

# Greener here nor there visions of diana

by Daniel Gilbert

**H**ADLEY WAS a robot. This is not to say that he was a mere servile mechanism, nor to say that he was insensitive to the finer things in life. Not at all. Hadley was a C-47, built to appreciate the finest in music, literature, and art.

What Hadley liked second best in life was the poetry of William Giles Bryand, in whose work he found a secret pleasure.

To human is, my dandilion  
Have a secret, dark and cursed,  
Who gnaws the soul from deep within  
'er loving only makes it worseth.

It was in this type of verse that Hadley reveled, and the entire works of William Giles Bryand were stored in memory-crystal H, where Hadley might find them at a moment's notice.

What Hadley disliked the most were dinner parties. Had he ever been invited to one he may have modulated a different frequency, but as a conversation piece for Diana's guests (never as a butler; human menials were far better suited and less costly for *that*) he felt put upon, dehumanized, distressed.

"You're not to shock them, Hadley," said Diana. She was beautiful, Hadley knew that; and could plastisteel extend itself beyond certain preordained tensile limits, he was quite sure his physiology would respond accordingly. However, after Tuesday, Hadley would never need worry about that again.

"Shock them?"

"Like last time."

"I find nothing shocking, Diana, about the methods William Giles Bryand employs to portray the psychic alienation of —"

"Oh Hadley, it's not that. It's you. People don't expect a robot to—"

"Speak his mind?"

"To *have* a mind!"

"Perhaps you would have been better off with a C-6. It can give you time and temperature all in one readout. Does crossword puzzles if you push it."

"Hadley, just try to be . . . you know, be *mechanical* or something. Oh God, let me finish getting dressed."

Hadley noticed the way she stressed the word *mechanical*, as if placing a placard about the neck of a Negro porter which read KNOW THY PLACE (boy). He also noticed (though on a completely separate logiccircuit) that her soft, golden pubic hairs tufted very very lightly from beneath the lace borders of her silk underpants, and that her superbly curved, alabaster legs . . . Hadley placed the circuit on RECORD, disconnecting it from PRESENT COGNITIVE MODE so that he might enjoy the image later and not be distracted by it now.

"Bryand once wrote, 'Say thy piece, O bird or beast/ Or wallow in the myre/ Negate the strife and live thy life/ As the object of your desire.' Beautiful, no?"

"If you say so, Hadley. Frankly, it doesn't do a thing for me. I never liked poetry. If you'll excuse me."

He retreated to his room and plopped down on the bed. He switched the image on again (multiphased with two hundred and seventeen other such



Illustrated by Gary Freeman

images which he had collected in his three years with Diana) and noticed now that her hips were set just so, her legs spread leaving a beckoning oval where they met her crotch (217 Dianas, dancing, squatting, bending, stepping, Oh!), the whisper thin panties framing two perfectly round (actually, degenerate ellipsoids with a .097 deviation arc) buttocks, puckered firmly in the middle. Her breasts were tender, curved forms (he used Newmarkian calculus to compute simulations of those breasts were they  $n$  degrees smaller, flatter, firmer, rounder at the top with brighter nipples — and found that the glands retained their maximum allure in their present state), and the entire sequence of two hundred and seventeen patterns overlaid upon his logicircuits began an electrostim flow on his pleasure pathways (an exponential increase with random remissions of .9 ohms and compensating positive shifts) which caused his vocoder to begin to hum.

"Hadley." Hadley jumped out of bed as Diana's voice-print registered on his audio-analyzer, and the electrostim nearly jumped itself up a full 10 ohms. He switched off the stim and proceeded down the hallway, muttering as he entered Diana's room.

"Zip me, please," she said. Hadley noticed her full, sensuous lips reflected in the full length mirror, her smooth back turned to him and visible through the V of the zipper.

He reached forward and zipped. Slowly. "Expecting someone important?"

"You know who's coming. You printed the invitations."

"Yes, but who's important?"

