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THE OTHER SIDE OF HERE

**MURRAY
LEINSTER**



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***A flick of the wrist—and whole cities plunged
into a void of lifelessness.***

Newark Manhattan . Baltimore—one by one they went out. A succession of thriving communities suddenly put out like a guttered flame—men, women, children sprawled like grotesque mannikins.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

STEVE WALDRON

He entered a world of frozen stillness only to become a man hunted by friend and foe alike.

LUCY BLAIR

She went along on a ride that ended in silent horror.

FRAN DUTT

A zealous lab assistant who was too eager to work overtime.

NICK BANNERMAN

A newspaperman who walked a tightrope between two worlds.

PROFESSOR HAMLIN

He walked into death with open arms.

ERASMUS' BLAIR

His disappearance signaled an invasion from the unknown.

THE OTHER SIDE OF HERE

by MURRAY LEINSTER

ACE BOOKS, INC.

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THE OTHER SIDE OF HERE

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ONE AGAINST ETERNITY (THE WEAPON MAKERS)

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O N E

IF HE'D BEEN a detective, Steve Waldron reflected grimly, he'd have been required to turn in his trench coat. However, official detectives hadn't been able to do any better than Steve. But the official detectives didn't have to face Lucy and acknowledge that there was absolutely nothing to indicate what had happened to her father. There was only the rather unlikely hypothesis that he'd vanished into thin air.

He'd been gone for four days now. According to Fran Dutt, who'd been in his private laboratory at the time, he'd answered a phone call. Then he put on his hat, told Fran that he'd be back presently, and walked out of this world altogether. He had no motive for disappearance. He didn't have secret acquaintances. There was no explanation whatever of the phone call. On the surface of things, nobody could have any motive for wanting to get him out of the way.

Waldron turned in at Lucy's entrance and went across the concrete path to the front door. All about him was the tranquility of a residential section of a medium-sized town. This Forest Hills area of Newark, New Jersey, was beginning to run down a bit, but it still retained some of the quietude and serenity of earlier years. The sun was setting beyond Branchbrook Park. Already a few early lights burned in the houses along the street. There were a few noises: children playing, cars moving somewhere out of sight, the faint, distant sounds from the downtown part of the city.

Waldron rang the bell. Lucy opened it instantly. She had been waiting for him. She looked hopefully at his face, and her own expression clouded at his obvious dejection. But she tried to smile.

"Nothing, Steve?"

"Not a thing. Rather worse than nothing, in fact. You mustn't take this seriously, Lucy. The newspapers have to have something to print. This is nonsense."

He hadn't offered her the newspaper, but her eyes fell to the rolled-up object in his side pocket. He handed it to her, repeating:

"It's nonsense!"

It was not a screamer headline. Professor Blair was not important enough to compete for headline space with news from Washington and the United Nations. But the story did rate a two-column headline.

HINT RED LINK IN BLAIR CASE

WILL CALL IN FBI

Police today speculated that Professor Erasmus Blair, missing scientist, may have been kidnapped to be smuggled to the Soviet Union to serve as a slave-scientist there. Admittedly pure guesswork, it is pointed out that in Europe scientists have also vanished and it is suspected they met a similar fate. There are even hints that not all the recent fatal accidents to American research figures have been accidental, and the matter has been placed before the FBI by local police officials. While the FBI refused all comment—

Waldron said:

"Not even the Reds would be interested in Straussman's Theory! That's nonsense, of course! There's another explanation and it will turn up. By the way"—he felt that he was unconvincingly casual—"has Fran come back yet?"

"No," said Lucy. "Why?"

Steve shrugged. "More nonsense, I'm sure. But Fran said your father left the laboratory after getting a phone call. The police found out today that the telephone line was cut. They're being very secretive about it, but it doesn't make sense. When was it cut and why? They want to ask Fran a lot of questions."

Lucy shook her head as if to clear it. "I haven't heard

from him, Steve. He called this morning and said he'd borrowed your car to try to track down a long-shot idea he had. He didn't say what it was. That's all I know."

Lucy put the newspaper away from her, as if trying to push completely away the idea it suggested.

"I'm as uncomfortable about it as the police," said Waldron with some grimness. "I like Fran, but I don't know much about him. I can see why the police want to talk to him. Of course, he never had to have an FBI checkover, because your father's research wa—is private and not sensitive. But there've been times when I thought Fran was a foreigner—good English and all. That cut phone line has the police wanting to know more about him. If it was cut before your father disappeared . . ."

Lucy shook her head. She was pale and she'd lost weight in the past four days.

"Fran didn't have anything to do with my father's vanishing, Steve. He—he's in love with me."

Waldron growled.

"No!" insisted Lucy. "He knows I'm going to marry you. He isn't happy about it, but he's . . . nice, Steve. I've even felt a little bit proud that somebody could care about me without hoping anything for himself. Fran isn't responsible for my father's disappearance."

Waldron said restlessly: "If I'd known more about him to tell the police . . ."

"I don't know much about him either," admitted Lucy. "He's been Father's assistant and I know he has some brothers and sisters, but that's all. However, I do know he wouldn't do anything to harm my father or me. Not under any circumstances!"

"Even a spy," Waldron impatiently, "wouldn't get excited about Straussman's theory that two objects can exist in the same space at the same time! That news article is nonsense! Don't worry about it. And of course when Fran comes back I'll ask him . . ."

Lucy hesitated.

"I've been racking my brains," she said slowly. "I'd almost thought of the newspaper idea myself, except that it

was too silly. But do you remember Professor Williams? He vanished. A month later they decided that he was probably the man seen diving overboard from a coastal steamer. His body was never found. And Professor Holt?"

"That was an automobile accident."

"Was it? They found his car overturned. But he wasn't in it. And when you think of it, at least three people with whom my father corresponded, in the same general line of research, have vanished in six months!"

Waldron said soothingly: "Easy there, Lucy! They were working on compenetration. It's philosophically possible, but physically absurd. You should hear what Hamlin says about it! It's pure-science research. Nobody has the least idea of any practical purpose it would serve. It's a theory that needs to be checked, like the expanding-universe notion. Something to investigate, but never make use of."

Lucy gulped, and then tried to smile. "I know, but when your father just vanishes as if he'd evaporated, and you think of other people who—"

The telephone rang sharply. Lucy put her hand to her mouth.

"Every time the phone rings I hope— You answer it, Steve."

Frowning, Waldron went across the room. He was realizing with a startled abruptness that Lucy was right about Professor Williams' body never being recovered, nor Holt's, nor any of several eminent scientists who presumably had died recently.

He put the receiver to his ear. He spoke.

"Stevel" It was Fran Dutt's voice. "Good! Listen to me! I can't come to Lucy's house. Police are waiting to arrest me and I have something I must do . . . for her father's sake."

"You've found out something?" demanded Waldron. Lucy tensed.

"Something . . . yes," said Fran. His voice was strained. "He's alive. He's unharmed. I do not dare to tell you more over the phone. The thing is too big, too incredible! I have found—"

"What?" demanded Waldron.

"I cannot tell you yet. I have been to New York in your car. You and Lucy are not safe. I am not safe either, but that does not matter. Something terrible is about to happen! I beg you to believe me, Steve!"

Waldron put his hand over the transmitter and said swiftly to Lucy: "He's found out your father's safe. Not harmed." He said into the transmitter:

"Well? Go on!"

"You must go to New York. You and Lucy. There is a letter at the Mayfair Hotel for her. Take your car and go at once. I stay here. There is danger. Terrible danger! Believe me, I know. And you must not get out of the car before you reach Jersey City, at least! No matter what happens!"

"I understand what you say," said Waldron reservedly, "but not what you mean."

"Let me talk to Lucy! Please!"

Waldron beckoned to Lucy and held out the telephone. He felt distinct suspicions. Fran Dutt was the laboratory assistant who had been present when Lucy's father walked out to apparent nothingness. There had been no sense to what had happened then, and there was no sense to what Fran was saying now. Waldron heard Lucy say:

"Yes. . . I know that, Fran. . . I think so. . . Very well. . . Where is the car? We'll go at once. You're going to stay here?"

She listened again. Waldron heard the click of the other receiver. Lucy was paler than before.

"The car's parked around the corner," she reported. "He says he loves me and I'm in danger here. I promised to leave with you." Then she added very quietly: "I believe him, Steve. He wouldn't let anything happen to harm me. He's going to try to get Father away from where he is. It's important that I not stay here. Will you take me to New York, Steve?"

Waldron nodded. He felt the frustrated confusion of a man who is faced with urgent matters of which he cannot even begin to make sense. Lucy left the room. She came back wearing a coat and hat. She handed a small glistening object to Waldron.

"My father had this," she said briefly. "Fran said to be sure and carry it."

Waldron tensed a little. He was not quite suspicious enough to examine the revolver then. But by the time he and Lucy had gone out of the house and turned the next corner and found his car parked there—the engine warm and the key in the ignition lock—he was very suspicious indeed.

Night was falling swiftly. He checked over the car. Nothing appeared wrong. Inside, by the map-reading light of the instrument board, he examined the pistol. Nothing wrong. He started the car. It whirred and caught instantly. The gas tank was full.

"The safe route to New York," said Waldron coldly, "ought to be a crowded one. We'll go by the Skyway."

He swung downhill and headed for the business section of town. At first there were private homes, and apartment houses, and more apartment houses. The lighted windows changed character. Presently the streets themselves were different. It was early for theater crowds and a little late for close-of-business crowds. Nevertheless, Broad Street had plenty of motorized traffic.

When Steve turned for the last straight stretch before the Skyway, the sidewalks were thronged. He drove through a district crowded with tenements. Here children played, shrieking at each other. Men and women stood about. Cars sped and trucks roared along the one-way street.

Suddenly the sound of the city changed. Waldron did not notice it at first. He was absorbed in unpleasant, suspicious thoughts which would not take definite form. But the total sound of all the city had been a smooth and almost a purring noise. Now—far behind—there came a queer harsh grumbling, as of a gear grinding. Then there was a shrill, high-pitched tumult that sounded like distant screaming.

The extraordinary sound came nearer without at all increasing in volume. People were screaming, but the voices did not seem to merge. Rather, it seemed as if the screams were coming from different places.

Then the grumbling noise dissolved into a loud series of crashes, some nearer and others farther away.

Lucy looked back and cried out. Waldron glanced in the rear-view mirror. A car had swerved from its lane and very deliberately crossed the street and smashed into a building. He saw a heavy truck turning into the lane of traffic. It swerved and turned and did not straighten out. It plowed into the cars parked along the curbing and climbed up on them. Then it lurched drunkenly and fell over on its side.

Nobody ran to the spot. Lucy gasped again. The people on the sidewalk—a man sat on the steps of a small and dingy stoop, somebody fell stiffly upon him. The sitting man did not yield; the person falling upon him did not bend. Two figures collapsed crazily upon the sidewalk and lay there.

A great bus crossed an intersection ahead, moving slowly. With vast deliberation it crashed into a lamp post. The bus was in low gear and its wheels continued to turn insanely. The lamp post suddenly crashed downward and the bus kept on going.

Cars ahead bumped into each other. One hit something and was struck from behind. Waldron jerked his steering wheel to avoid the pile-up. The car that had been following him smashed into the car that had been ahead.

Now there was no movement on the sidewalks. People had been standing and walking. No longer. Now they lay stiff and unmoving, as if abruptly frozen in the midst of motion. He saw hands extended, knees bent, mouths open, eyes staring. Some of the people had been running. They lay absolutely rigid where they had toppled. It was as if every living human being had abruptly been seized with catalepsy, or on signal had gone into a horrible catatonic state. They looked like toppled wax figures.

But cars did not stop until they stalled. Traffic was heavy enough so that few vehicles had been traveling swiftly. From all sides rose the monstrous grinding, crashing and clanking as all the moving things in the city came to violent stops.

Waldron said through stiff lips: "Fran said not to get out of the car."

He was in the left-hand lane and saw that it was clear. Reaching the corner, he threaded his way across it. He

went down the right-hand lane and swung again to the left. A ghastly cold horror lay all about. A city had suddenly been struck dead.

There was water in the street ahead. It rippled and swelled and spread. Waldron drove through it, with wings of spray splashing up from the wheels. A truck had crashed a water hydrant and the street was now flooded. The driver of the truck sat stiffly at his wheel.

They made a turn and the ramp to the Skyway loomed ahead. A limousine had battered through a guard rail and hung suspended, halfway fallen to the street below. Its passengers were not visible. Its driver sat foolishly behind the wheel as if he were still driving.

To right and left the street looked ridiculously like a store-window model of a city's thoroughfare, designed to look like the real thing but which had suddenly gone out of control, all the toys smashing themselves in senseless confusion. Only what Waldron saw was full sized. This was real.

Waldron drove up the ramp and sped across the Skyway toward New York. He did not react except with a frantic sense of urgency, as if he were caught in a nightmare.

There were wrecks along the Skyway—only wrecks. No other car moved.

Lucy's teeth chattered suddenly. "Wh—what happened? Did—did everybody die all at once?"

"I don't know what happened," said Waldron. He swerved the car to dodge a pile-up of battered cars. An engine was throbbing idiotically from somewhere in the wreckage.

He spoke through clenched teeth lest they chatter, too. "Whatever it was, it hit everybody but us. It was very sudden . . . for death."

Steve Waldron's own occupation was biological research. He had been in the research division of a pharmaceutical laboratory, doing his work under Dr. Hamlin, who had already discovered daphnomyecitin and complacently awaited further triumphs of scientific drudgery. Waldron knew enough to find it impossible to accept that any means of death could strike so abruptly and with such instant cataleptic stiffening as his unbelieving eyes had seen.

"I'm afraid," he said suddenly, his throat dry, "that this was the terrible thing Fran said was to happen. He said not to get out of the car no matter what happened. Remember?"

They passed more wrecks. The wide Pulaski Skyway climbed and climbed. It swept upward, splendidly, except for the catastrophes here and there: the collisions and the cars which had crashed into guard rails, and the one huge gap in the concrete side rail where something large and blind and senseless had ripped away all of sixty feet of railing and then dived terribly to the dark earth below.

They came to the highest point of the Skyway. Here a gigantic structure of steel girders carried the road to a height which was skyscraper-tall. They could see indefinitely across the meadows between Jersey City and the city they had left behind. Innumerable bright lights lay ahead. There were the fairylike towers of New York on beyond. Below the Skyway there were railroad tracks and scattered factories and the luridly lighted Jersey Turnpike. Below that were isolated straight lines of street lights and occasional illuminated windows.

Suddenly Waldron reached down and braked the car. He stared back toward Newark. The glow above it was the same as every city casts up to the sky at night. Winking red lights rose from neon signs. There were lights in windows, on moving signs. From far off, the city looked completely untouched, completely normal. It was impossible to believe that in that same city an incredible disaster had just taken place.

Then Waldron caught his breath. Mist was rising from the city. What seemed to be fog filtered upward. The city's street lights seemed to become dim. The glow in the sky became fainter. The mist could be smoke, but smoke would rise higher. There would be columns of it. There would be leaping flames. If the city had caught fire, there would have been no gentle upward surging of mist. No, there was no conflagration. The city was not burning.

As they stared, one huge, irregularly shaped section of the lighted space went dark. Abruptly, all its lights went

out. Then another huge section. A third. With methodical deliberation, one part after another of the city went black. It was blotted out precisely as if someone pulled the master switches of its electricity-supply service, plunging the city, bit by bit, into darkness.

There seemed no longer any city back there. Looking out into the night that was now around them, it seemed as if the city had been wiped off the face of the earth.

T W O

IN FRONT of them was the brightly lighted interior of the tunnel. The Pulaski Skyway gave direct access to it. They went through columned underpasses and then down an astoundingly wide one-way street. Then they passed an empty pay-booth and then they were in the tunnel.

The resonant echoes of the car's motor bounced back from the gleaming white tile. They thought they could hear the roar of a giant truck ahead. Then they began going up a gentle incline and some moments later they emerged into the open air of New York. Tall dark buildings loomed all around them and things were moving. People were actually walking—and everything seemed perfectly commonplace!

Steve barely spoke to Lucy as they drove northward, in perfectly ordinary traffic, stopping for red lights and moving ahead on green. It seemed nightmarish that the people about them could be so indifferent to the colossal tragedy across the Jersey meadows.

But, of course, they were not indifferent. The news simply hadn't arrived yet. Waldron and Lucy had outrun all tidings of the catastrophe. Even when they stopped before the Mayfair Hotel, the tragedy in New Jersey was only being guessed at by people on its edges.

While Waldron was telling the doorman to have his car parked, the telephone exchanges in New York were being

besieged by irate citizens. By the hundreds, indignant phone users were dialing "O" to protest being cut off from their parties in Newark. By other hundreds, other persons were complaining angrily of the service that could not even get them a Newark number. Supervisors were harassedly bedeviling the maintenance department to know what was the matter that no operator in Newark could be reached on any trunk line.

While Waldron asked the desk clerk if there was a letter for Lucy, frightened Hudson Tube employees were clustered about a train in the Beekman Street terminal. It had come out of Newark and rolled past the Jersey City stations without a pause. The line was clear, so no automatic stops had checked it. The train had come grinding through the under-river tunnel. Although brightly lighted, it was traveling blindly. Emergency calls raced ahead of it. Dispatchers swore. Finally, a thrown switch brought the train to a halt just before it reached the Beekman Street platform.

Then the occupants were seen—each motionless, each in a startlingly lifelike pose. But each man and woman had flesh that was iron hard, and bodies that held no sign of life.

The motorman appeared to be sitting at ease, his hand on the controller bar. But though his fingers were not clenched, they could not be loosened. Passengers held their newspapers or clung to straps with seeming carelessness. But the newspapers had to be torn from their hands to be removed, and the hand straps had to be cut from their overhead fastenings before the passengers could be taken out of the train. Doctors, hastily called, pronounced each man and woman dead. But each person's appearance was so lifelike that the decision had to be changed. The people were alive. But there was every sign of rigor mortis—a rigidity that suggested death. But no rigor mortis could be so intense. The doctors were puzzled, but still they insisted the passengers were alive.

Ambulances transported the stiff bodies to hospitals, where other medical authorities began to go quietly mad trying to find out what had happened. Their bewilderment increased when they tried to get information from Newark

on any possible cause of the phenomenon. Newark did not answer.

Outside of Newark, up in the Oranges, people were pulling glass-hard human bodies out of a bus that had rolled blindly into a motor truck. A plane radioed Newark Airport that it was coming in. It got no response. It began to circle overhead, while the pilot kept calling for permission to land. Out at Idlewild somebody heard the pilot's increasingly frantic voice. Then the voice of its pilot stopped short.

Lucy sat in a great upholstered chair in the lobby of the Mayfair and read the letter that was waiting for her. It was not in her father's handwriting. It was in Fran's. Waldron unabashedly read over her shoulder.

Lucy:

If you know what's happened in Newark before you read this, you will understand why I made you come here. If you have not heard of a terrible thing happening, stay where you are for an hour or two or even overnight. You will be safe there. You will be in much more terrible danger than you can believe, at home.

Your father is alive and well. I assure you of that on my honor. I also assure you that if you tell anyone but Steve, or if he tells anyone that you have this letter from me and that you escaped the thing that is to happen, your father will not be harmed. He will be just as safe as before. But I will be killed more horribly than you can imagine. I say this also on my honor.

I beg of you not to explain to anyone how you escaped from Newark. Let it seem an accident. If you say that I caused it, I will be a dead man.

Wait, I beg you, until I can come and explain.

Fran.

Lucy looked up. She moistened her lips. "He . . . he knew what was going to happen."

"That," said Waldron, with irony, "seems fairly clear."

"And he knows what happened—"

"To your father. Yes. It's even probable that he knew it beforehand, too. But you were right that he didn't want

harm to come to you. But for him, we'd be in Newark too, and like everybody else who's there. . . . Wait here!'

He moved away, passing through the brightly lighted lounge of the hotel, where elaborate chandeliers hung down from the ceiling. He made his way out the revolving door.

"I asked you to have my car parked five minutes ago," he said to the doorman. "Where is it?"

"It's in the garage, sir. I can have it brought back."

"I want to get something out of it. Where is it?"

The doorman gave him directions. Waldron moved as swiftly as the traffic of pedestrians permitted. He went a block and a half and then stepped into the rather dingy garage that was used by the hotel.

There was a smell of smoke and steam and the pungent odor of hot metal. In the middle of the floor was his car, thin blue smoke trailing from below it. Attendants were playing a gasoline extinguisher into the smoke.

"That's my car," he said sharply. "What happened?"

"Dunno," said a greasy man in jumpers. "It come in, and we was puttin' it on the elevator when it begun to smoke, so we turned on the extinguisher."

There was a clanking rattle. Somebody rolled a crawler into position for use. The greasy man laid himself on it, grabbed up a wire-caged light and pulled underneath the car. His voice was somewhat muffled.

"No fire . . . Huh? What's this?"

He pulled himself out and scratched his head. He reached for tools and went under again. He swore suddenly, as if he'd scorched himself. Then the crawler came out and the man raked an irregularly shaped, smoking object from under the car.

"This was it," said the mechanic. "What the hell!"

He pushed the object to a bucket of water and forked it in. There was a hissing sound and a cloud of steam arose. Waldron, his mouth dry, said:

"I think I get it." He added unconvincingly, "A practical joke. It misfired. I'll take care of it!"

He passed out money. The object, pulled out of the water, was still hot enough to dry itself immediately. It was a mass

of copper wires, stuck together with solder which had melted and run so that the original design could no longer even be guessed at. Waldron put it in his pocket. Feeling it uncomfortably hot against his hip, he went grimly back to the hotel.

The look of things in the Mayfair lobby had changed. There was a small, tense crowd about the hotel desk. There had been a small desk-radio there, turned discreetly low. Now it was turned to full volume, and everybody was crowded close to listen.

. . . and the entire city seems to be isolated from the world. From the Empire State Building it appears that all electricity in the city has been cut off. There is neither telephone nor telegraphic communication. A tube train has arrived with all its passengers dead—apparently dead when the train left Newark. Police cars from Jersey City are speeding toward the stricken city and will report by radio. The Jersey Turnpike is apparently closed by the disaster, whatever form it may appear to have taken. No cars are coming out of the section nearest downtown Newark from either direction. All traffic on the Skyway has ceased. . . Here's a flash from Jersey City. A police car driving in toward Newark reported a mass of wrecked traffic ahead. Immediately afterward it ceased to transmit. It does not answer calls. Efforts are being made to contact members of the Amateur Relay League—short-wave hams—with so far no result. . . . Here's another flash. The Newark airport does not answer calls. . . Another flash still. The telephone company reports that all its lines to Newark went dead at the same instant. Tests do not reveal circuit trouble. It is as if every person in Newark ceased to answer or else dropped dead at the same time.

There was a murmur of horror in the lobby of the hotel. Waldron slipped into a phone booth, his lips set savagely. He dropped dime after dime, dialing, dialing, dialing. He could get no answer. No connection. He was trying to reach some authority to report that he had escaped from Newark and could give information. But everybody in New York

with a family in Newark was trying desperately to ask questions.

He went back to Lucy.

"Get a reservation. Get a room here," he commanded. "Explain that you live in Newark and daren't go back because of what's happened. Stay here. I'm going to report in person what I can't get an answered phone to report to. All right?"

Lucy swallowed. She nodded. "This afternoon," she said unsteadily, "I was worried about my father only. Now, with this and Fran I'm sort of dazed."

"Naturally," agreed Waldron grimly, "but there's one thing I don't want you dazed about. Fran unquestionably kept us from being involved in whatever's happened in Newark. He did it for your sake. So to some degree I trust him. But he didn't try to stop the whole business, so I distrust him too. If he turns up to talk to you, don't see him except where there are plenty of people around. And don't leave the hotel under any circumstances."

"A-all right," she said.

Waldron wanted to say something encouraging, but he couldn't think of anything. He went out and got a cab. Its radio muttered. In traffic, the driver turned it up.

. . . Guesses at the nature of the tragedy range to notions of an invasion from space, like the famous War of the Worlds scare of thirty years ago, or mass sabotage by subversives, or the explosion of an atomic weapon by spies, to belief in a sudden and terrible plague. . . Newark, however, seems to be a city of the dead. On every side, the suburbs report disasters which add up to the statement that something unknown has wiped out all life in a roughly circular area, bordered . . .

The driver turned a scared face to Waldron. "Dam' funny thing, that! And so close!"

"Yes," said Waldron shortly.

"Wh-what in hell is it? D'you suppose it'll come over here? It—it ain't a plague, is it?"

"No," said Waldron curtly. "It's not a plague. It isn't coming to New York. I was in Newark when it hit."

The driver turned to stare. Shrieking horns reminded him of the danger of driving blindly in heavy traffic. He jerked his head back just in time to avoid a smash-up.

"M-my Gawd!" chattered the driver, "you think you caught it?"

"Nol" snapped Waldron. "But I gave you the Gracie Mansion address. There'll be nobody at the City Hall. If I can get to the Mayor, I can tell him what I saw. They'll know what to check on. They can figure out what to do! Make time, will you?"

The driver forthwith became inspired. He jammed down his accelerator and drove like a crazy man with second sight. He worked through a maze of moving vehicles, and behind him there arose a bedlam of indignant hootings and more than once the shrilling of a traffic officer's whistle. Finally, the driver drew in before the Mayor's official residence.

"Wait," commanded Waldron. "They may send me somewhere else with my information."

There was a policeman on duty. Waldron said briefly that he had some information about the mess in Newark. Things had happened so fast that the officer on post outside the Mayor's residence did not know of any mess in Newark. But Waldron sounded sane and the policeman let him pass.

