

Jewels from the Moon and The Meteor That Couldn't Stay



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JEWELS FROM THE MOON and
THE METEOR THAT COULDN'T STAY

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Jewels from the Moon



On that fine Saturday morning David had two impulses which led to one of the strangest adventures he and his friend, Chuck Masterson, had ever had. The first impulse was to go with his father, Dr. Topman, to see a patient near Big Sur, a redwood reserve about thirty miles south of Pacific Grove down the California coast. The second impulse you shall hear about later.

"But I thought," said his mother in surprise, "that you and Chuck had it all planned to go over to Mr. Bass's today and work on the agenda for your next meeting of the Young Astronomers."

Mr. Tyco M. Bass, a small man not much taller than David and Chuck, was astronomer, artist, and inventor all rolled into one, and he was their dearest friend. When he was away on one of his long trips, the boys took care of his little house with its observatory dome that looked like a mushroom cap sticking up among the trees of the garden at Number 5, Thallo Street. They tried to take care of the garden, too, weeding and cutting the grass whenever they had time, though certainly they did not have Mr. Bass's touch. But of course nobody in Pacific Grove had Tyco's touch with green, growing things. All around the house was a white picket fence, and near the gate in the front was a sign which proclaimed, *Society of Young Astronomers and Students of Space Travel*. As Chuck and David were its founders and managers, it was up to them to begin thinking about a program for the next meeting.

"Well, but I don't know," said David. "For some reason I don't want to do that now. I'd like to go with Dad to Big Sur. Maybe we could take a lunch. I'll phone Chuck. I'll bet he'd rather go and hike up to the falls while Dad's seeing his patient than stay cooped up all day working on an old agenda. Mom, why don't you come, too?"

Gulls were veering about on long sweeps of wind over the sea. But inland, down in the redwoods, the sun would be slanting in warm yellow patches onto the floor of the forest, and Mrs. Topman could lie there and read while she waited for her husband.

The idea was altogether too tempting for her—and for Chuck, who came over *at once*. She put aside all other plans and began packing a lunch of everything that everybody liked best: thick chicken sandwiches and big thick beef sandwiches, pickles (three kinds), any number of deviled eggs, packages of potato chips, and little sweet-tart tomatoes that burst in spurts of tongue-curling flavor when you pop them into your mouth whole, and bananas and oranges and large chunks of chocolate cake with deep creamy fudge frosting.

Half an hour later they set out in the Topmans' station wagon and were soon whirring along Highway 1, past the pine and cypress woods out into open country. Here, on the right of the highway, cliffs rise above a turmoil of surf. On the left, the land climbs in slow, rounded folds that, on this spring day, were covered

thickly with purple and yellow lupine and orange poppies.

They had gone a good way beyond the last of the bridges that span a number of creeks working their way down to the sea, and were almost within sight of the Point Sur lighthouse. There was a narrow meadow on the right. But as they turned a bend in the road, this meadow became a tumble of boulders that fell away to a broad, glistening beach. Long, unbroken combers spiraled in with majesty all up and down its length, and the whole beach resounded with their falling as if they echoed under a dome. From their flashing backs the spray was tossed up in a cloud.

It was at this moment that David was taken with his second impulse. He gave one look at that beach and laid a hand on his father's shoulder. And in the split second when he started to speak, Chuck spoke too.

"Dad!" began David, his voice full of urgency.

"Dave!" said Chuck. "Dave, *look—!*" He grabbed David's arm. "Let's—"

"Please stop, Dad! Chuck and I—"



Dr. Topman, startled, automatically glanced up at his rearview mirror and then drew over to the side of the road. Both he and Mrs. Topman turned in bewildered concern and stared at the two boys.

"What on earth is the matter?" demanded Annabelle Topman. She was plainly shaken. "Was there an animal—?"

"No, Mom—that wasn't it." David was leaning out of the window to listen. "I didn't mean to scare you. I just wanted to know if we—I mean, Chuck and I—could maybe get out here and you and Dad come back for us later. Please, Dad—*please*? The reason is—"

"—the reason is that beach," said Chuck. Now, it might have been the reason *he* wanted to stop, but how could he be so certain that it was the reason David wanted to stop? They hadn't spoken to each other; they hadn't even exchanged a glance. Yet plainly there wasn't a doubt in Chuck's mind, and he was right.

"But I don't understand!" cried Mrs. Topman. Her gaze was going back and forth in amazement from David's pale brown face and gray eyes to Chuck's Indian brown face and hazel eyes. "*Why* do you have to be let out at a beach that's no different from a dozen beaches you've played on all your lives, especially when you were both bent on going to Big Sur?"

"Seems to me you're both touched in the head." Dr. Topman turned back to start the car again, but once more David's hand came down on his shoulder.

"Please, Dad! This beach *isn't* just like any other. It's—it's the way it sounds. Listen! Did you ever hear anything like it? It makes me feel funny inside—that echoing—"

"And those rocks," said Chuck in a low voice. "They look like a castle way off down there at the end. I mean—it's just a real neat beach, that's all," he finished with such comical gravity that Dr. and Mrs. Topman both burst out laughing.

"Well, I can see some families sunbathing," considered Dr. Topman, "and some men fishing. Maybe it would be all right. What do you think, Annabelle? These two have been around on enough beaches by themselves to be careful." He turned and looked at them. "But you be up here by 3:30 precisely. We don't want to have to wait, worrying where you are and why you don't come. Do you promise?"

"*We promise.*" The words came out in eager, solemn unison. Five minutes later, Mrs. Topman having done her best about dividing up the lunch and putting David's and Chuck's shares into two paper bags, the boys were left waving good-bye at the side of the road as the station wagon revved up and disappeared around the next bend.

They gave each other a single, triumphant glance; then Chuck let out a whoop and began a headlong, bounding descent between the boulders and across their creviced sides without once losing his balance.

David followed more slowly and cautiously, and Chuck was already hallooing along the sand when David finally reached the bottom.

In a moment they had left the sprawl of families with their clutter of beach belongings and the two men earnestly fishing. Away and away spread the purple sea that paled near the land to jade and then to turquoise just before it heaved itself up in its incessant attack upon the coast. Ahead of them stretched what looked to be more than a mile of pure white sand with not another human in sight, only the calling gulls and companies of twinkle-legged sandpipers, with turnstones in their neat black and white darting among them.

"It *isn't* just like any other beach, is it, Chuck?"

They had been racing and leaping around each other like wild, unleashed dogs until they had to stop and gasp for breath. Now they were kneeling, absorbed, at a tide pool. "It isn't, is it?"

"Nope," said Chuck, frowning, intent on a crab. "Ow!" and he brought up his nipped finger.

"Why isn't it, do you s'pose?"

"It just isn't, that's all. Say, Dave." Chuck sat back on his heels. "Let's have lunch."

"But it's only eleven. What'll we do when it gets to be one or two? I know—let's wait till we get to the castle. Then we can climb up on one of those turrets and sit and look out over the sea while we eat."

Off they went. And it rather seemed, David thought

as he loped along just behind Chuck, that those rocks, looming like some forbidding fortress, might be the end of the beach. But, no, because now he noticed in the face of the rocks a tall, peaked opening, "kind of like a postern door," he said to himself. It seemed to be all black inside what looked like a cave or an arch. And as he ran toward it, swerving down to the wave line so that he could look into the arch, he caught a glimpse of white sand on the other side.

"Chuck, it *doesn't* end here." He felt an intense, tingling excitement.

Chuck, running ahead, stopped at the entrance to the arch, then turned and made violent gestures of "Come on—come on—!" At the moment David caught up, the sun went under a cloud. What had been a clear, warm, windy day of deep blue turned instantly to gray, for high up, a veil of mist had wound across the sky. David glanced out to sea and saw a fog bank stealing in low across the water.