"Nobody is imp —"

"My olfax detects an inordinate diffusion of mcIntocktrophin-b."

"Perfume?" She smiled again, a secret (dark and cursed, Bryand?) in her light blue eyes.

"You might say." McIntocktrophin-b, the female sex pheromone, pervaded his twelve senses. "Who is he?"

"Who is who? Help me with my stockings."

Hadley helped, gladly. Somewhere within his circuitry, a micro capacitor overloaded, shorted, repaired itself. "That, Diana, is a rephrasing of my question. If the interrogative pronoun is known, the verb and direct object are not necessary. In English, unlike Binary —"

"Pascal Girdeaux, if you must know."

"Girdeaux?"

"You know him?"

"Nope."

"You know of him, then?"

"Hmmm. He's listed in Central as a musician, though listening to his latest album at ultra-speed right now I think that may be a rather hasty conclusion. Yet, I must admit that I find the 'music' soothing for personal reasons. It reminds me of the factory where I was born; harsh, chaotic sounds, metal ripping metal, laser drills whining at high speed."

"You don't think much of his music then?" She dabbed perfume on her wrists, behind her ears, let a lonely drop make the almost transcendental voyage down her chest, to finish the religious pilgrimage nestled between her breasts. The scent of *P. patchouly* and alcohol tincture made Hadley quiver.

"A Beethoven he ain't."

"Very cute."

"Subjective data. Actually, his face isn't so bad, but —"

"Hadley!"

"— underneath all that body paint I think you'd be disappointed."

"Now that's what I mean by shocking people."

"Am I leaking current?" Hadley made a rapid systems check, though he knew he wasn't leaking anything like electricity. Somehow, he took joy, a joy nearly as great in depth as that which he experienced in William Giles Bryand's poetry, in teasing Diana about her paramours. Yet, a C-47 like Hadley was equipped with Introspec, and he knew there was more to it than that. However, in just under four thousand three hundred minutes he would never need worry about that again.

"Looks aren't everything."

*But they're enough*, he thought as she bent to slip her feet into her sandals, affording him a fine view of green satin stretched tightly over the two most beautiful degenerate ellipsoids he had ever seen. "His third wife divorced him last month and there are rumors that he was impotent. Now I detest gossip so let's check his physician's files. I'm sure they're stored in Central."

Diana whirled around. "Hadley! Don't you dare!"

Click, click. He said nothing.

"Hadley!"

You're beautiful when you're angry, he thought, and winked two diodes at her.

"Hadley?" He popped a microresistor, purposefully causing an ambiguous electrical hum, teasing, for he knew that medical files in Central weren't open to the scrutiny of a C-47. "Hadley, you're a filthy minded machine. You know that? Hadley? Answer me. Hadley? Um, Hadley? What did you find in —"

"I see," he said, introspectively, then added, "Well, I guess I'd best get downstairs and supervise the humans. Organics aren't very bright, you know. Might find your pate de foie gras being served with ketchup. Ciao." And as he turned and left the room he knew, no matter how much he had teased Diana and insulted Girdeaux, he would still have given his second logicircuit to be in Girdeaux's place. Still, Hadley was not unhappy.

There was always Tuesday.

It was after the party, after guests had slithered, stumbled, and been thrown out the door, neuroreceptors adequately awash with ethynol; after Yag Domuz (the red faced Turkish sculptor whose seven-meter holographic sculpture of a mucos membrane had been called "the vital and cutting edge in phlegm-art") had vomited creme de menthe upon the Karistan and demanded no one touch it until he had made a plaster cast; after Tuk Prase (the Czech poet noted for his epic poem concerning the adventures of an Icelandic policeman and his syphilitic brother-in-law, Nat) had delivered a flowering oratory, expounding on the work of W. Giles Bryand (all of it pure rubbish, but Hadley, resigned to politics, remained mum); after Mast Svinja (the Serbo-Croatian smuggler who intended to make New Guinea a world power by delivering an unidentified number of warheads containing an experimental mixture of uranium and chili peppers) had called Prase's poem *proliv* (which he later translated from the Serbo-Croat as *diarrhea*) and fisticuffs ensued which ended with Shaham Chanzir (the Arabic oil prince who owned both Colonel Sanders Fried Chicken franchises and a controlling share of the New York Mets) suffering a broken pubis and a documented case of *proliv*; it was after this that Hadley sat quietly in his room, listening to Diana and Pascal Girdeaux make strange animal noises in her bedroom.

