a slight pause and then the truck lunged completely out of the trap and onto something solid.

Joe stopped the truck and got out. He came back to examine the tracks. His eyes widened when he saw how deeply Conger's splayed feet had sunk into the mud in order to give his truck a slight shove? Being Catholic, he crossed himself. "Oh my, how did you do that?"

"Focus," Conger told him. "It gives me the power of ten."

He smiled, then shrugged. "Most people put limits on themselves. They say, I CAN ONLY LIFT 50 POUNDS, and sure enough, 50 pounds is all they can lift because the muscles begin to tear and strain. The pain is too much for them and they quit.

"But take away the pain, take away the limits imposed, and suddenly the human body is capable of miraculous feats of glory."

"Faith," Joe said musingly. "All it takes is faith and the miracle is done."

He glanced at Lora. "You did right to come warn him, Bessie. He is a right uncommon man, and a good one too."

# THE SKULL

By

Phillip K. Dick

With Changes and Contributions

By Lin Stone

"Here comes some of my scouts," Conger said. Black shapes were picking their way across the snow.

"That's some people from town. You can't keep this sort of police action quiet. We all listen to the police radio; they must have heard the news the same way Lora did. Someone tuned in, then spread it around with a little more flavor being added to it with each spread. Before you know it, —"

Joe shrugged. "A lot of them are armed now, let me talk to them when they get here and maybe we can talk into letting you go."

Conger laughed at the deadly seriousness of the plumber. "Joe, a little town like this," he shook his head. "My power is higher and brighter than all of theirs put together. There is nothing that happens here that I cannot stop, remember that. Now, you go ahead, take Lora back home so she won't get hurt on an accident. And Joe, thanks for coming."

Joe shook his head ruefully, then hustled Lora into his truck. He left then, slowly, carefully, regretfully, and the effect was not lost on Conger. He grinned and turned to study the crowd, or more correctly, the mob. "The poor fools; they have no idea in the world who is manipulating them or for how long or for what purpose. From morning until night, then back again they were heedlessly putting new weights on their own backs, struggling under loads not of their own making. It was too bad they were coming to kill him, or at least to watch it happen.

Conger could, make out a couple of them. Bill Willet was there, of course, with some boys from the high school. The Appletons were

# THE SKULL

By

Phillip K. Dick

With Changes and Contributions

By Lin Stone

along, dragging back in the rear as if they had changed their minds long ago but couldn't shake themselves loose from the mob and go back home where they belonged.

"Even Ed Davies is with them," Conger murmured to himself. He shook his head sadly. The storekeeper was toiling onto the field, with three or four other men from the town.

Conger couldn't afford to let them take him away. Any minute the Founder would appear, would step onto the field. Conger wondered if the Founder might be one of the townsmen, suddenly recognizing his own brilliance. Or maybe he was Joe French. Or maybe one of the cops. Any one of them might find himself suddenly moved to speak with fiery inspiration. And the few words spoken by the Founder on this morrow were going to be important to everyone on earth for a very long time. And Conger had to be there, ready when the first word was uttered!

Conger watched the converging forces for a moment. Then he dashed back into the woods, between the trees, toward the ridge.

He could get away, of course. Anytime he wanted to he could just slip right out of their grasp and get away. All he had to do was to leap into the crystal cage and turn the handles. But he had a contract, an important job. He had to be here, here at this place, at this time so that he might kill the Founder, before he spoke those words that changed the venue for everybody on earth.

He reached the cage, opened the door. He went inside and picked up the gun from the shelf. His Slem-gun would take care of them.

# THE SKULL

By

Phillip K. Dick

With Changes and Contributions

By Lin Stone

He notched it up to full count so it would spread out and extend for many kilometers. The whip lash and chain reaction from it would flatten them all,

1. the police,
2. the curious,
3. The sadistic
4. And all the morally skewed people that didn't even realize something very much out of the ordinary was about to happen.

They wouldn't take him! Before they got him, all of them would be dead. Conger knew that he would get away; he had a contract to fill. Yes! He would escape and take most of his ammunition with him. Before the sun sets this day they would all be flattened, some of them might even die if their feet happened to be a little bit wet. That wouldn't be his fault, but if that was what they craved, then by golly, they would find themselves receiving exactly what they thought they were ordering for him.

Then he saw the skull and it was gleaming in one of winter's last stream of long, stretched beam from the falling sun. Some obscure notion had probed at the base of his brain, some profound thought had soaked through the lower regions of his brain to feebly enlighten the most basic level of his natural understanding.

He put the gun down, he had to. Then he picked up the skull, he had to and nothing could stay his hand. He turned the skull over and peered into the cavity that once had held an entire, living brain.