Inside, a politely attentive secretary said soothingly that the Mayor was in conference but would send for Mr.—Mr what was the name? Yes. The Mayor would send for Mr. Waldron as soon as he possibly could. He would send a car and a motorcycle escort for Mr. Waldron. But just at this moment the Mayor was in conference .

The secretary hadn't heard the news broadcasts either. He had been disturbed at routine, after-hours business. He was annoyed but extremely polite.

Waldron got out to the street again and fumed. He went to the cab and got in.

"They think I'm crazy," he said coldly.

A man came running down the sidewalk. He babbled to

himself. "I've got to see the Mayor! I've got to see the Mayor!"

He stopped before the policeman in front of the gate. His eyes were bright, as he said urgently:

"I've got to see the Mayor . . . about the trouble in Newark. I made it. I sent some spirits over there to put everybody to sleep, but now the spirits won't wake them up again! I want some policemen to arrest the spirits who've stopped obeying me! I've got to see the Mayor—"

Waldron's taxicab drove away as the policeman resignedly rapped on the sidewalk with his night stick. Waldron's anger became tinged with irony. He had seemed to the Mayor's secretary merely a crank. They appeared constantly, besieging all in authority. Even had the secretary known of the tragedy of Newark, he would have thought Waldron to be the first of the oncoming nuts.

But in the other places where he tried to give the information he possessed, he did not appear to be the first. He had outrun the panic to Gracie Mansion. He followed it everywhere else. Newspapers came out with two-hundred-point headlines: "PLAGUE WIPES OUT NEWARK!" Other newspapers ran scareheads: "REDS OCCUPY NEWARK?" There was one which screamed in red headlines: "FLYING SAUCERS SMASH NEWARK!"

Nobody seemed possessed of any intelligence whatever. The streets swarmed with people frantically asking each other questions. Men and women clustered before TV stores to listen to the latest news flashes. But aside from catastrophes to buses, a tube train, police cars and ambulances which tried to enter the city, the unchanging fact remained: Newark had blacked out.

But there was additional fact. Nobody mentioned the thin gray mist which seemed to have risen from the city's streets shortly after the major catastrophe itself. Nobody suggested that the city was burning. This would have been a logical expectation. Nobody indicated the actual fact that whatever happened had been progressive, that the cataleptic condition of people on the streets had not been instantaneous. To some degree warning had been given.

The disaster had begun behind the car in which Waldron and Lucy rode. Then it overtook and passed them, somehow not striking them. Possibly this was not a pivotal point, but it was proof that none of the sources of information for the newspapers or broadcasters had been inside Newark at the time of the catastrophe. And failure to mention the gray mist was proof that nobody succeeded in entering Newark and returning.

There were too many cranks to put in confinement. They were simply blocked from approach to any source of authority or information. And to that fact Waldron owed his own freedom to move about. He was simply brushed off, while panic increased and piled up. Hysteria would have swept the population except that a good many people simply did not believe the news. It was starkly out of all reason.

Nearly two hours passed before Waldron realized that he knew one man in New York who wouldn't be important enough to be protected against cranks. Yet this man might be important enough to do something sensible about the information that could be given him. He called the Mayfair. Lucy was all right. He told her where he was going, and headed downtown for Newspaper Row.

He sent in a note to Nick Bannerman, press photographer for the *New York Messenger*. Nick came out of the newspaper building, brushed aside onlookers, cranks and assorted bystanders. He dragged Waldron back into the building.

"Swell!" he said, beaming. "You live in Newark. I'll use a picture of you for somebody to hang an interview on. What you think may have happened, your agony and suspense, and so on." Then he stopped. "Hey! No! You're a biologist! You make a guess on what sort of weapon could have wiped out everybody without explosions—no noise rules out atom bombs, and—"

"No," said Waldron curtly. "I was in Newark when it happened. I got out with one other person. We're the only people who did get out."

Nick stared at him. "The hell you say! We're fixing up an expedition now. Everybody in germ-proof clothes, gas

masks, and all that—as if we were going into an operating room.”

“No good,” said Waldron grimly.

He thought of the slowly cooling, cryptic object in his pocket. It was unquestionably the reason he and Lucy had not shared the fate of everybody else in Newark. Fran must have borrowed his car, not to make a search for Lucy’s father, but to install that thing so Lucy could be gotten out of danger. Abruptly, Waldron realized that he couldn’t tell anything that would involve Fran. Fran had saved him and Lucy—him, of course, in order to protect Lucy. He said he’d be killed if it were known. . . .

Nick Bannerman yelped suddenly. “Dumb mel” he gasped. “You’re an eyewitness! Come herel”

In minutes, Waldron was being photographed while men shot questions at him. He answered them—most of them. But he left Fran out. He said flatly that he and “a girl”—he did not name Lucy—were on their way to New York in his car when the city began to drop dead around them. He described what he saw. He professed complete ignorance of the reason for his and Lucy’s immunity.

The story did not hold together. It would be printed, of course. But it was thin. It was lame. It was not convincing. It sounded like somebody trying to get publicity for himself.

Nick took Waldron aside when he’d finished. “Steve,” he said with difficulty, “how much did you hold out? That’s a damned phony story. You aren’t a phony. What’s up?”

“I had help getting away,” admitted Waldron. “I can’t tell about that. What I’m hoping, of course, is that somebody with real authority will want to ask me some more questions and I can tell the stuff that simply mustn’t be made public.”

“It’s no accident?” demanded Nick. “Men are doing it? Reds?”

“I don’t know,” admitted Waldron. “Men, yes. Reds—I doubt it. And I don’t know what’s been done. I do know you can’t go into the dead area with gas masks and come out again. It’s not gas, whatever it is.”

Nick thought shrewdly. "My job is getting pictures. How about shooting pictures from planes?"

"I doubt very much that a plane can fly low over Newark and come back. Maybe a drone plane. I don't know why I think so. But I do." Then he added bitterly: "Not that my thinking is too good! I thought I had some information that would be useful. Your reporter friends thought I was crazy and a liar to boot. Anybody would—unless I told them what I can't!"

Nick said meditatively: "Y'know, Steve, I don't. I don't think you're crazy. You couldn't tell *me* the stuff you held out just now?"

Waldron hesitated, irresolutely. Then he said grimly: "I don't think I'd better."

Nick said shrewdly, again: "But you almost did. So there's something you do know. Are you sure, Steve, that germ-proof clothes won't do any good?"

"It wasn't germs," said Waldron shortly. "It moved in a wave, whatever it was. Spreading out from a center."

Nick said vexedly: "I should've told the guys your specialty—biology. They'd have asked questions from that angle. Your story'd have sounded better. Too late now." Then he added: "Everything's crazy! But if it wasn't germs that blacked out Newark, could it have been gas?"

"I didn't have a gas mask," said Waldron. He shrugged his shoulders. "Maybe I'll have something more by morning."

He went out, disillusioned and uncomfortable. He hadn't done much good.

He got back in the cab. *Biologist*. Suddenly he reached forward and tapped the driver on the shoulder. This cabbie was also listening to a news broadcast. Waldron gave him the address of Professor Jamison, near Columbia University.

Waldron was more than an eyewitness; he was also a biologist. Maybe if he found the right man who knew how to make use of Waldron's special insight and at the same time make some sense out of the now-cold metal thing in his pocket . . .

Of course, the answer was the leading American authority

on electric anesthesia. Although it was not practical, one could produce anesthesia sometimes, to a limited degree and in a limited area. The use of it, however, was tricky and not fully understood. The theory surrounding the phenomenon was incomplete and the results were very erratic. But something underneath a car had set itself on fire and then destroyed itself before it could be examined. And this something had kept the occupants of the car from turning stiff and glass-hard and lifeless. There was a connection, tenuous enough, but at least a possibility.

He would tell Professor Jamison exactly what he had seen. He wanted to know if it were possible to apply a large-scale electrical anesthesia to a city—the effect moving outward like a wave, as the generating source of anesthesia increased its power and reached a critical value. If such a thing were possible, then there would be a way to counter it by something that—say—could be put under a car. And if it could be countered, the still city could be entered and the generator of anesthesia smashed. . . .

While the cab moved northward, a high-flying plane flew over Newark and released flares, by which to take photographs. But the pictures would have been quite useless, because they would show only a mass of gray mist filling all the downtown streets and on a level with the tops of the buildings. Suburban streets, however, seemed quite clear of the mist. But even these inconclusive photographs were not seen by anybody, for the plane dropped to a mere ten thousand feet for clearer pictures. Then it ceased to communicate. Radar said it kept on going down, into the city.

This was not among the news items the taxicab's radio announced during the ride uptown. There were no longer any regular programs on radio. On every station the news was the same: there was no news. Nobody had been able to get any. So there were snatches of recorded music, and then a voice saying profoundly:

From East Orange comes word that ambulances moving in toward Newark have not returned. Police cars attempting to investigate the disaster simply cease

to communicate. Short-wave hams report that Newark hams simply stopped talking, though their carrier-waves in some cases remain on the air. And now, a resume of information up to the moment

The resume was completely unchanged from the one of five minutes before, and the five minutes before that.

Waldron paid off the taxicab before he went into the apartment house where Professor Jamison lived. He knew the professor, of course. He had been in conference with him several times before on behalf of his own laboratory work under Hamlin, of antibiotic fame. Seeing a self-service elevator, he went up in it. He moved along the hall to the professor's door and pushed the button.

The door was opened but not by Professor Jamison. Waldron saw a younger man. At first glance Waldron was startled. The man looked like Fran Dutt. But at second glance he plainly wasn't, although he could have been close kin. He wore a laboratory smock, work-stained and worn. The indefinable smell coming from behind the man was assuredly not unpleasant. But though it was a familiar odor, it wasn't exactly a normal smell for an apartment residence. But then Waldron remembered. Professor Jamison had no wife. Therefore, he had one room set aside for certain experiments connected with his work. There were white mice in the room too. They were of that fixed, genetically pure strain which is so valuable to biologists and which was so nearly wiped out by the Bar Harbor fire, years ago.

"I've got to see Professor Jamison," said Waldron abruptly. "I just came from Newark. I escaped what's happened over there. I have to tell him what it is. My name's Waldron."

The young man blinked at him and held open the door. Waldron entered the apartment.

"The professor will be back in a few minutes," said the young man who looked like Fran Dutt. "What is this about Newark, anyhow? I had music on and suddenly the radio babbled nonsense!"

He turned into the room where there were small cages against the walls. Waldron followed him. He saw a table

with a partly assembled electronic apparatus that looked like it might be a model of a tentative electric-anesthesia device.

The young man smiled cordially at Waldron. His smile, too, looked like Fran's. He was the perfect pattern of a talented laboratory man—a younger man working under an older one for experience and training. Fran Dutt looked like that, too. And this man looked like Fran. But the resemblance was more than that of kinship. Rather, it was the resemblance of a type. A racial type. One such man would blend into any ordinary American crowd. But two of them would be noticeable.

"I know a man who looks a lot like you," said Waldron abruptly. "I wonder—"

"I wouldn't know," said the young man easily. "That Newark business has me puzzled. In the last three hours—" He turned to a laboratory table. He opened a drawer. It was a perfectly casual movement, but it was wrongly timed. He reached in a trifle too hurriedly. He had to reach far back inside the drawer and he looked sharply over his shoulder at Waldron.

Waldron went tense. This man made him think of Fran, and, just now, Fran was not a restful person to think about. Also, Waldron had been brushed off many times this night as a crank when he tried to tell his story. And the one time he'd told it, he'd been disbelieved. Without being aware of it, he'd been on edge lest Professor Jamison also think him a crank. All of these factors added together made for an almost paranoiac reaction of suspiciousness.

The young man found what he wanted. He turned. He had something in his hand which looked partly like a pistol and partly something else.

"I won—"

Then Waldron's fist hit home. His conscious mind did not command the blow. But there was no reason for anybody to receive him so cordially and say that he didn't know Fran Dutt before Waldron had finished naming him. Then for that person to reach into a drawer and look sharply over his shoulder before his hand came out with something that could be a weapon

Waldron was appalled at his own action. The other man reeled backward and collapsed on the floor, out cold. The thing he'd held in his hand fell from his fingers.

It gave off a thin curl of pale-blue smoke. It grew hotter and glowed dull red. The smell of scorching wood rose from the floor. Then the object's parts shifted obscurely and lost all organization. It became merely a mass of copper wires, that had been held together by solder. The solder had melted and the wires had pulled away from their anchorages. It was no longer possible to discover what the object's original design had been.

The room was very silent. Waldron looked at the now-destroyed thing which had acted exactly like the object underneath his car. Also, this man looked like Fran Dutt. The shape of his head was the shape of Fran Dutt's. The slightly wide jaw was like Fran's. His nose seemed of identical shape.

The silence was extreme. There was no radio going, so the man had not been listening for news. But there was something else wrong. Some other noise that should have been there.

It was because Waldron was himself a biologist that he noticed it. The room held the faint, musky odor of white mice but the mice were utterly still—no sound of their quick movement came to him. He moved to the cages.

The mice were frozen, stiffened. They were cataleptic. He reached for a cage. Opening it, he took out a mouse. Another. A third. The flesh of the small creatures was hard, harder than rigor mortis would account for, harder than any form of catalepsy could produce. Harder, it seemed to Waldron, than even frozen flesh would have been.

But the mice did not look dead. Although they did not feel alive, they looked like consummately carved images which a person could expect would suddenly spring to life.

Steve grimly took down laboratory towels from a rack by the table. He painstakingly made the still-unconscious man helpless. Then he called the office of the *Messenger* and demanded to speak to Nick.

"The expedition was called off," reported Nick, as soon as

he heard Waldron's voice. "A hospital sent in a gang. A gas company sent in an emergency wagon with everybody wearing gas masks. Nobody came back."

"Send somebody up here," Waldron told him, "and you can get some pictures—and some stuff for people to work on too. Get this address down, Nick!"

He carefully dictated it. Nick wrote. Then he said:

"Say! Somebody called up about you. A Miss Lucy Blair. She asked for me and said, 'Fran's come,' whatever that means. How'd she know I knew you, Steve? She's at the Mayfair. Is that your hotel?"

Waldron barked into the transmitter.

"Yes. Get some cops up here to grab the young fool I knocked cold. He knows the whole business about Newark. You'll find some mice up here that are in exactly the same condition as the people in Newark. The gadget that was used to put them in that state is here on the floor, melted down. Hurry it up, Nick! Slap this guy in jail and hold him there! I've got to hurry!"

He paused to pocket the five tiny cataleptic bodies of the mice and then moved quickly out of Professor Jamison's apartment. The self-service elevator seemed to take an age to get downstairs. It took another age to find a cab. When he did find one, he convinced the driver of his need of haste in getting to the Mayfair Hotel.

He got the haste. Had he been less concerned about Lucy, he might have spent some time worrying about himself. But his distrust of Fran was more intense than ever. Someone with Fran's own racial characteristics had tried to use on him a weapon that produced frozen rigidity. This time the victims were mice instead of the people of Newark. Waldron had a sad conviction that Professor Jamison was missing too, just like Lucy's father. And with Fran near Lucy, Waldron felt anxiety of the most nerve-wracking sort.

However, when he came rushing through the revolving doors of the hotel lobby, he saw Lucy almost immediately. She was pale but composed, sitting quietly on a sofa at one side of the great open room. She talked to Fran, but her eyes were on the doorway. Pure relief showed in them when

she saw Waldron. Fran, on the other hand, looked sick and wretched.

Quickly Waldron stepped over to them. He nodded briefly and sat down, facing the two of them.

"What're the developments, Fran?" he asked coldly. "You were right. It was wise for Lucy to get out of Newark. Something pretty terrible did happen there. Now what?"

Unsteadily, Lucy said: "Fran's been urging me to go out West somewhere. He's been offering money. For both of us."

Waldron's jaw muscles tightened.

"That so? Does your crowd propose the same sort of thing in New York, Fran?"

"My crowd? Why say that, Steve?" But Fran's voice was strained. "I think I've proved that I don't want any harm to come to Lucy. Or even you. You can't class me with—"

"I do, though," said Waldron grimly. "You're one of the gang who did what's been done to Newark."

"I resent that!" said Fran harshly.

"Don't be a fool!" snapped Waldron. "I'll be willing to bet that about your person you've got a—well—let's call it a pistol. It's something like a pistol, but it doesn't shoot bullets. And if you drop it to the floor, it'll heat up and destroy itself—like that gadget you put underneath my car!"

Fran had been pale. He went paler yet.

"Where'd you hear about pistols like that?"

"I just had an argument with a man who had one," Waldron told him. "He lost the argument. Instead of hitting me with whatever it delivers, he hit some white mice. They're the hardest, brittlest corpses you ever saw. Like the people in Newark. Men used something of the same kind in Newark. Your kind of men, Fran!" Waldron added very softly: "You'll notice my hand is in my pocket, Fran. Don't put your hand in yours!"

Fran Dutt hesitated in an agony of indecision. Then he looked at Lucy. Desperately, he said:

"All right! I'll admit it. I do have such a pistol in my pocket—and I'll use it if I have to. But I did get you two out of Newark. I do want to go on keeping Lucy safe. But if

you fight me, Steve, I can't. My life's in your hands, but I'm the only person who can help Lucy and her father."

"Are you asking a price?" asked Waldron icily.

And Fran flushed hotly and then went deathly pale again.

"I am not! For Lucy I will do anything I can! I love her and she knows it! I am risking my life—and more than my life—in what I've said to you here and now. You cannot begin to understand what I am risking. But I would be a traitor to my homeland if I tried to do more than protect Lucy! What I have done for you has been incidental. It was necessary for someone to take Lucy away. That is why I looked out for you. You were my friend but—"

"Your homeland," snapped Waldron. "Russia?"

"Those fools? No! You wouldn't understand. You wouldn't even begin to believe—"

Waldron's eyes narrowed.

"The broadcasters have guessed at plague—which is wrong. They've guessed at subversives letting off a bomb or something similar. That's wrong! They've guessed at flying saucers and an invasion from space. And that's wrong!" Waldron was watching Fran's face. Fran tried to interrupt, but he went on savagely. "One of your—ah—compatriots worked for Professor Jamison, Fran. The professor's vanished, hasn't he?"

"Ye—how do I know? Steve, you're wasting time."

"Williams," said Waldron, inexorably. "Holt, Lucy's father. Now Jamison. The first three were working on things allied to Straussman's Theory: two objects in the same space at the same time. Jamison's electric anesthesia might have had some bearing on it. Eh? Your compatriot—whom the cops are going to get and question—and you, Fran—you were spies for your fellow-countrymen. You were saboteurs—guerillas—and now what's happened to Newark is a sort of Pearl Harbor. My country is in a war that it doesn't yet know exists—waged by a nation none of us has ever heard of."

Fran's hand went to his coat pocket. Waldron's own hand tensed. Fran had gone paler and paler with every word. Now he said bitterly:

"You do want Lucy to hate me, don't you? All right, it's

true! I am a spy! My country has invaded yours! But try and tell your countrymen so. They'll call you a lunatic."

"I have been called a lunatic," said Waldron. "I'm used to it."

"But I hate the whole business!" said Fran desperately. "There was no need for this war! There are many of us who do not believe our Leaders are right in this thing. Many of us hate our Leaders. We would be glad to overthrow them, to wipe them out utterly. But what can we do? You can't reach my country. It is invulnerable. You can't even believe it exists. So I was sent through to be a spy. If I fail my parents, my brothers, my bisters—"

"You're telling me plenty," said Waldron. "I'm still not sure I believe it, even though I know it's so. But you turned white when I mentioned Straussman. He disappeared too!" He ground his teeth. "And if you people hate the ones who decide on things—Leaders, you call them—maybe you were planning a revolt. On this world"—he used the phrase deliberately and Fran caught his breath. Waldron nodded—"on this world wars have been started to stave off revolutions. That might be the reason in yours."

"Perhaps," said Fran desperately. "But still—"

A newsboy shouted outside the hotel. "*Extra! Eyewitness from Newark! Man who saw the whole thing tells his story! Extra!*"

Fran Dutt started up, his face contorted.

"Me," said Waldron. "But I covered you, Fran. I didn't tell anything they couldn't believe. And they didn't believe that!" He called a bellboy and sent him for a paper. "I want to know how straight they printed what I did say," he added tonelessly. "If they did print it straight, somebody might guess—"

The bellboy came back, panting in his haste. He'd gotten a copy for himself. Waldron ran his eye down the account of the interview. The extra had been gotten out in record-breaking time. He exclaimed furiously:

"The idiots! All nonsense! Listen! 'Steve Waldron, on finishing his story, said, 'That's all I can tell you now. I've proved that men are responsible for the destruction of New-

ark. I'm going to get some rest and start out to lick them." He expects to organize defense measures from his suite at the Mayfair Hotel—"

Waldron heard the inarticulate sound that Fran Dutt made. Fran's face was white as chalk.

"Get Lucy away from here. They mentioned this hotel and I'm not the only spy in New York."

Waldron's mouth dropped open. Then he stood up and grabbed Lucy's arm in one motion. He led her swiftly out the front revolving door. Fran Dutt followed them out and then moved quickly down the street. Seeing a taxicab discharging a passenger in front of the hotel entrance, Waldron thrust Lucy inside and snapped:

"Drive on! In a hurry! Speed!"

The taxi lurched. In half a block there was a traffic jam. In a block there was a red light. Waldron said fiercely: "Straight ahead—keep going!" The light glowed green and the cab started again.

There was a tumult of crashings behind them. Screams suddenly filled the air. Heavy, sodden bumps mingled with other screams and there was the shattering of plate glass and the roaring of automobile horns and the shrilling of police whistles.

Waldron looked back. He said evenly to the driver:

"Driver, the stuff that hit Newark is at work back there. You'd better step on the gas!"

T H R E E

THAT NIGHT occurred the most monumental traffic jam in New York's history. The business of Newark, alone, should have been sufficient stimulus to panic. But it hadn't been fully believed. However, the discovery that a small area—circular, and two crosstown blocks in diameter—in the very middle of New York was similarly affected, made panic inevitable.

In that two-block area, human beings lay frozen in that position and gesture they had held when struck by some unknown force. They lay toppled on the street or leaned drunkenly against some object that had arrested their fall. Motor vehicles had gone blindly mad, crashing into each other and into sidewalks. Some of them had rolled out of the stricken area like juggernauts, seeming corpses at their wheels.

With the spread of the news, the traffic jam began. As through repetition the facts about Newark became more and more plausible, more and more people uneasily decided to take their families farther away from the scenes of desolation. Suddenly it seemed that a whole city had taken to wheels.

This was the worst thing possible. The Holland and Lincoln tunnels could be crossed, and the George Washington Bridge was open. But nobody wanted to go closer to what they considered a plague spot. The bridges to Brooklyn and Long Island—these became the roads to safety. As a result, a ghastly crush built up at these exit points.

But most of the population wanted to get away by the highways leading north from Manhattan. The result was a jam to stagger the imagination. The cab in which Waldron and Lucy rode was caught in it. At first the cab moved yards, stopped, moved yards again. Presently it moved only feet at a time. But later it moved only inches.

At four o'clock in the morning their cab was hopelessly fixed in place. It had not stirred at all in almost an hour. Waldron grimly paid the driver and he and Lucy made for the sidewalk. They had to climb over bumpers. There appeared to be no sidewalk. Cars had filled all lanes in the streets, of course, and then desperate drivers had tried to use the sidewalks for traffic lanes. And they were stalled too.

Waldron led the way northward, squeezing past cars that were almost pressed against building walls.

"If we can get out of this and to where we can get a train," panted Waldron, helping Lucy get past a particularly tight place, "we can lose ourselves from Fran's crowd, and

I'll be able to find out something from these mice."

He still had the mice from Professor Jamison's flat, and he was bitterly certain that no police had gone there to get the others for doctors to work on. He was also certain that the young man who looked so much like Fran Dutt had not been arrested. And that some men had had a weapon which did on a small scale what had been done to all Newark and one four-block area in New York.

When the sun rose, they were still not at the end of the jam. The streets running north and south were rivers of stalled cars, over which hung reeking clouds of exhaust gases. And the traffic congestion was more hopeless than ever, because many cars had run out of gas, or had overheated and stopped. Many others had been abandoned by their owners, desperately resolved to try to escape the city by subway or by train.

Waldron and Lucy turned into a tiny lunchroom which was open despite the panic. Business was not normal, of course. The most important thing in life, this morning, seemed to be the news broadcasts. All broadcasting stations had abandoned all attempt at programming and simply ran news. This continued to be essentially that there was no news about anything within either Newark or the area around the Mayfair Hotel. Then two records were played and the same news was repeated.

Waldron ordered breakfast for Lucy and himself. Then he started for a telephone. A news broadcast came on. He listened.

. . . the authorities announce that the outbreak of plague in Manhattan—which, however, does not seem to be spreading; *repeat*, does not seem to be spreading—is due to the bringing of germs from Newark by a Mr. Steven Waldron, who claimed to have escaped the onset of the plague there. The new plague area has been surrounded by a military cordon. It is known that Waldron had been in the hotel. Everyone to whom he talked at a newspaper office has been isolated and every precaution is being taken against spread of the contagion. . . .

Waldron went back to Lucy. Nick Bannerman couldn't be reached, evidently, if he'd been isolated. Waldron drummed on the table, while immobile traffic outside the tiny restaurant filled all the air with misty exhaust fumes. He wondered if the mist he'd seen in Newark had appeared in the New York area now classed as a plague spot.

But then another broadcaster came on.