"Dave," called Chuck hollowly, sounding like a ghost of himself because he was well inside the arch by now and making his way over a floor of slippery boulders intersticed with razorbacks. "Dave, I thought maybe the beach ended here, too. I thought—" Then he slipped, dropped his lunch, gathered it up again, muttering and groaning to himself, and continued toward the far opening. David followed. Intent on keeping upright, he was silent, but inside of him the tingling was still going on.

When they came into the light again, they saw that there could be no doubt of it: the beach did not end, though the full extent of it was hidden. With appalling swiftness the fog had swept in across the sea, and its misty outrunners were even now creeping over the sand ahead of the main body in woolly swirls that moved and changed and thinned and glided on again. But not so thickly yet as to obscure the fact that there was a small house a short distance ahead, crouched back against the cliffs. It sat up on stilts well above the sand, and there was a stone chimney sticking up on the other side of the roof.

"Boy!" yelled Chuck. "I bet it's deserted, and we can explore. It sure looks deserted."



"Let's eat there—oh, golly, Chuck, I *knew* this beach was different." He hoped the house would be deserted and that they could build a fire in the fireplace. If there was one thing he was drawn to especially it was deserted houses, with boards flapping and holes in the floors and stained newspapers that told you when the last human had left for good (why, do you suppose?) and were full of old news and ancient comic strips. He'd found a newspaper once that actually said, "March 23, 1922," and he couldn't understand why it hadn't moldered to bits long ago.

"Dave, look—it *isn't* deserted."

By now they were almost engulfed in the gray fog, its cool, damp tendrils moving over their faces. Just before Chuck spoke, a single eye of orange light came on in the middle of the smudge which was all they could see now of the little house.

"Shall we go back?" suggested David. But really he didn't want to. When he turned, it was as if there were no castle rocks, as if there were nothing where they had been but the thick, woolly, impenetrable grayness. "Maybe," he said, "maybe if we knock and stay here for a while, the fog'll go inland the way it always does, and *then* we can go back."

"O K," said Chuck. He stood staring at that dark smudge. "O K—I guess we can take a chance. Maybe it'll be an old man who likes living practically in the sea." They approached. They went around the stilts,

patched with lichen, to the far side, and David noticed that the board siding of the house was silvery-gray as if long weathered. The knots in the wood and the grain of it stood out sharply. They found some slanting steps going up to the door (barely to be seen by this time) and knocked. There was silence, profound silence, except for the hush of the waves. Then there came a kind of rustling on the other side, something dropped—and the door opened. A little woman in a bright blue-green dress with her white hair done up on top of her head stood looking at them intently with large dark eyes. Her face was rather golden in color and was alive with surprise and pleasure and interest.

"Hi," said Chuck faintly. David didn't say anything, but he found himself smiling at her.

"Good gracious!" she said. "Why, I never! Two waifs washed up by the sea, each with a brown paper bag, possibly containing lunch, and lost in the fog—or at least adventuring. Come in—come in!" The little woman stood to one side. As David went in past her, he saw a fire leaping on the hearth, and big comfortable chairs, and a sofa with pillows, and lots of books on shelves and some stacked on the floor. There were soft-looking curtains at the windows, with plants in pots underneath. There was a table drawn up at the fire, and it was set for one person.

"We thought your place was deserted," said Chuck. "But this is lots better."

"We were going to eat lunch in the castle—or, I mean, on it somewhere." David was consuming that whole room with his eyes.

"Yes, the castle," said the little woman, just as if she always called the rocks by this name. "But what a gloomy, damp proposition it would have been. Oh, my, I am so delighted we can all eat together. But first you must have some of my extremely special cream of mushroom soup—something hot on a day like this. You two could be setting the table with more places while I fill the bowls. The silver and mats and napkins are in that cabinet over there." She pointed and was about to turn away when she put her head on one side and said, "You must call me Miss Bronwen."

"I'm David Topman, Miss Brouwen, and this is my friend, Chuck."

"—Masterson," added Chuck.

"Well, Chuck and David, this is the best thing that has happened to me in weeks—or is it years? I'm not always sure which is which." Her last words came rather indistinctly, as she was by this time in the kitchen rattling pots and taking dishes out of cupboards.

A few minutes later, they were all three sitting around the table spooning up mouthfuls of the most delectable soup David had ever tasted in his life. Yes, it *was* cream of mushroom soup. But when had it ever tasted like this? Was it the cream, possibly from some heavenly cow who had fed in Elysian pastures? Was it the season-



ing? Or was it—and here David felt that familiar tingling going over him again—was it the mushrooms? He smiled to himself and glanced at Chuck (but Chuck was absorbed) and then at Miss Bronwen. She had been watching him, and now there it was again: that slight tilting of the head. She laughed.

“So you like my soup.”

"I never," began David, "I never anywhere in my—"

"Well, of course not. It **stands** to reason, though I'm not quite sure I have the **right** to say that, because much of the time I'm more **imagination** than anything. How about another helping?"

So they had seconds, and then divided their lunches with Miss Bronwen and talked and talked. She wanted to know everything about **them**, so they told her all about The Society of Young **Astronomers** and Students of Space Travel, and about **their friend** Tyco Bass, the astronomer and artist and **inventor** all combined in one, and how he raised mushrooms for a living, and how he was away on a long trip and they were taking care of his house with its small observatory and remarkable telescope he'd made all by himself.

"Y'know," said Chuck, "I bet Mr. Bass is lots of times mostly **imagination**, just the way you **said** about yourself. He's a good thinker but you should just *see* his paintings, and what he's **invented**. Why, he's got to be mostly **imagination**." Chuck sighed. "Boy, I wish he could've had some of this soup."

Miss Bronwen studied him.

"He has, Chuck, many times. He has sat **right here** in front of the fire, and we have talked just as you and David and I are doing now. You see, Tyco Bass is my friend, too—"

Both boys drew in their breaths.

"You mean—*our* Mr. Tyco Bass?"

"Oh, yes. He is one of my oldest friends, old, of course, in every sense of the word. You know, great age can be a treasure. It's like an enormous chest in which you rummage and rummage without ever coming to the bottom—no divisions, no sections, all one, and everything in it quite real. Which just goes to show that what most people believe about time simply isn't true."

Chuck and David were still lost in amazement that their Tyco Bass should be Miss Bronwen's friend, when suddenly she gave them the strangest look, a kind of sparkling, questioning look, which seemed to end in decision. She got up and beckoned them to come over and see something. It proved to be a picture on the wall, and she took it down and handed it to them.

"Druids!" said David. Yes, it was a small, incredibly clear and detailed painting of Druids, and they seemed to be engaged in some ceremony under a large, darkish tree—an oak, David thought—all hung with rings and chains and a few ornaments like that twisted gold circlet Miss Bronwen wore around her neck. A tall Druid with a kind, bearded face that David liked was standing with arms upraised as if asking a blessing. Amber sunlight slanted across him, and you almost felt that he would move.

"Our chief Druid was one of the best and wisest men I have ever known, outside of Tyco Bass. He was all that Druids were supposed to be and sometimes were not."



Chuck looked up aghast. "But, Miss Bronwen, Mr. Bass told us that Druids lived—well, I think it was thousands of years ago—"

"About two thousand—"

"But then I don't understand," protested David. "It seems as if you meant that you *knew*—"

"Ah, well, remember what I said: that what most people think about time isn't true at all. Nor about space either. But this is because they are ruled by what seem to be facts, and they are frightened by anything else. Space and time can contract or expand—it's all accord-

ing to your way of thinking—your outlook. Would you believe it, Chuck and David, if I told you the universe is my garden? Tyco Bass would understand that, wouldn't he? And speaking of space, do you know what tektites are?"