# THE SKULL

By

Phillip K. Dick

With Changes and Contributions

By Lin Stone

He examined the teeth and there was loosed a cold wind whistling down the back of his neck. Once upon a contract a fat rattle snake had fallen from a tree limb, struck that exact spot and then slither down his back and fall out the uninhibited bottom of his shirt. Ever after that, there was an area there that quivered in times of blundering stress when he knew the contract was getting away.

Walking gingerly, Conger carried the skull with him and went to the mirror.

He pressed the upright skull against his cheek, face forward. Beside his own face the grinning skull matched up, cap against cap, crown against crown, the skull leered back at him. "You," it said, "You are the Founder. Your words are the ones that will change the course of history for centuries to come."

There was no denying the evidence. This was his own skull that he held against his leeches cheek. He (Conger himself) was the one who would speak some marvelous words that launch a movement that would inexplicably change the course of history. He was the Founder and history hinged on the words he said and the things he did.

The words he had dreamed up to say before now seemed woefully inadequate deprived of sense and notions. This encounter today was pivotal and his words must be strong enough to form the door that opened men's souls and inspired dynamic changes in their gestaltic emanations. And the most bewildering part of all his participation was that he had no idea in the world what he was going to say.

Holding his own skull was like holding a crystal ball with nothing to say. It was

mocking him with the beams of late evening sunshine slumping through the skull and dancing out the eye sockets.

Was that in itself a message? Nothing, as in nothing mattered? As quickly as that thought bubbled to the top of his consciousness another thought wiped it out. "No! What I have to say here is worth dying for." And, what was that precious thought?

"Because I hold my own skull I know that I shall not live forever. Is that true?" Conger tested the idea for solvency, and answered his own question. "No, Because I hold my own skull I really and truly know that I shall live forever.

"Is that true? Is that really true?" Conger tested the idea for solvency, and for the first time in his life he felt the seeds of confirmation begin to sprout within his breast. Here was a truth he could taste. Here was a truth lodged in its own foundation.

Conger nodded to his thoughts even as they exploded. "This is true, and if it is true then everything I have ever thought about life and living is wrong, irretrievably WRONG."

And therefore, Conger's brain caught fire as new confirmations drove wedges into all his carefully constructed anchors from the past and new bridgeworks began to rise and fall into place for a bright and wonderful future.

Conger put the skull down. He was ready; he knew what he was going to say; he knew the words that he must say. He knew the words strong enough to change the course of history. He knew those words were true, and he knew that they must be said, now, today!

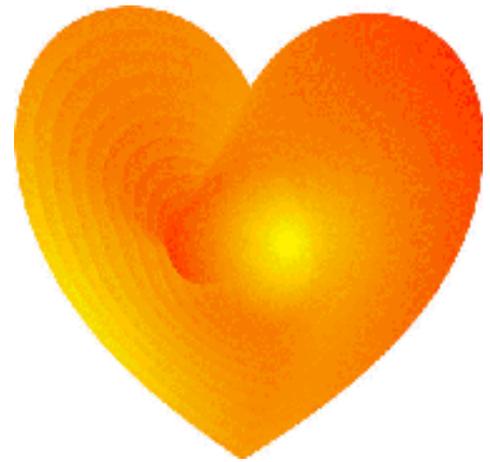
# THE SKULL

By

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By Lin Stone



Golden Romances

# THE SKULL

By

Phillip K. Dick

With Changes and Contributions

By Lin Stone

He stood at the controls for a moment, wondering how to send his empty craft back home. Then he remembered The Speaker saying they had ways of bringing him back.

"He might have been bluffing –" Conger thought, then laughed and said, "Good enough for them then. They will receive exactly what they deserve."

He could hear the sound of antique motors outside, the muffled noise of men opening and closing antique doors. His gaze was dragged toward the skull as if wishing for reassurance. The empty eye sockets seemed to be exultant now, and that in itself was reassuring. There it was, his own skull, yellowed with age, dented and banged about on every side by shifting strains beneath the earth's surface. No man in all of history had ever had the privilege of beholding his own skull.

There seemed to be an immense gulf ahead of him; it roared like the waves of an angry ocean pounding a gaping hole in the beach contrived by the puny wiles of men. It was claiming lives, shifting little granules of thought as if they were sand to form something new, yes, new and strangely eternal.

Conger picked up the mighty weapon that could stun and even kill a kilometer filled square with human beings if they stood still or rushed him. The Speaker had thought a weapon of this magnitude had the power to solve everything, and yet Conger knew it was powerless when standing against an idea emerging from the sands of time. He laid it aside, he stuck it behind his skull. With

loving arms Conger scooped up his own skull and cradled it in the vise of his left arm.

