

TOR·COM



Escape to Other Worlds with Science Fiction

a short story by

Jo Walton



with an illustration by

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In the Papers (1)

NATIONAL GUARD MOVES AGAINST STRIKERS

In the seventh week of the mining strike in West Virginia, armed skirmishes and running “guerrilla battles” in the hills have led to the Governor calling in

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EX-PRESIDENT LINDBERGH REPROACHES MINERS

ASTOUNDING SCIENCE FICTION

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SPRING FASHIONS 1960

Skirts are being worn long in London and Paris this season, but here in New York the working girls are still hitching them up. It's stylish to wear a little

HOW FAR FROM MIAMI CAN THE “FALLOUT” REACH?

Scientists say it could be a problem for years, but so much depends on the weather that

You hope to work

You hope to eat

The work goes to

The man that's neat!

BurmaShave

Getting By (1)

Linda Evans is a waitress in Bundt's Bakery. She used to work as a typist, but when she was let go she was glad to take this job, even though it keeps her on her feet all day and sometimes she feels her face will crack from smiling at the customers. She was never a secretary, only in the typing pool. Her sister Joan is a secretary, but she can take shorthand and type ninety words a minute. Joan graduated from high school. She taught Linda to type. But Linda was never as clever as Joan, not even when they were little girls in the time she can just remember, when their father had a job at the plant and they lived in a neat little house at the end of the bus line. Their father hasn't worked for a long time now. He drinks up any money he can bully out of the girls. Linda stands up to him better than Joan does.

"They'd have forgiven the New Deal if only it had worked," a man says to another, as Linda puts down his coffee and sandwich down in front of him.

"Worked?" asks his companion scornfully. "It was working. It would have worked and got us out of this if only people had kept faith in it."

They are threadbare old men, in mended coats. They ordered grilled cheese sandwiches, the cheapest item on the menu. One of them smiles at Linda, and she smiles back, automatically, then moves on and forgets them. She's on her feet all day. Joan teases her about flirting with the customers and falling in love, but it never seems to happen. She used to tease Joan about falling in love with her boss, until she did. It would all have been dandy except that he was a married man. Now Joan spends anguished hours with him and anguished days without him. He makes her

useless presents of French perfume and lace underwear. When Linda wants to sell them, Joan just cries. Both of them live in fear that she'll get pregnant, and then where will they be? Linda wipes the tables and tries not to listen to the men with their endless ifs. She has enough ifs of her own: if mother hadn't died, if she'd kept her job in the pool, if John hadn't died in the war with England, and Pete in the war with Japan.

"Miss?" one of them asks. She swings around, thinking they want more coffee. One refill only is the rule. "Can you settle a question?" he asks. "Did Roosevelt want to get us to join in the European War in 1940?"

"How should I know? It has nothing to do with me. I was five years old in 1940." They should get over it and leave history to bury its own dead, she thinks, and goes back to wiping the tables.

In the Papers (2)

WITH MIRACLE-GROW YOU CAN REGAIN YOUR LOST FOLLICLES!

In today's world it can be hard to find work even with qualifications. We at Cyrus Markham's Agency have extensive experience at matching candidates to positions which makes us the unrivaled

NEW TORPEDOES THAT WORK EVEN BETTER

Radar, sonar and even television to

AT LAST YOU CAN AFFORD THE HOUSE OF YOUR DREAMS

LET SCIENCE FICTION TAKE YOU TO NEW WORLDS

New books by Isaac Asimov and Robert A. Heinlein for only

ANOTHER BANK FOUNDERS IN PENNSYLVANIA

WE HAVE NOT USED THE WORD “SECEDE,” SAYS TEXAS GOVERNOR

Why do Canadians act so high and mighty? It’s because they know

In the Line (1)

When Tommy came out of the navy, he thought he’d walk into a job just like that. He had his veteran’s discharge, which entitled him to medical treatment for his whole life, and he was a hero. He’d been on the carrier *Constitution*, which had won the Battle of the Atlantic practically singlehanded and had sent plenty of those Royal Navy bastards to the bottom of the sea where they belonged. He had experience in maintenance as well as gunnery. Besides, he was a proud hard-working American. He never thought he’d be lining up at a soup kitchen.

In the Papers (3)

TIME FOR A NEW TUNE

Why are the bands still playing Cole Porter?

SECRETARY OF STATE LINEBARGER SAYS THE BRITS WANT PEACE

ATOMIC SECRETS

DO THE JAPANESE HAVE THE BOMB?