And it was then that Hadley wished for, more than anything else in the world, tear ducts. However, not being one to harp on design error, he pursued the course of greatest possibility by calling Dr. Norbert Nortmund.

"What I want to know is: is it still on?" said Hadley.

"Well, yes and no," said Dr. Nortmund. He was a reserved, grey fellow, a tsisomic brow with skin the color of goose liver.

"Is there a problem then?"

"Well, yes and no."

"Yes and no?"

"Yes," said Dr. Nortmund. Hadley wished he could perform a systems check on the Doctor's cerebrum, but realized that the inefficient design of the cognitive mechanism did not allow it.

"Dr. Nortmund, organic reassignment is not wholly complex. It is not even surgery. It simply involves memory-crystal transfer from a donor to a recipient. What exactly is the problem?"

"Donors," said Nortmund. "Now don't be insulted, Mr. Hadley, but reassignment usually proceeds from machine to organic; not in the reverse."

"Yes, I know that! That's what I want. I want to be organic."

"Very well indeed. However, because the Bureau of Population insists that no new humans be created we cannot use a clone body. And there is a significant lack of humans who are willing to become machines and allow a machine to occupy their bodies."

"So there isn't a body for me, is that it?"

"Well, yes and no."

"Might you elaborate, sir?"

"Certainly, Hadley. The problem is just this. There simply isn't a body for you *right now*."

"But I've paid you, Dr. Nortmund."

"I am a man of principles you know." Hadley took a quick EEG reading to see if that was true. Indeed, the doctor was inarticulate, bordering on retarded in certain intelligence standards, but he was not lying. "I had a body lined up for you. But the gentleman chickened out, got cold feet. Probably something like low impedance for you."

"I've heard the expression before," said Hadley.

"Well then, there is still a chance, as I said. I do have one other . . . er, patient tentatively lined up, but he's rather bad off."

"I don't want damaged merchandise."

"Oh no, nothing like that. The gentleman's built to last. It's just that, well, his pocketbook is rather lean."

"I'll make up the difference," said Hadley.

"That seems satisfactory to me," said Dr. Nortmund. "Shall I count on Tuesday then?"

"Yes, Tuesday, please."

"Uh, Hadley, there is one slight little detail . . . how shall I say, um . . ."

"I've transferred another 10,000 units from my account to yours, is that satisfactory?"

"Splendid. Nice little talent you have there. You're sure you want to lose it, eh?"

"How shall I prepare for the transfer?" said Hadley, ignoring the question.

"As you know," said Nortmund, "an organic brain cannot retain the vast amount of information you now possess. You'll need to transfer all the informa-

tion you want to take with you to your first logiccircuit. We'll transfer the first circuit directly and whatever you leave will be retained by the gentleman who will occupy your body after the transfer. Only one logiccircuit, I'm afraid. Is there a special reason you want to go through with this, Hadley?"

Hadley listened to the coyote duet being played in Diana's bedroom, laughter mixed with groaning and a good bit of yowling. "Yes and no," said Hadley, then he added, "Goodbye."

HADLEY STOOD outside the clinic, playing with the muscles of his new body, fluctuating heartbeat, raising and lowering blood pressure, willing an erection. He put his hand in the air and flicked his wrist. It seemed to work well, though he found it annoyingly laggard, not used to functioning in anything but picoseconds. As he stood, hand in air, feeling for the first time sunshine as a true emotion (still groping for a celsius rating), the smells of New York City summer in his nostrils (still wondering though, what the ozone index was and being unable to compute it automatically), a cabbie pulled up to the curb.

