

MAUDE MOLD

#48

by Stanley Lieber

PEOPLE WHO DON'T CHANGE

It was nothing for her to sit still for ten years. Even longer, if she were left unprovoked. She'd been doing this for most of her life without even trying. Vulnerable narcissists could be relied upon to plague her every move, even as she found herself so inclined, so she simply sat still and let them dance, running through their kinetic surplus until their batteries finally ran down. Decades passed. The only downside to all this stasis was the early onset of tech neck. Yes, she wore her visor all the while as she sat.

Anomie, she decided, was the price of eternal vigilance. As plain as the balls on her face.

Odin had stopped by.

THE INABILITY TO SIMULTANEOUSLY VERIFY SENTIENCE, LOCATION, AND IDENTITY

"Rub this blue plant wherever it feels good."

Odin shifted in his belabored crouch, seeming rather unstable, but deftly manipulating the *kukan* and creating an opening for Maude to decide to comply. Somewhat groggily, she shrugged off her visor and accepted his withering blue stalk, laying it gently across her forehead.

It was smooth on her skin.

Odin had fallen in with a strange new sect who painted their entire bodies blue with the rubbings of a vibrant, scrawny plant, wandering the spaceways in their fruitless yearning for true equality with God. They didn't seem to realize who he was.

For his part, Odin was amused at Maude's desktop tan.

"You look like you're still wearing the visor," he said, and laughed again.

If he was trying to embarrass her it wasn't going to work.