Sources close to the Emperor say yes, but the Nazis deny that they have given out any plans. Our top scientists are still working to

NYLONS NYLONS NYLONS

DIANETICS: A NEW SCIENCE OF THE MIND

Getting By (2)

Linda always works overtime when she's asked. She appreciates the money, and she's always afraid she'll be let go if she isn't obliging. There are plenty of girls who'd like her job. They come to ask every day if there's any work. She isn't afraid the Bundts will give her job away for no reason. She's worked here for four years now, since just after the Japanese War. "You're like family," Mrs. Bundt always says. They let Olive go, the other waitress, but that was because there wasn't enough work for two. Linda works overtime and closes up the cafe when they want her to. "You're a good girl," Mrs. Bundt says. But the Bundts have a daughter, Cindy. Cindy's a pretty twelve-year old, not even in high school. She comes into the cafe and drinks a milkshake sometimes with her girlfriends, all of them giggling. Linda hates her. She doesn't know what they have to giggle about. Linda is afraid that when Cindy is old enough she'll be given Linda's job. Linda might be like family, but Cindy really is family. The bakery does all right, people have to eat, but business isn't what it was. Linda knows.

She's late going home. Joan's dressing up to go out with her

married boss. She washes in the sink in the room they share. The shower is down the corridor, shared with the whole floor. It gets cleaned only on Fridays, or when Joan or Linda do it. Men are such pigs, Linda thinks, lying on her bed, her weight off her feet at last. Joan is three years older than Linda but she looks younger. It's the make-up, Linda thinks, or maybe it's having somebody to love. If only she could have fallen in love with a boss who'd have married her and taken her off to a nice little suburb. But perhaps it's just as well. Linda couldn't afford the room alone, and she'd have had to find a stranger to share with. At least Joan was her sister and they were used to each other.

"I saw Dad today," Joan says, squinting in the mirror and drawing on her mouth carefully.

"Tell me you didn't give him money?"

"Just two dollars," Joan admits. Linda groans. Joan is a soft touch. She makes more than Linda, but she never has any left at the end of the week. She spends more, or gives it away. There's no use complaining, as Linda knows.

"Where's he taking you?" she asks wearily.

"To a rally," Joan says.

"Cheap entertainment." Rallies and torch-lit parades and lynchings, beating up the blacks as scapegoats for everything. It didn't help at all; it just made people feel better about things to have someone to blame. "It's not how we were brought up," Linda says. Their mother's father had been a minister and had believed in the brotherhood of man. Linda loved going to her grandparents' house when she was a child. Her grandmother would bake cookies and the whole house would smell of them. There was a swing on the old apple tree in the garden. Her father had been a union man, once, when unions had still been respectable.

“What do I care about all that?” Joan says, viciously. “It’s where he’s taking me, and that’s all. He’ll buy me dinner and we’ll sing some patriotic songs. I’m not going to lynch anybody.” She dabs on her French perfume, fiercely.

Linda lies back. She isn’t hungry. She’s never hungry. She always eats at the bakery—the Bundts don’t mind—any order that was wrong, or any bread that would have been left over. Sometimes they even gave her cakes or bread to bring home. She rubs her feet. She’s very lucky really. But as Joan goes out the door she feels like crying. Even if she did meet somebody, how could they ever afford to marry? How could they hope for a house of their own?

In the Papers (4)

SEA MONKEYS WILL ASTOUND YOUR FRIENDS!

PRESIDENT SAYS WE MUST ALL PULL TOGETHER

In Seattle today in a meeting with

TAKE A LUXURY AIRSHIP TO THE HOLY CITY

CAN THE ECONOMY EVER RECOVER?

Since the Great Depression the country has been jogging through a series of ups and downs and the economy has been lurching from one crisis to another. Administrations have tried remedies from Roosevelt’s New Deal to Lindbergh’s Belt Tightening but nothing has turned things around for long. Economists say that this was only to be expected and that this general trend of downturn was a natural and inevitable

NEW HOLLYWOOD BLOCKBUSTER "REICHSMARSHALL"
STARRING MARLON BRANDO

In the Line (2)

When Sue was seventeen she'd had enough of school. She had a boyfriend who promised to find her a job as a dancer. She went off with him to Cleveland. She danced for a while in a topless club, and then in a strip joint. The money was never quite enough, not even after she started turning tricks. She's only thirty-four, but she knows she looks raddled. She's sick. Nobody wants her any more. She's waiting in the line because there's nowhere else to go. They feed you and take you off in trucks to make a new start, that's what she's heard. She can see the truck. She wonders where they go.

In the Papers (5)

ARE NEW HOME PERMANENTS AS GOOD AS THEY SAY?

Experts say yes!

