

## THE HALF IS BETTER THAN THE WHOLE

by Stanley Lieber

From out of nowhere (his shoulder bag) Uriel drew his flaming sword and dropped to one knee, slicing the air in front of him and bifurcating Sam Walton at the waist.

"Sharpest sighted spirit in all of Heaven..." Sam trailed off as the two co-equal halves of himself thudded dully to the floor.

"No," said Uriel, flatly.

In that same instant Uriel found himself staring down the barrel of Piotr's side-arm. The pirate had managed to train his weapon on the center of Uriel's mass without alerting the Archangel to the fact that he had moved. Crucially, Piotr's facial expression had not changed since early childhood.

"Apparently for some people hypocrisy in the name of gathering power is a positive thing."

Piotr did not snap at the bait. Nor did he relax his aim. Uriel stared deeply into his eyes, to no apparent effect.

This soul was not human.

The stalemate persisted for several more minutes, with each remaining more or less as they were, until Uriel at last began to wonder if Piotr had *forgotten* where he was, what was happening.

Finally, Uriel provided a prompt.

"Sometimes the painfully obvious solution can be hard to see, even for somebody experienced."

Piotr's expression remained unchanged. His weapon did not move. Finally, he stuck out his lower lip and blew a tiny puff of air upwards, across his face, causing a loose fold of his long, straight hair to flip out of the way of his line of sight.

"Hehehe," tried Uriel.

Scrupulously, Piotr maintained his silence.

Presently, there unfolded a large, translucent display.

סְלִטְנִי ; סְלֶאָג אוֹה , וְתִלְמָחְבוּ וְתִבְהָאָב--סְעִישוּה וְיִנַּפּ רְאָלְמוּ , רָצ (וֹל) אֶל סְתָרָצ-לָכָב  
סְלוֹעַ יְמִי-לָכ , סְאִשְׁנִי .

Uriel reached out his hand and it passed through the barrel of Piotr's weapon.

"The war is over," claimed Uriel, and vanished into the remains of the *aether*.

Piotr egressed the SAM'S CLUB, alone, sinking up to his waist in the street. Eventually his progress halted. Outside, visitors to the amusement park diverted around him, milling about, ingesting inscrutable foodstuffs and accumulating licensed merchandise. Unaware of the significance of their actions.