



# **THE BIG TIME**

**FRITZ LEIBER**

**Global Grey ebooks**

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**BY  
FRITZ LEIBER**

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Bruce and Erich weren't taking orders from Mark just yet. Erich went over and said something to Bruce at the bar, and Bruce got down and went over with Erich to the piano, and Erich tapped Beau on the shoulder and leaned over and said something to him, and Beau nodded and yanked "Limehouse Blues" to a fast close and started another piece, something slow and nostalgic.

Erich and Bruce waved to Mark and smiled, as if to show him that whether he came over and stood with them or not, the legate and the lieutenant and the commandant were very much together. And while Sevenssee hugged Lili with a simple enthusiasm that made me wonder why I've wasted so much imagination on genetic treatments for him, Erich and Bruce sang:

*"To the legion of the lost ones, to the cohort of the damned, To our brothers in the tunnels outside time, Sing three Change-resistant Zombies, raised from death and robot-crammed, And Commandos of the Spiders—Here's to crime! We're three blind mice on the wrong time-track, Hush—hush—hush! We've lost our now and will never get back, Hush—hush—hush! Change Commandos out on the spree, Damned through all possibility, Ghostgirls, think kindly on such as we, Hush—hush—hush!"*

While they were singing, I looked down at my charcoal skirt and over at Maud and Lili and I thought, "Three gray hustlers for three black hussars, that's our speed." Well, I'd never thought of myself as a high-speed job, winning all the races—I wouldn't feel comfortable that way. Come to think of it, we've got to lose and win all the races in the long run, the way the course is laid out.

I fingered to Illy, "That's the picture, all right, Spider boy."

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