Chuck said he thought they were something like meteorites, only they were mostly glass. Miss Bronwen nodded and took from the mantle a strangely carved box, then came and sat down with it in her lap.

"This box is made of bog oak and it is very, very old—much older than I am, even, and the carving on it was done by some Celtic artist who either lived in Wales or left it there. My father found it—it was in a big bronze kettle along with a lot of other things, mirrors and bracelets and ornaments of all kinds—"

"So then you *are* Welsh," cried David. "So is Mr. Bass, and you sound just like him."

Miss Bronwen nodded.

"Of course I am Welsh, with a name like mine." Now she opened the box, and David saw that it was almost full of curiously-shaped small bits of glass, black and dark green and very pale green. Some of them were lustrous and others had a delicate sheen on the ridges and furrows that swirled over their surfaces: some round, some elliptical, some like little dishes or buttons or dumbbells and some like melted and hardened tear-drops. Miss Bronwen ran her hand in among them and held up a palmful, then let them drop, tinkling. "They

are pieces of the moon. When, at different moments in time, huge meteors slashed into the moon's surface anywhere from 50 million to a few thousand years ago, great rings, gigantic splashes of molten sand, were thrown up. And when the molten globules were cast into space, they hardened into glass and kept flying, out and out and out, impelled by the energy of those fearful explosions, until they were caught by earth's gravitational pull and landed, finally, on our planet. I've picked them up all over the globe and sometimes have gotten them from ancient peoples who used them as charms and amulets. I call them my moon jewels."

Now they talked about the moon and the stars and space. And Chuck and David were in the midst of hearing about blue and red giants and red dwarfs and white dwarfs and subdwarfs and supergiants and collapsed supergiants, which are the names of the stars in varying stages of life and death, when David heard a "Ting!" He started as if that little "Ting!" had given him a poke in the ribs. He stared at the clock on the mantle and then down at his wristwatch. "Two-thirty, Chuck—we've got to go—we *can't* be late or Mom and Dad won't let us come back." Chuck jumped up, and now that Miss Bronwen had stopped speaking David felt as if he had come out of a dream, and he saw that the sun was trying to shine through the filmy curtains. Miss Bronwen, with the box still in her lap, looked up at them and David noticed that her face seemed a pale greeny gold.

"I know!" she said. "I want to give you some of the soup to take home to your families. And you must come back and bring them with you—for lunch, now, mind you—and Tyco, too, when he returns from his trip."

Five minutes later the boys were standing on the sand below Miss Bronwen's house, and David had a jar of soup and so did Chuck.

"Good-bye, Miss Bronwen—good-bye! We'll come back and bring Mr. Bass. Shall we phone?"

She laughed. "What would I be doing with a phone? You just come!" She raised her hand and turned, the door closed, and she was gone. Chuck and David started back toward the castle rocks which now stood up almost free of fog; beyond, the sea was all shimmering under the fading mists.

When they passed through the postern door to the other side of the rocks, the mists were almost gone and the sky was to be seen, blue as ever, and the sun felt hot when the wind died. *R-r-r-r-oooooooooooooooooooo-mmm*, sounded the breakers, and then *sh-sh-sh-sh*, far, far down the beach, and this hushing was taken up and lost as another thud reverberated and the sounding echo began again. They followed the frosting of the wave line, laid down in long airy curves, and as they walked in companionable silence, David thought to himself that he felt kind of peacefully quiet and happy. He wondered if Chuck felt the same way, but he didn't like to ask.

They arrived at the side of the highway above the beach at twenty after three, and not two minutes later along came the station wagon. As it drew to a stop on the other side of the road, Dr. Topman leaned out, grinning with perhaps more than a little relief that they were there, sure enough, whole and safe. David chuckled when his dad spied the jars as they ran across the road. "What are *those*?" he called. "Soup," replied David, just as if one always came back from the beach bringing jars of soup. And when they climbed in on the other side, both his mother and dad turned and looked at them, wordlessly questioning. So of course, Chuck and David told them every single thing that had happened, and it was lucky Dr. Topman had been able to park well off the road, because it was plain that it never occurred to him to start the car while they were talking. Both he and Mrs. Topman listened in absolute silence the whole time.

When they had finished, Dr. Topman rubbed a hand across his eyes. "If it weren't for the jars of soup—"

"And she's Mr. Bass's friend, you say!" murmured Mrs. Topman, as if she couldn't take it in, somehow. "What is Miss Bronwen like, David?"

"Well, I can't say exactly. She's awfully old, I guess, but she doesn't seem a bit old—she doesn't seem any age, really—"

"Like Mr. Bass," put in Chuck.

"Yes," said David, "like that. She's more like Mr. Bass than anyone you can imagine—"



"And her house? Was it odd, or outlandish in any way?"

"Oh, no—it was just swell, but a lot bigger than you'd ever think from the outside. Say, *that* was a funny thing, wasn't it, Chuck? And there were heaps of books, and a nice, soft carpet, kind of a deep red, and there were gray curtains, cloudy or gauzy or something, at the windows—"

"And there were things around," said Chuck, "old little things, *real* old-looking, statues and figures and stuff like that, that I wanted to pick up, but there wasn't time, not *nearly* enough time. Dave, we've got to go back. When do you s'pose we can go? Tomorrow, maybe?"

All the way home, Mrs. Topman more than Dr. Topman (who seemed lost in thought) kept asking questions, incredulous, bemused questions. And, of course, whenever they talked about the Druid picture, David knew in his heart that both his father and mother just took it for granted that he and Chuck had misunderstood, or hadn't heard exactly what Miss Bronwen had said. They didn't come right out with this, but David got the feeling. And somehow he didn't mind. When they all went back, all of them together, to Miss Bronwen's house, then everything would be clear.

Chuck's family had gone up to San Francisco on business for a few days, so he was to stay at David's. And while they were drinking their soup that night in silent, almost solemn appreciation, Chuck put his question again.

"When can we go back, Dr. Topman?"

"This elegant concoction," said the doctor, scraping a few last drops from his bowl, "should be put into golden jars and served to the gods, but only on very special occasions."

"You can have more when you take us to Miss Bronwen's," reminded Chuck, and he watched Dr. Topman's face intently. "When, do you think?"

"Well, I don't see how I can manage before next Saturday, but I promise I'll take you then."

"A whole week?"

"But surely we must phone first," said Mrs. Topman.

"That is, Miss Bronwen did say she wanted us to come for lunch?"

"Of course," answered David. "But I don't think we *can* phone—because I got the idea she doesn't have one. We're just to come."

"No phone," said Mr. Bass, smiling to himself. "We're just to come. You know, Bronwen has never needed a phone since they were first invented."

Would you believe it! The boys had gone over to 5 Thallo Street early the next morning, fully intending to work hard on their agenda for the next meeting of The Young Astronomers and Students of Space Travel. And they had gone shouting and rattling up the steep, narrow stairs that led to Mr. Bass's observatory so that they could work at his desk and that way feel a little closer to him, with his telescope looming over their heads and all his books and paintings around them. And there he was, sitting at his desk himself, surrounded by a great clutter of papers, pen in hand, his large notebook, which he called "Random Jottings," in front of him, and he was watching the door with that elfish, mischievous glance the boys knew so well. His large, brown eyes were alight with pleasure under the broad forehead. And he must have been ruffling his hair in thought, for what wisps there were, were all standing up.