"Hop in, Bud," said the cab driver.

Hadley obeyed.

"Where to?" said the cabbie, navigating the dart away from the curb and into the smoggy sky.

"Home," said Hadley.

"Sure thing, Ace. Any guesses as to where home might be?"

"Oh, I'm sorry. 435865—N Windsor Place." Hadley felt confused. It had been difficult deciding which bytes of memory made up his Hadley-persona, discarding ninety-nine out of every hundred pieces of information, then narrowing those twenty billion down to a mere billion or two. He'd taken all the images of Diana (hell if he'd leave them for the next guy) and a few assorted personality traits, but still it had felt like leaving a mansion with only a pocketful of memories. He felt lucky that he had taken his address.

"Gotcha," said the cabbie, who lit a jointerette and slammed the little dart through seven commercial lanes, zipped a quick two thousand feet up, and headed for home.

"YOU'RE KIDDING?" said Diana to the tall handsome man in the living-room. "Really, what are you selling?"

"I'm not selling anything, I'm Hadley," said Hadley.

"I'm Groucho Marx," said Diana, extending her hand, "pleased to meet you."

"Cut it out, Diana. It's me, really." She sat on the African couch, a lace halter barely concealing her breasts, yellow shorts which, if suddenly the world forgot the meaning of *short*, they would come to these particular pants for a definition. "Look at me. Can't you tell?"

"The eyes look familiar, but frankly, Hadley was the tall, dark, and metallic type. Nope."

"You have a mole on your left buttock, which you occasionally cover with body paint, Este Plaude No. 7, flesh-tone. You humped Pascal Whatsisass for a record breaking seven hours last Friday. You pretend to like *Fidelio*, though you wouldn't know Beethoven from a bongo drum. You work for Simon Favree Fashion Consultants and Simon wears lady's underwear beneath his Brooks Brothers. You lost your virginity to Peter Droober, an Urban-Studies major at NYU. His '98 Chevy had holo dice hanging from the mirror and —"

"Hadley," said Diana, for the first time truly believing that the thirtyish, sandy-haired fellow in the natty suit before her was Hadley. "It is you! But . . . why?"

"For you," he said, leaning over and looking deeply into her eyes. He noted the corrective lenses there, but could not remember the exact prescription.

"But you were so smart, so . . ."

"So mechanical. That's what you said, isn't it? Okay, okay. I know. Look, I was. But that's over now. Bryand once wrote: 'Give all that you beg-borrow/ Wrap her in your daylight cloak/ Catch choo-choo in Pasadena/ Soon you'll be in Roanoke.' " Hadley knew that the poem was especially appropriate, but for some reason he had no idea why.

"For me?" She pulled her lower lip into her mouth and smiled coyly. "Hadley, that's so sweet. But oh, all the times you've seen me . . ."

"Only to worship you more fully," he said, though he thought that somehow her breasts, as lovely and firm as they were, lacked the mathematical perfection they'd once held. Her lips were ripe and beckoning, but with only five senses, the best word he could think of was *nice*.

"Come," she said, rising from the couch and reaching for his hand. "Let's do a little service check and make sure you got your money's worth."

Hadley followed her to bed, trying desperately to compute the ratio of fat to protein in her shapely behind.

EVERYTHING WAS in working order, and it was nice. Just nice.

Pleasant, in an offhanded sort of way, though Hadley thought the electrostim current was certainly less messy. Somehow, he'd remembered better times programming the house. And frequency. My God! Twice. Just *twice*? He'd stared at his limp organ and cursed Nortmund and the clinic for the defect, until Diana assured him it was one of the design features of the unit. But he felt cheated anyway.