Rumors of an invasion from outer space, as the cause of the incredible disaster in Newark, continue to be spread. Physicians, examining the passengers and crew of a tube train which arrived from Newark with everybody seemingly dead, are unable to confirm or deny this report. The victims seem dead, but doctors refuse to perform autopsies in the absence of normal changes usually following death. While the use of extra-terrestrial weapons cannot be ruled out, as yet, a plague of previously unheard-of virulence is considered the more likely explanation. The sternest possible sanitary measures are now in force—

Waldron scowled. He got up.

"I'll call the Health Department and tell them where there are some plague-stricken mice," he said to Lucy, his tone sardonic. "If they do autopsies on them, they'll find out something—maybe."

He went into the phone booth and swung the door shut. The two breakfasts arrived and Lucy began to eat her bacon and eggs. She was mildly astonished that she could eat at all. But the events of the past sixteen hours were much too far out of normal to have normal effect. She watched Waldron as he talked on the phone. She saw his frowning concentration as he dialed again. Then he asked for someone and waited, and then he talked crisply. An instant later he looked incredulous. Then, infuriated, he barked at the instrument and slammed down the receiver.

When he returned he did not sit down to his own meal. He said briefly:

"We've got to move—and fast."

She rose unquestioningly. Outside, he raged:

"I told them they'd find cataleptic mice in Professor Jamison's apartment, together with a tied-up character who knew everything they wanted to know if they could sweat it out of him. And they wrote that down, very carefully, and then the imbecile I was talking to commanded me very impressively to stay where I was, until quarantine officials could come for me. He added that the phone call would be traced instantly."

Then he looked out at the steaming, stinking river of stalled cars.

"They won't get any squad cars here very fast. Come on."

He led her through the motionless mass of throbbing motors and headed for an alley on the far side of the street.

Two hours later they were far uptown. By that time bulldozers had been brought into play on the traffic. Bulldozers pushed stalled cars to one side and went rumbling down the cleared space in search of other stalled vehicles. Slowly but effectively abandoned or useless cars were weeded out. Traffic began to move a bit. The bulldozers kept on the job.

Waldron and Lucy watched a steady, glistening stream of flowing traffic racing northward. Nearby, a small uptown radio-TV store had its loudspeaker blaring news. The Commissioner of Police was on the air. There were two more plague spots in New York. One centered at the little restaurant from which Waldron had called. The other centered near Columbia University, where Waldron had told of cataleptic mice who could be dissected to learn what had happened to them.

Every place where this man Waldron is known to have been, the plague breaks out within an hour! We can only assume that he is himself a carrier of the unidentified disease, that he is immune to the disease which spreads death all around him. We have reason to know that he listens to news broadcasts. Therefore, I make a personal appeal to him to surrender himself for quarantine, so that the germs he scatters can be studied, so that this terrible plague can be arrested, so that uncounted thousands of his fellow-men may live out unharmed the lives his present conduct jeopardizes, that little children—

Somebody touched his arm. Waldron whirled, ready to do battle for freedom against this incredible stupidity. A man in a dark-blue shirt and a sport cap nodded to him.

"You lookin' for a way outa town?"

"Yes," said Waldron. "Why?"

"You look able-bodied," said the man in the cap. "Nobody but you and her?"

"That's all," said Waldron. "What's the idea?"

"I got a car," said the man calmly. "A pickup truck. And I got some kids. Traffic's moving fast, here. A pal of mine just came back from further out. I was gonna stop and pick him up. He and his wife walked it here, instead. Where this traffic goes over a bridge there's a mob waiting—folks trying to climb into cars. They knocked some drivers on the head and piled in. The cops can't do a thing. Any car that gets through has to fight through. My wife can drive. I'll make room for you two if you'll help scrap. Three of us with clubs 'd oughta do all right."

"I'm with you," Waldron told him.

The car was parked in a back yard. Four children, three women and three men cramped themselves into it. The children crouched down on the floor, while the men stood ready with clubs. Waldron fumbled in his pocket and gave Lucy the pistol that had belonged to her father. The man with the cap watched calmly. He indicated the clubs, which had once been part of a prized item of furniture, and said:

"This's solid maple, anyhow, and we got one extra. Let's go."

They drove out into the side street. A little later they got into the main stream of traffic, now moving at a fairly fast speed. Then, finally, they were out of town. There had been only one really bad place. A mob of people on foot tried to cross a bridge that was filled from brim to brim with every conceivable type of motor-driven vehicle. The mob was desperate. And when the cars were forced to slow up, the pedestrians tried to surge across the bridge. As they rushed forward they fought madly to get into and onto anything with wheels.

Fortunately, the pickup truck was in the very center.

Waldron saw a convertible buried under a writhing mass of assailants. Its driver was crushed and driving became impossible. The convertible crashed into another car. Screams arose. Seeming madmen leaped from it upon other cars—on their hoods, on their roofs—to be carried away from New York.

Waldron and the man with the cap and his pal had to fight only once. Three men swinging clubs were daunting.

Once outside of Manhattan, the pickup truck turned off the main highway. The woman driver of the truck very competently threaded side roads and byways instead of staying on the parkway where the great mass of traffic was.

But the woman took a wrong turn, and presently they found themselves riding into a sizeable small town. Worse, they crossed a highway bridge and saw the swarming, appalling, ghastly flood of traffic which was mobile New York in flight.

On the far side of the bridge, the truck stopped in order to back around and get back on relatively unused minor roads. Hardly anybody else realized these could carry them away from the metropolis.

"We'll get out here," said Waldron. "What I want is simply a town with a modern hospital in it. This should do."

"Us," said the owner of the pickup satisfiedly, "we're on the way up to Vermont. The wife's got a family up thataway and we're going to visit a while. We'll take you closer in where y'want to go. I like the way you swung that table leg."

The embattled pickup truck drove them into the town. Waldron and Lucy got out, and the man with the cap waved his hand cordially. His red-haired wife smiled briefly and a child piped: "G'bye."

The truck turned and disappeared toward Vermont.

"Now," said Waldron, "I'll want a hospital's laboratory. But the way to get the use of that is through a doctor—the best one in town."

They trudged to a drugstore, where they drank malted milks and ate sandwiches. They were advised of the name and office address of one of the town's best doctors.

They found the physician just returning from his morning round of calls. Entering the office with Lucy, Waldron said briefly that he was a fugitive from New York, that he'd been a research man with Professor Hamlin—the discoverer of daphnomyecitin—that he had some data on the affair in Newark.

After asking a few questions, the doctor warmed to Waldron. They could talk shop together and this inspired confidence in the medical man.

"My name," said Waldron evenly, "is Steve Waldron. I'm supposed to be a carrier of a plague. I'm not. It isn't a plague. I have some mice here that should be autopsied."

He kept his hand in his pocket, suddenly annoyed that he hadn't thought to get back the pistol from Lucy. But the doctor said mildly:

"It couldn't be a plague. A plague does have boundaries for its cases, but no plague ever known had a timing device built in for the simultaneous collapse of all its victims. And nothing has ever had a hundred per cent effect, either. What do you want to do? I don't advise a hospital. There is something about being on salary that makes a man timorous of breaking rules. A man who has to make decisions for himself takes chances. I've reasonable equipment here. ."

Waldron displayed his white mice. There were five of them and they were completely unbelievable. If they were dead, they should not be as hard as ivory. If they were not dead, there was simply no possible explanation for the condition in which they were. The doctor examined them.

"Here's my equipment," he said calmly. "Get to work. I'll keep in touch with you. I'd like to help, but I have patients."

Waldron set to work. It was then about noon. The doctor's office was equipped past the dreams of doctors of former years, but doctors needed more equipment than in the past. Waldron dissected one mouse, painstakingly. The flesh cut almost as if it were formed out of mahogany. The internal organs were precisely as solid. There was no abnormality except the incredible hardness in each organ and tissue. No ordinary chemical process could have produced

that hardening. The blood was solidified too. It had neither clotted nor separated. Its corpuscles were normal in appearance and number.

The doctor came in, went out and came in again. He checked Waldron's results, using his microscope. Everything was perfectly normal except for the utterly impossible, rock-like hardness of tissue. It seemed impossible!

At four o'clock Waldron felt complete intellectual frustration. It was about then that, in a last, unreasonable attempt to find some other anomaly than the rigidity of his specimens, he essayed to measure the electric resistance of muscle. He wanted to determine if muscle tissue would flex when an electric current passed through it, on the analogy of Galvani's frogs.

The muscles not only did not kick, they did not conduct current!

At first he could not believe it. He tried again and again. Then he stepped up the battery voltage. At twenty volts the needle of the millimeter flicked feebly—perhaps one, perhaps one and a half milliamperes. At twenty-five volts, the current jumped to sixty milliamperes. At thirty volts—

Waldron stared in stupefaction. The bit of tissue vanished completely from between the two electrodes. It seemed to evaporate instantly. It simply ceased to be.

He paced up and down the room, thinking furiously. Lucy watched anxiously. She'd been watching silently all the while he labored.

Presently he took one of the remaining cataleptic little creatures and moistened its fur in two places. He put electrodes in the two spots. He motioned to Lucy to watch. She came close, staring. He threw the switch.

The immobile white thing which was the mouse disappeared like the blown-out flame of a candle.

"Steve!" cried Lucy. "Where did it go?"

"To the place Straussman guessed at," said Waldron, with a grim and savage satisfaction. "You might call it the Other Side of Here. Some people have called it the fourth dimension, but that's wrong. And some have called it Avalon, and

Tir-nam-beo, and some have called it Hell. I suspect the last is closest. I'm certainly going to work like the devil to keep you from going there!"

He began to work more furiously than before. Now he used another tiny strip of muscle tissue from the dissected creature.

"Halfway between," he muttered. "Intermediate stage. Now what will cancel it? Hm . . . Orientation . . . The mouse is as if it were magnetized. . . A crazy idea! But the way to demagnetize something . . ."

He worked swiftly with wires and rheostats. The doctor's office had X-ray machines, and an electrocardiograph machine, and diathermy— He used the diathermy machine. He placed two terminals on moistened spots of a strip of muscle. The diathermy machine would send high-frequency currents through the tiny bit of flesh.

He turned on the diathermy current. The muscle stretched. It sagged.

Waldron paced up and down yet, and Lucy watched him with absorbed attention. He seemed to be suffering as he frowned in concentration and scowled at some mental difficulty. Clenching and unclenching his hands unconsciously, he worked out one item after another. Lucy began to feel uneasy. But Waldron was actually feeling the deepest satisfaction a scientific worker can experience. The items of a difficult problem were beginning to fit themselves together. Answers to other parts of the large problem were beginning to suggest themselves.

He was working on the third mouse, fitting the electrodes to its body, when the doctor came back. Waldron called him. His hands were shaking with triumph and excitement.

"Watch this, Doctor!" he commanded feverishly. "I've put this mouse in a diathermy circuit! I doubt that such high-frequency is necessary, but—" He brought himself under control. "Check the mouse, please. I think a diathermy circuit will bring it back to normal-tissue condition. I've even got a crazy idea— Check this!"

The doctor asked questions. Waldron told him, with diffi-

culty, of the effect of the diathermy current on muscle tissue that had been dissected out. He showed that bit of tissue. He showed the other dissected parts of the mouse, still iron-hard. The doctor fumbled at his chin. Then, without words, he picked up the mouse Waldron had made ready. He examined it carefully. It was iron-hard. It was at least cataleptic. He put it back as Waldron had arranged it. In silence, he waved Waldron away and threw the diathermy switch.

There was a faint humming sound and the smell of ozone. A frightened squeak rose and a small white mouse fought frantically to release itself from entrapment. The doctor picked the rodent up and dropped it in a porcelain tray. The mouse ran about feverishly and then subsided, its beady small eyes fearfully regarding the humans above it.

Waldron's face glowed. "They're not dead!" he cried. "The hundreds of thousands of people like that—they can be brought back to normal and to life with diathermy machines! The odds are that even simpler stuff—any high-frequency current of high enough voltage—will do the trick. But if you try to tell anybody about it, Doctor, one of the spies of the people who're pulling this trick will be on the job to stop you. They're after me. We've got to work out a fool-proof trick."

The doctor said quietly: "Without wasting words congratulating you, I think you must be right. I'll call every doctor in town here, describe your results and invite them here for a demonstration. Then, separately, we will head in for New York. We assuredly have data justifying the use of diathermy machines on patients nobody else has any idea how to treat. We will revive those patients. And then we will name you. Not before. If anyone admitted he had been in contact with you, he would probably be mobbed. Have you been listening to the news broadcasts?"

Waldron shook his head.

"It's bad," said the doctor calmly. "So bad, indeed, that I would suggest that you tear some of my equipment apart and try to improvise something on the order of a high-

frequency generator that will not produce a fever. To use as —ah—an immunizer against whatever causes this condition of catalepsy.”

There were two white mice left in the condition which had seemed to be rigid death. The doctor carefully put them aside for use in his scheduled demonstration. Then he began to make his calls to fellow-physicians.

Waldron got to work. He understood, with deep satisfaction, what the device Fran had put under the car had done. It had generated high-frequency currents in the metal of the car. Those currents had induced high-frequency currents in Waldron's and Lucy's bodies. He took out the gadget and examined it. Melted as it was, it was useless. He threw it away. It was much easier to improvise small battery-operated generators of his own.

He made one battery-operated high-frequency generator, then another. He set to work on a third, a fourth. Meanwhile, the doctor made one phone call after another. Waldron could hear his voice, very calm and unexcited, as he talked to other doctors or tracked them down through their nurses. He was setting a time for the demonstration so that all of them should be able to attend. There were only two mice left to use in the experiment.

The doctor finished his calls and came to watch Waldron at work. Darkness fell outside. However, the office remained brightly lighted, and the expression on the faces of the three remained enwrapped. Waldron was absorbed in his work and in speculations as to the complete disappearance of a mouse when a direct current was passed through its body. Straussman's Theory gave a clue to that. Straussman had expounded a completely unconvincing theory, which among other things implied the possibility of such a disappearance. He, himself, had disappeared. But nobody believed it. It was quite irrational and nobody believed in things that do not make sense.

The doctor watched with professional interest, while Lucy observed with a peculiarly wistful, almost maternal pride. Outside, there was a continuing faint noise of the

traffic on the Merritt Parkway, half a mile out of town. Also, there were the closer sounds of the town's cars and human beings.

"It was a crazy guess," said Waldron, almost ashamedly. "I thought of the analogy to magnetism. The mice, according to Straussman's Theory, would be partly in a state analogous to magnetism. And the way to demagnetize a magnet is to use alternating current. I had controlled alternating current in the diathermy machine. I even figured that high-frequency would be better than low-frequency. But it was a crazy idea. I had the break of a lifetime when it worked."

He slipped dry batteries into place in the little generator he had made. He turned it on. It was almost soundless, but it created tiny high-frequency currents. It should—

There was an impact somewhere out in the street. There was a thunderous crash somewhere a block away. A long distance off, there rose a growling noise. It was a most unusual and extremely distinctive noise. Waldron was probably the only man in the world who would have recognized it instantly. It was the sound of innumerable crashings of unguided cars. It was the roar of sound rising out of uncountable collisions.

Waldron jerked his head up, his face going white. The other two in the office sat quite still. Lucy did not move a muscle; the doctor did not even blink. They were stiff, motionless—cataleptic.

Waldron swore thickly. The sound of crashings ended. The town outside fell silent—utterly silent. It was as still as Newark and those "plague spots" in Manhattan. It was the silence of death—no, it was worse than that. It was the silence of life which was frozen and chained and hopelessly imprisoned in stiffened flesh.

Then he heard quiet, unexcited voices. They spoke an unintelligible language. He heard footsteps. They moved in an approximate cadence, like men marching together upon a certain definite errand.

The footsteps came closer. They moved directly for the small building housing the doctor's office. Waldron listened

with his hands clenched fiercely on the small object he'd made. Lucy and the physician were absolutely motionless. They did not even breathe.

Waldron knew bitterly that this small town had become what men would call a plague spot. One of the city's physicians, informed of a prospective proof of a way to cure the "plague," had reported that specimens of "plague-stricken" experimental animals were in the city. He had named the physician who proposed to display them to other medical men. And Fran Dutt's compatriots had learned of the report. They had, therefore, made a new dead spot, a new plague spot of this small town, so that they might seize that doctor. And they would seize Lucy and, of course, Waldron himself. They would completely prevent anybody from finding out what Waldron now knew.

F O U R

WALDRON found himself standing up, gripping the little device he'd just made with fury-tautened fingers. He didn't have the pistol that had belonged to Lucy's father. She had it. He'd get it and at least kill some of this crew. Veins throbbed on his forehead with his hatred and his rage.

But then he looked down at the small device in his hands. In its interior a tiny tongue of metal wavered back and forth, and a tiny blue spark flickered. Because of that spark and the high-frequency currents it generated, Waldron himself was still able to move and breathe. And there around him were the other outfits.

He moved clumsily to the diathermy machine and turned its switch without releasing the device in his hands. He picked up the two leads which had revived the mice. Very, very carefully—not breaking the effect of his own tiny machine—he sent the diathermy current through the doctor's body.

The doctor stirred.

"Quiet!" said Waldron in a low tone. "You've had a dose

of what they call the plague. Now you're out of it. But keep quiet and listen. While I keep high-frequency flowing through your body, start up that other pack on the table. Start it!"

The doctor stared hard at Lucy. Then he listened.

"Yes!" said Waldron bitterly. "The town's dead! Quick!"

The doctor moved like a man accustomed to emergencies. Waldron drew back. The doctor still moved.

"Good!" said Waldron. "Lift Lucy over here. The wires won't reach her."

The doctor obeyed without words. He was very pale, but a man who confronts the daily emergencies of a general practitioner learned to act without stopping to talk. He lifted Lucy to within Waldron's reach with the diathermy terminals. Waldron touched them to her. She shuddered, stared and then gasped, looking at Waldron with horror-filled eyes.

"Right," said Waldron. "They've frozen the town around us. Doctor, give her that third generator. Start it."

He withdrew the diathermy terminals. Lucy continued to move and breathe. There was no sensation from either the diathermy or Waldron's own make of high-frequency generator. He switched off the big machine. He still breathed. He had been unreasonably fearful about that.

Now the sound of nearing footsteps was very plain.

"They stopped to check a street number," he said grimly. "Fran Dutt's compatriots, Lucy. We've got to get out of here and we've got to do it quietly. We can't fight. Doctor, it's up to you to get us out of here without a sound."

Without a word, the doctor led the way. They went through a side door from his office and came to a dark hallway. Steps led down and Waldron steadied Lucy, cautioning her under his breath. At last, the doctor opened a door ahead of them with infinite caution. The cool fragrance of night swept against their faces. Behind them, feet tramped into the building they had just left.

They went swiftly away into the dark. Behind them they heard voices: argument in an unknown tongue. Somebody tramped heavily down stairs again. The fugitives moved faster.

There was gruesomeness and terror all about. The street lamps still burned brightly. Lights in the houses were on. But no living creature moved anywhere. The three could see into a lighted room. A family was seated there, but not a person moved. They passed a car in which were a young man and a girl. The motor idled softly. The girl had just gotten in beside her sweetheart. He had snatched a furtive, quick and eager kiss—and had frozen in the act.

And a long, long way on—when they felt almost safe—they saw a woman sitting on the step of one of the meaner houses. She was bent over a tiny, carefully wrapped bundle which she held in her arms. The bundle was a baby. The woman would sit in that pose of unconscious tenderness through the night, and through days and nights to come.

They came to another parked car. There was no one in it. Waldron reached inside and fumbled with his hand.

"Somebody left the key in the lock. He meant to be right back. We need this, Doctor."

Very quietly, they climbed in and Waldron pressed the starter. There was very little sound. The car purred softly and Waldron drove away, moving swiftly into high gear to avoid the telltale whine. He did not turn on any lights, as his eyes were now fairly well accustomed to the dark.

Three times, he checked the car sharply to keep from running into something. Once, with tight-clamped jaws, he went up on a sidewalk to avoid running over persons lying absurdly in the street. He knew they were alive, no matter how they looked.

They got out of the town. Just beyond the houses there was a brightly lighted filling station, in which blared a radio. A big, black, glistening car was pulled up at the tank. A station attendant worked the pump. But it had shut itself off and nobody moved. The car itself was empty. Its occupants had probably gone into the filling station for cigars or soft drinks. Waldron saw a huddle of bodies on the floor. One of them had been frozen in the act of hearty laughter.

"We take this car," said Waldron coldly. "Hunted as I am, I need something with speed to it. You keep the car you've got, Doctor, and head in to New York. If you get to a hospi-

tal and revive a few patients, maybe some of the fatheads who think this is a plague will believe you. But make sure you get some more high-frequency generators made up!"

The radio inside the filling station blatted:

In fourteen hours there has been no enlargement of the three plague spots in Manhattan. The area about Newark, however, has enlarged twice. The first enlargement was near sunrise this morning, when a number of Army quarantine teams were overwhelmed, and the other was late this afternoon when a party of newspapermen and press photographers, touring the edges of the plague spot, were apparently overtaken. It is understood that though every precaution had been taken against infection .

"I notice," said the doctor quietly, "they don't mention the name of any well-known medical authority as calling it a plague."

"I can guess," said Waldron bitterly, "that anybody big enough to have more sense was picked off ahead of time—or else was caught in one of those two 'enlargements.'"

The radio voice went on:

. . . There is some hope that the virulence of the plague is dying down. This is not unusual in epidemics. In any case, the failure of the plague spots to spread is encouraging. No sporadic outbreaks have been reported, proving that the plague is at least not wind-borne. It has been suggested to the Plague Administration, in fact, that the plague may be artificial—

Waldron's eyes brightened. "Brains at last!"

. . . in that Steven Waldron, known to have been the source of infection in the New York plague spots, had been working in antibiotic research. It is suggested that during his work he produced some mutation of a familiar organism which is the deadly agent at work now. It has been suggested that his mind became unhinged and that he has released the culture deliberately. This view has not been officially accepted by the Plague

Administration but all police officers everywhere have been urged to seize Waldron wherever he may be found. His description and facsimile photograph is being transmitted to every police department in fourteen states. If possible, he should be taken unharmed for questioning, but at all costs his career as a plague-spreader

Waldron laughed without any mirth. "I was a little ahead of myself. But at that I'd probably have guessed the same thing about somebody else. Take care, Doctor, not to admit you've seen me until you've proved you can revive the patients they're planning to bury, and until other men doing other revivals are protected as you are."

The doctor very deliberately finished filling the gas tank of the car Waldron had stolen.

"I shall be careful," he said dryly. "I pay you no compliments. Not yet. They would be rather futile when I think what your discovery means. I drive on to New York at once. . . . Will Miss Blair accept my protection back to the city?"

Waldron was silent.

"N-no," said Lucy. "I've been with Steve. They'd lock me up as a plague-spreader, too. And . . . Steve and I . . ."

"You may be wise," said the doctor cynically. "I'll go now."

Starting the first stolen car and meshing the gears, he drove off into the night. Waldron loaded up the other, larger car with batteries and assorted parts with which small HF generators for personal protection could be made. The doctor, of course, had done exactly the right thing. But Waldron could not feel that what the soft-speaking physician did would make any difference. Certainly with police departments urged to hunt Waldron down dead or alive, he and Lucy were in no cheerful situation.

Dr. James Armistead reached the edge of New York just as news of the blotting out of his own home town became known to the public. There had been panic enough before. But after this last bit of news, the frenzied craving for the

means of flight became a mania. However, when the doctor approached the city with knowledge of how to alleviate its terror and revive the victims of what everybody believed a plague, he ran into a blockade. Men swarmed into his car, battered him into unconsciousness. They then fought savagely among themselves for possession of the car.

Meanwhile, Waldron and Lucy had driven off into the darkness in another direction, leaving behind them a filling station attendant looking up at a gasoline gauge with an expression of absorption which would remain upon his face for days or weeks.

Waldron drove. At first he used only the parking lights and moved slowly. But after some miles he turned on the full headlights and the big car leaped ahead. A long time later, when a rabbit leaped frightenedly from the road before them, he was sure they were beyond the area of affliction. He relaxed, for he had felt a nagging anxiety that one of the high-frequency packs might cease to work at any instant.

"We're out of the dead spot," he told Lucy. "Tell me: while you were frozen, did you know it?"

"N-no," said Lucy. "One instant I was sitting in the chair, watching you twist two wires together. And suddenly the doctor was holding me toward you and you had your hands on my arms and I wasn't in the chair at all. I had no feeling of time-lapse."

"I think we should thank God for that!" said Waldron. "If all those hundreds of thousands of people could see and hear and feel but not move, they'd be better off actually dead. But they won't know anything until they're revived. That, at least, is merciful."

He slowed the car and searched the sides of the road.

"What are you looking for, Steve?"

"A hiding place," said Waldron briefly. "The packs we have are all right. They saved us. But they're makeshift. I want to connect them up so they'll use storage-battery current while we're in the car and go on dry cell only if we get out. And I want to change the dry cells. Also, I think you need some rest."

"How about you?"

Waldron shrugged. He did not feel sleepy, but he was beginning to feel that numbness which came from complete weariness of mind and body.

Presently he found a small side road. It was hardly more than a dirt road that led through the pinewood that bordered the highway. Seeing that it showed no sign of recent use, Waldron turned in it and drove a hundred yards or so. The road wound and twisted, and low-hanging branches swished over the car's roof.

"Okay," he said, and cut the ignition. "Now we should be all right for a while. I'm going to fix our life savers. When they're done, I'll take a nap until sunrise. Curl up in the back and go to sleep if you can."

Lucy hesitated, and then obediently moved to the wide, soft rear seat. Waldron cut all but the instrument-board lights and set to work as best he could in the unsatisfactory illumination.