"Mr. Bass—you got back early!" As one boy they descended upon him, smothering him in hugs, and David



was thinking to himself—*he's here—he's really here—old gray gardening coat and elastic-sided boots and everything.*

So then they all sat down, the boys cross-legged on the floor at Mr. Bass's feet, with a slant of sunlight falling through the slit in the dome where the telescope poked through (maybe he had been looking at some planet or star or galaxy last night). And they related

every detail of their adventure, first Chuck, and then David, and then both together, sort of interweaving their pieces of story.

"I can't tell you how remarkable this all is," observed Mr. Bass at the end. "To think that you two should have felt the specialness of that beach so strongly, that you should have *heard* the waves echoing just as you did! You see, boys, that wouldn't happen to just anyone. And that is why Bronwen has no more visitors than she wants, and the ones who come are just the right ones. That is why she was so happy to see you." He shook his head, gazing off at some unseen place. "She and I have been friends for—well, really, I couldn't begin to say—"

"And you *will* come with us to see her, Mr. Bass?"

"I wouldn't think of staying behind."

The visit with Mr. Bass was on Sunday. The following Wednesday night another curious event took place, though of course David didn't realize how curious it was until he began telling Chuck about it.

That night it seemed to him he was in a broad, high-domed hall flooded with silvery light that came through the walls and ceiling. He couldn't understand this until he noticed that the walls were constantly moving and he realized he was in one of those great piled-up clouds he'd often watched in the sky and longed to explore. And the silvery suffusion was moonlight. He went on and on through this high hall that opened into another, and

still another, and he would come out onto galleries where he could look down over other clouds all luminous in the moonlight. He felt that he could have gone on forever, and never have felt lost or lonely or tired. Then he heard someone calling, and he turned and there were Miss Bronwen and Chuck. Together they went out onto a vast cloud terrace and looked down through the sky to where cities lay in twinkling clusters on the invisible surface of the earth.

Then Miss Bronwen took them by the hands, and they went whistling out into space far past the round moon, past coppery-red Mars with its network of markings edged in bluish green and, spinning around it, little Phobos, its inner moon, racing to catch up with Deimos and passing it. They went through the belt of the asteroids, bits and pieces of an ancient, exploded planet moving in an orbit where once that planet had turned. Most of the asteroids were tiny worlds no bigger than a mountain, mere chunks of metal and stone with the sun casting dense black shadows across their jagged landscapes. Ahead loomed massive, brilliant Jupiter with its great red spot and bulging equator, and with four of its twelve moons running races with each other and its outer four going in the opposite direction to the rest. "Imagine!" thought David. "Imagine, if you were on earth, looking up into the night sky and seeing all *that* going on above you—how could you ever stop looking?"

But already they were coming near Saturn, and David

held his breath at its beauty. Those rings—those rings! Now he could see that they were composed of millions of moonlets, reflecting so much light that Saturn seemed far brighter than she really was. The rings threw a belt of shadow across the surface of Saturn and were in turn marked with the sharp black shape of Saturn's shadow. Far, far off in space David spied green Uranus with faint parallel bands across its surface, and out beyond that, greenish Neptune. Pluto, as Miss Bronwen took them farther into the turning galaxy, he never did catch sight of.

What he beheld next was an unthinkable huge globe glowing dull red. It was a body so mammoth that it seemed to him, when he thought of his own sun, that this red giant would surely consume the solar system all the way out to Jupiter, if the giant were sitting in the sun's place. As he and Chuck and Miss Bronwen fled on, he saw supergiants slowly collapsing, growing hotter and hotter, slowly rotating, and showering off their substance like gigantic catherine wheels. And sometimes their blinding bright inner cores were revealed and these—perhaps Miss Bronwen was telling him—the astronomers of earth call novae. He saw blue-white giants radiating a brilliant electric blue, and white dwarfs that are the remains of collapsed giants, dwarfs so small and so dense (smaller than the earth, and they are stars!) that a matchbox full of their material would contain a billion tons.

He saw suns that were yellow, yellow-orange, orange and deep orange-red, and others gold and green and topaz and emerald. Clusters of them were like nests of jewels glittering against the intense blackness of space. Sometimes they came upon double suns turning about each other, and one would be so enormous and the other so minute that it was as if a gnat waltzed around an elephant. Once they saw a system of seven suns, all blazing in different colors and dancing together in constantly changing patterns of the most fantastic complexity. When they came near the heart of the galaxy, the swarms of suns were so thick, so closely packed that darkness no longer existed nor ever could exist. For the



sky was a blaze of multicolored light in which the shapes of individual stars were lost.

Finally, as they sped outward again, they saw what David knew, from Miss Bronwen's thought, to be a supernova. One moment they were looking at a far-off system of stars, one of them red, and the next moment they witnessed an explosion like the going off of a million, million, million, million hydrogen bombs. It was the explosion of that red collapsing supergiant, the most terrible and violent outburst in all of nature. Now it would become a blue dwarf, Miss Bronwen told them, and then a white dwarf and, in the last stage of all, a black dwarf, cold and dead.

But not yet, not yet, said Miss Bronwen. They settled on the cloud terrace once more, and the moonlight was shining across it as bright as ever, softly illuminating the interior of the clouds behind them. Then she released their hands, and they watched her going away. She raised her arm and turned and vanished. The moon was still shining; its light was cold—intensely cold—and when David sat up to look across at Chuck asleep in the day-bed, he was shivering. It was not yet quite light.

"Chuck," he called, and after Chuck was sufficiently awake to listen, David began telling him all that had happened.

"The Hyades," said Chuck, after a small silence when David had finished. "Those were the stars we were looking at when the supernova went off."

David swallowed. He wasn't sure if he was understanding Chuck or not.

"The Hyades! How did *you* know?"

"And Miss Bronwen had that green dress on, the green with blue in it, the same color as some of the stars we saw, and she had that gold thing around her neck, twisted gold with the two knobs in front, one on each side—and after she waved good-bye, she just seemed to disappear without going. I mean, you never really *saw* her go."

They were quiet while David looked at Chuck and Chuck sat looking at him. Then, David spoke.

"Shall we tell my mother and dad?" David sounded as if he thought not.

"Nope. Not on top of finding Miss Bronwen's house and all that about the Druid picture—"

"I know. We've got to wait until we all go and see her, and then Mother and Dad'll believe us, and Miss Bronwen can tell them about it, too. But we can tell Mr. Bass. He won't be surprised. Chuck, how can we wait till Saturday? It'll be *centuries* till then."

But Saturday did arrive. Mrs. Topman packed a batch of cookies and some fruit and cake for Miss Bronwen, and they actually started out.

Mr. Bass said, when the doctor and Mrs. Topman were lagging behind along the beach, that he thought he would just go on ahead with the boys. And it seemed

to David, as Tyco moved quickly beside them, that his small feet in their elastic-sided boots scarcely touched the sand. You could not imagine him lagging. He might sit quietly thinking at his desk, or reading in his easy chair, but if he were going anyplace he appeared to whisk along with as little effort as a breeze takes to blow.

The postern door of the castle rocks was still some way ahead, and the boys were telling their "dream" of Miss Bronwen and their journey through the stars all over again, remembering details they had forgotten to tell Mr. Bass the first time. It was as fine a day as it had been the last Saturday. The water was as deep a blue, and there was not even a hint of fog at sea. The boys were happy and excited, chattering away to him, and he listened rather quietly, not saying very much. Before they knew it, they were standing in front of the postern door—the entrance to the castle rocks.

Now David and Chuck in silent concentration made their way over the smooth boulders and razorbacks under the arch and, when they came out on the other side, there was Mr. Bass waiting for them with the strangest expression on his face. They looked up eagerly, their eyes going at once to that spot on the beach where the little house had stood back against the cliffs, nestling under them in the thick, woolly fog.

