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# THE ARM OF THE STARFISH





A HEAVY summer fog enveloped [Kennedy International](#). The roar of the great planes was silenced but in the airport there was noise and confusion. Adam wandered about, trying not to look lost, keeping one ear open to the blaring of the loudspeaker in case his flight to Lisbon should be called or canceled. His bags had long since disappeared on the perpetually moving conveyor belt, and he was too excited to sit anywhere with a book. All he could do was walk about, looking and listening, caught up in the general feeling of tension.

An extra load of business was being conducted over the insurance counters and at the insurance machines. Adam debated between a machine which would give him insurance and one which would give him coffee, and chose the coffee. Holding the paper cup in one hand, and his battered school briefcase in the other, he walked through a crowd of agitated people who had come to meet planes which were now being deflected to Boston and Philadelphia.

The hot, sweet coffee finished and the carton disposed of in a trash can, Adam headed for a row of phone booths, but they were all occupied by frustrated people whose plans had been changed by the July fog, so he decided against trying to call any of his friends. Probably no one would be home, anyhow; they were either away for the summer or busy with summer jobs.

So there was no point in trying to impress anyone with *his* job which had come up suddenly and gloriously after he and his parents had moved to [Woods Hole](#) for the summer and he was already set in the familiar routine of sorting and filing for Old Doc [Didymus](#).



Doc might be ninety and doddering, but it was he who had said, the second day Adam reported for work, "Adam, I'm letting myself get dependent on you in the summer and this isn't good for either of us. My young friend, O'Keefe, is doing some rather extraordinary experiments with starfish on an island off the south coast of Portugal, and I'm sending you over to work for him this summer."

Strangely enough it was almost as easy as it sounded, parental permission, passport, inoculations, and a ticket to Lisbon.

Adam, like every biology major, had heard of Dr. O'Keefe, but the scientist was only a name in the boy's mind. To work for him, to see him as a person, was something else again. He was full of questions. 'Young' to Old Doc meant anywhere between eight and eighty, but Adam had early learned that one did not ask Old Doc anything that did not pertain directly to marine biology. Adam's father, who had also worked for Old Doc in his day, knew this, too. He said only, "If Doc thinks you're ready to work for Dr. O'Keefe then it's the thing for you to do, and I'd be the last person to hold you back. O'Keefe has one of the extraordinary minds of our day. Your mother and I will miss you, but it's time you got off and away."

Over the loudspeaker Adam's flight was postponed for the third time. He started for an emptying phone booth, but a woman with three small children beat him to it. The children huddled together outside the booth; the eldest, bravely holding on to the hands of the two littler ones, began to cry, and Adam, to his own indignation and shame, felt a strong surge of fellow-feeling with the child.

He turned quickly away and walked up and down the large, noisy main hall of the air terminal, trying not to be disturbed by the loudspeaker calling, people rising from couches and trying to listen, annoyed men heading for the bar, mothers trying to coax babies into sleep with bottles of milk or juice. The main thing, he finally acknowledged to



himself with a feeling of deep shame, was that he'd always had someone's hand (figuratively, of course) to hold, his family's, or Old Doc's, or the teachers', or the kids' at school, and now for the first time (for shame, Adam, at such an age), he was on his own, and just because his flight kept being postponed was no reason for him to start feeling homesick and to look around for another hand to hold.

Adam [Eddington](#), sixteen, going on seventeen, out of high school and set for Berkeley in the winter, had better be ashamed of himself if a crowded airport, heavy with fog and tension, could put him on edge now.

It was after his flight had been delayed again (but not yet canceled) that he became aware of one person in the enormous, milling crowd, a girl about his own age. He was aware of her not only because she was spectacularly beautiful in a sophisticated way that made him nervous, but because she was aware of him. She looked at him, not coyly, not in any way inviting him to come speak to her, but coolly, deliberately, as though looking for something. Twice Adam thought she was going to come over to him; it was almost as though she had some kind of message for him. But each time she turned in another direction and Adam decided that he was being imaginative again.

He started to go for another cup of coffee, then looked back across the echoing hall, and now not only was the spectacular and enticing girl looking at him, she was walking toward him, and as she came closer she smiled directly at him, and held up one hand in greeting. His palm was slightly moist against the handle of his briefcase.

"Hi," she said. "I know you."

Adam gave what he felt must be a rather silly grin and shook his head. "No. But I wish you did."

She frowned. "I *know* I know you. Where?"

Adam was aware that this was a rather outworn opening gambit. However, he felt that this girl really meant it; she wasn't just casting around for someone to amuse her until



her plane should be called or canceled. With her looks in any case she could have had any man in the airport with the lift of an eyebrow; Adam saw several men looking admiringly at the naturally fair hair, that particular shining gold that can never be acquired in a beauty parlor, and which shimmered softly down to slender shoulders. She wore a flame-colored linen dress and spike-heeled pumps. A leather bag was slung casually over one shoulder, and Adam no longer felt even the smallest need to hold anyone's hand, except perhaps the girl's, and that would be a different matter entirely. He was overwhelmingly proud that out of this vast conglomeration of people she had singled him out for her attentions.

"I'm Adam Eddington," he said, "and having met you now I'm not likely to forget it."

The girl laughed, with no coyness. "I admit I'm not used to being forgotten. I'm Carolyn Cutter, called [Kali](#). Where are you off to? That is, of course, if we ever *get off*."

"Lisbon first."

"Oh, sharp! Me too. Where next?"

"Well, I'm going to be working on an island called [Gaea](#). It's somewhere off the south coast of Portugal."

As he said 'Gaea' she frowned slightly—perhaps she was thinking of Gôa—but she said, "What on earth kind of work could you possibly find to do in Gaea?"

"There's a marine biologist working there, Dr. O'Keefe. I'm going to be assisting him."

Now the girl definitely frowned. "Oh, so you know O'Keefe."

"No, I don't know him. I've never met him."

Kali seemed to relax. "Well, I know him, and if you'd like the lowdown I'll give it to you. How about going into the coffee shop and having a sandwich and a Coke or something? I was counting on eating on the plane and heaven knows when we'll get on *that*. I'm starved."