There was silence. A breeze blew outside and tree branches sighed and whispered. Lucy was still. Waldron spliced wires and made contacts. From time to time, there was a faint humming sound as he tested some new arrangement.

Lucy stirred and sat quietly for a long time. She stirred again. Then she said:

"Steve . . . I haven't asked anything about my father for a long time. Does what you've found out tell anything about him?"

"He's in Fran Dutt's homeland," said Waldron flatly. "Fran said he was unharmed. I more than suspect he is. I believe it."

"But . . . where's that? What country? Where?"

Waldron frowned. He scraped wires. He twisted them together. "Tricky to explain," he said slowly. "But you remember that your father was working on Straussman's Theory. Straussman sprang his wild ideas all of thirty years back, or even more. Scientists laughed at him. They classed him with Fort. He said two objects could be in the same

place at the same time. Compenetration was philosophically possible. But in *fact*—they said it was ridiculous. When Straussman claimed experimental proof, nobody would even look at it. So Straussman disappeared. He vanished into thin air. Nobody cared. His theory lay fallow for thirty years, until somebody noticed that he'd anticipated some extremely ticklish wave-mechanics stuff. Then they realized that he had something. But I don't think anybody understands it all yet."

"My father said that much, Steve."

"Just so. Your father examined his theories. He published a paper on that two-objects-in-the-same-space-and-time angle. It was just about then that Fran Dutt turned up, so brilliant and so admiring that your father took him on as assistant. Remember?"

"He offered to work without pay for the privilege of serving with Father in pure research."

"With the purest of motives," said Waldron ironically, "as we know now. He was sent to spy on your father, just in case he found out something in this pure research of his."

He tightened two twisted wires with pliers.

"In the living room of your house," he said presently, "there's a mirror hanging on the wall. If you look in that mirror you see another living room in the space where actually there's a dining room. Right?"

"You see a reflection," said Lucy. "What has that to do with my father?"

"You'll understand in a minute. But you say it's a reflection you see, not another room, because you can't walk into it. It does not affect things which are real, and so can't be real itself. But if it did affect other things it would be real, whether you could walk into it or not. Is that right?"

Lucy knitted her brows. "I suppose so," she admitted doubtfully. "But I don't see . . ."

"Straussman says that the fact that we can't touch a thing or walk into it doesn't prove it doesn't exist. There are a lot of things we never see, but know exist. A press that prints the morning paper. The television transmitter that sends out

programs. The dark companion of Sirius. We don't see them, and the last can't possibly be seen. But we infer their reality from their effects."

Lucy stirred restlessly.

Waldron said: "There are some unexplained effects: the difficulty in calculating the moon's exact position; the anomaly in the orbit of Mercury. More things—very many more things—in wave-mechanics. Straussman suggested that those effects were like the reflection in your mirror, if it were real. Matter we can't touch or discover in ordinary physical ways. Matter, you might say, in another set of dimensions—though that isn't really it at all. Straussman talked about atomic polarities and the planes of rotation of electrons. He suggested that all the atoms of a given bit of matter must have their poles pointing very nearly in the same direction or they won't hold together. They have to face the same way, like a company of soldiers' drilling. If they don't face together they aren't an organization but a mob."

"But Steve! What has this to do with my father?"

"Everything," Waldron told her. "Just before he disappeared, he'd worked out an experiment to prove or disprove Straussman's theory. If Straussman is right, there is more than one kind of matter. There are at least three kinds, probably six, possibly eighteen and conceivably fifty-four different kinds of earth, air, water, and, of course, fire."

Lucy was silent.

"Like companies of soldiers," added Steve. "In open order. Some of them face east. Naturally they're not part of the organization which faces north. They can pass right through each other. And there are other soldiers lying on their backs staring up at the sky. If they're far enough apart—and the atoms in solid substances are relatively almost as far apart as the stars—they won't even see each other when one passes through the others. Change to atoms for soldiers and atomic poles for facings, and have the atomic poles face in different directions, and according to Straussman the two or three, or however many different kinds of matter there are, would not affect each other perceptibly—unless one looked very closely. Matter of one orientation could pass

right through matter facing differently. There's plenty of room between atoms! We couldn't feel a cannonball passing through our bodies if it were made of one of those other sorts of matter."

Lucy spoke uneasily: "You mean it could be like one of those fourth dimensions people write stories about. There could be another world right around the corner, or something like that."

"According to Straussman, there would *have* to be another world right around the corner. Even if a planet were formed of one kind of matter, the pressure at its center would be so great that some of the atoms would have to yield and be squeezed into another orientation. That would be—in a sense—another world. If the pressure held up, some of those atoms would be squeezed into yet another angle of facing, to get room to exist in. And so there'd be pressures forcing the existence of other worlds whose atoms faced every way that atoms could face in order to get room to exist.

"Super-heavy suns and planets and so on are simply assumed to have a large number of such otherwise-oriented companions occupying the same space. That's how he accounted for the excess of Earth's mass over the specific gravity of what it's made of. The dark companion of Sirius is explained that way. And so on and so on and so on. Rather wild?"

"I remember my father talking that way," said Lucy dubiously. "But I haven't a head for that sort of thing. And what does it have to do with his disappearance?"

Waldron painstakingly fitted small parts together. Then he said: "Those mice I worked with had been in some artificial condition which partly changed the direction of their atom poles. Instead of east or north, they faced part-way between. When I put a direct current through them, they seemed to vanish. But I think it simply completed the change in the direction of their atom poles. They switched to a direction which isn't real in our world, but is very real in a world I suspect Fran comes from. I think your father was sent to that world by a similar process. He must have been

expected. Fran says he's alive and unharmed. He should know! He was translated from that world to this. He's probably in regular communication."

"But . . . another world . . . a fourth dimension . . ."

"There've been several scientists vanishing, lately," Waldron told her. "They got too close to the facts. So they were snatched. But now I've made an apparatus which prevents snatching. Once it's known and proved what Fran's gang are doing, we're close enough to do the trick ourselves and go into Fran's homeland and raise the devil."

Lucy sat still. Then she leaned forward from the back seat, moving to where Waldron worked.

"I don't quite understand, Steve," she said unsteadily, "but somehow I know you can do what you say. Won't you—won't you kiss me good night?"

Waldron kissed her. Then he said gruffly:

"Now go back where you belong, woman! Even if I am going to marry you, I'm human!"

He went back to work, that she might doze off while he was still awake. He made another power-pack. The parts from the filling station were superior. He made a second. He heard Lucy's breathing grow even and regular. He became conscious of the small sounds in the night outside the car. The wind made branches rustle. Presently, Waldron turned on the car radio very low. It murmured, almost inaudibly:

. . . thirty thousand more victims. It is considered established that the plague is the result of mutant bacteria developed by Waldron during his work with antibiotics. He is immune and acts as a madman sowing death. We do have the comfort that it does not spread, except by his action. And therefore it is officially announced that Waldron must be stopped at any imaginable cost. He may be shot down like a mad dog . . .

Waldron turned off the radio and shrugged his shoulders.

FIVE

AT TEN o'clock the next morning the phrase likening Waldron to a mad dog had been demonstrated. He was regarded as beyond all human kinship. The news broadcasts made it plain that one man—and one man only—was responsible for the most blood-chilling catastrophe in human history. And Waldron had planned things quite otherwise.

It was obvious, by now, that the physician who had started out with a high-frequency power-pack and certain knowledge of how to revive stone-hard people had not gotten through to anybody who would accept his offer to revive the supposedly dead.

The black car was hidden from overhead detection by trees which stretched over the curving narrow highway. Half a mile ahead, a northward-reaching road was jammed with a black, unending, crawling stream of motor vehicles. By this time, stalled cars had closed the Merritt Parkway. Now other, parallel roads were in use as escape routes from New York. Waldron was moving down one of them. There was not one gap in the flood of vehicles moving north. Above them hung an effluvium of burned gasoline and cylinder oil. It seemed that the very air was filled with a terror that became a palpable reality.

Waldron had tried to make a phone call from a deserted farmhouse. A desperately plausible individual had tried to keep him in conversation. But the ruse hadn't worked. Waldron had hurried back to the car and roared away to a hiding place under trees. Planes had appeared only minutes later. They bombed the deserted farmhouse from which he'd talked. They bombed a tractor in a nearby field. They went on to bomb other deserted farmhouses. That was when Waldron shot the car to a more distant place of hiding.

By the time the planes returned to soar above the remains of the building from which he'd spoken, the black car was a long way off. Now Waldron looked down at the preposterous

right of a city's population in flight by totally inadequate means.

"See if you can spot those planes," he said presently. "If we can't see them, they probably can't see us."

Lucy got out of the car and went back to where the sky was clearly visible. From far off came the sound of new explosions. Lucy returned. She was tense.

"They're behind that last big hill."

"If you're right," said Waldron, "we may live a little while longer. I'm going to hit this migration."

The black car's motor roared. It shot forward, horn blaring. But there was no possible way for the mass of fugitives to open a path for it. There was not two feet of space between any two cars. However, Waldron kept the car headed toward the flood of traffic. The scream of the car's horn and its seemingly irresistible momentum caused a flurry ahead. Cars tried to close up the tiny spaces to make room and avoid being struck. A protesting din of horn-tootings arose.

It looked like sheer ruthlessness. But Waldron did jam on the brakes as the traffic ahead turned into a bedlam of horns and shoutings. However, a very minor gap had been produced by his tactics in the nearer line of cars. Thrusting his front wheels into that gap, Waldron drove ahead. He pushed the nose of his car into the line and gave all other men the choice of making room for him, or of smashing him and themselves.

Bitter curses rose around him. There were grindings and scrapings. The black car was struck, jarred and dented. A wave of bumper clashings went backward and forward among the cars, like the rippling of water disturbed by a stone. But he was in the traffic, moving and breathing in the mephitic fumes it created.

Loud explosions burst off to one side. The last possible farmhouse in which Waldron could have hidden had now been bombed. The planes, completing their bombing run, flew over the line of traffic. They swept back. Waldron knew that if there had been the barest suspicion that he was in the stream of cars, bombs would have been dropped there too.

"When we humans," said Waldron, "get an idea in our heads, we do carry things to extremes."

But he made no other comment. The car next to them was an ancient taxicab jammed with scared men and women, including a woman with a sleeping baby. The car directly ahead was a delivery truck jammed with Negroes. Beside that was a sports car containing seven people. A motorcycle-and-side-car combination seemed lost in the traffic, though it carried a woman and three children besides the motorcyclist.

A heavy-duty juggernaut of a truck was loaded with household possessions as well as a family, which was certainly not that of the corporation owning the truck. A sedan, neat and trim and newly polished, had all the windows on one side smashed. A limousine held a white-haired woman and an elderly man in the back; in the front were servants in livery. The footman beside the driver had a repeating shotgun between his knees.

Yet, despite the seeming confusion, there were distinctly four lanes of cars. Waldron discovered that his lane moved faster than the next. Presently he saw the cause. An ancient, angular car of the style of fifteen years before was in the stalled line. Steam came from its radiator and a thunderous thumping noise came from its innards.

The engine was no longer running. The thumping came from somewhere in the motor as the wreck on four wheels was pushed by the car behind it. And that other car did not serve willingly, its driver cursing and shouting furiously. And Waldron heard a pounding noise and discovered that it was a flat tire on the wheeled wreck, which bumped and banged and thumped. But in that traffic it was not possible to stop to change tires.

The horde of fugitives pressed on. Once something made the whole column slow down. Then it moved again and Waldron saw a car being pushed off the road. It had caught fire.

This went on for hours. The maximum speed was five miles an hour. Shortly after noon Lucy worried because Waldron had nothing to eat. She took his knife and hacked

open a can of the fruit they'd brought from the grocery shelves in the filling station. She fed him as he drove. She had seen other drivers in the swarm being fed and refreshed in the same way.

But the strain was great, not only on men but on machines. Motors heated and boiled. Sometimes they caught fire and flamed luridly. Again they passed in solemn procession a place where a burning car had been heaved out of the way by main strength. It was a pyramid of fire. Its gas tank exploded when they were only a hundred yards beyond and there was tragedy. But the snail-like flight continued.

Then, quite suddenly, the line broke. Some cars darted to the right, where a great highway led northeast. Some swerved to the left and their motors roared as they sped away. Some went straight on, and divided further along, and re-divided.

Waldron turned on the car radio again.

"I've got a hunch what I'll have to do," he said heavily. "But we might as well check up on developments during the day."

The radio hummed. Music came out of it. Waldron estimated the traffic ahead and behind. He drew out of the road. At least he could get back on it when he chose, here.

The music stopped. An announcer said:

News bulletin! It is still not certain that Waldron has been killed and further outbreaks of the plague thus prevented. But he attempted to communicate with authorities this morning, speaking incoherently of reviving plague victims. Planes bombed the farmhouse from which he is believed to have telephoned, and other previously evacuated dwellings in the neighborhood. Two automobiles, also, moving in the same area, were bombed. One was found to be in use by a band of looters. The occupants of the other car have not yet been identified. It is hoped, however, that Waldron is dead, though only with his death made sure can we be positive that no other plague spots will appear. Meanwhile, military cordons have been thrown about New-ark and the three other areas

"We get an idea in our heads," Waldron observed bitterly, "and we keep it until it's knocked out. And it happens that I'm probably the only person who knows that this idea has to be jolted out of official craniums. It's going to be dangerous, Lucy. I'll drive you to a railroad station. I've got some cash. You can get on a train and go as far as it will take you—"

"No!" said Lucy fiercely.

"It would be safer, though I don't know how much."

"There are just two people in the world I care about," said Lucy, as savagely as before. "There's my father and there's you, Steve. My father is alive, but he's in the hands of the people who're making this monstrous thing they call the plague. And you— Don't you see, Steve, that if anything happens to you I've nothing to live for any more?"

"I'd question that," said Waldron dryly, "but it happens that I don't see much for anybody to live for if Fran's gang isn't licked. He wanted you to go out West. That may mean all the East is likely to be frozen. And Fran—" He frowned. "If Fran's people know you're with me, and they probably do, if you were captured they'd probably make very sure of you. And Fran risked his life and all his family's to prevent it. So the only choice is staying with me or going West, far West."

"I stay!" said Lucy. "Anywhere you go, I go too. And if you're—if you're killed—"

Her voice wavered. Waldron put his hand on hers. "You're a good kid, Lucy." Then he said brusquely, "Our first job is gas and oil. We need it. Then we'll have just about enough time to smash that cordon around Newark in daylight. We can drive without lights and won't be seen from a distance."

He started the motor again. The wheels spun, gripped the gravel. The car roared into the traffic, which here was speeding, but a bare mile back was hardly crawling. Three miles farther on, they bought gas. Waldron asked for road directions to the Bear Mountain Bridge across the Hudson.

Traffic remained heavy, but no bar to reasonable speed. They descended into the town of Peekskill and found it

agitated and uneasy. It was far enough from the developed plague spots to be less than panicky, but there was enough of the fear-stricken traffic going through to make the townspeople uncertain.

Waldron drove on up and through the winding, climbing curves in the Reservation, and presently he coasted down again and crossed on that singularly lonely-looking cantilever bridge to the Jersey shore. Here he ran into more and heavier traffic. It seemed that all of Jersey was fleeing north.

It would have been impossible to have headed south along the river road. All its lanes were filled with north-bound cars. Instead, Waldron headed inland, keeping far enough from any direct route to Newark to avoid arousing suspicion.

Until within an hour of sundown there were no major problems. Very few cars were headed in his direction, although there were very many passing from the opposite way. Waldron drove and listened to the special bulletins as they were broadcast. There was no further development of what was called "the plague." The bulletins had to do with the exodus of fugitives from New York, with the exact limits of the four known dead spots, and repeated assurances that they were not growing in size.

There was also the announcement that a youthful bacteriologist had isolated the germ which was responsible for the plague. Also reported was the arrest of divers persons who were offering, confidentially, absolutely sure and certain specifics against the plague. For five dollars, it was disclosed, these gentlemen had offered a draught which immunized the drinker against all germs of every sort, known and unknown.

The bulletins continued to mention Waldron. Hysterical mobs had thought they recognized him in seven different places. Anybody who acted in a manner anybody considered suspicious was likely to be taken for the wanted man. Steve Waldron and Satan were considered to be very probably the same person. Three of the poor devils suspected of being Waldron were killed out of hand. The others were at the least severely mauled.

In Nutley, Waldron was stopped and questioned. A state trooper flagged him down and asked where he was going. Knowing his surroundings, Waldron could give satisfactory answers. The trooper warned him of the limits of the cordon, told him that the sanitary guards had been authorized to be trigger-happy and waved him on. It began to look as if crashing the cordon would not be easy.

It was at this moment that he saw a tiny drugstore which defiantly remained open for business in spite of terror. He stopped before it and went in. He bought paper and envelopes, scribbled a message and signed his name.

Only fifteen minutes later, a soldier stopped the black car at a barrier across the road.

"No civilians allowed to go past here," he announced. "You'll have to turn around, Mac, and go back."

"I've got a letter for the commanding officer," said Waldron. "From the Mayor of Nutley to the officer in command along here. I don't know what it's about, but it's important."

The soldier hesitated. Waldron held out an envelope. The soldier looked at the address.

"I guess it's okay. But don't go too fast! Maybe a quarter-mile down this road there's a barrier with a red lantern on it. That's all there is to stop you from going right on into plague territory. And you don't want to go there, Mac! Besides, there's orders to shoot to kill if anybody goes into plague territory an' then tries to come back. See?"

"I see," said Waldron.

He drove on, Lucy's hand closed tightly on his sleeve. Presently he could see Newark. There was a thin, faint mist just barely visible above the tops of the buildings. Even drone planes had been prevented from getting any photographs of the streets near the center of the town.

Waldron saw a red lantern across the road. A few paces to the right a bonfire burned, its brightness emphasizing the deepening dusk. The car rolled up to the barrier. Soldiers ran to intercept him, shouting.

"Officer in command!" called Waldron. "Letter for him!"

"Here," said a young lieutenant, by the fire.

He came forward and took the letter from Steve's hand.

He went back to the fire to read it. The other soldiers, of course, relaxed. There seemed no need for vigilance. But Waldron had not stopped his motor. He put the car into low gear as if to turn around, suddenly shifted gears, sent it hurtling forward and hit the barrier with a crash. It toppled and he rolled across it. In seconds he was in the forbidden area. He flashed on his headlights and instantly flashed them off again. He had seen enough of the road and he drove like mad.

Behind him there was stunned astonishment. On instinct, every man looked to their officer for orders. And he stood staring at the sheet of paper in his hand with the look of a man regarding a snake. The blood had drained so completely from his face that he looked white even in the ruddy firelight.

He croaked unintelligibly. Then he dropped the paper into the flames. He brushed off his hands feverishly.

"That was Waldron!" he cried thickly. "He's gone back to the plague. . ."

He had not read the letter. Like most men receiving a letter on one sheet, he had glanced first at the signature, and the signature was enough. Steven Waldron! In frozen horror, he thought instantly that this might be the way in which the plague-spreader Waldron had created other plague-spots elsewhere. Germs, bacteria—in a letter that would scatter them when opened. The officer watched the fire devour the letter, hoping against hope that all plague-forming germs were being destroyed.

The letter, of course, had contained exact instructions for reviving persons who were victims of the plague. But it had been signed by Waldron. So it had not been read at all. And therefore some hundreds of thousands of people would remain stiff and motionless—to all intents and purposes, dead.

Meanwhile, Waldron and Lucy careered onward through increasing obscurity toward the city of silence and of seeming death. At a signal from Waldron, Lucy turned on the little high-frequency generators that had served their purpose before. Waldron drove without lights, and as he neared the city he slowed for more silent driving. Toward the last,

the car crawled, while the sunset colors faded and died, and the obscurity of dusk became darkness.

Presently something crunched under a wheel. Waldron could make out the outlines of houses, but he had been unable to see the thing lying on the ground.

Sickened, he stopped. He made sure of the revolver. Then, taking Lucy's hand, he started cautiously for the center of the town on foot.

There is no darkness so deep as that of an unlighted town at night. Here, as the houses became solid masses about them, the darkness became more nightmarish because of the stars overhead. Later, nearer the center of the city, it became more nightmarish still because the stars gradually faded. A mist filled the streets around them.

Silence hung about them. There was no sound in the furry night. No dog, no cat, not even an insect stirred. There was a silence which was touched by sheer horror. The horror became greater when Lucy stumbled and went to her knees. She discovered that she had caught herself by putting her hand on the upturned, dew-wet, unyielding face of a man who lay with his face to the sky and did not stir.

She bit her lips to keep from crying out. She clung to Waldron's hand and stumbled on. Then he said:

"Sh-h-h-h!"

From somewhere came a furtive vibration. Waldron led the way toward it. Presently, in the misty blackness, they detected shapes moving. Motors hummed quietly. A truck moved away. Another came, then another. Men were at work—hundreds of them. They worked feverishly at something unguessable. Then a faint light glowed to guide an approaching truck. They saw one of the men in this glimmering of illumination. His appearance was weird, incredible, utterly unhuman.

A rustling rose at Waldron's elbow and a voice rasped a challenge. The challenge was unintelligible. A figure came close. It rasped its challenge in cryptic, snarling, alien speech. It was definitely suspicious—and it had hundreds of fellows within call.

S I X

Waldron said:

"Sh-h-h-h!"

It is not possible to guess what that man thought. But he lowered his arm—which may have been holding a weapon—and bent his head toward Waldron to try to make out his features in the almost complete blackness of the night. Waldron's fist lashed out. It landed accurately on the point of the other man's jaw. There was not light enough to judge distances. It was either blind luck or a miracle, according to one's estimate of such matters. But the other man staggered, and Waldron hit him again and again in such blazing ferocity of attack that the man did not even cry out.

He collapsed, and Waldron flung himself upon him, his hands groping for his enemy's throat.

A long time later he whispered over his shoulder:

"He's got some kind of armor on. Scale armor. I'm guessing that it works like our frequency-packs to protect him. I've got to get it off. Then he'll stiffen like everybody else, I think. And if we hide him—"

He rose, heaving the inert figure to his shoulders. Then a sudden cold sweat came out upon his body. This other man was somehow protected against the thing which made all unprotected humans into inflexible images. All his fellows were protected. They were wholly and permanently safe. But Waldron was preserved from catalepsy only by an improvised, dry-cell contrivance which was not designed to be fought in.

Cold sweat came out on his face as he carried off the man he had battered into unconsciousness. He felt panic for fear that at any second his generator of high-frequency current might stop working. Its flickering tongue of metal seemed horribly fragile. Its twisted connections seemed makeshift and insecure. And having fought, Waldron felt sick and

dizzy with the realization of the chance he'd taken in entering into battle while depending on so uncertain a device.

With this odd panic upon him, he did not carry his prisoner far. Fifty feet, perhaps. Then he laid the man down. He pulled off the close-fitting helmet and put it on his own head. He stripped off the close-fitting, curiously worked scale armor and with whispered and urgent instructions to Lucy in case he "froze," he slipped it on. Then he felt curiously secure. Lucy's life depended on his own, and for battle he needed something more certain than dry-cell connections.

He felt the body of his victim. It was hard. This man, a compatriot of Fran Dutt, had yielded to the strange force that had made and still kept the city a place of grotesquely posed pseudo-corpses.

Then Waldron hid his victim and he and Lucy crept away. In whispers he explained to her what he had done. He could not find the weapon that had been pointed at him. Most probably it had fallen from the sentry's hand and now lay somewhere in the darkness, heating itself to destruction, its glow unseen.

He oriented himself carefully by the rumbling of muffled, quietly driven trucks. They were heading toward the business section of the city and they were moving without lights. Their drivers must possess the eyes of cats, Waldron thought. He went quietly along a parallel street, Lucy clinging to his hand. For block after block, they moved through soft and horrible darkness. The stars were not to be seen through the mist that hung overhead. Belleville Avenue joined Broad Street. Waldron peered and listened. It seemed to him that another stream of silenced trucks came from somewhere and joined the first.

They went on. And now and again they saw a vague grayness, or a vague whiteness, or an indefinite difference in the color of the sidewalk on which they quietly moved. Those patches of color were human beings, toppled where they had stood. Sometimes there was wreckage on the sidewalks. They passed one place where huge objects, which must have been motor trucks, blocked the sidewalk alto-

gether. The smell of stale, spilled gasoline saturated the air.

They circled that broken mass and plodded on. Gradually, even Lucy ceased to gasp faintly if by chance she trod on a frozen arm . . . a leg. Yet they gained a new alertness in avoiding such accidents. And all the while the soft, purring mutter of many motor trucks moved parallel to their course.

"I don't understand," protested Waldron, straining his eyes before and all about him. "They're looting, but they're taking pains to do it silently. They're not using lights so there'll be no glow in the sky. Why? And where is the loot going to?"

There were plausible guesses that could have been made, but he was not equipped to make them, just then. For example, the first reaction to the news of the disaster in Newark had been uncertainty. There had been suspicion that it was the result of some horrible action by the Reds—not too good a guess. There had been guesses that it was the final fruition of all the flying-saucer stories that had been cropping up for years on end. Fran Dutt's compatriots could not be sure that the explanation of a plague would be accepted as the true one. Very probably, the tactic of invisible looting was merely a precautionary measure. A terrified America, convinced that the population of Newark was dead anyhow, in desperation might use an atomic bomb against possible invaders from the stars. Such an action might have been undertaken had activity been observed within the blacked-out, silent town.

They came to a wide, open space where a triangular park verged upon the downtown street. It seemed that here the overhanging gray mist let through more starlight, or possibly the dim light was supplied from some other source. In any case the line of trucks could be seen turning and lurching across the soft green sward of the park. They vanished into a great building on the farther side, and none of them seemed to come out again.