But it was not there.

Four or five stilts remained standing, some leaning at angles, some upright. But there was not even a scatter-



ing of planks or of roof timbers or shingles. There were no stones. There was nothing. The little house might have been ruined years ago, and these stilts were all that was left of it, the rest washed away by the tides.

"But it was *here*, Mr. Bass—it was *here*! Chuck and I both saw it, and Miss Bronwen was here and we ate with her, inside the house. And it had a chimney, a rock chimney, and there was a fire going. Everything was *here*—everything—"

"A week ago," said Chuck. "Only a *week*—"

He sank onto his knees and, with his head down as if he didn't want anyone to see his expression, he pushed both hands into the sand then pulled them up again with the sand flowing between his fingers.

"Only a week ago," echoed David, his throat tight. "Was there a storm, Mr. Bass? Could it have been a storm? Did it wash her house away?"

Mr. Bass shook his head. His eyes went from Chuck to David, and his small, boyish face was filled with sympathy.

"No, David—no storm. And you say it was only a week ago. But do you remember what she said: that most people have no idea of what time really is? Miss Bronwen's time is quite different from yours and Chuck's. It changes like the fog—thickening or thinning, stretching out and then drawing together again in a way that you cannot yet have any idea of."

He sat down on the sand beside Chuck, locking his arms around his knees, and the wind played among his wisps of hair. Chuck, who was still absently scooping up sand, presently gave a cry, and when David looked he saw a tektite lying on the palm of Chuck's hand. Now David got down on his knees, and they both dug and after a little while, came to a nest of tektites. It was as if Miss Bronwen's box had spilled, and she hadn't waited to gather them all up. With scarcely a word they continued their search until they could find

no more. Then they divided the tektites three ways and David picked out an especially beautiful one, pale, silvery green brushed over with a pinkish bloom, and put it on Mr. Bass's pile.

"Where is she, Mr. Bass? Where has Miss Bronwen gone?"

"I remember something else you boys told me," answered Mr. Bass. "She said, 'The universe is my garden.'"

Now they got up and as they began walking slowly back toward the rocks, Dr. and Mrs. Topman stepped through the arch.



Choose Two

Number your paper **1** to **5**.

Read each sentence carefully. Choose two words which best define each underlined word.

1. On that fine Saturday morning David had two impulses which led to one of the strangest adventures he and his friend, Chuck Masterson, had ever had.

wishes

inclinations

instincts

attacks

2. Now they were kneeling, absorbed, at a tide pool.

shocked

fascinated

overwhelmed

soaked

3. He felt an intense, tingling excitement.

unreal

strong

powerful

strange

4. When he turned, it was as if there were no castle rocks, as if there were nothing where they had been but the thick, woolly, impenetrable grayness.

dull

horrible

dense

solid

5. And they related every detail of their adventure, first Chuck, and then David, and then both together, sort of interweaving their pieces of story.

repeated

reported

told

discussed

The Curious Trip

Do you remember reading:

Then Miss Bronwen took them by the hands, and they went whistling out into space. . . .

Much later you read:

Then she released their hands, and they watched her going away.

So much happened on that curious trip. So much was seen!

The list below records some of the exciting experiences but *not* in the correct order. On your paper rewrite the list, beginning with the *first* thing they observed on that strange, strange adventure. Then list the other events in their correct order. You may wish to reread this part of the story.

Hint: Your list should begin with *the round moon*.

huge globe glowing dull red

brilliant Jupiter

Saturn with those rings

green Uranus

a supernova

coppery-red Mars

greenish Neptune

belt of the asteroids

double suns

the round moon

Touched in the Head

What did Mr. Topman really mean when he said: "Seems to me you're both touched in the head."

You know he did not mean someone had rubbed or stroked the boys' heads. Rather, he used an expression which means "slightly crazy."

This was not an insulting remark but rather an expression which many people use when they are confused by someone's actions.

Look at the underlined expressions in Column I. Choose the words from Column II which help to explain each expression. Write them on your paper.

Column I

Column II

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 1. Have you heard the latest <u>scuttlebutt</u> ? | confusedly hurried;
haphazard |
| 2. Did they have a <u>falling out</u> ? | scantily; skimpily;
meagerly |
| 3. They live from <u>hand to mouth</u> . | worthless fellow;
do-little |
| 4. He is really a <u>good-for-nothing</u> . | disagreement; quarrel |
| 5. Everything he does is <u>helter-skelter</u> . | hearsay; rumor |

Paint Pictures with Words

As you read the story, you must have noticed the sparkling word combinations used by the author.

The lunch Mrs. Topman packed, was not *just a lunch*, but rather. . . .

thick chicken sandwiches
big thick beef sandwiches
pickles (three kinds)
any number of deviled eggs
packages of potato chips
little sweet-tart tomatoes
bananas and oranges
large chunks of chocolate cake with deep creamy fudge
frosting

In fact, the author used these interesting and tempting words *to paint a picture of the lunch*.

The boys did not *meet a woman* but rather. . . .

A little woman in a bright blue-green dress with her white hair done up on top of her head stood looking at them intently with large dark eyes. Her face was rather golden in color and was alive with surprise and pleasure and interest.

THE BEACH

THE MOON JEWELS

Under each heading list the wonderful words or phrases used by the author to paint a picture of the beach and the Moon Jewels.

The Meteor That Couldn't Stay



He could go. His father had said that he could go. David's gray eyes widened under the unruly thatch of blond hair, and his thin, freckled face flushed with joy. They were at the breakfast table, he and his mother and father. A summer fog was beginning to muffle the Monterey Peninsula so that the tall pines were veiled, and beyond the windows the sea, which could just faintly be heard, was almost lost to sight.

"Yes, David," said Dr. Topman, smiling at him, "your mother and I think it will be all right. Prewytt Brumblydge is a good driver—you'll be safe with him. And he's been in the desert before. He told me on the phone just now that he'll be here in Pacific Grove at eight tomorrow morning, so you be ready on the dot. He figures it should take about a day and a half to drive over to the Arizona border."

"Where does this Clem Peachtree live," asked Mrs. Topman, "the man who knows where the Brumblium meteorites are?"

David in his excitement couldn't wait for his father to answer.

"Mesquite, Mom, or at least just beyond Mesquite in Arizona. And Mr. Peachtree said in his letter to Mr. Brumblydge that this crater with the terribly heavy meteorites in it is only about two miles away from his house. Just think—my first scientific expedition, and Mr. Brumblydge says I can be a *tre-mendous* help—"

"All I hope," said Mrs. Topman, "is that those really

are Brumblium meteorites. Prewytt's been putting ads in the desert newspapers for months, and if these turn out to be only—

"But, Mom, Mr. Peachtree said in his letter that most of the meteorites aren't as big as baseballs, and yet he can hardly lift them. He said it kind of frightened him when he first found them."

"And if they *are* Brumblium," mused Dr. Topman, handing David his toast when it popped up, "they'll be radioactive, and Prewytt can find more by using the Geiger counter. And then he can get on with his Brumblitron and perhaps some day actually turn saltwater into fresh as cheaply and quickly as he claims he'll be able to. His whole trouble right now, he told me, is that his process is too slow."

Mrs. Topman laughed. "I think he is a rather vain little Welshman. Brumblydge, Brumblium meteorites. And this name for his new invention: the Brumblitron. Not to speak of his Brumblydge Theory of the Universe. He always manages to put his name on all his discoveries and inventions, doesn't he?"

"Well, but he's a great man," protested David, "even though he *is* kind of little. Why shouldn't he put his stamp on the things he invents and discovers and thinks up?"