NEW WAYS TO SAVE

PRESIDENT SAYS: THERE IS NO WITCH-HUNT

Despite what communists and union organizers may claim, the President said today

Getting By (3)

The Bundts like to play the radio in the cafe at breakfast time. They talk about buying a little television for the customers

to watch, if times ever get better. Mr. Bundt says this when Linda cautiously asks for a raise. If they had a television they'd be busier, he thinks, though Linda doesn't think it would make a difference. She serves coffee and bacon and toast and listens to the news. She likes music and Joan likes Walter Winchell. She should ask Joan how she reconciles that with going to rallies. Winchell famously hates Hitler. Crazy. Linda can't imagine feeling that strongly about an old man on the other side of the world.

Later, when Cindy and her friends are giggling over milkshakes and Linda feels as if her feet are falling off, a man comes in and takes the corner table. He orders sandwiches and coffee, and later he orders a cake and more coffee. He's an odd little man. He seems to be paying attention to everything. He's dressed quite well. His hair is slicked back and his clothes are clean. She wonders if he's a detective, because he keeps looking out of the window, but if so he seems to pay just as much attention to the inside, and to Linda herself. She remembers what Joan said, and wants to laugh but can't. He's a strange man and she can't figure him out.

She doesn't have to stay late and close up, and the man follows her out when she leaves. There's something about him that makes her think of the law way before romance. "You're Linda," he says, outside. She's scared, because he could be anybody, but they are in the street under a street light, there are people passing, and the occasional car.

"Yes," she admits, her heart hammering. "What do you want?"

"You're not a Bundt?"

"No. They're my employers, that's all," she says, disassociating herself from them as fast as she can, though they have been good to her. Immediately she has visions of them being arrested. Where would she find another job?

“Do you know where the Bundts come from?”

“Germany,” she says, confidently. Bundt’s German Bakery, it says, right above their heads.

“When?”

“Before I was born. Why aren’t you asking them these questions?”

“It was 1933.”

“Before I was born,” Linda says, feeling more confident and taking a step away.

“Have you seen any evidence that they are Jews?”

She stops, confused. “Jews? They’re German. Germans hate Jews.”

“Many Jews left Germany in 1933 when Hitler came to power,” the man says, though he can’t be much older than Linda. “If the Bundts were Jews, and hiding their identity, then if you denounced them—”

He stops, but Linda has caught up with him now. If she denounced them she would be given their property. The business, the apartment above it, their savings. “But they’re not, I’ve never—they serve bacon!” she blurts.

“You’ve never seen any evidence?” he asks, sadly. “A pity. It could be a nice business for you. You’re not Jewish?”

“Welsh,” she says. “My grandfather was a minister.”

“I thought not, with that lovely blonde hair.” It’s more washed out than it should be, but her hair is the dishwater blonde it always has been, the same as Joan’s, the same as their mother.

“I might have some evidence,” he says, slowly. “But any evidence I had would be from before they came here, from Germany. Some evidence that they were still Jews, if you’d seen anything, would be enough to settle it. The court would deport them back to Germany and award us their business. You could run it, I’m sure you could. You seem to be doing most of the work already.”

“I just serve,” she says, automatically. Then, “What sort of thing would I have noticed? If they were Jewish, I mean?”

Temptation settles over her like a film of grease and hope begins to burn in her heart for the first time in a long time.

In the Line (3)

If you're black you're invisible, even in the soup line. The others are shrinking away from me, I can't deny it. They wouldn't give us guns to fight even when the Japanese were shelling the beaches up and down the California coast. I left there then and came East, much good it did me. If I'd known how invisible I'd be here, I'd have stayed right there in Los Angeles. Nobody there ever chased after me and made me run, nobody there threatened to string me up, and I had a job that made a little money. I never thought I'd be standing in this line, because when I get to the head of it I know they'll separate me out. Nobody knows what happens to us then, they take us off somewhere and we don't come back, but I'm desperate, and what I say is, wherever it is they got to feed us, don't they? Well, don't they?

In the Papers (6)

ANOTHER FACTORY CLOSING

PEACE TALKS IN LONDON AS JAPAN AND THE REICH DIVIDE UP RUSSIA

Will there be a buffer state of “Scythia” to divide the two great powers?

BATTLE IN THE APPALACHIANS: NATIONAL GUARD REINFORCEMENTS SENT IN President says it is necessary to keep the country together

OWNERS GUN DOWN STRIKERS IN ALABAMA
Sixty people were hospitalized in Birmingham today after

ESCAPE TO OTHER WORLDS WITH SCIENCE FICTION
New titles by Frederik Pohl and Alice Davey



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