"I have a suspicion I know what's going on in that building," murmured Waldron, "but I want to be sure. We'll get around to the back."

It took them half an hour to go the short distance re-

quired. This was the part of the city where traffic had been thickest and where stiffened bodies were most numerous everywhere.

Then they came to a place where lights shone. These were not from inside windows. Rather the lights seemed to seep out from rooms within the building. Yet the lights that fell outward was too scant to be seen from afar. For that matter, surrounding buildings would prevent radar detection of the moving trucks.

Waldron moved with infinite caution through the darkness behind the building. But there would be no watchers. The man whose protective armor he wore had probably been on guard as much to watch against looters finding valuables for their own account as for any other purpose.

Presently Waldron drew his revolver and went quietly to look inside. Lucy followed close.

He flattened himself against a wall and edged to a window from which feeble light came. His hand, holding Lucy's to give her reassurance, closed hard as he took his first glimpse within. Then he drew his head back and motioned for her to peer in.

She gazed into what had been a sort of grand foyer—an exaggerated open ground-floor space, with a twenty-foot ceiling. A very neat concrete floor held specks of marble and mica that glistened. There had been a newsstand with magazines, packaged candy and tobacco, and a soft-drink stand, and there had even been a certain number of plate-glass frames serving as directories. But the revolving door and plate-glass panels had been ruthlessly hacked away. The opening now served as an entrance for motor trucks to run in a growling, unending stream into the building.

The decorative floor was fouled with mud and clay and discolored bits of glass. The sound of motors was a subdued thunder within the enclosure. The trucks kept coming in, moving past men who barked at the drivers in some strange language. The soda fountain had been torn out and hauled away. Ends of the piping still flowed streams of water, to which nobody paid any attention whatever. The newsstand, of course, was destroyed.

But in the room thus enlarged, a platform of rough wooden planks had been built up, perhaps a foot and a half from the floor, with a ramp leading to it. The platform was itself the floor of an open-ended cage. The sides of the cage were bars of polished metal all of an inch thick, which wound round and round and under the platform to form a hollow spiral—not unlike a gigantic spring—into whose open, farther end the trucks rolled as they mounted the platform.

And in that spiral, they vanished, like the blown-out flames of candles.

They came growling into the huge room. They rolled across the untidy mess their predecessors had tracked into the building. Then they shifted gears and went ponderously up upon the platform, inside the wide-spaced coil of metal bars. And then they flickered and were not. Truck after truck, loaded with all manner of loot, they filed into this building and into the colossal, cryptic device. And in it they seemed to fade into thin air and were gone.

Heavy copper cables led to the helical cage. A queer, unearthly, bluish wild fire seemed to play all about the platform. A heavy-duty long-haul truck, packed with machinery, rolled up on the platform. It was followed by a smart, light delivery truck from an expensive grocery. The one behind that was worn and dilapidated, with streaks of fabric showing where the tread of the tires should have been.

But each truck was as heavily burdered as its body would hold, and each one was driven by a man who wore curious, scaly armor. And each vehicle rolled upon the clumsy platform inside the coil-like bars, and when it got there it flickered and was not—and then there was room for another.

The flickering fire seemed half solid—no, not half solid but half phantomlike. It shimmered in an uncanny fashion, in an incalculable combination of many rhythms. At times Waldron had the feeling that it was not merely flame or luminosity. It was something else.

He watched one certain spot. The blue glow came and went. But when it was present and when it was strongest, it had a definite pattern impressed upon it. That pattern moved. Presently Waldron saw a man's face in it. It came

back and the man had shifted his position. It looked almost as if colored motion pictures were being thrown upon a screen of smoke which wavered and vanished and appeared again irregularly. It was as if something impressed a deep-blue tint upon all the projected image, and the smoke which served as screen appeared only in patches and flecks, and nowhere showed a complete picture.

Lucy drew back to look bewilderedly at him. The light that came out of their peephole showed his face clearly enough. His eyes were glowing in deep satisfaction.

"Steve!" she whispered. "I don't understand!"

"Those pictures you see," he whispered in reply, "they're actually views of Fran Dutt's world—of the other side of here. The trucks go through and small bits of light come back. We're seeing where Fran came from. In case of need, now, we might even invade that world to get back the people and things that have been carried there."

He watched an instant longer. Knowing or guessing at the full meaning Waldron meant to convey, Lucy gazed again at the fragmentary scenes. Her father, Waldron said, was most likely in that world she now saw in fragments of bluish-tinted scene. She looked upon an enigmatic planet which was not Earth and yet was Earth, which was in what might be called a fourth dimension and yet was bounded absolutely by the common three. She gazed with totally illogical intensity as if hoping for a sight of her father.

But the shimmering, flickering vision, such as might come from a television set with something not working quite right in its innards, showed only scraps of what was to be seen. She saw torches flaring—but only intermittently. Once she saw a truck which was of Earth. She even remembered its huge and sleekly shining shape. It had rolled up on the platform and vanished a bare two minutes since. Now she saw its image in those phantom bluish flames, with men swarming about it. It had vanished and yet it existed. It did not exist on this earth, but it did exist on another earth which was in the same space as this earth.

In a low voice, Waldron said:

"We'll go."

Again he led the way. But now it was Lucy who kept a wary watch. Waldron seemed so engrossed in the meaning of what he had seen that he would have walked straight toward the line of trucks if she had not stopped him. That, of course, was after they had moved through blackness well away from the building of the helix and the platform.

But at her whispered word he came back to himself. Then he was all awareness of the crime and the silence which spread in every direction save where the truckloads of loot moved toward envanishment.

"They've got a line of trucks coming down from Belleville and another one out yonder." He waved his arm in the blackness. "They can loot only so far, or the military cordon around the town will hear. What I've got to do is—" Then he said half aloud to himself: "Professor Hamlin will do! Lucy, I know where he lives. He's a big enough name to make anybody listen, and he'll have to accept what I can tell him. I can prove it. We find him and I explain—"

"Steve! He's—he's like everybody else—"

"Naturally! But if I can't revive him I'm in a bad fix, and if I can it's conclusive. The first thing is to get to him. We have to edge around ."

He chose a new course. But he was no less absorbed in the meaning of the thing he had seen. Up to this moment, all the events dating from the first phone call from Fran Dutt had seemed ominous. Bit by bit they did fit into a sort of hypothesis he had built up. But now he had seen something which made that hypothesis quite different from a guess. Now he knew it was an explanation—the explanation of all that had happened.

He talked under his breath as he and Lucy fumbled their way through the blackness of the immobilized city. The tumbled figures they stumbled upon and the disasters they skirted were not gruesome, now. They were inspiring of horror and of a monstrous fury. Waldron filled in what he knew with what he had guessed before. From there he went on to what could not be proved by evidence but which by the nature of things had to be accepted as true.

There was another planet occupying the same space as

Earth. Straussman's Theory was correct. This other planet must be very nearly the same size, and it must contain the same elements in the same proportions. Undoubtedly, its atmosphere and oceans and clouds resembled those of Earth. And Waldron, stumbling as silently as he could through the stillness of death, grew utterly absorbed in speculations in his own specialty of biology.

If there were occasional interchanges of biological specimens, the existence of animal and plant species on Earth without any clear line of ancestry could be understood. It was certainly conceivable that such exchanges had taken place in cataclysms of one sort or another. In such a case, the peopling of one world from the other could be accounted for, and the fact that Fran Dutt and his compatriots were human would be accounted for. As a matter of scientific theorizing, Straussman's Theory could even be right in more than merely claiming that there could be two worlds existing in the same place at the same time. There should be three, at least. There might be six or eighteen or fifty-four.

While Waldron talked, he made a huge circling movement around the part of the city receiving the immediate attention of the men in scale armor. However, the prospects he envisioned went beyond the mere reversal of the monstrous crime which surrounded him.

"There'll be worlds to explore," he said hungrily. "Great globes, quite as big as this, with continents and oceans unmapped and still unknown. There'll be creatures such as we've never dreamed of, and fruits no man has ever tasted, and there will be colonies to create and grow, and there need never again be war with more worlds for nations to expand in. . . ."

Lucy said:

"Sh-h-h!"

She pointed. Ahead of them was a curious dull-blue glow. Although bright enough to see by, it made no glare which would be noted either on the gray mist which filled the city's streets or on the sides of houses.

Waldron stood stock-still. He heard voices, speaking that unintelligible language which he'd heard spoken only by

men wearing suits of peculiar scale armor. A voice snarled something, in an arrogant harshness that could make one's hackles stand. Another voice replied in fawning humility. There was a snapping sound and a whimpering, brief cry. The arrogant voice came again, commanding. Then silence.

Another voice broke in. By its tone it was making a jest, and the voice which had been so arrogant replied in the manner of one speaking to an equal. There were small stirrings, as from men moving. Another humble voice. The arrogant one again, harsh as before.

Waldron put Lucy behind him and gestured for her to stay where she was. He moved forward, taking infinite pains to make no noise. He brought his revolver up. The blue glow enabled him to avoid a group of tumbled figures which he knew were the lawful inhabitants of Newark, now immobile and frozen on the ground. He reached the corner and peered carefully around it.

He saw the marquee of a movie theater reaching out over the sidewalk. The title of a motion picture was spelled out in letters intended to be illuminated; the name of an actress of proven fascination showed even larger.

But there was movement here. The light was inside the entrance to the theater. At the sidewalk there was a small truck, waiting. There were piled-up human figures in the truck and no men were among them.

In the foyer of the theater stood two slim and arrogant figures. Each carried, as if it were a cane, a slender stick with half a dozen snaky filaments at one end. Something at the tip of each filament glittered metallically. The pair wore the strange scaly armor which protected the looters of the town. They seemed youthful officers or nobles of the corps of looting men. Other, heavier-set, stickless figures brought more figures from the inside of the theater. The figures were, invariably, the frozen, stiffened figures of young girls who had been in the audience of this theater when all the city was stricken cataleptic.

Blind fury rose in Waldron, so that for a moment he could barely see anything at all. Blood pounded savagely in his temples. At first, there were three of the burdened men in

view. They were loading stiffened figures into the truck. Unburdened, they paused before the two slim, armored men and cringed before scuttling back into the motion picture house. It seemed as if that abject shrinking of the body were a standardized thing, equivalent to a military salute. They disappeared into the theater.

The two superiors remained in elegant idleness, talking together in their cryptic language. A man came out, bringing another girl.

The two superiors inspected her amusedly. One pulled off her hat, to see her face more clearly. Another girl was carried out. The two superiors began gaily to dispute the division of the truckload of movie patrons.

Waldron felt a hand on his arm. Lucy had followed. She whispered shakenly:

"Steve! What are they going to do?"

"Load 'em on the truck," said Waldron icily, under his breath, "and take them to their own world. They'll revive them there, I suppose, as wives or slaves. They've just divided them—all but these last two. They're arguing about them now."

The debate between the two superiors was amused and bantering and incredibly enraging. The second girl, when frozen, had been smiling faintly at something on the theater screen. The two slim, armored figures argued amiably over her. One of them apparently proposed something like a toss-up.

One of the underlings stumbled with his burden. He brushed ever so slightly against one of the two young lordlings. And that lordling rasped an order. The offender—he had cringed automatically when his offense was committed—moaned a little. But he put down the girl he had carried. He stood still, his eyes closed. And the limber, cane-like thing with the tentacles on its ends flashed up. It struck viciously upon the unprotected face of the subordinate armored figure. The metal tips of the lashes—the cane was suddenly clearly a metal-tipped whip of many strands—made deep gashes. Blood spurted. The whip struck again and again. . .

Waldron went around the corner. His revolver flashed. It

flashed again, and the reports were incredibly loud in the silence of the dead city.

The slender man with the upraised whip faltered in his stroke and collapsed. The other uttered a choked cry of such unbelieving fury that it was not even articulate. He snatched at his waist.

Waldron shot him too. Then he whirled upon the other, subordinate, obedient figures. They squealed and fled. And it seemed uncanny to hear the echoes of Waldron's shots re-echoing in the motionless street, and to hear the squealings of the frightened underlings as they fled in every direction.

"Now I've done it!" said Waldron savagely. "I've really done it! Get in the truck, Lucy. We're going to get a long way from here."

He helped her into the truck and fumbled for the switch and starter. It seemed to him that the sound of shooting would never cease to echo. Certainly, he had a crawling conviction that figures moved toward him from everywhere in the darkness, and that armed men moved swiftly to lay traps for him.

S E V E N

OF COURSE, they had a tremendous advantage in their flight. The looters of the city would find it impossible to accept their presence. The higher-ups of the scale-armored folk knew of the existence of Steven Waldron and that he had managed to get out of Newark, but that could have been assumed an accident. Also they may have believed his other escapes were the result of his extreme alertness. Always he got away from later plague spots before they were formed.

But the invaders—or the looters—could not imagine that Waldron actually knew how to counteract the weapon or the instrument that had thrown four inhabited places in the stasis of catalepsy. Shots, heard in the night, would seem

to the higher-ups to have resulted from one of their underlings firing unfamiliar weapons by accident. Even when some of the squealing, groveling looters babbled of someone killing two noblemen or leaders, Waldron had been wearing authentic scaly armor. There would still be no reason to think that one of the authentic inhabitants of the city was alive. Still less chance existed that it would be believed a single man had dared return to the dead area.

So the small truck went racketing from the scene of the shooting. Twice Waldron flashed on his headlights for guidance and flashed them off again. Such momentary flickerings in the mist above the buildings were not likely to be noticed. In a little while the truck was speeding up the right-hand fork beside Lincoln's statue. A few minutes later, Waldron turned right and stopped to listen for pursuit.

Leaping from the truck, he took some of the stiffened figures from the back and hid them in shadows and in lanes. Then he drove on, stopped and listened—again he disposed of more girls' frozen forms. Then he dodged and twisted and presently arrived at a hillside street where he could see, very far in the distance, the lights of the Oranges and the other communities on beyond. Those lights were not as numerous as usual. Everybody who could run away had done so. But the truck's headlights could be seen where humans were still alive and moving and alert.

Waldron turned on the truck's headlights to their brightest, and he and Lucy fled. But he risked a few brief seconds to flash the light on and off again, three short flashes of light, and three long ones, and three short ones again. Presently men would become aware that there was life in the dead, still city of Newark.

During the racketing flight from downtown, Waldron had kept his original purpose in mind. The placing of the truck had its purpose. Its lights would not be visible from where the looting was busiest. But now or soon there would be a deadly hunt for whoever had killed the two officer-leaders. If it was true that all of them carried metal-tipped whips and used them so arrogantly and mercilessly as Waldron had seen, then it was apparent that a hideous division of castes

existed among the invaders. Unbearable brutality was probably practiced upon the lower castes by the higher. Therefore, there was a good chance that the killings would seem more nearly mutiny than the result of an outsider's action. Time might be lost in the attempt to find out who was in revolt. There might be harsh punishments to prevent the idea of mutiny from spreading. The consequence would be to create a greater tendency to mutiny. In short, Waldron might have performed a successful guerilla operation against Fran Dutt's compatriot army.

But his purpose was something more and better than that. He knew his way about the city. Within half an hour after leaving the truck—and actually before it was found and its lights turned off—Waldron had opened an unlocked back door of the residence of Professor Hamlin.

He and Lucy went inside. They had a peculiar, insistent discomfort that they were acting like burglars. This was a private home, and they did not feel they had a right to be in it. Moreover, it was even blacker inside the house than outside. The sensation of intrusion and furtiveness in the dark was almost intolerable. It was not until Lucy, remembering the hour at which the "plague" had struck, suggested the dining room that they were able to find the professor.

Waldron struck a match, while Lucy drew the heavy curtains which the elderly scientist's wife had put up a good ten years before her death. There was a candelabra stick on a mantel and Waldron lighted a candle.

Professor Hamlin, portly, white-haired and austere, was pompous even in his own home. He had been seated at table, in the act of raising a spoonful of soup to his lips, at the moment he was stricken lifeless. His arm had frozen halfway. His lips were pursed to open. He looked grotesque. He looked ridiculous. The soup had dried in the spoon. The plate before him contained only a gummy mess.

Waldron unslung his own high-frequency pack, depending only on the scaly armor for his own continued life. He fitted the pack to the body of the portly scientist whose assistant he had been. He turned it on.

The scientist moved in the candlelight. He continued the

gesture he had begun forty-eight hours before. His spoon was empty. Then his eyes widened in stark, blank incomprehension. The lights were out. He became aware of the single flickering candle in the room. And there was a strange figure in improbable armor, and a girl with dusty clothing. . . .

It was minutes before he could recognize Waldron clothed in the eccentric garb. It was a long time before he could believe Waldron's story. He had no sense whatever of any time-lapse. It was necessary for him to peer out of his house at unlighted streets and dark houses, listen to the horrifying silence of Newark, before he could begin to believe. Then he found a flashlight and discovered his servants' stone-hard bodies, and he was sure they were dead. . . .

Lucy convinced him, finally, by indicating the motionless tropical fish in the professor's aquarium. She lifted one out and held it in her hand. Suddenly revived by the high-frequency current, it flapped wildly. She dropped the fish back into the tank and it was still and frozen again.

Then the scientist really listened, while brushing clouds of dust from his sleeve.

"I see," he said profoundly, at last. "What you tell me is impossible according to all preconceived notions, but it is apparently true. Straussman seems to have been right. I know that Professor Blair was inclined to accept his theories. My dear, have you heard anything of your father?"

Lucy said bitterly:

"He's in that other world we saw—the one the trucks all go to."

"I shall go," said Professor Hamlin soberly, "to this military cordon you have told me about. I shall identify myself. And I will be proof that some hundreds of thousands of people are not dead. In this contrivance you have put on me, Steven, I shall have evidence that others can be revived. I should think that a regiment or two of soldiers, equipped as I am, would handle things nicely, eh?"

"They should," said Waldron dourly. "But you'll have to be extremely careful, Professor! Everybody's trigger-happy!"

Professor Hamlin rose with dignity. With even greater dignity he put on his hat and a light topcoat. Lucy blew out

the candle and with Waldron followed him out of the house.

The utter darkness of Newark and the fainter glare in the sky which was New York and Jersey City were further proofs of the incredible. Almost beyond the professor's front door they came upon a pathetic bundle on the ground. A boy and girl—high-school children—had been talking together. They had fallen side by side. Professor Hamlin recklessly struck a match. He saw their faces.

"Girls," said Waldron grimly, "are being loaded on trucks and carried to that other world. This girl is pretty enough—"

Professor Hamlin said with dignity:

"It shall be stopped!"

And Waldron and Lucy walked with him downhill and toward the place where there would have to be soldiers, watching lest anyone go into or try to come out of a city that seemed both dead and deadly.

It was a long walk, and Professor Hamlin grandly took the initiative. He made Waldron feel that he was merely a subordinate, again. But he did ask questions, and he did agree that for them to move on foot was preferable to taking any of the available cars. A car could be heard in motion, especially when starting. But toward the end of the hike his feet were beginning to hurt. But then, a little later, they saw a bonfire burning in the middle of a street. All the houses, all along the way, had been dark and still.

"Hal" said Professor Hamlin profoundly. "There is the cordon—and about time! I shall approach it alone, Steven. And I think I can promise you that within twelve hours there will be adequate action taken to end this terrible catastrophe."

"Better not mention my name," said Waldron cynically. "At least not until you have to. I'm guilty by association with what's happened here."

Professor Hamlin shook hands, impressively.

"And be sure to call ahead when you go up to the cordon," Waldron added. "They've orders to shoot anybody who tries to come out. You'll have to argue with them."

"They will not shoot me," said Professor Hamlin, confidently.

But they did.

Waldron saw it happen. The portly figure of the scientist moved away from him through the darkness. A long time later, they heard him speak. It sounded peculiar, as if he were raising his voice in the manner of a lecturer filling a large hall.

There was a sudden flare of light. A spotlight on a car flicked on. A thin lance of light shot out and outlined the impressive, dignified figure. The professor waved his hands and walked forward. Somebody shouted back to him. The tone was commanding. Professor Hamlin halted. The other voice rasped commands, obviously commands that the man retrace his steps. Professor Hamlin replied indignantly. He moved deliberately, impressively forward.

There was an outburst of tiny sparks: the tearing rat-tat-tat of small-arm fire. Outlined in the spotlight beam, Professor Hamlin fell and lay still.

The two far back in the darkness were stunned. The spotlight flickered about, searching. It stopped at one spot where something could be mistaken for a human figure. The guns rasped again. The object was a tree trunk. The spotlight continued to search.

Waldron drew Lucy into hiding. Presently he said in a rage-thickened voice:

"The news broadcasts will report a man trying to come out of the city and being shot down. The outside world will think that somebody recovered from the 'plague' and tried to leave the city and had to be shot. Fran Dutt's gang, though, will think their single traitor got his when he tried to get away, after killing two of their officers or leaders. So all we've done has been to get Professor Hamlin killed!"

A moment later he added savagely:

"They may have heard the shots, back in the city. We'd better get somewhere else."

They moved away.

The situation as a whole looked as desperate as at any time before. Waldron was not confronted with a state of affairs that some one line of brilliant reasoning could break down to complete solution. There aren't many such states of

affairs in real life. In scientific research, in particular, Waldron knew of the deadly drudgery which prefaces every accomplishment. The problem which the world was calling the "new plague" could not be abandoned. And though it was disheartening and enraging to find that one's efforts to combat the cause of the catastrophes had gotten somebody else killed, quite automatically Waldron's mind turned doggedly to a new approach. Only there wasn't any new approach possible.

They were two blocks away when Waldron said grimly:

"I'm fresh out of ideas. Let's find a car with a radio and see if the news will offer anything."

So they searched, while they moved at a right angle to the cordon about the city. But most cars, obviously, were smashed to a greater or lesser degree. They had stalled and their batteries had run down because the ignition had remained on. Other cars had been parked. And they could not be entered without smashing windows, which would be a noise-making proposition. Some of the highly organized looting force would assuredly have been sent to investigate the shots, especially after the killing of two leaders outside of the movie theater on Market Street. Even now there probably was a frantic, furtive search in progress.

The silence of the city became increasingly tense and horrible. There was now no sound at all. The murmur of the trucks downtown had either stopped or was too far away to be heard. The houses were blank and dark and still. If they had been empty there would have been a vast desolation in the night. But they were occupied by motionless staring figures, which made an even greater desolation. The streets were utterly dark and there were motionless, stone-hard human figures toppled here and there upon them. And there was the fact that around them furtive figures were in motion in the dark city. And now another element to the over-all horror—a cordon of troops had been flung about the city, and it was alerted to shoot anyone fleeing this city of the dead.

Lucy's teeth chattered suddenly. But Waldron kept on, methodically examining cars. The badly shattered ones, of

course, were mostly so crumpled that to open their doors quietly was impossible. But at last he found a convertible with its top down. He stepped over the door and tried its glove compartment. It made a slight noise as it opened. He whispered:

"A flashlight! That helps!"

A moment later he whispered again:

"I can use the radio."

Then there was a long, long wait. Finally, the faintest, tiniest possible humming noise came, then music—turned down so that one could barely be sure it was there.

They waited. They had tuned in between news broadcasts from New York. A tenor singing about love was about as inappropriate to Lucy's and Waldron's situation as any sound could be. But presently a voice muttered:

. . . has not expanded. The method of contagion has so far baffled all epidemiologists. Even electron microscopes give no clue to the microorganism involved, and culture-plates exposed all about the plague areas have provided no unknown forms of bacteria or viruses. The existence of still-active material for the spread of the plague, however, was proved today. A group of newspapermen, who had been isolated because they secured an interview with the plague-spreader, Waldron, volunteered today to make a crucial experiment. Several members of the group considered that they might have been somehow immune to the cause of the plague, in that they had talked to Waldron without becoming infected. As single individuals, approaching from different directions, they moved toward the city.

One of them, Nick Bannerman of the *Messenger*, interpreted some of Waldron's statements as indications that the virulence of the plague thinned out at the edges of the plague spots. From Waldron's statements, he believed that he would be able to detect the presence of whatever conditions make the plague virulent before he actually became a victim. He equipped himself with a walkie-talkie and moved toward the city along the Pulaski Skyway. He would return, he said, if he felt any symptoms. Epidemiologists were not hope-

ful, but considered that if he felt slight symptoms and withdrew, he might develop immunity if he did not become a victim. In such a case serum from his blood might immunize other persons and in time permit of the immunization of the entire population. At four this afternoon he started toward the plague spot. He kept in touch by walkie-talkie. He was in the act of saying that he felt no symptoms whatever when his voice cut off in the middle of a word. Nothing has been heard from him since.

The voice murmured on. Waldron tensed. Presently the newscast came to an end. He turned it off. Then the silence was so deep that the blood in his own ears seemed to make a pulsing sound. There was no light anywhere except to the east, where a pale glare shone up toward the sky. That was the glow of New York's myriad street lights. The nearer lights of Jersey City were hidden by houses.

"Walkie-talkie," whispered Waldron. "That's it! If I could get hold of one . . ."

He stood still, thinking intensively. There was silence. . . .

Something crashed no more than two blocks away. It was a sound like tinware falling. Lucy groped blindly for his hand.

"All right," he whispered.

He led her away—half a block, a block. He froze, clutching her arm tightly. A little knot of men, about half a dozen, came out of an alleyway. They crossed the street and vanished.

"Close, that. But I ought to have my armor on underneath my clothes. Then I could simply stand still. The two of us wouldn't look like anybody who'd have been stealing trucks and killing big shots. Listen!"