It was a day and a half later, about three in the shimmering-hot afternoon. David and Prewytt were mounted

upon the mules, Hinny and Linny, and Clem was walking beside the small donkey, Binny, who was loaded with wood and provisions. Slowly they made their way, *cluff, cluff, cluff*, across the pink, mesquite-spotted Arizona desert. Every once in a while, as a special treat in the burning monotony, a stunted Joshua tree would loom up. With its prickly, stubby arms outspread, it looked like some tortured growth left over from the age of dinosaurs. There was no road. They had left Prewytt's car behind at the shack because, Clem said, it would be of no use whatever.



Far, far off, the pale lavender range of the Virgin Mountains seemed pasted flat against a colorless horizon. Around the travelers, great salmon-pink, beehive-shaped hills came and went, came and went, or perhaps revolved endlessly. And they were all so much alike that David, for the life of him, couldn't figure out how Clem knew which way to go. Under the powerful sun, they moved down into pink gullies and up onto pink mesas, and nothing seemed ever really to change.

"It's kind of like a bad dream!" burst out David all at once. "We've been going on here for ages, Mr. Peachtree, and you said it was only two miles to the crater."

At this, Prewytt drew up. His short legs stuck out at an angle over the sides of Hinny, and his stocky little body sat erect. His bow tie, which had been so precise and perky when he had started out, was off; his white shirt was rumpled and dirty. He had, in his hurry, left his big new straw hat at the motel that morning and now wore on his head one of Clem's red bandana handkerchiefs, knotted at each corner and slightly tilted, which gave him a dashing air. But he plainly did not feel dashing. His round, glistening face was furious.

"Clem Peachtree," he said in a low voice, "it is my firm opinion that we are lost, and that you haven't an idea in the world where this crater is with the Brumblum meteorites in it. Why don't you admit the truth?"

Clem, long and lean, and about the same width all up and down his faded blue figure, had been slouching

along in silence, rolling easily on his bowed legs, his face expressionless under his bashed-up, broad-brimmed felt. Now he stared at Prewytt, astonished and indignant.

"Lost!" he cried. "Why, Mr. Brum'lydge, ye could twirl me around blindfolded and upside down, fifty times, and ye couldn't lose me. This here desert's my *home*. Right over yonder's yer Brumblium crater. Only ye can't see the crater itself 'cause it's hidden till ye get to the edge o' the mesa."

In a trice Prewytt was off under his own power with David after him, not on Linny because she wouldn't budge unless Binny and Hinny did. Now, together, David and Mr. Brumblydge stood on the rim of the mesa. They beheld, in a rather narrow, sheltered canyon that had a short side-canyon leading off of it, a crater about thirteen feet across made by some ancient meteor that had whistled and rumbled down from the desert sky, who knew how many aeons ago.

Twenty minutes later Prewytt, with cries of joy, was struggling to lift one of three small objects Clem had just shown him, hidden in a cave on the canyon's eastern side.

"Brumblium, Clem! David, it is Brumblium, as sure as you're born! Listen to that Geiger counter crackling!" Prewytt straightened long enough to break into a few exultant steps of the Welsh jig he always did when caught up on a wave of triumph. "Heft it, Dave! Just try to heft it! That's Brumblium for you. Why, I'll bet

that little bit there weighs close to two hundred pounds—"

David was bending over, examining the small, pitted, iron-colored object—as unexciting and unpromising a lump of material as one could ever imagine. Yet within its cold, dark heart lay the power to turn barren soil into rich and yielding fields through the working of the Brumblitron. At least so Mr. Brumblydge said. Dave laced his fingers around it and tried with all his might to get it off the ground. But it was as if some gigantic force were clutching it to the bosom of the earth and would not let it go.

"It's onnatural, that's what it is," muttered Clem. "I don't like it, an' I don't like this place. An' if it wasn't fer that \$150 I been promised, I wouldn't never have come here—"

But Prewytt was paying no attention, being much too busy getting out his chemicals and tools to test for Brumbligen lines. These are the curious, greeny-gold patterns which appear on the cut and polished face of a Brumblium meteorite in place of the Widmannstätten lines that show up on the usual varieties composed of nickel and iron.

"Now, David," said Mr. Brumblydge as he laid everything out very neatly on a piece of newspaper, "I want you to watch just how I do the testing, and then you will have learned something for the future. And when I've finished, I shall comb this whole area with the

Geiger counter, and you and Clem come along after me and start digging."

In another hour or so, when the floor and west side of the canyon lay in a cold, bluish light and the sky had turned a soft apple green, a little treasure horde of nearly a dozen fragments of Brumblum lay in a pile at some distance from the crater. Clem had taken them over there so that their radioactivity should not confuse the search for further pieces. Prewytt, perspiring and trembling from his labors, stood over them, leaning on his shovel. He wiped his face with the knotted red bandana and shook his head.

"Clem," he said, "Clem, I never expected anything like this!"

"What'd I tell ye?" Clem's usually mournful face was alight with pride. "I knew those heavy, wce bitty things I'd found was just iggzackly what you were talkin' about in that ad in the Mesquite paper. But now ye better put yer little jacket on, Mr. Brum'lydge. A city man like you could catch yer death o' cold out here. Ye been workin' too hard, on top o' sittin' at a desk every day." Clem, who might have been any age from forty to seventy, was not even damp, nor was he breathing any harder than usual though he had done by far the greater part of the digging and lifting of the meteorites.

"Nonsense!" cried Prewytt, clearly mad to go on with his search. "There's a good hour of light left—and I

don't need light. Come on, David, get the Geiger counter."

But Prewytt lasted only another twenty minutes. Besides, it was rapidly growing dark, and David was never more thankful in his life, because he doubted if he could have pried up one more spadeful of that hard desert earth.



So now they all went off to the cave, lying in a jog of the canyon wall, where Clem had already laid out their sleeping bags and their cooking equipment, and where Hanny and Binny and Linny were tethered. While Prewytt rolled up for a short rest so that he could get on with the hunt right after they'd eaten, David and Clem built up a fire. And over it Clem concocted bitter, scalding coffee into which he broke some bread and some horribly strong-smelling cheese. Prewytt took one swallow and looked as if he were going to die. He coughed, and coughed, and coughed, his bloodshot eyes starting from his head.

"*Great Ebenezer's ghost!*" he finally managed to wheeze. "What is it, Clem? Where in the name of all the gods did you learn to make this intolerable brew?"

Clem grinned.

"Powerful, ain't it? When I was a kid, I came out here with my folks from Tennessee and herded sheep with the Basques over yonder in Nevada. This here's what they stewed up mornin', noon, an' night. Tastes mighty good to me. How 'bout you, Dave?"

"Oh, I'm not allowed to drink coffee, Mr. Peachtree," said David thankfully. "My mother put up some sandwiches and cake and apples and things, and I guess maybe Mr. Brumblydge and I'll have those."

Later, when they were all warm and full, and the animals had been fed, Clem got a banjo from his bedroll and, sitting cross-legged, started strumming. Now the

strumming became a soft, teasing rise of notes that grew ever quicker and more exciting until suddenly Clem put his head back and started to sing:

"Lips as red as the bloomin' rose,
Eyes of the deepest brown,
You are the darlin' of my heart—
Stay till the sun goes down!
Shady Grove, my little love (come on,
Dave, come on, Mr. Brum'lydge)
Shady Grove, I know,
Shady Grove, my little love,
Bound fer Shady Grove—"

On they went through "Arkansas Traveller" and "Across the Wide Missouri" and "The Bluetail Fly" and "When the Saints Come Marchin' In" and a whole string of others. Clem's swift, complex fingering (how did those old desert-calloused hands manage it?) was like nothing David had ever heard before. He sang with all his heart, and so did Mr. Brumblydge, his eyes shining with pleasure. There was that beautiful little pile of Brumblum out there somewhere to the left of them (the cave faced up the canyon), and the sky was full of stars, and the fire was going, and there were Henny and Binny and Linny standing together and seeming to be watching the flames and listening to the singing with their ears forward, just as if they were enjoying it, too.

