

1979

Progress Report

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Progress Report

Forty . . . forty-one . . . forty two. Forty-two people with 42 heads and 84 useless hands to feed 42 mouths. Forty-two; too much. Annihilate.

See janie play. See janie play jump rope. janie has two brothers, michael and paul. Error . . . Error . . . Public Law 2046 directly states that only 4 units are permitted per family. janie + michael + paul + 2 parental units = 5 units. Annihilate . . . Error . . . Annihilate . . .

paul swung gently from the tree limb - the jump rope cutting ugly welts into his broken neck, eyes bugged, face deeply purpled, lips grossly swollen. Error corrected . . . janie unstrung the laces from his dangling tennis shoes and began a game of cat's cradle with michael.

The computers whirred through the problems methodically. Lights blinked reds and yellows, beepers beeped, buzzers buzzed, tapes turned. A parasite with thoughts, it spit out the answers, methods . . . This was progress. This was perfection. This was Society.

Populations must remain constant. Computer brains whizz out exact figures. "Each family is allowed one adult male unit, one adult female unit and 2.3 child units. If total child units exceed this number, last born will be annihilated, or may be substituted by child of parent's choice . . . "

". . . there was an old woman who lived in a shoe . . . "

"aunt sara always lied about her age - but she couldn't fool Them . . .

. . . there's no such things as grandparents anymore. These kinks in the system had been smoothed out long ago . . .

. . . i heard that she went out to the mailbox one day and never returned."

Sweaty hands squeeze each other reassuringly. But there's no need to worry. This is right. This is the Law.

A fly vibrated up and down the window pane - searching for the escape that wasn't there. It's sixteen subdivided eyes ogled as 16 chubby fingers descended upon its small hairy body and gently pressed it against the glass.

. . . cold metal gleams in the dewey sunlight, as it programs a new day's work . . .

Small cupped hands delicately capture and cage it. A wide blue eye peeps through thumbs into the zumming darkness.

The fly skittered - throwing itself against the walls of its skin prison - blindly making no progress. Squeezing it would be fun, pull the wings off, make it squirm - make it scream, make it sorry for getting caught.

. . . but deliver us from evil. Amen.

The chubby hands began to close tightly - closing off air and life- skin sensing the quickened thrum of wings. Then - impulsively the fingers uncurled . . .

". . . who had so many children, she knew not what to do . . . " Annihilate.