



**Circus**  
Nourse, Alan

**Published:** 1963

**Categorie(s):** Fiction, Science Fiction, Short Stories

**Source:** <http://gutenberg.org>

### **About Nourse:**

Alan Nourse was born August 11, 1928 to Benjamin and Grace (Ogg) Nourse in Des Moines, Iowa. He attended high school in Long Island, New York. He served in the U.S. Navy after World War II. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in 1951 from Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey. He married Ann Morton on June 11, 1952 in Lynden, New Jersey. He received a Doctor of Medicine (M.D.) degree in 1955 from the University of Pennsylvania. He served his one year internship at Virginia Mason Hospital in Seattle, Washington. He practiced medicine in North Bend, Washington from 1958 to 1963 and also pursued his writing career. He had helped pay for his medical education by writing science fiction for magazines. After retiring from medicine, he continued writing. His regular column in Good Housekeeping magazine earned him the nickname "Family Doctor". He was a friend of fellow author Avram Davidson. Robert A. Heinlein dedicated his 1964 novel Farnham's Freehold to Nourse. His novel The Bladerunner lent its name to the Blade Runner movie, but no other aspects of its plot or characters, which were taken from Philip K. Dick's Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? In the late 1970s an attempt to adapt The Bladerunner for the screen was made, with Beat Generation author William S. Burroughs commissioned to write a story treatment; no film was ever developed but the story treatment was later published as the novella, Blade Runner (a movie). His pen names included "Al Edwards" and "Doctor X". He died on July 19, 1992 in Thorp, Washington. Some confusion arose among science fiction readers who knew that Andre Norton used the pen name "Andrew North" at about the same time. They mistakenly assumed "Alan Nourse" to be another Norton pen name. Source: Wikipedia

### **Also available on Feedbooks for Nourse:**

- *An Ounce of Cure* (1963)
- *Star Surgeon* (1959)
- *Gold in the Sky* (1958)
- *Martyr* (1957)
- *Infinite Intruder* (1953)
- *Letter of the Law* (1954)
- *Image of the Gods* (1963)
- *Second Sight* (1963)
- *My Friend Bobby* (1963)
- *The Link* (1963)

**Copyright:** Please read the legal notice included in this e-book and/or check the copyright status in your country.

**Note:** This book is brought to you by Feedbooks

<http://www.feedbooks.com>

Strictly for personal use, do not use this file for commercial purposes.

"Just suppose," said Morgan, "that I *did* believe you. Just for argument." He glanced up at the man across the restaurant table. "Where would we go from here?"

The man shifted uneasily in his seat. He was silent, staring down at his plate. Not a strange-looking man, Morgan thought. Rather ordinary, in fact. A plain face, nose a little too long, fingers a little too dainty, a suit that doesn't quite seem to fit, but all in all, a perfectly ordinary looking man.

Maybe *too* ordinary, Morgan thought.

Finally the man looked up. His eyes were dark, with a hunted look in their depths that chilled Morgan a little. "Where do we go? I don't know. I've tried to think it out, and I get nowhere. But you've *got* to believe me, Morgan. I'm lost, I mean it. If I can't get help, I don't know where it's going to end."

"I'll tell you where it's going to end," said Morgan. "It's going to end in a hospital. A mental hospital. They'll lock you up and they'll lose the key somewhere." He poured himself another cup of coffee and sipped it, scalding hot. "And that," he added, "will be that."

The place was dark and almost empty. Overhead, a rotary fan swished patiently. The man across from Morgan ran a hand through his dark hair. "There must be some other way," he said. "There has to be."

"All right, let's start from the beginning again," Morgan said. "Maybe we can pin something down a little better. You say your name is Parks—right?"

The man nodded. "Jefferson Haldeman Parks, if that helps any. Halde-man was my mother's maiden name."

"All right. And you got into town on Friday—right?"

Parks nodded.

"Fine. Now go through the whole story again. What happened first?"

The man thought for a minute. "As I said, first there was a fall. About twenty feet. I didn't break any bones, but I was shaken up and limping. The fall was near the highway going to the George Washington Bridge. I got over to the highway and tried to flag down a ride."

"How did you feel? I mean, was there anything strange that you noticed?"

"*Strange!*" Parks' eyes widened. "I—I was speechless. At first I hadn't noticed too much—I was concerned with the fall, and whether I was hurt or not. I didn't really think about much else until I hobbled up to that highway and saw those cars coming. Then I could hardly believe my

eyes. I thought I was crazy. But a car stopped and asked me if I was going into the city, and I knew I wasn't crazy."

Morgan's mouth took a grim line. "You understood the language?"

"Oh, yes. I don't see how I could have, but I did. We talked all the way into New York—nothing very important, but we understood each other. His speech had an odd sound, but—"

Morgan nodded. "I know, I noticed. What did you do when you got to New York?"