Everybody was perfectly happy.

Hours later, toward morning, David was dreaming.

curled up in his sleeping bag in the dark of the cave. Mr. Brumblydge, he dreamed, was having a big ceremony at the unveiling of the first Brumblitron with all the citizens of the Monterey Peninsula invited, and David had to be up on the stage to see to the seating of the dignitaries and the managing of the curtain. But when Mr. Brumblydge turned on the Brumblitron, it was awful. Nobody could bear it, for there arose from it an ominous, thundering sound that made your stomach sick and your heart quake with fear.

Now somebody was shaking him, and when he opened his eyes, there was Mr. Brumblydge bending over him in a pale, ghastly greenish radiance like the reflection of a sick moon.

"Dave—listen!"

What came to their ears was a rolling, roaring rumble like giant artillery that seemed to fill the whole heavens. Now the radiance grew brighter. Appalled, they went and gazed skyward from the mouth of the cave, and all the time the radiance grew, and the artillery seemed to be coming closer. *A jet plane coming in too low*, thought David, but even as the words flashed through his head, he saw it: a green ball of fire streaking across the sky from the west and looking as if it were going to go northeast, and maybe come down about a mile away.

"A meteor!" breathed Mr. Brumblydge. "Perhaps a *Brumblium* meteor!" And in that terrible glow he spread

his arms wide as though personally to receive this traveler from far-off space.

But now the most awesome thing happened. As the fireball came near, David could have sworn he saw it change its course. It had been coming down on a gradual arc that would have taken it well beyond the canyon, but in the next instant it was making straight for them. And the instant after, he was snatched backward by strong, wiry hands, shoved down flat, and then someone flung his own body across him.



The air in the canyon reverberated; there was a long, eerie whistling, a sudden silence, and then such a hideous racking and rending of the air as David had never heard in his life. The earth shook as though it were an earthquake.

When it was over, he lifted his head and listened, but all was dark and quiet. Then the person on top of him let out a sudden cry—"The critters!" and away Clem went out of the cave before anyone could speak, and Mr. Brumblydge was off after him. David followed, expecting he knew not what—perhaps some fearful blasted and blackened ruin of the canyon walls. But everything looked just as it had the evening before, except that now the canyon was drowned in the blue tide of early dawn in which far objects were not yet quite distinct, as though seen under water. Up above, the sky and the stars were growing pale. The whole place was still, so still that when a ragged old raven, frightened, perhaps, by the meteor's explosion, flapped out overhead, David actually heard the *whuff, whuff, whuff* of its wings rowing their way through the air.

Clem had already disappeared beyond sight, maybe off into the side canyon in search of his beloved critters. As for Mr. Brumblydge, he seemed to be heading for the old crater, but all at once he turned to the left, and then David saw him stand and stare downward without moving. When he himself got to Mr. Brumblydge, he understood why, for at their feet was a new

cone-shaped hollow, a craterlet about eight feet across and three or four feet deep at quite a little distance from the old one.

"David," said Mr. Brumblydge, "David, will you run back and get the Geiger counter? We may have here a rather large meteorite, and if Providence is good, it could be that it is a chunk of Brumblium."

In a few moments, Mr. Brumblydge was holding the counter out in front of him like a lantern in the cold blue dimness, working over the entire surface of the hollow made by the new fall. But the counter was silent, and it was only after several minutes that David, who had been utterly absorbed in this search, came to and realized something. He stared all about, wanting to be quite certain of the landmarks before he spoke: a great, half-buried rock here, a rise of the canyon floor there. Then he turned to Mr. Brumblydge, who had been watching him, and his eyes were wide with an almost unbelieving question. Mr. Brumblydge nodded.

"Yes, David, the horde of Brumblium we piled up here on this spot yesterday afternoon has most certainly vanished."

"But maybe the pieces are buried so deep by the new meteorite that the counter can't report them, Mr. Brumblydge. I'll bet that's it. Don't you s'pose that's it?" There came no answer, and then, "But it doesn't make sense. The counter ought to crackle because of their being somewhere around. At least it ought to crackle a little."



Still Mr. Brumblydge did not answer, but once more held out the Geiger counter and calmly and methodically began moving it back and forth over the surface of the new crater, then along its entire rim, then outward from the rim on all sides, up and down and roundabout, with David following. But by the time the sun had begun to



paint a rich apricot along the west wall of the canyon, they had not discovered so much as a pebble of Brumblum, and the counter hadn't crackled once. Not even faintly. Then they tried digging for the new meteorite at the center of the crater in the pulverized earth, but it was simply not to be found.

Now Clem came along, having tethered Hinny and Binny and Linny once more at the entrance to the cave, and was told the whole bewildering story.

"It's onnatural, just the way I said," and Clem's voice was fateful. "Them heavy little bitty stones was onnatural to begin with. And so's the new one, wherever 'tis."

David was studying Prewytt.

"Mr. Brumblydge, I don't understand. It seems to me, even if that meteor did land near the Brumblum, or on the pile, it would just have scattered the pieces or buried them. And even if they exploded, whatever dust or bits that are left—and they've got to be here somewhere—ought to make the counter crackle."

But Mr. Brumblydge shook his head.

"No, David. I've been thinking. I don't believe they *are* here anywhere, nor the new meteor either. And I don't believe that any of this is unnatural. It's just antimatter, and it *would* have to hit this spot!"

"Aunty *Who*, did ye say?" demanded Clem, plainly bewildered. "Aunty Matter? Who in the name o' Goshen is she?"

"Not Aunty anybody," returned Prewytt, and David could see excitement rising in him like a storm wind. "Antimatter. Pronounced Ant-eye, meaning against. Look, Clem, you know that everything's made up of what we call matter. Whatever takes up space—solid or liquid or gas—it's all matter—"

"Ye mean, don't matter what 'tis, it's matter."

"That's right. Now, it turns out that instead of there being just the plain, ordinary matter that we all know and can see or smell or feel, there's another kind as well: antimatter, possibly making up a whole universe the exact opposite of the one we live in, which scientists call the negative universe."

"But, Mr. Brumblydge, where *is* this negative uni-

verse?" David asked in enormous wonder, and Clem drew his brows together as though trying as hard as he could to imagine anything the exact opposite of what he could see.

"I haven't the faintest notion," replied Prewytt flatly.

"Then how in tarnation do ye know there is such a thing?" shouted Clem, plainly exasperated.

"Because particles of antimatter have been created in the laboratory. In fact, my friend, Dr. Elfinstone, the physicist, has produced them. And if there are particles of antimatter, then it stands to reason there must be atoms of antimatter, and molecules and gases—and therefore stars and perhaps galaxies and thus a whole universe of antimatter. But it's nothing to be bothered about," Prewytt assured them lightly, "unless, by chance, a galaxy of antimatter should happen to collide with our galaxy, and then we wouldn't be here. We would simply disappear, just as that collection of Brumblium did, released in the form of energy."

"We *would*?" murmured Clem. "How do ye know?"

"Because, in the laboratory, particles of matter and antimatter destroy each other as soon as they meet."

"And do you really mean, Mr. Brumblydge, that that was an antimatter meteor we saw come down?"

