NINE

Paul turned off the ignition and pulled on his gloves. The first
accumulation of snowfall lay on the ground. He walked briskly up to
the front door and fumbled in his pocket for the housekey. Out of the
corner of his eye, he caught a glimpse of the crescent moon burning
with a silver fire in the black night sky. He opened the door and
walked inside.

After he hung up his coat, he walked over to the computer to see if
anyone had sent a message. None. It had been a long day. He had
encountered no problems in getting a housing for the machine built.
Getting the circuitry assembled was quite difficult, however.

Paul was no technical wizard, so he compensated by developing
friendships with people who were more mechanically inclined than he
was. One of his friends opened a computer store a few years before,
so Paul stopped in for some help with his machine. The problems began
with the memory chips called for in the blueprint. These chips were
256K each, and thousands of them were required. Since the technology
for the production of this chip was quite new, they were in short
supply and commanded a premium price. The large number of chips
required generated a great deal of heat, and only one fan was included
in the design of the machine. Another, more serious problem, was the
inadequacy of the power supply. The unit was originally designed to
require much less power, and extensive modifications had to be made.
All the problems were eventually overcome, but the cost of the machine
was phenomenal. Paul was expecting to see Owhindamon when he walked
in the door, or at the very least, to have a message from him waiting
on the computer."

"Well, it looks like I'll have to sell Fleshrender a planet tomorrow.
I wish Owhindamon would have been here to lend a hand. At least I
have the printouts listing the possible sites for a game preserve.
Damn, I hope nothing goes wrong tomorrow. I'd better get to bed
early; it will probably be a long day tomorrow."