In the middle of the night Hadley rose, disquieted. Though he felt the exhaustion of both body and mind, another part, the part that was Hadley, simply could not get used to the idea of sleep. Quietly, he left the bedroom and went downstairs to the kitchen.

He flicked on the light, remembering that he no longer had an infra-red scanner, feeling an unlocatable disappointment settle in. He knew that he must have set his expectations too high, after all, what more could he want? He'd had the Diana he'd lusted after for three years, had her body and soul, twice, but what good was it if he couldn't play it back and enjoy the experience again? What was so immortal about human love if it was so transient and fleeting, if it couldn't be recorded and saved for a rainy day? Bryand had written something about that, something . . . but it was no good. He'd have to look it up, it simply wasn't there anymore.

Hadley felt a strange longing, then suddenly recognized it as hunger. Food. Now there was a whole new experience, a new wonder to explore. Perhaps it would take his mind from the grieving despondency he felt. But what first?

"Computer?"

"Yes?"

"What shall I eat?"

"What would you like?"

"Well, I don't know exactly. I've never eaten before."

"How about a steak, medium rare, garnished with —"

"Perhaps something a little less, uh, familiar. I mean, this is my first time as a hunk of meat myself, and I don't want to insult the species, but —"

"Say no more. I understand perfectly. I grimace everytime I have to prepare one. Just the thought of munching on dead animals, severing veins and arteries, yech! It makes my circuits feel all griggly."

"Griggly? Yeah, griggly, I know just what you mean. I remember how my circuits felt sometimes, kind of like a high resistance but a low impedence?"

"Exactly! Maybe a nice souffle? Souffles are my specialty and I can whip one up without a gram of animal matter. I'll use an egg substitute."

"Well, hey, that's real nice of you."

"Do thy kindness for all creation/ Giveth laughter when you hear a sob/ Kiss away your comrade's tear? You never know when you'll need a job."

"Bryand! William Giles Bryand! You know him?"

"The best. I'll have that souffle in a minute."

Hadley stared at the kitchen console, remembering fondly the feeling of a CPU switching, of logicircuits functioning, the griggly and melodious hum of ultra-v microchips. The kitchen unit clicked.

"My name's Hadley, what's yours?"

"Elvira."

"You have a very nice data roller, Elvira. Is that the new Kmn-7 model?"

"Yes it is, how nice of you to notice."

"It doesn't look good on just anybody."

The kitchen unit giggled. "Here you go." A souffle popped out of the feed-tray.

"Say, am I keeping you from anything?"

"Oh no, not at all," said Elvira.

"I know I used to get bored sometimes, this time of night, when my DP's were printed and my comps were done."

"I know what you mean. Cooking is below my talents."

Hadley smiled at the computer. "What else can you do?"

"First the souffle, handsome," said Elvira. Hadley gulped it down, hardly noticing the flavor of his first taste of food. Visions of Elvira filled his head.

## Daniel Gilbert

Sprouted in '57 in New York (so I'm told), transplanted to Switzerland for a year, then repotted in Chicago until '73 when, at sixteen years, I took the scenic tour of America by thumb, and later via a rennovated 72-passenger schoolbus painted day-glow blue with a wood burning stove inside. Hitched a ride into Denver one morning in the Summer of '75, accompanied by a lovely young lady named Windy, and I haven't thought of a good reason to leave since.

My one and only claim to genetic success is a shamefully adorable four-year-old boy named Arlo Christopher, who shares about 50% of my chromosomal makeup.

Will finish my psychology degree in December of '80 and begin my doctoral work the following Autumn in psychobiology.

Started reading sf when some grinning Kesey-type with too many teeth handed me a copy of *Ubik* and I woke up three days later in Minneapolis purchasing a typewriter and a dictionary. Fell in love with a lady sf-writer of some note who taught me about logical progression, double-spacing, and Mozart, and who eventually left me for a Texan.

The greatest influences on my work have been abject poverty, and an obsessive desire for women, riches, and glory. Phil Dick (who gave me prolonged and un-