"And d'ye mean," cried Clem, "that that Brum'lium has just disappeared for good—that it's vanished—and the new meteor, too?"

Gravely, Prewytt nodded.



"That is what I think, Clem. We have not found the meteor that came down, nor any fragments of it. As for the Brumblum, the counter is absolutely silent. What other explanation for this silence can there be? As a matter of fact," Prewytt went on, "there are other craters on earth besides this one in which no fragments of meteorites have ever been found." Clem was silent, and David thought he looked just a little like Hinny. "David," said Mr. Brumblydge presently, "David, did it seem to you that that meteor did something peculiar this morning?"

"Yes," said David, and he felt a little chill go down his spine at the memory. "I thought it changed its course."

"Ah!" said Prewytt. "Just so. Then I was not still asleep. I almost hesitate to say it—but, don't you see?—Brumblium and antimatter attract one another! And if we further consider the fact that a given mass of antimatter destroys upon contact an exactly equal mass of matter, thus releasing enormous energy, why then this could mean that my Brumblitron—" Prewytt fell silent. He seemed to be thinking deeply, but then he began humming. Next, words escaped his lips, but David knew he hadn't the least idea he was singing, or what he was singing.

"Shady Grove, my little love,

Shady Grove, I know—"

Now he stopped and stared at them. "I've got to get home and talk to Elfinstone. Here's your check, Clem. I'm going to make it out for a little more than I promised you." He wrote, holding the checkbook on his knee as he knelt, and then handed the slip of paper up to Clem.

"Why-y-y, two hunerd dollars!" exclaimed Clem, his little eyes round with astonishment. "Just think o' that! An' all fer seein' Aunty Matter an' losin' your Brum'lium ye worked so hard to get!"

"But, Clem, I still have those three meteorites in the cave that you found, and a most beautiful idea to boot. What Elfinstone and I must do now is to experiment with the attraction between Brumblium particles and particles of antimatter, and the resulting release of

energy from their collision. Then who knows? My Brumblitrons may soon be producing vast Niagras of fresh, clean, sparkling water from the sea at an absolutely incredible rate." Prewytt's face was alight with eagerness and impatience, and now he made a quick, pushing motion with his hand. "One door opens beyond another, Clem, and another and another beyond that. Oh, this has been a very rich experience, most rich and rewarding, indeed."

"Mr. Brum'lydge," said Clem, clasping the check to his faded blue chest, "you an' Dave come back any time you feel like it, an' ye can allus bunk in with me. But don't go bringin' Auntie Matter along. You tell her she'd best keep herself to herself on her side o' the sky, an' we'll keep here on ours. Then we'll both be safe an' happy." And he looked up suddenly as if there brooded above them in the desert silence some huge presence, whom he regarded with awe and respect but wanted never to see again as long as he lived.



What Does It Mean?

Read each sentence carefully. Choose the phrase or word which best explains the underlined words, and write it on your paper.

1. "He told me on the phone just now that he'll be here in Pacific Grove at eight tomorrow morning, so you be ready on the dot."

be prompt

be reliable

be alert

2. Every once in a while, as a special treat, in the burning monotony, a stunted Joshua tree would loom up.

in this exciting place

in this hot place

in this dull place

3. "Heft it, Dave! Just try to heft it."

lift it

throw it

push it

4. "And when I've finished, I shall comb this whole area with the Geiger counter, and you and Clem come along after me and start digging."

walk everywhere

test everywhere

search everywhere

5. "Where in the name of all the gods did you learn to make this intolerable brew?"

terrible coffee

delicious coffee

boiling coffee

6. David asked in enormous wonder, and Clem drew his brows together as though trying as hard as he could to imagine anything the exact opposite of what he could see.

frowned

listened

spoke

Hyphenated Words

It was a day and a half later, about three in the shimmering-hot afternoon.

His face was expressionless under his bashed-up, broad-brimmed felt.

What do the underlined words have in common? Yes, they are a combination of two distinct words. A mark (-) called a hyphen is used between the two words. These words, therefore, are *hyphenated words*.

Look at the words in Column I. Select the definition from Column II which best explains each hyphenated word, and write it on your paper.

Column I

1. double-dealing
2. eagle-eyed
3. go-ahead
4. say-so
5. long-winded
6. pitter-patter
7. up-to-date
8. open-minded
9. know-how
10. happy-go-lucky

Column II

- skill, ability, capacity
progressive
easygoing, casual
assurance
trickery, fraud
talkative, gabby
sharpsighted, quick-sighted
rapping, tapping, drumming
current, present time
broad-minded, tolerant

Choose the Right Words

Read the sentences below. Choose a definition which best explains each underlined word, and write it on your paper.

1. In a trice Prewytt was off under his own power with David after him, not on Linny because she wouldn't budge unless Binny and Hinny did.

burst of anger very short time self-moving machine

2. Now, together, David and Mr. Brumblydge stood on the rim of the mesa.

sloping edge outer edge rocky edge

3. Prewytt straightened long enough to break into a few exultant steps of the Welsh jig he always did when caught up on a wave of triumph.

joyful, elated slow, deliberate strong, hobbling

4. Now the strumming became a soft, teasing rise of notes that grew ever quicker and more exciting until suddenly Clem put his head back and started to sing.

pushing and shoving plucking and picking
humming and singing

5. Clem's swift, complex fingering (how did those old desert-calloused hands manage it?) was like nothing David had ever heard before.

dazzling and flawless skillful and sure
difficult and complicated

That Person at That Moment!

The name of a person or a word referring to a specific person has been underlined in each quotation listed below. Reread the page indicated after each statement. Then choose the one word which best describes how *that* person felt at *that* moment. Write the word on your paper.

Example: "All I hope," said Mrs. Topman. . . (p. 40)

annoyed uncertain pleased

Answer: uncertain

1. "Well, but he's a great man," protested David. . . (p. 41)

frightened defensive disappointed

2. "It's kind of like a bad dream!" burst out David. . . (p. 43)

displeased embarrassed joyous

3. "Clem Peachtree," he said in a low voice. . . (p. 43)

tired lucky worried

4. "It's onnatural, that's what it is," muttered Clem. . . (p. 45)

weak uneasy silly

5. "Clem," he said, "Clem, I never expected. . . ." (p. 46)

depressed excited terrified

6. "David," said Mr. Brumblydge, "David will you run back. . . ." (p. 53)

hopeful doubtful joyful

MEET THE AUTHOR

Eleanor Cameron began writing when she was twelve. Four years later, when she discovered astronomy, she could not have dreamed that one day a young son named David would ask her for a space story about himself and his best friend, Chuck—"a story with magic in it and an urging flow." Nor could she have dreamed that those astronomy books would lead her to the Mushroom Planet, Basidium, and to Mr. Tyco M. Bass, that astonishing little man in the gray gardening coat and elastic-sided boots. All of his adventures begin on the Monterey Peninsula, which she loves—a place of cliffs and sea and ancient cypress trees. There she and her family go from Arcadia, California, to spend their summers and often their Christmas vacations.

So far there are four Mr. Bass books: *The Wonderful Flight to the Mushroom Planet*, *Stowaway to the Mushroom Planet*, *Mr. Bass's Planetoid* (in which Mr. Brumblydge is introduced), and *A Mystery for Mr. Bass*.

Other books by Mrs. Cameron are *The Terrible Churnadryne*, *The Mysterious Christmas Shell*, *The Beast with the Magical Horn*, and *A Spell Is Cast*. "As you can tell by these titles," she says, "I am drawn to wonder and mystery and magic and to the free play of the imagination. These qualities always seem to weave themselves into my books—something I cannot help because they are what give me happiness—and I hope they give happiness to the children."

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