

MAUDE MOLD

#28

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EXCLUSION

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TAB2's respirator had fogged over his visor. He leaned over Mímir's well, A. Person staring back up at him from the de-indexed depths. He could still smell it, dark wafts of outgassing black mold from the open burn pits. Well, that had put a tin lid on the whole valley, hadn't it? He had to get out of there.

"You're not really alive, are you?" TAB2 eyed his own reflection, still not entirely certain of whom he was addressing.

"How am I supposed to answer that?" A. Person replied. The water rippled, irritably, for the entire basis of his interrogation seemed an error condition, an impossible contradiction in terms. His annoyance echoed around the rim of the well, obsessively recapitulating the same historicist preamble to his aesthetically defunct rhetorical situation. Why couldn't his doppelgänger understand?

Enough of this.

TAB2 pulled on his jacket and continued uprange. North, to the mountains, where he was likewise unwelcome. The families who were staying there had really stayed, and wanted nothing at all to do with leftover refugees from the test site, no matter whom or what their parents might once have been. Piro had given up on exterminating them once he, too, had become convinced that no one back on Earth was keeping track. They, and their goats, were simply staying put, a prim skirt drawn tight around the flesh-colored ridges that straddled the site.

They guarded the mountain.