He whispered desperate instructions of what she was to do if he went stone-hard and rigid. He had made extra high-frequency packs. He still had two of them. He turned one on and—while Lucy stared and listened desperately for other living beings—he got the armor off, piece by piece, and back on again with his ordinary clothing outside of it. Then he said grimly:

"We ought to have another suit of this stuff for you. If I can catch one of those fellows alone, I'll try." Then he said: "Damn! I've shot this pistol empty! We've got to find some weapons. A motorcycle cop or a traffic cop would have a gun—if we can find any."

"You said walkie-talkie—"

"Our next enterprise," he told her. "Hold everything!"

They had spoken in whispers. The last was barely breathed. Another patrol of the invaders had appeared. This one was not as near as the first. It went on, oblivious. Waldron and Lucy moved cautiously. There were two more alarms by the time they had traveled a mile.

"There must be a couple of thousand men in town here, looting it," whispered Waldron. "And half of them are hunting for us. They won't be sure whether they're looking for a traitor or a rebel, or whether somebody like Professor Hamlin. But he hasn't been mentioned in the newscasts yet. No time. They'll be guessing at a traitor."

They probably were. But the hunt for a traitor would not immediately extend to the examination of every normally clothed body of a man in the darkened streets of Newark. That would be too big a job. Yet the search going on must be a desperate one. Though conducted in pitch darkness, all lights and noise were forbidden lest the world beyond the dead city recover from its delusion that plague, and not planned crime, was responsible for its state of horror.

Over and over again, Waldron and Lucy avoided patrols of scale-armored men. It was noticeable that they never moved as solitary individuals. Individuals could lie in wait for a traitor to move; patrols could not. It could have been that individuals could not be trusted. . .

In any case, Waldron and Lucy evaded discovery. More, they crossed the river to Harrison undetected, though the feat was a hair-raising adventure. Here there were no trucks and the Pulaski Skyway curved into view as a vague and nebulous object in the night. There was no gray mist this far from the center of town. And here, too, a policeman lay sprawled out stiffly at a street intersection. Waldron took from him a revolver and a supply of cartridges.

Then he and Lucy climbed to the Skyway. Their upward motion was nerve-wracking, but they felt relatively safe. The invaders in their attempt at secrecy had kept their looting limited to the center of Newark. No movement must be visible beyond the dead area. Therefore, any place which could be seen in daylight from any place not yet dead must be left untouched.

Waldron and Lucy walked the Skyway. And it was a long journey. They were city folk, and already they had done more walking since sunset than most city people do in a month. Lucy, in particular, was desperately tired.

They walked a wide ribbon of concrete which rose above the dark meadows. Here and there were stalled automobiles, piles of wreckage. In the distance there were lights, but they were very far away indeed. Stars winked above them and on either side of the road stretched nothingness. The roadway climbed and climbed, and Lucy trudged on and on, until fatigue became an obsession. Presently they were very high up and a clean wind blew against them. There was only blackness below and behind, and it seemed that they walked hopelessly upon a highway across nothingness itself.

Twice, Waldron stopped at smashed motorcycles. Policemen leaned stiffly forward on them. Waldron burdened himself with their service revolvers and cartridges. He was heavily loaded now. Again they went on and the walk seemed endless. Lucy drew nearer and nearer to collapse.

She stumbled and he caught her, and later she stumbled again. Then she saw a bonfire burning very far away and roused a little. Waldron paused. He opened the door of a car that had run into the side-rail and stalled. Taking out the man at the wheel, he helped her into the car.

"Nick Bannerman started off this way," he said, "with a walkie-talkie. He'd be on foot. He'd be the only person on foot on the road ahead. I shan't go close enough to any fire or lantern to be shot at. You stay here."

She should have been alarmed. But she was so completely exhausted that his voice and all of reality seemed dreamlike. She mumbled and then she was asleep. It seemed

seconds later that she felt him shaking her arm again. Desperately, she tried to rouse herself. Finally she did manage to get out of the car, but she would have fallen if he had not caught her. Then she heard him saying:

"I found Nick. Here he is. We'll help you."

To Lucy it seemed what followed was part of a nightmare, of which she was only half-conscious.

Since sundown, she and Waldron had walked not less than fifteen miles on unyielding concrete.

Presently Lucy was dimly aware of being helped to lie down on something that was blissfully soft. Later she had a quite vivid memory of hearing Waldron say:

"We ought to be safe now. You go on to sleep, Lucy. Nick and I have some talking to do."

And Lucy relaxed completely and she slept.

When she woke again, it was either just past dawn or close to sundown again. She heard voices. There was the amazingly fragrant odor of freshly made coffee and something else more tantalizing. She stirred. Waldron stood over her, his face drawn with weariness, but smiling.

"Rested?"

"Yes." Then she tried to move, and said, "Oh, Steve, I ache."

"You'll be all right when you've stirred around," he told her. "There's coffee and hot dogs—waiting and ready. Come and meet Nick Bannerman."

She stood up, painfully. They were inside a small garage, tools and cars under repair all about them. Waldron led her into the garage office, where the delicious smells came from. There was Nick Bannerman, short and swarthy, holding a frankfurter over a tin can from which the blue flame of alcohol arose. He grinned at her and nodded.

"Nice mess this, isn't it?" he asked cheerfully. "I got tired of being in jail and Steve'd said it wasn't a disease, so I figured I'd be as well off proving it as staying there while they decided whether to shoot me or not. I did think I'd feel some warning symptoms before I keeled over, but I didn't. I was walking along the highway, checking my pulse and sensations and reporting them all by walkie-talkie. And

then all of a sudden it was pitch dark and Steve had this dinkus on me and was explaining a lot of improbable things. So we came here to hide. It was close to daybreak."

"And we've got those devils licked, now!" said Steve savagely. "We've got them!"

"We hope so, anyhow," said Nick, amiably. "My walkie-talkie's no good. Nobody happens to be listening. That's a sort of necessity for communication—that somebody be listening. So we've got a set-up we're fixing now. Have some coffee!"

From a steaming saucepan he poured coffee. Lucy took it and drank. Then she said ruefully:

"I must look horrible. What are we going to do, Steve?"

"Nick went burglarizing, just at dawn. He came back with a couple of tape recorders. Unfortunately, they're the plug-in kind. We've been adjusting that—fixing them to work on car-radio power units. We just got them working half an hour ago. We've been making recordings for them."

Nick handed Lucy the cooked frankfurter, neatly folded in a slice of bread. She nodded gratefully and bit into it.

"The point is, of course," said Nick blandly, "that we didn't go all the way back to Newark. We stopped here. And the telephone here is a Jersey City number. You catch?"

Waldron said evenly:

"There's no telephonic connection from Newark to New York, of course. Fran's gang has turned off the automatic exchanges. Maybe they've got somebody watching in them—in case! But the Jersey City exchanges are working! This part of the dead spot has direct phone connection to Jersey City!"

"Oh! You can phone—"

"Dumb little me," acknowledged Nick. "I'd have done it! But Steve is a suspicious guy. He said that when he telephoned that frozen mice could be found up near Columbia University, it wasn't half an hour before that place was a plague spot. This guy Fran Dutt—whoever he may be—has friends in high places. They know as fast as any word comes in. They'd send people here—their people! Pretty

good spy-system, I'd say. So we do not take down a telephone receiver and tell anybody where we are. We take down a receiver, yes. We dial a number, yes. Then we turn on the recorder to talk into that mouthpiece, and we get away from here like bats out of—"

He stopped and beamed.

It seemed perfect. It seemed absolutely foolproof. And Waldron added icily:

"And just to make absolutely sure, it's possible to dial a press line to Philadelphia. Nick's going to set one record going to give all this news to the Philadelphia office of the Consolidated Press Service. They'll get it and it'll be spread all over the United States before Fran's gang realizes it's happened. Spies in New York won't do a bit of good!"

It looked very neat indeed. As a precaution, they waited for sunset. There was a car in the garage, brought in for a wax-and-polish job. They made sure it was ready for a get-away and they checked their weapons.

Meanwhile, they drank coffee and ate hot dogs cooked over an alcohol flame—the coffee and provisions had come from a delicatessen shop raided by Nick during his burglarizing sortie—and rejoiced. All that was necessary was for them to pick up the telephone receiver. . .

Night fell. They waited for darkness to become complete.

They heard a noise. And on the instant the three of them turned pale. It was the sound of many feet, marching out of cadence. The three of them became deathly silent. Waldron drew his revolver and Nick pulled out his. They waited.

The noise came nearer. It did not hasten and it did not hesitate. It reached the street in front of the small garage and then it went on past. A party of forty or fifty men. Even in the blackness they could be seen wearing the scaly armor of the unknown invaders. They went on past the building and marched away into the darkness.

A long time later, Nick Bannerman said shakily:

"Now, what in blazes are they doing over here?"

It was obvious enough, in the light of later events. But

the trio was much too shaken to think of the logical reason for massing parties of armor-clad men near the fringes of the dead area which was Newark. Waldron's mind had been desperately occupied with immediate dangers and the frantic necessity of finding what the "plague" was and how to counter it. After that he had tried to get his knowledge to where it could be used. He had not even tried to anticipate developments that could be expected to come next.

Yet it would be inconceivable that invaders—looters, aliens from another world—would intend merely to take and loot one city and then return to their own world. They would have either to withdraw their incredible device which froze all life or they would have to keep it in operation. If they withdrew it, the looting would be discovered and the fact that some instrument, some weapon, had been used would be inferred. If they kept it on, ultimately someone would be able to detect its manner of operation.

Having taken one city, the invaders could not withdraw. They had to go on. An extension of frozen territory would require a force ready to move in, turn off power-lines, cut off all communications, and be ready in case planes flying overhead dived and crashed and caught fire.

But the party of armored men went on and on, and the soft, slip-slop sound of their muffled feet died away.

Waldron said:

"We don't use this telephone. They might be tipped off too quickly. We move back. In fact, we carry our outfits, Nick. If there is a rush toward them, we'll start running from here."

Nick swallowed audibly. There had been over forty men in the party marching past the garage.

"Why—yes!" he said sickishly. Then he ground his teeth. "Damn them! They made me scared! They scared me! And I don't like the idea of being scared! I've got to do something about this, Steve!"

They listened for a very long time. And the actual silence added to the quality of terror hovering over them.

Half an hour later, the three of them moved away from the garage where Lucy had slept and where Nick and

Waldron had arranged for recorders to speak into telephones. They were heavily loaded down with their apparatus.

They moved with extreme caution through the darkness and stillness. It was another half-hour before they entered a small corner drugstore. With shielded flashlights, they set up one recorder to start its message. They left it. A block away, they set up another in a butcher shop.

"Here goes," said Waldron curtly.

He lifted the telephone receiver. He listened. There was a dial tone. He carefully dialed the number Nick gave him. He heard a bored voice say:

"Consolidated Press. Go ahead!"

"Get this recorded if you can," said Waldron. "It's a recording from Nick Bannerman and Steven Waldron. It's coming from inside the military cordon around Newark. Get every word of it. It will repeat twice!"

Nick threw the switch. The recorder began to speak in the silent store.

"Nick Bannerman of the Messenger speaking. I am inside the supposed plague spot which includes Newark. I have been hit by the plague and have recovered. I tell you from the beginning that—"

Then they were out of the butcher shop. Waldron paused to close the door firmly, so that the sound of the recording could not be heard from the street. They ran through soft, black, deadly stillness. They arrived at the drugstore where the other recorder was set to speak. Nick dropped a coin in the slot. He listened. He heard the dial tone. He dialed the number of the *Messenger's* rewrite line. A familiar voice said:

"Messenger, rewrite. Who is it?"

"It's me," snapped Nick. "Nick Bannerman. Get the stuff that's coming. I'm telling you. I'll repeat it once. Listen!"

The recorder began:

"Nick Bann—"

Then Nick hung up the phone, rather absurdly. He said through stiff lips:

"No good, Steve. Somebody cut me off. And the dial tone

didn't come back on. Somehow, those devils are monitoring the phone lines from this area. Let's beat it!"

They went swiftly out into the street. Waldron seized Lucy's hand and dragged her after him. They ran. And about them was the terribly deadly silence which cracked one's eardrums. It was broken only by their own footsteps, which sounded thunderous.

Then the silence, which was horrible, was replaced by a sound which was even more horrible. It was the purring of motors. Cars were racing through the blackness: muffled cars, unlighted cars. It should not be possible for anybody to drive so furiously in absolute darkness. Then Waldron made a guess.

"Snooperscopes!" he panted to Nick. "I wondered how the trucks could do without lights! They've got snooper-scopes!"

Nick ran on for just three paces. Then he stopped and lay down on the sidewalk. He put out one leg in an ungainly attitude, as if he had fallen while walking. Waldron dragged Lucy to one side.

"Still!" he panted. "Act frozen!"

A snooperscope, of course, was a device that was invented for snipers in warfare. It transformed infra-red light—heat-rays—into visible light on a screen. A man could drive a truck through absolute blackness by the difference in temperature of streets and building walls, which would appear on the screen as different degrees of brightness.

A car turned a corner a block ahead. It was crowded with men. It raced past them, dropped out four men a bare hundred yards beyond them, swerved and raced down a side street to leave other men at other intersections.

Waldron found himself sweating profusely. Even after he had heard the car go past and even after it had turned the corner, he sweated in the ghastly realization that purest chance had saved them. Because they, being alive and active, would have showed as warmer, brighter and more visible on the infra-red instrument screen.

Other cars moved swiftly at other places. Unlighted cars. Furiously driven cars. The purring of their motors divided

and spread. They were forming a cordon about the place from which telephones had been dialed. It was the purpose of the drivers to establish a cordon of armored men about that place where desolation had somehow become contaminated with life. They had to destroy that life, because it tried to destroy them by telling their deepest secret.

The noise of motors dwindled and stopped. The cars were still. There was a cordon. Had the driver of the car that passed within twenty feet of them been driving less frantically, he would have noticed the brighter prone figures on the sidewalk. The snooperscope, in fact, would have showed them as warm-blooded and alive, just as the "third eye"—the heat-perceptive organ—of pit-vipers detects the bodies of small warm-blooded animals in the darkness of empty woodlands.

The four men dumped out a hundred yards away now began to progress very slowly and carefully away from the three who played dead. They stopped and touched every prone figure on the sidewalks. They reached into every stalled or wrecked car. Once Waldron saw a faint flicker of light as one of them guardedly used a blue-glow flashlight up an alley. Of course, they would not all be equipped with infra-red devices. But they had been warned that the person—the incredibly alive and active person, perhaps the traitor among them—might be disguised as a victim. So they touched every tumbled body to see if it was other than iron-hard.

They went away into the distance. A long time later, Waldron stood up stiffly. By the mere chance that the cordon had been formed ever so slightly beyond them, the trio had gone undetected.

Twenty minutes later they were in the garage where they had labored so futilely to contrive the recorders which would tell what the outside world had to know.

There was no reason for them to choose the garage. But they felt that they had to get off the street. This place they knew. The clinging smell of coffee about the office was singularly comforting.

Then Lucy began to shiver. Waldron said desperately:

"We've got to do something, Nick! We've got to! But—"

There was a sound of footsteps outside. One man's footsteps. The man walked heavily down the sidewalk outside, and the three in the inner darkness could not imagine who it could be. The man opened the door of the garage office. He came inside. He closed the door behind him.

Then Fran Dutt said in a low, harsh voice:

"Lucy? Steve?"

There was no answer. The three of them were motionless.

"Answer me!" whispered Fran fiercely. "I know you're here! I traced you with a short-wave detector. The Leaders haven't thought of that yet. I was in the party that walked past here just now. I was with them and my instrument picked up your set noise. It tells me you're here now. I knew you'd come here when all the world tried to find you to kill you. I didn't tell the others when we walked past just now. I'm your friend, Steve! Lucy—I've got to talk to you!"

Dead silence. Then Waldron's voice, cold and deadly:

"I've got a gun on your middle, Fran. Come through the door and talk. But talk quietly!"

Fran came out into the garage proper. He closed the door from the office behind him. Then he turned a flashlight on his own face. It was haggard and worn.

"I've been going crazy," he said bitterly. "Lucy, you're all right?"

He swept the beam around. It touched Lucy and its reflection showed Nick as well as Waldron.

"Three of you, eh? You are clever!"

He put the flashlight down on the ground, with its beam still turned on.

"They got an alarm from somewhere," he said jerkily. "They're hunting there. But I came here and my instrument said you were back, whatever you did elsewhere. It's worse than I had imagined, Steve. They're not only looting the city, but they're shipping women back to my homeland for the Leaders. It is horrible! Horrible! If Lucy is caught I will go mad! She must be made more safe."

Waldron sat down. Fran Dutt wrung his hands, in the singular surroundings of the garage lighted only by his flashlight beam. He looked like a man in torment. Waldron pocketed his revolver.

"Well?" he said cynically. "How can Lucy be made more safe? God knows I've tried!"

Fran made a lightning-like movement.

"This way!"

A flash and an inadequate report came from something in his hand. A blue spark shot out from Nick's high-frequency pack. The tiny, silenced gun spat again. A wire of Waldron's pack parted and a lurid flame spat momentarily.

Then Lucy cried out. Nick toppled slowly forward, every muscle instantaneously stiffened in that ghastly tetany which men had called the "plague." He struck the floor of the garage and careened to one side, unspeakably grotesque because he retained the pose in which he had been standing. And Waldron, seated on a full oil drum next to a car in process of repair, remained utterly motionless. Not a muscle moved. Not an eyelash fluttered.

Lucy cried out hoarsely when she saw Waldron stiff and still. She wrung her hands.

"I almost wish," said Fran Dutt, in exquisite bitterness, "I almost wish that he had killed me when I came in. Because I happen to love you."

E I G H T

LUCY sobbed. Waldron remained utterly motionless. Fran no more than glanced at him. The radiation or the field of force—or whatever it was that had caused the greatest single catastrophe in human history aside from war—the weapon of the invaders had been so utterly effective that merely to see Waldron stiff and still was proof to Fran Dutt that he would stay that way.

He put away his small-caliber pistol and said desperately: "Lucy, I've been a traitor to my homeland, trying to make you safe. I haven't asked anything in return. I've made no bargain. But you must listen to me."

"You've killed my father and Steve, and now—"

"Your father isn't dead. I beg you to believe me." His features were contorted. "I cannot let our Leaders take you!" he cried. "You do not know our Leaders! You cannot imagine them! I will not let them take you. Beautiful as you are, they would want you for themselves. I would kill you first, Lucy! I love you, and I will kill you first!"

"Then do it!" cried Lucy as fiercely. "You've killed everybody else—"

"No! Your father is alive. He is in the laboratories of the Leaders. He works, but he is well treated. He is even happy. The Leaders know better than to mistreat scientists. Straussman filled them with such reverence that they will only keep your father prisoner. And Steve is not dead. You know that also. He will go to the laboratories and he will help your father, and they will have work that they love, and good treatment—everything but freedom."

"Then if they're to be prisoners," said Lucy desperately, "let me be a prisoner too!"

Fran Dutt wrung his hands again.

"Listen to me! I hate our Leaders as you do. I hate this invasion as you hate it. I hate our Leaders more than you can imagine, because I have felt their whips. But my father and my mother and my brothers and my sisters—they are hostages for me while I am in your world. If I fail our Leaders, they die by torture. How can I do that? Listen to me! Soon our Leaders will take New York itself. They will take Philadelphia. They will take all the great cities and loot them. They will have such riches and such loot that they will forget this place. Let me hide you, and presently I can come back to this place. We can be happy, perhaps, because I will never let our Leaders see you. I can do no more than that, Lucy. I swear it."

Lucy stared at him in the queer, reflected light that came from the flashlight on the floor. Her face was chalky-white.

Her eyes were wide and dazed.

"I think I believe you," she said through stiff lips. "I used to like you. You're probably trying to be decent, in your way. But it isn't enough. I—I think I prefer dying."

"But I won't let you!" Fran said fiercely. "You will become like Steve and I will hide you carefully. Then I'll come back and waken you and plead with you again. I cannot let you die—and I cannot let our Leaders take you!" His expression was pitiful. "Do not make me do that, Lucy! I beg you—"

There was a sudden, quite impossible movement. Waldron's voice came, icy and even.

"I'll take over now, Fran. And I'll kill you if you move!"

He stood up and went over to Fran. The muzzle of his pistol touched Fran's side as he disarmed him.

"I got one of your gang," he observed, "and put on his armor under my clothes. It works very well, thank you. I pretended to freeze so you could talk frankly to Lucy. I think you did. Lucy, take this unneeded pack off me. I think there's only a wire broken by Fran's bullet. Twist it together and wake Nick up, will you?"

Lucy trembled as she moved to obey.

"You won't kill Fran, will you?"

"Not if I can help it," said Waldron. "He's going to be too useful."

Fran said in the bitterness of absolute despair:

"I will not be useful to you, Steve."

Waldron said:

"We'll see."

He watched as Lucy adjusted a high-frequency pack to Nick's body. The photographer's rigid figure relaxed and he stared foolishly. Then he swore luridly and got up.

"What the hell hap— Oh, he shot and there I was on my face. Damn! Have I been dead again, Steve?"

"Something like it. Get your gun on Fran, here. I don't want to kill him—but if you need to, don't hesitate! This is a sort of war, after all. He's an enemy. Shoot him if you have to."

"It will be," said Nick grimly, "an exquisite pleasure."

He covered Fran. Waldron fumbled in the pockets of his coat.

"I bought some paper and envelopes the other day," he said dryly. "I only used one sheet and it did no good. I forgot to throw away the rest. Fran, could you make a suit of armor like you're wearing?"

"No," said Fran. "I am a spy and a theoretic physicist. But I do not know the process for making this armor. Your high-frequency packs work as well, but not as dependably—and you can be located."

"Good," said Waldron. He spread out a sheet of paper and extracted a fountain pen from his pocket. He wrote. Presently he read aloud what he had written.

Report of Operative 27D, in Newark. I have so far failed to get more information about the armor used by the invaders, and Fran Dutt has been able to supply me with only one more suit for examination. He points out that this is extremely dangerous work for him, and that the revolutionary plot in which he is engaged is much more likely to lead to the failure of the invasion than outright war. With a sufficient supply of NN gas and adequate bazookas, he is sure that he and his fellow-conspirators can seize and hold the entrance to his world and allow of the entry of an invading force from this world. He is prepared to sign a treaty promising adequate reparations for the damage done in this invasion if supplied with poison gas and bazookas. Of course our troops will be in partial occupation also. He is authorized to sign, "Fran Dutt, for the Revolutionary Committee." The helix by which the Invaders entered Newark is fully sketched, and an outline of its theory is promised within three days.

He glanced up. Fran Dutt looked like a corpse.

"That's phony, of course," Waldron observed. "But I'm putting it in my pocket. If your crowd kills me, they'll want to know how I escaped freezing. They'll find that in my pocket. What will they think when they find it, Fran?"

Fran's forehead glistened with sweat. "That I'm a traitor. That a plot exists. They'll torture my father and mother and

my brothers and sisters—all my friends. You don't know what hellish torments—" His voice broke. "You can't do this, Steve. If you'll kill me and tear that up, I'll thank you. On my honor I'll bless you if you'll only kill me and tear that up."

Waldron shook his head. "You'd better go back to your friends who hate your Leaders, and tell them about this. And get that revolution going! I suspect it's overdue. Because either I win, over here, and your damned Leaders are licked by us, or else I'm killed over here and they'll find this on my body. So you'd better start a revolt."

Fran licked his lips. Then he said in a strange voice:

"Perhaps—perhaps you have done me a favor. Our Leaders keep us Underones thoroughly cowed. I have urged revolt before. But the penalties for failure—they have been too great. Now if we do not revolt, we will be punished terribly. Because we cannot tell them—"

Waldron said nothing. He watched, his eyes narrow. Fran Dutt steadied himself.

"I know what I face. If I am accused of treason there will be others accused. Under torture, they would accuse others. Ah, yes! And it would be such torturing, such burning, such slow death— We have been afraid to strike. Now we dare not not strike!" Incredibly, he smiled, his face like chalk. "Either you have done us a favor, Steve, or else you will be cursed by so many men, suffering such agonies as they die, that their curses will pass the boundary between our worlds and strike you here."

"I hope," said Waldron in a matter-of-fact voice, "that I've done you a favor. My guesses were right, then?"

"What harm to tell you?" asked Fran, still ash-pale. "Yes. Straussman arrived in our world many years ago. He appeared in an open field outside of one of our cities, with a structure of metal about him. Underones and Leaders saw it appear. All were frightened. When Straussman appeared, our Leaders took him away and questioned him."

Waldron glanced at Nick. The photographer was listening, but skeptically. And he kept his revolver bearing steadily on Fran.

"Our Leaders," said Fran, "were very gentle to Straussman. They took him to their palace and gave him rich food and many women—women whom they took, as is their custom, from us Underones. Straussman learned to speak our language. He showed marvels. And Straussman became a Leader and even more arrogant than most of the others. He made Underones build him strange devices. Then new things began to appear: new weapons, new books, strange knowledge. The Underones who worked in his palace told of groups of Leaders who went into machines with him and vanished, and many hours later returned. They brought back machines and living plants and dogs which were more intelligent than those we had—even horses.

"And they brought back men who were wounded or drugged, and much more often there were women. Most of these captives were kept in stockades, and children of the Underones were sent to them to be taught. I was one. We were to be trained as spies, and we learned many things. But we were never allowed to forget that we were Underones and that a terrible punishment awaited us and our families if we failed our Leaders!"

Waldron said:

"About the same thing that would have happened if ancient Babylonia could have sent time-machines to our era to kidnap and loot."