"Well, obviously, I needed money. I had gold coin. There had been no way of knowing if it would be useful, but I'd taken it on chance. I tried to use it at a newsstand first, and the man wouldn't touch it. Asked me if I thought I was the U.S. Treasury or something. When he saw that I was serious, he sent me to a money lender, a hock shop, I think he called it. So I found a place—"

"Let me see the coins."

Parks dropped two small gold discs on the table. They were perfectly smooth and perfectly round, tapered by wear to a thin blunt edge. There was no design on them, and no printing. Morgan looked up at the man sharply. "What did you get for these?"

Parks shrugged. "Too little, I suspect. Two dollars for the small one, five for the larger."

"You should have gone to a bank."

"I know that now. I didn't then. Naturally, I assumed that with everything else so similar, principles of business would also be similar."

Morgan sighed and leaned back in his chair. "Well, then what?"

Parks poured some more coffee. His face was very pale, Morgan thought, and his hands trembled as he raised the cup to his lips. Fright? Maybe. Hard to tell. The man put down the cup and rubbed his forehead with the back of his hand. "First, I went to the mayor's office," he said. "I kept trying to think what anyone at home would do in my place. That seemed a good bet. I asked a policeman where it was, and then I went there."

"But you didn't get to see him."

"No. I saw a secretary. She said the mayor was in conference, and that I would have to have an appointment. She let me speak to another man, one of the mayor's assistants."

"And you told him?"

"No. I wanted to see the mayor himself. I thought that was the best thing to do. I waited for a couple of hours, until another assistant came along and told me flatly that the mayor wouldn't see me unless I stated

my business first." He drew in a deep breath. "So I stated it. And then I was gently but firmly ushered back into the street again."

"They didn't believe you," said Morgan.

"Not for a minute. They laughed in my face."

Morgan nodded. "I'm beginning to get the pattern. So what did you do next?"

"Next I tried the police. I got the same treatment there, only they weren't so gentle. They wouldn't listen either. They muttered something about cranks and their crazy notions, and when they asked me where I lived, they thought I was—what did they call it?—a wise guy! Told me to get out and not come back with any more wild stories."

"I see," said Morgan.

Jefferson Parks finished his last bite of pie and pushed the plate away. "By then I didn't know quite what to do. I'd been prepared for almost anything excepting this. It was frightening. I tried to rationalize it, and then I quit trying. It wasn't that I attracted attention, or anything like that, quite the contrary. Nobody even looked at me, unless I said something to them. I began to look for things that were *different*, things that I could show them, and say, see, this proves that I'm telling the truth, look at it—" He looked up helplessly.

"And what did you find?"

"Nothing. Oh, little things, insignificant little things. Your calendars, for instance. Naturally, I couldn't understand your frame of reference. And the coinage, you stamp your coins; we don't. And cigarettes. We don't have any such thing as tobacco." The man gave a short laugh. "And your house dogs! We have little animals that look more like rabbits than poodles. But there was nothing any more significant than that. Absolutely nothing."

"Except yourself," Morgan said.

"Ah, yes. I thought that over carefully. I looked for differences, obvious ones. I couldn't find any. You can see that, just looking at me. So I searched for more subtle things. Skin texture, fingerprints, bone structure, body proportion. I still couldn't find anything. Then I went to a doctor."

Morgan's eyebrows lifted. "Good," he said.

Parks shrugged tiredly. "Not really. He examined me. He practically took me apart. I carefully refrained from saying anything about who I was or where I came from; just said I wanted a complete physical examination, and let him go to it. He was thorough, and when he finished he patted me on the back and said, 'Parks, you've got nothing to worry

about. You're as fine, strapping a specimen of a healthy human being as I've ever seen.' And that was that." Parks laughed bitterly. "I guess I was supposed to be happy with the verdict, and instead I was ready to knock him down. It was idiotic, it defied reason, it was infuriating."

Morgan nodded sourly. "Because you're not a human being," he said.

"That's right. I'm not a human being at all."

"How did you happen to pick this planet, or this sun?" Morgan asked curiously. "There must have been a million others to choose from."

Parks unbuttoned his collar and rubbed his stubbled chin unhappily. "I didn't make the choice. Neither did anyone else. Travel by warp is a little different from travel by the rocket you fiction writers make so much of. With a rocket vehicle you pick your destination, make your calculations, and off you go. The warp is blind flying, strictly blind. We send an unmanned scanner ahead. It probes around more or less hit-or-miss until it locates something, somewhere, that looks habitable. When it spots a likely looking place, we keep a tight beam on it and send through a manned scout." He grinned sourly. "Like me. If it looks good to the scout, he signals back, and they leave the warp anchored for a sort of permanent gateway until we can get a transport beam built. But we can't control the directional and dimensional scope of the warp. There are an infinity of ways it can go, until we have a guide beam transmitting from the other side. Then we can just scan a segment of space with the warp, and the scanner picks up the beam."

