

wondering where to go next. On a mad impulse it went up to the beach again. It drifted back to sea.

“I hope it isn’t good news,” muttered Zipo Bibrok 5×10^8 , “ ’cos I don’t think I could bear it.”

“Your Krikkit judgment was carried out today,” said the girl sumptuously. There was no need to say such a straightforward thing sumptuously, but she went ahead and did it anyway because it was that sort of day. “I heard it on the radio,” she said, “when I went back to the ship for the oil.”

“Uh-huh,” murmured Zipo and rested his head back on the jeweled sand.

“Something happened,” she said.

“Mmmm?”

“Just after the Slo-Time envelope was locked,” she said, and paused a moment from rubbing in the Essence of Qualactin, “a Krikkit warship that had been missing, presumed destroyed, turned out to be just missing after all. It appeared and tried to seize the Key.”

Zipo sat up sharply.

“Hey, what?” he said.

“It’s all right,” she said in a voice that would have calmed the Big Bang down, “apparently there was a short battle. The Key and the warship were