Then he rapped confidently on the top of the skull to bring forth the good luck that he knew he already had. He put the skull down carefully and turned to open the door. "It's Stage time, and I, Conger the murderer, am the star of this grand production that will brighten so many lives for centuries yet untold."

He was smiling broadly as he walked across the crispy, crinkling grass beneath the snow. "Time is nothing. I have sipped chocolate malts with a girl born a hundred and fifty years before my time. I have lived for many years after my flesh has moldered and stripped my skeleton clean.

What a sensation it had been to have picked up his own skull. It had felt comfortable in the nook of his arm, "What a sensation, and even more enlightening is that condition in the cusp of time when I knew these things were true. All of my studied, stilted words have lifted up on gilded wing and gently, softly drifted away."

There were a lot of people standing around, gathered together, waiting, waiting for they knew not what. Surely they expected a good fight; they knew he had something more powerful than they possessed. After all, they had heard about the incident at the fountain.

Conger smiled in the mellow of deep self-awareness. He raised his hand for silence and was grateful that they paused in thought to pay him strict attention.

# THE SKULL

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He cleared his throat and knew that his voice would be adequate for this performance.

"Behind me is a weapon so powerful that with one small click all of you would be wiped out. I have left it behind me because I have reserved something much more powerful for you."

One of the brave young men tossed something at him. It lobbed in the snow by his feet, and he looked down. It was a volcanic rock. He smiled and spoke directly to the young man. "You think of power in terms of the crushing power of rocks; more rocks, more power.

"My friends, I possess a raw, naked power that can raise a million flowers to bloom in shadow or sun. But I say unto you, It is time to put these toys away."

At the edge of the group an older woman was watching him with a close, penetrating gaze. He felt a sudden shock for just a moment, gone before he could even identify it. He had seen this old woman before. Where?

He remembered then. He had seen her on that day at the library. As he had turned the corner he had seen her. She had noticed him and been astounded. At the time, he did not understand why, but now he did.

By a strange twist of science he would appear again, a few months later, after his body full of bones had been buried under the floor of the jail.

And so, in a fashion, he would escape death. He would die, but then, after a period of months, he would live again, briefly, for just a single afternoon.

# THE SKULL

By

Phillip K. Dick

With Changes and Contributions

By Lin Stone

Just one afternoon. Yet long enough for them to see him, to understand that he was still alive. To know that somehow he had returned to life, and then left them again.

And then, finally, he would appear once more, after nearly two hundred years had passed. Two centuries later he would be born again, born, as a matter of fact, in a small trading village on Mars. He would grow up, learning to hunt and trade—

Conger's brain paused when he saw a police car come to the edge of the field and stop. The people retreated a little, to make room for the armed men to pass through. Conger raised his hands and smiled broadly. "Up here, boys. This is where I'm at."

The crowd laughed, faintly, nervously. More police were emerging from the woods on either side. They were walking bravely toward him. Gossip had endowed him with a thousand new and strange weapons; they advanced cautiously, with their weapons out.

Conger smiled, such feeble weapons, even they must know that such feeble weapons were sometimes less effective than a well-aimed rock. He laughed and said, "My friends, I have a message for you of eternal importance."

He paused until every eye had swept back to feast upon this stranger. "You are gods. You shall live forever and be as the gods before you.

"This much some of you have already entertained, but there is more to my message. You are gods. You shall live forever and be as the gods before you. It is now time for you to begin acting the parts of

gods. Quit wasting your time on matters of little importance. Put away the childish things that matter little and cost much."

A weapon prodded him in the back and Conger laughed. "My time must be up, but remember this and so do. You are gods; you must think like gods. Reach out and claim the heavens. Let your rests be filled with warm thoughts of an eternal nature. Fill your lives with the things that will live forever."

Conger waved to the stunned crowd as the police bore him away for interrogation by the secret police on their way there from Washington.

"Boys," Conger said as two exulting policemen slapped handcuffs on his wrists. "There is a tomorrow, and it is beautiful."

### **The End.**

**The author,** Philip K. Dick has written many choice stories, sold them to the science fiction pulps of his day. Most of his fame came from the spotlessly crafted books that he wrote, like **FARMERS IN THE SKY.**

The Contributor.. Lin Stone counts himself fortunate in the life he has lived. From his first day in school and trying to learn English, until his eyes close tonight, with peace, and gratitude, securely wrapt in the arms of his Savior. It has all been wonderful. **"Yes Virginia, there is a tomorrow, and it is beautiful."**

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