He shook his head wearily. "We're new at it, Morgan. We've only tried a few dozen runs. We're not too far ahead of you in technology. We've been using rocket vehicles just like yours for over a century. That's fine for a solar system, but it's not much good for the stars. When the warp principle was discovered, it looked like the answer. But something went wrong, the scanner picked up this planet, and I was coming through, and then something blew. Next thing I knew I was falling. When I tried to make contact again, the scanner was gone!"

"And you found things here the same as back home," said Morgan.

"The same! Your planet and mine are practically twins. Similar cities, similar technology, everything. The people are the same, with precisely the same anatomy and physiology, the same sort of laws, the same institutions, even compatible languages. Can't you see the importance of it? This planet is on the other side of the universe from mine, with the first intelligent life we've yet encountered anywhere. But when I try to tell

your people that I'm a native of another star system, *they won't believe me!*"

"Why should they?" asked Morgan. "You look like a human being. You talk like one. You eat like one. You act like one. What you're asking them to believe is utterly incredible."

"*But it's true.*"

Morgan shrugged. "So it's true. I won't argue with you. But as I asked before, even if I *did* believe you, what do you expect *me* to do about it? Why pick *me*, of all the people you've seen?"

There was a desperate light in Parks' eyes. "I was tired, tired of being laughed at, tired of having people looking at me as though I'd lost my wits when I tried to tell them the truth. You were here, you were alone, so I started talking. And then I found out you wrote stories." He looked up eagerly. "I've got to get back, Morgan, somehow. My life is there, my family. And think what it would mean to both of our worlds—contact with another intelligent race! Combine our knowledges, our technologies, and we could explore the galaxy!"

He leaned forward, his thin face intense. "I need money and I need help. I know some of the mathematics of the warp principle, know some of the design, some of the power and wiring principles. You have engineers here, technologists, physicists. They could fill in what I don't know and build a guide beam. But they won't do it if they don't believe me. Your government won't listen to me, they won't appropriate any money."

"Of course they won't. They've got a war or two on their hands, they have public welfare, and atomic bombs, and rockets to the moon to sink their money into." Morgan stared at the man. "But what can *I* do?"

"You can *write!* That's what you can do. You can tell the world about me, you can tell exactly what has happened. I know how public interest can be aroused in my world. It must be the same in yours."

Morgan didn't move. He just stared. "How many people have you talked to?" he asked.

"A dozen, a hundred, maybe a thousand."

"And how many believed you?"

"None."

"You mean *nobody* would believe you?"

"*Not one soul.* Until I talked to you."

And then Morgan was laughing, laughing bitterly, tears rolling down his cheeks. "And I'm the one man who couldn't help you if my life depended on it," he gasped.

"You believe me?"

Morgan nodded sadly. "I believe you. Yes. I think your warp brought you through to a parallel universe of your own planet, not to another star, but I think you're telling the truth."

"Then you *can* help me."

"I'm afraid not."

"Why not?"

"Because I'd be worse than no help at all."

Jefferson Parks gripped the table, his knuckles white. "Why?" he cried hoarsely. "If you believe me, why can't you help me?"

Morgan pointed to the magazine lying on the table. "I write, yes," he said sadly. "Ever read stories like this before?"

Parks picked up the magazine, glanced at the bright cover. "I barely looked at it."

"You should look more closely. I have a story in this issue. The readers thought it was very interesting," Morgan grinned. "Go ahead, look at it."

The stranger from the stars leafed through the magazine, stopped at a page that carried Roger Morgan's name. His eyes caught the first paragraph and he turned white. He set the magazine down with a trembling hand. "I see," he said, and the life was gone out of his voice. He spread the pages viciously, read the lines again.

The paragraph said:

"Just suppose," said Martin, "that I *did* believe you. Just for argument." He glanced up at the man across the table. "Where do we go from here?"

**Loved this book ?  
Similar users also downloaded**

Alan Nourse

---

*Second Sight*

Alan Nourse

---

*Image of the Gods*

Alan Nourse

---

*Meeting of the Board*

Alan Nourse

---

*My Friend Bobby*

Alan Nourse

---

*The Link*

Alan Nourse

---

*An Ounce of Cure*

Alan Nourse

---

*The Dark Door*

Alan Nourse

---

*PRoblem*

Alan Nourse

---

*Letter of the Law*

Alan Nourse

---

*Gold in the Sky*

YOU WILL MEET-- Greg Hunter. Test pilot--happy only when his life hung in the balance. Tom Hunter. A pioneer--his frontier was hidden in test tubes. Johnny Coombs. A prospector--he returned from the asteroids too soon. Merrill Tawney. An industrialist--he sought plunder even beyond the stars. Major Briarton. A government man--his creed was law and order.



**[www.feedbooks.com](http://www.feedbooks.com)**  
Food for the mind