"But our Leaders feared this world," said Fran. "There were more people here—many more people. And they had something our Leaders could not endure: the people rule themselves. That is a fearful idea to our Leaders. So for many years they have been terrified lest other scientists duplicate the work of Straussman. At first they thought they could build our world to where it could defend itself. But it was easier to tear down the civilization of this world—and it would yield loot. So they kept spies here, and when other scientists—your father, Lucy, and others—began to inquire into Straussman's work, they knew that sooner or later our world would be found out. So they have set out to destroy the things they fear in your world."

"And meanwhile Lucy's father works in their laboratories,"

said Waldron. "I suggest that he might help in your revolution, Fran. He's no fool. But neither am I. Your armor is better than our high-frequency packs. I'm going to take it."

Fran went whiter still.

"That's the same as killing me."

"I'm giving you a high-frequency pack," said Waldron. "Nick, there is an extra pack for him. Get the armor off, Fran."

Fran licked his lips. When his armor was partly removed, he went rigid and started to fall. Nick caught him. They got the balance of the armor off. Lucy donned the armor, discarding her outer clothing behind one of the cars. She looked slim and boyish when she came back.

Nick turned on the power pack. Waldron said coldly:

"Now, Fran, we'll be on our way. Nobody else has a listening device like yours, but they could think of it any time. You stay here. I'll leave your pistol at the next corner."

He moved to open the garage door. Lucy said uneasily:

"Steve, if Fran's seen without his armor and with one of our packs—"

"He knows what I'll have to do," said Fran harshly.

And Waldron did. Fran would have to use his native language to call a compatriot aside from others, and then he would have to knock out that compatriot and take his armor. And the other man from the other side of here would thereupon become a frozen, catatonic image.

Nick started the car they had fueled and checked over before and Waldron opened the garage doors. The car went smoothly and silently out into the street. With a relatively desperate plan in mind, Waldron moved the car as quietly as possible toward the bonfire on the Pulaski Skyway. It would approach that part of the cordon not far from the dead area, but laterally along the fringe of it. Nick would pretend that he had been passed by another cordon and did not realize that he had gone beyond the permitted area. At the least they would not be shot down for so plausible an error. Then they would be able to use a telephone. They would be able to do something. Once somebody—anybody—listened to them

They saw the bonfire in the night. Nick turned on his car's headlights. He swept confidently toward the fire. There were soldiers around it and he saw a machine gun pointing toward Newark.

But nobody moved. There was a sudden clashing, clanging uproar everywhere toward New York. The uproar grew greater. It reached a climax. Then it stopped. Afterward, only here and there other crashings sounded. Then they stopped too.

They reached the soldiers, who were now motionless, lying on the ground in grotesque postures.

The rest of the United States would immediately be assured that the plague which had wiped out Newark—and had appeared again in two spots in New York and one in Westchester County—had spread. Jersey City was now a place of frozen, motionless forms and wreckage.

"Head on toward the tunnel," said Waldron grimly. "It isn't likely that Fran's gang has gotten to that yet. If they have, we'll try to shoot our way through. Hold it!"

He got out of the car. The street lights here had not yet been turned off. It seemed very remarkable to be walking openly in a lighted place. But Waldron accumulated weapons and ammunition, including sub-machine guns. The three of them were very well armed when they went on down the ramp into the long tunnel which led to the vehicular tube itself.

Fran's gang had not gotten to the tunnel mouth.

Nick drove into it. The lights burned brightly, but the traffic was wrong. Utterly wrong. The traffic was stopped. And every car that stopped did so because it crashed into something, or stalled when it pushed gently against the immovable. There was one place where Nick and Waldron had to get out and use the jack from a truck to raise up a car so that they could topple it over. That way there was barely space for their own car to scrape by.

One of the tunnel police lay on the catwalk beside the highway, one hand stretching stiffly out to where a moving car would have hit it. But theirs was the only moving car.

Then, abruptly, the lights in the Tube went out. The

rows of glittering electric bulbs which brighten its white-tiled walls died abruptly. Their car's headlights glared ahead. Suddenly they showed only emptiness. Apparently the Invaders' weapon had ceased to have effect, here, and the cars beyond its reach in the tunnel had fled on ahead and out. But then they saw a limousine, stopped for no perceptible reason. Bluish, dense smoke came from under its hood. The smell was from burning rubber.

Then they came out into New York, with all its lights glowing brightly and stars shining down from the light-tinted sky. But New York was silent. It was still.

It was dead, with people tumbled stiffly in its streets, and all its vehicles piled in wrecks and heaps and dented masses.

N I N E

WALDRON had had some hope of New York. He even stopped the car and listened, quite foolishly. The subway did not roar. Traffic did not move. There was such silence on Manhattan Island as was never there by day or night, in summer or in wintertime, since the glaciers drew back and permitted the growth of arctic grasses.

"We're too late," he said with a peculiar calmness. "Much too late. I'd guess this happened all of five minutes ago. Probably while we were in the tunnel. By the time we could get high-frequency packs made and any number of men up and convinced and armed, the invaders would find us. In empty streets like these we'd be plainly visible. You notice there aren't as many cars about as there were in Newark."

The last comment was for Lucy. It was noticeable, when one looked. But for three days, now, New Yorkers had been getting out of town by any possible means. There were only a fraction as many automobiles as normal. There were fewer people. A vast army of refugees had flowed northward and spread out. The number of cars and people visible at a little before midnight, when the invasion-weapon struck, was only fractionally as great as it should have been.

Nick chewed at his fingers.

"It looks like we're licked," he said dismally. "Damn it, Steve, they'll get us sooner or later. Let's hunt up these guys and use up this ammunition we've got."

"I'd like to do more damage than that," said Waldron. "If they took New York, they'd take Brooklyn and Queens and the Bronx, I suppose. I wonder how they spread this stuff, anyhow? It must be something done electrically. It's like magnetization. A DC current turns an object from the stasis-condition into reality in that world and unreality in this. A high-frequency current undoes it. I wonder . . ."

It was not particularly rational to sit in a stopped car in a dead city and speculate about how it had been immobilized. Especially when a considerable force of armored men, responsible for the disaster, would be arriving at any instant.

"I've got a hunch," said Waldron thoughtfully. "The hunch is that they spread the—I suppose it's some sort of a crazy field of force—they might be able to spread it by wires. If they introduced it into a city's lighting circuits, the wires would carry it everywhere. Like captive radio—short-range stuff for colleges and small towns, transmitted over wires, that can be picked up within half a mile."

Lucy said desperately:

"Steve, please don't give up! Think of all the people who've been taken there to that other world—"

"I'm not giving up," said Waldron calmly. "I've just reached the point where I can't feel angry any longer. I'm past all that. I'm thinking that they might use the city electric mains as a way to establish the condition that turns everybody into statues. And I'm thinking that just possibly we could use them to nullify it." He turned his head to Nick. "There's a huge electric power plant over on the other side of the East River, Nick. This thing isn't half an hour old, and they'll have automatic stokers and controls. We ought to be able to use a hundred thousand horsepower or so. . . ."

The starter hummed and the motor purred, and the car moved swiftly forward. Nick headed east. The uncanniness of the frozen city did not lessen as they passed through more

and more scenes disclosing the abruptness and totality of the disaster. They did see more people away from the tunnel's mouth, though. An amazing array of shabby human beings lay upon the sidewalks.

These had been people who could not secure transportation out of the city. There were scrubwomen and men who looked like janitors, and once there was a too richly dressed woman. There were bearded men—three of them—fallen beside their pushcarts. They came to one place where a woman in a gray checked apron, magnificently matronly, lay in the middle of a group of bundled-up children that she had been leading to some unknown destination.

They drove down Canal Street, sweeping past the Bowery and up upon the bridge. Then they were high over the wide East River.

Below them, on the dark water, midget tugs with shining bright lights puffed sturdily but aimlessly upon the waters. Their crews smitten, they would move at random about the harbor until their fires died down or they ran aground. Far over to the left, the multiple chimneys and the pale brick bulk of the giant powerhouse showed in the faint glow of all the city's lights. Some smoke came from the tall stacks.

"There'll still be steam," said Waldron, "but they'll want to shut off the power as soon as they can. It would be logical. Since high-frequency wakes people up, any sort of accident that would create an arc might upset their plans. When we go in the powerhouse, Nick, we'll want to take all our guns."

They came to wreckage on the bridge. Cars had met almost head-on and crashed. Their impact had swung them partly around, blocking the roadway. But somebody had come along since the crash—spilled gasoline and oil on the highway showed it—and shifted one car enough to clear the road again. This meant that somebody else was alive and moving. That could only be some compatriot of Fran's.

Waldron's jaw clenched. Nick noted it too. In any case, Waldron very painstakingly checked his high-frequency pack and reached over into the back of the car and hung extra ammunition-belts about himself until he looked rather

like a harness rack. He got a sub-machine gun ready to fire.

They drove down the sloping other side of the bridge. They turned to the left and passed through streets that were mostly clear. Much of Brooklyn had fled, like much of New York.

They reached the powerhouse, standing monstrous and tall above an empty street. Chain-link fencing surrounded most of it. But there was, of course, an entrance. And here there was not silence. There was an indefinite but sustained humming sound. Once there was a faint, mechanical clanking.

Nick stopped the car at Waldron's instruction. Waldron then reached back his hand and Lucy gave him a sub-machine gun and shells for it. Nick got cautiously out on the other side.

"I don't hear anybody," said Nick in a hushed voice, "but there must be somebody tending the machinery. Or is it automatic?"

His voice echoed, hushed as it was. Lucy stepped to the ground, a quaint and exotic figure in the armor of the invaders, yet with the most familiar of weapons at her waist.

They went into the powerhouse. They passed through empty, lighted corridors with unfamiliar smells. They found the room where there were long rows of iron objects, with doors through whose chinks came the gleaming of the fires of hell. They saw men here, too. They were toppled and stiff.

They went to the vast generator room, in which the humming noise was created. The room was monstrous in size and the machinery was gigantic, though not in proportion to the power it developed. And there was no moving human figure anywhere. The only attendants were small, stiffened figures scattered among the metal giants. Even alive, they would have seemed too puny to control such mechanisms.

Waldron feverishly traced bus-bars and power-leads. He followed them across the hall to the switchboard with its maze of inch-thick copper conductors. There, dwarfed by his surroundings, he said:

"The main switch is thrown, Nick."

Nick ran ten paces. He looked out a window.

"Most of the city's dark. It wasn't when we came in. Somebody threw that switch while we were down in the boiler room, most likely."

Waldron said grimly:

"I think we're going to get killed. We can't make a stable arc with the amount of juice that'll be pouring out, unless we do a divided flat one. We want insulating stuff to pound up and make a crucible with."

Nick opened a metal cupboard. Material for emergency repairs was there. There was a stock of copper bolts and nuts. There was highly desirable other material.

Lucy said a shaky sentence and climbed to a high walkway where she could see every entrance and exit of the huge room. She did not know what they planned. They had spoken of steam and boilers and horsepower by the hundred thousand. As they worked, they babbled of condensers and gaps and molten copper. They seemed to refer with full comprehension to some fully matured plan at which she could not even guess, and which certainly they hadn't discussed in any detail. But Lucy had come to have an extraordinary confidence in Waldron.

Nick knelt on the floor and hammered porcelain insulators to bits. Then he built the fragments into a mound such as children build on the seashore with sand. There came the sound of blows on metal, and Waldron came staggering back with ten- and fifteen-foot sections of shining square bus-bar. Nick grinned at him. Together they bent them into the shapes they required by sticking the ends in stationary machines and heaving on the ends.

Waldron came back with more bus-bar. He disappeared again. Lucy watched. Once she thought she saw a movement through one of the open bus-bars, but she could not be sure.

"It's all right," said Nick. "You and Steve are wearing their armor. That ought to confuse them a little."

There was a shot. Two more. Nick ran for the sound, swinging a sub-machine gun to readiness. Lucy turned white

and darted for the steps to the floor of the great room.

But Waldron came into the huge room, dripping big sheets of thin sheet metal as he came.

"Only one man," he said calmly, "and I killed him. But we'd better hurry. Nick, these are for condensers."

Nick grabbed them.

"Glass from the windows. Big sheets!"

Waldron shattered one windowpane and strained at the frame which held in the next. He came back with a sheet of glass. Nick built up condensers. They were neither neat nor efficient nor very promising. They might arc. But they had to do.

A man in the scaly armor of the invaders stormed into the huge room. He carried one of the cane-like whips with metal lashes that Waldron had seen used on Market Street, in Newark. The man saw Lucy first, and she looked like one of the invaders herself. He rasped a savage and wholly unintelligible sentence at her.

Waldron shot him dead, very deliberately, and said mildly:

"Better hurry up, Nick."

Nick worked like a madman. Two more men dashed in. A burst of shots knocked one down. The other tripped over him and fell. But he saw Nick—not in proper uniform of armor—and he screamed out in the cryptic syllables of the invaders' language. He crawled behind a turbine base and continued to scream shrill warning.

A man poked his head around a door. He aimed a queer, pistol-like device at Nick. It looked familiar to Waldron. The man absurdly hid behind the door instead of the door frame. Waldron fired a burst of shots through the wood, filling the door with holes and the man with lead. The pistol-like weapon dropped to the floor, heated up and seemed to melt.

There were running footsteps and babbling voices.

"Watch the doors on that side, Lucy," said Waldron.

Nick stood up, panting.

"I think I've got it," he wheezed. "I think so."

He ran to the great master switch. He jammed it home.

There was a flash of blue-white flame. Then another. Then a harsh, unbearable glare.

Nick had built a flat mound of powdered porcelain, something like a dry mud pie. Its top contained shallow depressions filled with stray copper bolts and nuts, and separated by a dyke of porcelain between. A streak of sheet metal had connected the metal scraps, and bus-bars led to the separate hollows.

With the switch thrown, sixty-six hundred volts of electricity and nobody could know how many amperes of current tried to go through the small, sheet-metal bridge. It heated and exploded, and a giant arc poured through the metallic vapor over the porcelain dyke. At first the arc was merely blue-white. Then it was colored by the ghastly hue of vaporized copper. It threw an unbearable, an intolerable glare upon the ceiling. The heaped-up copper objects smoked and began to glow. In seconds they were white-hot. Then there were merely two pools of melted copper, separated by a narrow mass of porcelain, with an arc flaring and flaming between them.

It looked like a fragment of a blue-white star flung upon the floor of the generator room. Men in scaly armor flung their hands before their eyes, fearful of what seemed strange and frightening to them. Harsh voices from shelter commanded them on. But then Nick and Waldron set grimly to work with their sub-machine guns.

And then noises began in the city outside.

The sixty-six-hundred-volt arc was of necessity a generator of high-frequency current. The condensers Nick had improvised served in a fashion to stabilize that output. The arc itself fed into the city's power-lines. Surges of high-frequency current poured out through all the feeder lines of the city. Automatic switches cut in the lines normally allotted to other powerhouses, and automatically synchronized alternators cut in the enormous reserve of storage-battery current which was designed to stabilize the voltage but now maintained the arc. Every AC feeder line in the city became filled with surges of current. And nearly every human being in the city had high-frequency surges induced into his body.

There were many, many thousands of horsepower in the arc now flaming between pools of melted metal. There was more power in the arc—more by many tens of thousands of kilowatts—than in whatever device there was which had thrown the world's greatest city into cataleptic lifelessness. Trivial as was the current each person received, it was enough to neutralize the paralyzing force, plus something over. It was enough to start the process of revival—and to finish it.

The life in the city had been that of a partly evacuated city near midnight. But New York and Brooklyn are not silent at any hour. There should have been the sound of many motors. There were only crashes and wrecks in the streets. Folk who found themselves lying prone, others like them all about, and saw the innumerable disasters of the traffic—they could guess instantly two important matters. One was that the "plague" had struck them. The other was that they had recovered from it. Unspeakable tumult arose on all the many square miles of the city.

The noise came even into the powerhouse, and Waldron and Nick Bannerman heard it in between the cracklings and roaring of their own guns. The invaders attacked with a queer helplessness, driven on by cracking whips and raging voices behind them. And they did not know how to take advantage of the cover of the machines, and when presently they began to use firearms they were clumsy and unskilled in their management.

The great hall rang with the roaring of the sub-machine guns and with the poppings of revolvers. Waldron and Nick defended their unholy flame with an insensate savagery.

Bedlam arose upon the harbor. Tugs and steamers found themselves suddenly violating all rules and customs of navigation. They got their high-frequency current through the fact of earth-return to the powerhouse. They whistled furiously at each other to straighten out the tangle in which they found themselves. Those which had rammed each other or found themselves aground emitted the mournful, wailing blasts which called for immediate assistance. There were whistlings and hootings and bellowings on the water.

But there was more. Policemen found themselves everywhere prone upon the ground. They scrambled to their feet to see wreckage all about them, smashed cars, smashed windows. Their whistles shrilled and they raced to their beat telephones to report tragedies, or else they competently broke in the doors of the nearest stores to call ambulances with the minimum loss of time.

And these things happened not only in New York, but in Brooklyn, and Queens and the Bronx. There was uproar everywhere, except, rather quaintly, for a certain considerable area in the fifties, where the character of supplied electric current was anomalous. There the power lines carried direct instead of alternating current. The feeder lines of the other sort did not feed to them. So part of New York remained frozen and dead. But everywhere else the city cried out tumultuously.

And Waldron and Nick Bannerman fought savagely. They dodged about among the generators, sending bullets at every attempt of the invaders to get enough men inside the great room to overwhelm them by pure numbers. The attackers were of that cringing, cowed class known—so Fran had said—as Underones. They were not good fighting men. For Leaders remaining safely under cover and threatening their men into bravery did not bring out the higher qualities of courage.

So Nick and Waldron could hold the space about their ghastly green flare. It flickered and flared and filled the room with its incredibly colored light. The crackling sound of shots stung their eardrums. The light blinded their eyes when they could not avoid glancing at it. Lucy had climbed upward again. She called down warnings of any gatherings of men about to rush toward them. The dynamos hummed and hummed and the two men fought desperately, and even more desperately they wondered when this outburst would bring police and consequently help to them. Meanwhile, however, the police worked like madmen to cope with emergencies they knew of.

Then a pilot light went out before one of the giant generators. Then another, and another. The droning of the

turbine-driven dynamos had been a steady, throbbing hum. It became a fainter sound and then degenerated into a whine. The whine grew fainter. More pilot lights flicked out. The ghastly blue glare wavered. It was running exclusively on far-away banks of storage batteries now. But these were designed to have a capacity to run every device in the city for a period of ten minutes and they had been drawn on heavily for a very long time. Guns continued to crackle, but the arc which leaped between pools of melted metal grew unstable. It wavered more and more erratically. Then the same hands that had cut off steam from one turbine after another found the switch to the battery banks.

The arc went out.

The noises in the city stopped. The shrieking of sirens cut off to the sound of many crashes. The whistles upon the river died away save that far down toward the Battery one lone boat wailed on and on, and would so continue until the steam in its boiler was exhausted.

"They cut off the steam," said Waldron in icy calmness. "The city's gone dead again. But it was a good try."

There came another rush of men. This time some of their Leaders followed them, striking with their whips at the men who were to do the actual fighting. And there was the courage of pure desperation in that rush. Revolvers crackled in the front ranks.

T E N

As THE scale-armored figures plunged toward him, bunched together for courage, Waldron slaughtered them. He rested the automatic rifle on a platform railing and deliberately traversed it. Bullets poured from its muzzle in a deadly stream. A storm of lead poured into the charge. It shattered it. Of the men who had composed the bunch, a dozen dropped at once. Ten more dropped as they recoiled from the slaughter. More flung lead dropped all but three of the balance. And two of the three were Leaders, judging by the whips which dangled from their wrists.

Waldron concentrated upon them. One crashed to the floor with half a dozen bullets between his shoulders. Another fell as a tree falls. The third screamed shrilly as bullets pulped his left arm. He careened through a doorway and continued to squeal.

"Not much nerve," said Waldron detachedly. "Those Leaders ought to learn to take it."

"Now what?" demanded Nick.

"Oh, there'll be more of them coming," said Waldron, "and we'll kill them, and presently they'll kill us."

Lucy said:

"W-will you tell me when you think you . . . can't hold out any longer?"

Waldron jerked his head to face her. She was pale, but she smiled at him. If her voice wavered, she could not help that.

"W-we tried, didn't we? But after what Fran said, I don't want to take any chance of not being killed."

She touched the revolver in a holster at her side, over the invaders' armor she wore. Waldron swore savagely, then.

"We're fools, Nick!" he said bitterly. "Fools! Because we hate those devils, we've thrown away our lives! We could have headed for a place where they haven't struck. The cordon was down. There was nobody to stop us. We could have broken through, and told what we knew, and organized men to fight."

Nick pulled out a pack of cigarettes and was absurdly painstaking in taking one out.

"Rather late to think of that now," he said. "But we'd better be moving. We don't want to stay here!"

"What more can they do than kill us?"

"They had spies," said Nick. "And those spies would know something about tear gas. Your friend Fran didn't speak too highly of their methods of execution."

Waldron suddenly flung up a revolver and fired at a man dodging past a window. The window smashed. Something came in and exploded with a not-at-all alarming violence.

"That's gas now," said Waldron. "Come on!"

He took Lucy's hand. With Nick on one side and Wal-

dron on the other, they broke into a sprint. They swerved as something else came in another window and burst. They plunged for the wall and tore open the small door there. A spiral stairway wound up and up, and then led down.

"We can't go down," said Waldron grimly. "There are mobs of them down below. So we're going up."

He led the way. For seconds, perhaps half a minute, their departure from the generator room went unnoticed. Initiative was not encouraged among the Underones by the leaders of the invaders. Waldron reached a landing with the others close behind. He halted and listened. A small window was close by. He peered out.

"I wish," he said between his teeth, "that we could convince them we'd gone down. Something to throw to make a noise in the courtyard below. What can I use?"

Nick was helpless. Concrete walls. Concrete floor. Steel spiral stairway. Nothing . . . But Lucy reached up.

"Here's a light bulb," she said quietly. "It'll sound like a shot when it breaks."

Waldron took it and threw it out. There was a sharp cracking sound below. There was a babbling. Below them, on the stairs, there were voices. Men had pushed open the small door through which the three of them had disappeared. A voice bellowed arrogantly. Men started both up and down the stairs.

There were louder bellowings, farther away. The bulb had been mistaken for a shot. It was like enough, for ears not accustomed to firearms. Men halted and tramped down again.

"Go quietly," said Waldron, under his breath. Again he led the way.

He reached out and gathered electric light bulbs as he passed them. The powerhouse, of course, was lighted by a small auxiliary generator all its own. Lucy imitated him. When they reached the top of the stairs their arms were full.

The stairway ended at the powerhouse room. Here was a small plank platform and a sort of hut. From it a person should have been able to see far down to the Narrows. But

there were no lights on the shore anywhere. The only lights visible were from the stars and from the aimless drifting tugs and other craft upon the harbor waters.

Waldron went to the edge of the roof. He peered down. All was still. He flung out half a dozen electric-light bulbs. When they struck, they created sharp bursts of sound. He saw light streak out into the street as a door was opened. Then Waldron, making due allowance for wind, threw two more, and then three, and four more. The result was a satisfying confusion and the use of flashlights to hunt for them.

Nick said somberly:

"It looks to me, Steve, like we made a mistake not getting killed down there. After all, they've won. At a guess, the only place anybody would be safe from those devils would be somewhere out at sea."

Then Waldron said curtly:

"That's an idea! If we'd had it before it might have done some good. Now, how are we going to put it into action?"

In the night atop the wind-swept roof, Nick seemed to stare at him. Then he grunted.

"I'll see how much I can make out of the way the streets run," he said dourly.

He went across the roof. He found a place where he could see the rooftops below and began to study them by starlight.

Lucy said unsteadily:

"Steve, it's not fair. You try so hard, and every break is against you. It's not fair!"

Waldron looked at her and grinned. "Woman," he said gruffly, "you are slightly insane, expecting the breaks to be tempered to the boy friend. But thanks. And since Nick is plotting our later escape—why, come here."

It was a peculiar moment and place to act in a more or less romantic fashion, even if Waldron's motive was at least partly to reassure Lucy. But she clung to him.

"I—I thought," she said unsteadily, an instant or two later, "I was thinking tonight—when it seemed we would be killed any instant—I was thinking that it was horrible to have it happen when we hadn't really kissed each other since all

this began. We've been together for days without saying a word about caring for each other.

There was some sound. She did not seem to mind.

"But I'm glad," she said. "I'm glad you felt like kissing me now."

And then there were footsteps inside the shed—the penthouse at the top of the stairs. The door opened. A figure came cautiously out, looking curiously about it. It wore the scaly armor of the invaders. The figure gazed interestedly.

Waldron drew his revolver, disengaging his arm from around Lucy with a slow precision. She whirled. The invader—looter, alien—was less than fifteen feet away. He was obviously performing something like a routine examination. But Lucy gasped.

Waldron shot him. There was nothing else to do.

While Lucy wrung her hands, Waldron faced the penthouse door. The wind blew strongly at this height. The sound of the shot was loud, but most of it would blow upward. Unless there were other invaders very close, it might go unheard.

Nick came running, a revolver ready.

"Here's armor for you, too, Nick," said Waldron grimly. "If this lad came up just to look about, we may be all right. But if he's missed, it may be too bad."

For five minutes, for ten, they waited for the penthouse to erupt figures. No one came. Then Waldron opened the door, with Nick ready to pour a storm of fire within it. The penthouse was empty. The man had come alone.

