Invader

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Invader . . .

by Bryce Forester

For a long time now Cush had been looking for a home; he was cast out, hated. It was no fable that he was unwanted; wherever he went he was cursed and fought. People turned milky with fright when they heard his name. It was as though he and Despair were constant companions.

Somehow, Cush was different. He didn’t know how—he could eat and sleep and talk just like the rest of them—but they would never like him; they always tried to get rid of him.

“They cut my brother once, and took him away, but they won’t get me. I’ll hide where they won’t find me, and I’ll eat and sleep and grow fat. Then I’ll tell them where I am; they’ll grow all squirmy and be afraid. They’ll try to catch me, but I’ll run and run, and be everywhere.”

Cush reached a great open spot. He sat down to rest, for he had come a long way and the tubes had been very crowded. All through the tubes there was always a rushing and crowding. He had been near their heart once; it was even worse there, and so noisy—lub-alub-alub-alub. Not at all like it was here; here it was quite and warm and moist. The softness beneath him undulated in a sensuously soothing way. There was food nearby. He would make this his home.

Cush stretched, sighed, and then settled down into the wet softness. He purred to himself contentedly as he sleepily inhaled the warm vapors floating about him.

He began to grow—not too fast, for he might be discovered if he took too much to eat. The time must be just right to announce himself. Slowly he spread out into the plushiness surrounding him, until out of the sky poured the most delicious liquid, and when he drank it he felt all wild inside. There must be more of it for him! There was, and Cush drank and drank as though he might never drink it again.

Cush forgot everything in his ecstacy. He grew and he vibrated, carelessly dumping messages virtually screaming “here I am.” But Cush didn’t care. Such joy was worth being discovered. He could run when he had to.

And soon he had to. The blissful drinks from the sky ceased, and the warm velvetiness beneath him became strangely chilled and quiet. Even the throbbing of the tubes grew hardly audible.

Suddenly, from above came a blinding flash of light, and his air grew rough, dry and odorless. They were attacking him once more! As the stern glint of sharpened steel pressed down upon him he tried to run, but try was all he could do. He had drunk too much and eaten too long.

The blade of metal slashed into his sides, bit his back and deftly cut under him and around him. A dull red of pain squirmed before
him as he was wrenched from his home without which he could not live.

"Good Lord, it's hot in here."
For once he was right; it was pretty warm.
"Smoky, noisy, hot, and it's only the middle of April . . . where'd I put my cigaret?"
They had been going for about an hour now. It was just going to be a small party, but there are always those jokers you didn't invite that always manage to drift around with that ya-jus'-gotta-let-me-in look on their freeloading faces.

"And then the two of them . . ."
The usual cultural minded group was listening to jokes.
Big Ben was trying valiantly to mix drinks, but between Clyde's insipid suggestions and Ben's random sampling (to insure the best), Ben was more mixed than anything in any of the glasses.
A few forced laughs floated over from the culture group, and Clyde shifted his interests to a half-open window in the far side of the cloudy room. He leaned on the sill trying to get a bit of unused air into his lungs while the room behind him hummed hypnotically. A conversation from months back found its way into his thoughts.

"That might not be your last, Mr. Addison. Be careful what you eat and drink; it can start again."
The party droned on like a hive of drunken bees.

The clock twisted its face to read several hours later. His stomach began to get sick.
"C'n hol' my likker. He di'n' know wha' he was talkin' ah—bowt. DOC!"
His insides wretched violently. He bent over and tried to sit down—he thought he did. They picked him up and rushed away . . .

. . . the sweetness of the ether spoke to his foggy brain only as cheap perfume. The knife cut easily separating flesh and muscles. The slit widened, skilled eyes of the surgeon sought out the ulcer on the walls of his stomach. Blade, hand and mind moved in unison. The unwanted visitor was eliminated.