

The dry humor so well displayed in the work of British writers can be the base of fiction which is seldom if ever forgotten by the reader who is lucky enough to chance upon it. I first read "Diabologic" years ago. I returned to read it in one of the anthologies in which it happily appeared several times thereafter. As a writer, my admiration for the work of Eric Frank Russell stands very high and I cherish the volumes I have been able to obtain. The only difficulty is that there is so little of it to amuse one—some novels and a handful of short stories—but always to be treasured and rejoyed as the years pass.

Humor is not an easy subject in any field and requires more than the usual skill of a writer to make a fine example such as this. I preserve my Russells carefully and *that* is logical.

—Andre Norton

DIABOLOGIC

by Eric Frank Russell

He made one circumnavigation to put the matter beyond doubt. That was standard space-scout technique; look once on the approach, look again all the way around. It often happened that second and closer impressions contradicted first and more distant ones. Some perverse factor in the probability sequence frequently caused the laugh to appear on the other side of a planetary face.

Not this time, though. What he'd observed coming in remained visible right around the belly. This world was occupied by intelligent life of a high order. The unmistakable markings were there in the form of dockyards, railroad marshaling grids, power stations, spaceports, quarries, factories, mines, housing projects, bridges, canals, and a hundred and one other signs of a life that spawns fast and vigorously.

The spaceports in particular were highly significant. He counted three of them. None held a flightworthy ship at the moment he flamed high above them, but in one was a tubeless vessel undergoing repair. A long, black, snouty thing about the