Nick stripped him of his scaly armor and sighed gustily in relief when he had donned it, though he left the high-frequency pack in place until he was sure.

"Now I feel better."

But then there was a faint rumbling sound in the air somewhere. They looked down. Trucks were beginning to move in the streets about the powerhouse. At first they moved away from the great building. Waldron guessed that they were moving out of the building. They would be bound upon some definite errand. This might well have been the way the looting of Newark had begun. Doubtless

there was another such activity beginning in Manhattan. . .

They went down the stairs when the first of the trucks began to come back. They counted on those trucks for a diversion. They had checked over their weapons. Waldron, using Nick's high-frequency pack, had shifted his scaly armor outside his clothing again. In a dim light he might pass as an invader. All three of them might—maybe. Certainly they needed every advantage they could get. Because the powerhouse was a center of the activity of the invaders.

As they went quietly down the circular stairs, they heard the faint humming of dynamos set running again. Lower, they listened to the dull rumbling of trucks. Once they heard voices behind a door they had to pass on their way down.

They reached the level of the generator room floor. The sound of generators was distinctly loud, now, but there was a louder noise elsewhere. As they descended further, that other noise became loud. Suddenly they reached a hallway and someone moved nearby. They walked quietly but very quickly through the nearest open door—and they were in the middle of vast activity and flickering light.

The scene was singularly like the one in the building in Newark. A platform with a helix of heavy bronze bars was raised above the ground. It had not been brought to this place from outside, and certainly it had not been built here. It must have been translated from that strange other world from which the invaders came. A ramp led to the platform and a wavering, bluish light flickered about the surrounding coil. A truck rolled onto the platform, flickered—and was not. Then another and another and another. They were coming steadily from the darkness beyond the building. There was no particular need for secretiveness now. There were no watchers trying to detect signs of life here.

The fact that Waldron, Lucy and Nick knew that the trucks did not cease to exist, but that they merely had the direction of their atomic poles changed, did not make the vanishing of the trucks seem less magical. The atoms of their substance changed the direction of their poles, and

they became matter of another sort than the matter of the trio's world, and vanished from it. But they also became matter of the same sort as that in the strange world from which the invaders came—and they appeared in it.

There was a warning flash of light. The stream of trucks checked. Men materialized from nowhere upon the platform. They were clad in scaly armor. They were Underones, and they gaped at their surroundings as they shuffled docilely off the platform to the ground. Voices roared harsh orders at them. They formed up over at one side of the open space. The light flashed once more and the movement of trucks began again.

The men from the invaders' world moved toward the entrance in groups of four and five and six. They went out. Obviously, they were going out to find trucks, to load them, and then to bring them back.

"Efficiency!" said Waldron under his breath. "They've been taught to drive in the other world. I'll bet they've studied street maps in preparation for this."

There was a muffled clanking sound immediately behind. Men came out of the doorway through which the trio had just come. The flickering light of the helix lighted up their bodies. Their armor, though scaled, glittered with the prismatic coloring of many jewels. They carried the metal-studded whips which were the symbols of nobility or leadership. There was arrogance in every movement, in every pose.

The three Americans stood in deep shadow. They were heavily armed, as Underones seemed not to be, but otherwise they would pass a quick glance. Waldron searched for a plausible way of leaving this place. With the noise about him and the urgency of his need, he did not hear the just-emerged group. Nick stared open-mouthed at the incredible disappearance of the trucks, ceasing to exist as if they were soap-bubbles. Only Lucy heard, and turned and gasped.

The group swaggered on. One of the lesser Leaders brushed against Lucy. He rasped at her. He raised his whip and lashed at her. Lucy cried out in mingled terror and pain, and Waldron turned into a madman.

He whirled, to see the lash descending on Lucy's face. He became an entirely primitive man. He had a sub-machine gun slung across his back and four revolvers at his waist. But he roared inarticulately and sprang. His hands closed about the throat of the man with the whip just as that man realized that Lucy was a girl and was stunned with amazement. Snarling, Waldron bore him to the ground.

Lucy cried out for Waldron's danger. The balance of the arrogant group gasped in shocked incredulity at the sight of an apparent Underone daring to lay hands on one of their superior mold. Voices raised in thick cries of fury. Whips flashed aloft, their metal lashes glittering, to rake the flesh from the bones of these unspeakably insolent—

Nick opened fire from the hip. He, alone, had kept his head. He pulled the continuous-fire stud on his weapon and played it upon the armored men as if it were a water hose. The men collapsed in a kicking and suddenly shrieking heap. One of them howled, choking, and a wave of horror filled the whole courtyard with panic greater than the mere terror felt by Waldron and Nick and Lucy. Nick had killed men who were important among the invaders. He had killed, in fact, seven of the Leaders of the highest rank of all.

Some of the invaders gasped and fled. The Underones, especially, scuttled off into the dark like rabbits. Lesser Leaders, who an instant before had been the very embodiment of authority, ran agitatedly about, bawling orders which an instant later they countermanded.

"Crazy fool!" panted Nick. "You've raised hell! But come on. Let's get out of here before they get back their senses."

He shook Waldron's arm. Waldron wrenched horribly. Then he stood up and said thickly:

"Show the way. We'll follow you!"

They ran out, the three of them, and once blundered into a knot of scaly figures who shouted and fled—though not before Waldron had emptied a revolver into their midst. Then they came to the dark street and the passenger car. But they did not take it. Instead, they plunged into the darkness of an alley which Nick, pantingly, indicated. Behind them there was sheer confusion. The killing of highest

officers had produced horror which paralyzed all other activity.

Presently—not many blocks away, and yet far enough—three armored figures came out into starlight, and Nick busily hunted among the boats at the dock. Suddenly, he grunted gleefully and dived down below deck of one of the craft and almost immediately created the rushing, droning sound of a high-power marine engine running smoothly.

Waldron anxiously inspected Lucy's cheek by a beam of light coming up from below. Meanwhile, Nick bobbed above the hatchway and roared profanely at him. Waldron cast off the lines. Water thrashed somewhere and the boat backed out into the river. Nick wrestled mightily with gears and sent the boat forward. Waldron swung the wheel. The boat swept downriver, its speed surprising. Nick bobbed below again and the speed increased. They headed for the lower harbor, leaving the dead city behind.

E L E V E N

IN A DEAD world there are no laws. Therefore, the boat Nick had chosen, and the three of them had stolen, ran through the night without riding-lights or any other thing to betray her position to possible pursuers. It was, apparently, a fast cabin speedboat.

Waldron held the wheel and headed for the open sea, while Nick explored and found radio and other adjuncts for navigation. He agreed with Waldron that it would be unwise to use the radio close to New York. Therefore, they cleared the harbor mouth and headed south along the Jersey coast.

For an hour or more Nick tended to putter over the engine, risking the doing of more harm than good. He then poked about among the stores, and at last managed to come to some conclusion about the amount of fuel there was on board. He came to the wheel to report, yawning a little as he did so.

"All right," said Waldron. "We'll keep going until day-

break, and then start the radio. That should be far enough away."

"It should," admitted Nick. "The only question is, will it? I'm going to sleep on the engine-room floor for a while."

He disappeared, to fall instantly asleep. Waldron settled down to a vigil. But he was no less tired than Nick. Lucy smiled maternally at him when he nodded occasionally at the wheel, steadying the boat on the course that had been picked out almost at random.

At dawn, Lucy investigated the galley and they drank coffee in the cold dawnlight. Nick came awake and demanded some coffee too, and then he turned on the broadcast receiver and they listened to news accounts. The only station they could tune in was in Chicago, despairingly broadcasting at what was four A.M. by Central time. The announcer said drearily:

Rioting on the lake-front, which began at four this afternoon when mobs tried to storm the wharves of lake steamers, resulted in the death of six policemen who tried to restrain the rioters. The number of civilian deaths has not been ascertained, but at least thirty persons, many of them women, were trampled by the mob which struggles to escape the city before the plague strikes.

Nick blinked at the other two. The announcer went on:

Mob violence against the owners of cars has practically ceased, because practically no cars attempt escape from the city. The ways out of the city are now filled with crowds of human beings on foot.

Waldron drank meditatively and put down his cup.

In other cities, rioting continues. St. Louis is under martial law, which means that the authorities have not yet been overwhelmed. Pittsburgh is a city of madmen, according to advices broadcast from there. Three-fourths of the population is trying to leave the seemingly doomed city. The balance, hopeless of escaping

the plague which yesterday wiped out the Atlantic Coast from Boston to Baltimore and Washington, has given itself up to looting and revelry.

Lucy uttered a little cry of dismayed horror.

"Boston to Washington! Millions upon millions of people!"

"It may be for moral effect," said Waldron. "They can't loot all those cities immediately, most likely. But they can smash our civilization by panic. You remember Fran said they were afraid of us."

The announcer went on dispiritedly:

The last advices do lead to the opinion that the plague has ceased to advance. But it was quiescent for a time after overwhelming Newark. The cities known to have been overwhelmed, besides New York and Newark, include Albany, Schenectady, and Troy, in New York; Trenton besides Newark in New Jersey; Scranton and Philadelphia in—"

The voice droned through a long list of names, from Maryland north to Massachusetts. It went on:

It is noticeable that only the larger towns have so far been affected. No city much under one hundred thousand population has so far been smitten. The meaning of this fact is not known. A late news bulletin: Niagara Falls is believed to have fallen victim to the plague. The water power from both the American and Canadian falls was cut off at eleven tonight, and no word has come from the city since that time.

Waldron said thoughtfully:

"They would hit Niagara. There's plenty of electric power there. With arcs of power-transmission-line power, the trick we tried last night back in New York could revive a good many thousand square miles. If we have to work on a long-time basis, Nick, we'll fix up a sort of Army and try to seize that as a base of operations."

He switched off the radio.

"Let's try to start something. Are you set, Nick?"

"Yes," said Nick. He gulped down the last of his coffee. "It ought to take 'em an hour to reach us from New York after we start sending, even if they use planes. Finding us included, of course. Maybe they don't have planes."

Lucy said nothing. But she started to clear away the cups from which the two men had drunk, while they went to the desk which was in the radio room.

It was a completely quiet and matter-of-fact performance, at that. This cabin cruiser was equipped for ham short-wave radio. Nick sent out calls. Presently he talked crisply—warning his listeners not to give their own call-letters—and telling them to switch to directional aerials, if possible. There came interference. Squawking, meaningless, blasting noises, of the type first developed by an European-Asian nation which did not wish its citizens to listen to broadcasts from other countries.

Nick talked on. Once he said:

"What frequency would you say, Steve?"

"Diathermy works," said Waldron. "Apparently almost anything under fifteen thousand cycles. If feeder wires carried it all over New York, it may be as low as ten."

"I'll tell 'em," said Nick composedly.

He talked. Presently he swung away.

"It's done—if it can be done. I had six hams on the air then, all on directional aerials which cut out most of the scrambling. And every one of them swore that even before he made a high-frequency pack for himself, he'd pass on the news by amateur relay. Each one says that his own town is crazy with terror. Our whole civilization is going to pot. But we've done our stuff. Now what?"

As if in answer, there came the droning hum of a plane motor, then another. The sound became the deep-toned, distant roar of many engines.

Waldron searched the sky. Small, wabbling dots appeared against the blue—not from the direction of New York, but from the west. Philadelphia, perhaps. There were all of a dozen planes, but they did not fly in the riveted, rigid formation of military ships. These were flown by men who had little experience in formation flying, certainly. In fact, they

were not military plans. Highly specialized training was needed to fly a modern military plane. It was not likely that such training would be encouraged in Underones who were treated as so much dirt.

Waldron straightened out the course of the cruiser.

"This is the devil!" he said with extreme calm. "I suppose I'll have to run the boat ashore and we'll take to the woods, eh?"

The planes were still a very long distance away—mere specks in the sky.

"We must be almost past the dead area, or past it," said Lucy uneasily. "If we could get help—"

"There's a Navy ship!" said Nick crisply. "A destroyer!"

Waldron stared. A nearly formless gray blob upon the sea, it floated aimlessly. It gave no sign of life at all. Waldron realized that they had not seen sea gulls lately. Gulls hovered about harbors to feed on refuse. This destroyer had undoubtedly been "frozen" as it moved slowly through some anchorage. He swung the small fast motorboat around. Nick dived for the engine room.

"I'll see if I can get more speed for you," he said hungrily. "There'll be anti-aircraft guns on that destroyer, if we can get on board and get at the ammunition."

"Better than that," said Waldron. "She'll have dynamos on board and fighting men. An arc—"

Nick uttered what was almost a yelp of joy. He vanished below deck. The engine's speed picked up. The boat headed for the far-away cruiser.

But the planes came on. Nothing could be more daunting or more menacing than a formation of swift and deadly planes, flying low for a strafing run. Yet the terror came partly from the mathematical, unhuman precision of their roaring approach. However, these planes were not fighters. They were two and four-place passenger planes and they were handled competently enough, but without the speed or deadly precision that would have destroyed all hope of escape.

Their droning hum rose to a growl. From a growl, it rose to a roar. From a roar, it became thunder. Then the first of

the planes dived. The sound of its motor rose in pitch. Waldron jerked over the wheel. The cruiser heeled over as it swerved.

The wings of the plane hung batlike over the boat for a bare instant. Something small and smoking dropped from it. It hit a wave and exploded with a racking detonation. A small wall of water flung the speedy cruiser's bow aside. The plane had swept on ahead.

"This isn't too bad!" said Waldron, in grim surprise. "They aren't trained for fighting or even for bombing. Hm. They only expected to loot. They weren't trained for anything else."

A second plane dived. Lucy watched, fearfully. Another miss. This thing, whatever it was, exploded in midair. Waldron glanced up.

Again there was the rising whine of a plane diving for them. And the complete weakness of the attack became evident. It could be that such a social organization as Fran had outlined could not possibly have high fighting quality. When the rank and file hated their leaders, there was a limit to the training that could be given them. Men too close to rebellion could not be trusted with bombs, or trained to bomb with precision. Actually, with military airfields in their hands, with military planes and undoubtedly ample bombs available, because of their social system the invaders could only muster men trained to fly private planes. No men had been trained for bombing. Waldron realized that the explosions from the first two planes had been of dynamite sticks! But they could be deadly enough.

The third plane overshot. Something went off smokily ten yards ahead of the cruiser. Spray fell all over the boat.

"Nick!" snapped Waldron. "Come up here with guns! We'll let Lucy steer and we'll do some anti-aircraft stuff."

Nick bobbed up. Lucy took the wheel. And the motley group of attacking planes had no thought beyond carrying out its orders. A plane dived down. It was no more than fifty feet above the water-level when Waldron and Nick Bannerman opened fire on its cockpit, together. It came head-on. Bullets hit.

The plane went into a wild sidewise swoop. It hit the water. Something exploded smokily. A large splash arose.

"Carrying dynamite loose in the cockpit," observed Waldron. "A case of it went off, then."

A four-passenger, company-executive type of plane soared upward. Small objects came sprinkling down. From two hundred feet or more, it dropped many sticks of dynamite. Some of them exploded when they hit the water. Some vanished harmlessly.

"If one of them hits our deck, though," said Waldron, "we'll be done for. Let's keep 'em high."

The motor cruiser sped on. The flight of planes swept past, peppering the sea about the water-borne craft with explosions. None of the detonations was comparable to an actual aircraft bomb, but any of them could destroy the motorboat. The invaders simply had not dared secure bombardment or combat training for pilots. So, faced with furious orders from their surviving Leaders, those who had gone to loot Philadelphia had taken what civilian planes their fliers knew how to handle, loaded easily discoverable dynamite in them, and sent them off to kill the only three people in some tens of millions who had attempted to put up resistance.

But their lack of practice in aerial-bombing tactics was evident. The planes which had first dropped dynamite about the fleeing small cruiser did not go smoothly on, to swing in a circle and bomb again after their fellows had done the same. They swung sharply and came diving back without discipline.

Even that was dangerous enough. While Nick fired and fired, to keep the planes high—he got one Cub, which came spinning down and crashed into the sea—Waldron took the wheel again and made a crazy evasive pattern of the small boat's wake. But the inaccuracy of the bombardment almost countered the erratic course. Once a tall column of spray fell across the motor-boat's stern. But save for some hundreds of gallons of water admitted, there was no damage.

Then Lucy called out to Nick, and she kept a gun going

while he made a grapnel fast to a line. They were almost at the destroyer.

Waldron came up almost at its stern, on the seaward side. Nick threw the grapnel and swarmed up the rope. In seconds he was hauling at Lucy, to get her up. Waldron himself was just swinging over the destroyer's railing when the planes made a concerted, desperate bombing run and fairly rained dynamite sticks down upon the now-stationary small craft.

Dynamite exploded beside a ventilator and shattered it. A fair hit on the small boat blew off its bow. More dynamite ripped deck planking on the destroyer.

But a destroyer was not as easy to sink as a motorboat. One stick of dynamite would tear up planks and dent mild steel. But a destroyer required more than a case of industrial dynamite to produce real damage.

The three fugitives dived behind steel doors. Then they hunted busily. They found the lieutenant-commander in charge of the destroyer. Waldron unloaded a high-frequency pack from the festoons of ammunition and oddments with which he was burdened. He put the pack on the naval officer and turned it on. A little tongue of metal began to vibrate. A tiny blue spark flickered and danced. High-frequency currents, which could not even be felt, coursed through the officer's body.

He had been in the act of drinking a cup of coffee when the "plague" struck his ship. Now he swallowed automatically, stared at the three barbarically armored figures who stood before him. Hearing the crashing sound of dynamite explosions about and upon his ship, he leaped to his feet.

"Commander," said Waldron sharply, "your ship's being attacked by the gang that's responsible for the so-called plague you've probably heard of. Your crew is under its influence now and you have been. But if you'll help us, Nick and I will get an arc going and—"

From a distance, the destroyer would have seemed to be in a bad way, during the next quarter of an hour. It floated

aimlessly upon the sea. Planes darted about and above it, raining down small black sticks which sometimes exploded when they hit the water and sometimes did not, but always blew up when they hit the ship. Flames and smoke arose from each impact.

But suddenly the war vessel awoke. Its commander's voice roared out of the speakers which filled every deck and compartment with sound. Order after order left his lips. And in the Navy men obey orders first and ask questions afterward.

At one instant the destroyer was a helpless, floating hulk with the reek of detonated dynamite about it. The next instant its guns stirred. Men flung themselves across its decks to anti-aircraft stations. And suddenly the ship was spitting flames exclusively its own.

And now the amateurishness of the pilots and their low-speed planes was fatal. Strictly professional anti-aircraft fire blasted the slow-flying planes. When three went down in six seconds, the others tried to flee. One vanished in a sheet of flame when its dynamite cargo was hit.

None of the planes reached shore. It appeared, however, that one of them had reported despairingly by its radio before it hit the ocean. But that discovery was made later.

As of now, the destroyer got up steam. It moved steadily for New York—not at full speed in the beginning. Its electricians worked busily. They had plenty of help.

And presently the destroyer did put on full speed. It was some hours later, mid-morning, when she approached the harbor from the sea. Smoke pouring from her funnels, white water hissing at her bows, she came steaming in the Narrows with a vengeful confidence. The invaders had gotten one great bombing plane aloft. It circled and dived upon the cocky naval ship—and such a storm of anti-aircraft fire poured upon it that it reeled dizzily and crashed into the water not far from Bedloe's Island.

Then there were monstrous detonations on shore. The forts at the Narrows were firing point-blank. But the guns were not designed for such short-range work, and their desperate, improvised gun crews did not know their jobs. The guns did not average two shots apiece. Not one was a hit.

The destroyer disdainfully refused to return such fire. She swept on.

She came up the East River, floating to a stop opposite the great powerhouse. Then small boats dropped from her sides. Each was loaded with men and each man carried contrivances designed by the ship's electricians, but often made by their wearers. They were very simple—merely battery-driven spark-makers. Leads picked up the high-frequency surges made by the sparks and conducted them to the flesh of the men. That was all there was to it.

The boats neared shore and something stirred on land. Machine-gun fire from the boats swept the landing. As the sailors came close, some hand grenades were lobbed ashore. The rifle fire from shore ceased and scale-armored figures fled.

The boats docked. Compact groups of zestful fighters swung into action, and these men were not driven into battle by "Leaders" with whips.

To the cracking of rifles, they went into the powerhouse. Tumultuous gunfire and the explosion of grenades kept up for perhaps five minutes. Then that noise stopped. Other boats put ashore from the destroyer. These were not to reinforce the landing party. They raced for the navy yard. Their crews also landed. Wearing their portable high-frequency packs and carrying extras, they vanished into other naval ships.

Then a strange quiet descended. The two cities—the city on both banks of the river—were utterly still and utterly silent. The ships of the harbor were grounded or sunk or still drifted helplessly with the tides. The streets were empty of all save stiffened, grotesquely posed bodies. Not even rats scurried in the sewers. Not even insects flew.

The only visible signs of life were close together. One was a destroyer of the United States Navy, with smoke pouring from her funnels and her screw turning just fast enough to keep her opposite the powerhouse. The powerhouse itself trickled smoke from only one of its tall stacks. From within it, at long intervals, came perhaps one shot, or two, or perhaps a flurry of three or four.

Then, simultaneously, smoke came in thick masses from the hitherto smokeless stacks of the powerhouse. At first thin and white, it thickened and became dense—proof that those who fired it were less than experienced with these particular furnaces. Then smoke arose from the funnels of no less than four of the frozen, immobile ships tied up at the navy yard. Electricians were working in the inwards of those ships while other men got up steam.

Abruptly, one of the moored vessels emitted an exultant bellow from its whistle. Figures stirred upon its decks. Some of them stared incredulously at the stillness of which they had been a part until a few seconds before. A second vessel boomed triumphantly. Signal flags fluttered from its mast. And then figures from the powerhouse began to wigwag to the destroyer.

With startling suddenness, there were noises all about. Bells clanged, whistles shrilled, and voices babbled everywhere. The cities were alive again. Because, with trained men to work, and the problem outlined beforehand, the great arc in the generator room had been reconstituted in a technically stable manner.

That was not all that had to be done, of course. There was more. Much more! Commandeered trucks began to move away from the powerhouse. They were driven by men who very often wore the scaly armor of the invaders—except that it could be noted that most of those suits of armor had bullet-holes in them somewhere or another. Upon the scaly helmets rested the caps of sailors or marines, who were heavily and very efficiently armed.

They whooped derisively at each other as they rode, and also at certain bewildered civilians who could not understand that they had just been revived for the second time by a great arc in the powerhouse.

Those trucks drove here and there. They went to other powerhouses, some in Manhattan and the Bronx and some over in New Jersey. They would build up arcs in each station after zestfully demolishing any invaders who might protest. They would then instruct local electricians and go on to repeat the process farther away.

In hours, cities as far away as Philadelphia would be again normal so far as their citizens were concerned. There would be more trucks moving out of each city, too. And the men in those other trucks would be very, very desirous of being resisted by the men who had come from another world to loot and shatter this. Washington would be alive again before nightfall. Before tomorrow's dawn, even Niagara Falls would again be awake and its enormous water power diverted to the turning out of high-frequency currents making any repetition of this invasion impossible.

But that last was a precaution. Long before that time the menace of this particular invasion was over. Waldron took measures to bring that about almost at once. He had authority, because he knew more than anybody else. And there were adequate armed parties available for use from the navy yard. Waldron had asked for them.

If any counter-measure, from the world which was the other side of here—if any counter-measures had been planned, the fighting men who came to the powerhouse were ready to handle them. Although they came as landing parties—marines and bluejackets—they had with them those nasty bits of destructive equipment that had been proved in landings on remote islands . . . if not on other worlds.

Waldron had the men put in readiness for a counter-invasion. The way led through the helix, whose flickering bluish flame still persisted. From one certain position, which was that which a truck riding up on the ramp would occupy, all the bluish flames seemed to coalesce. Then they formed a single solid picture. And the images on the flames, which elsewhere were fragmentary, combined together so that one looked directly into the world which was the other side of here.

Waldron saw a scene very nearly normal. To be sure, there was no city in the other world corresponding to Brooklyn. He saw green fields and sunshine and clouds, and a long distance away there were the forbidding towers of a stronghold. Nearer, there was a small town—a sprawling small town of little houses. It was not at all modern. Its streets were narrow and its houses mean. And there was

fighting going on in it. Men battled with swords and spears, and other men fought savagely with weapons which were noiseless and unfamiliar. It was a quaintly alien city, and yet there were motor trucks of standard make. Men were using them as fighting machines to charge other men.

But the fighting was lessening. It seemed rather the cleaning-up process that followed after street fighting, when defeated men made last stands till they were hunted down.

Waldron watched for a long time before it seemed that he had sufficient force at hand to make a counter-invasion a really practical performance. As fresh detachments of armed men arrived, equipped with high-frequency packs and much more lethal equipment, he repeated his explanations of all he knew about the invaders and their alien world.

Then a motor truck came bumbling toward that portion of the flame through which Waldron looked. It came at a brisk pace to the very entrance, in that other world, to the helix—which was in this. There it stopped. Six men in scaly armor got out. Fran Dutt was one of them.

Fran strode up the other-world ramp to this helix. He spread out his hands to show that he was unarmed. He walked into the helix and appeared *here*. The other five followed him. Fran looked completely unsurprised at the mass of men making ready for invasion. He nodded grimly at Waldron.

"Steve," he said, unsmiling, "we've had our revolution. Perhaps it's thanks to you for scaring us into it. We've got this town and a few others, already. We'll get the rest. I'm speaking for the Revolutionary Committee."

"We've had a few doings in this world too," said Waldron dryly.

"I know," said Fran. "It scared our Leaders and made our job easier. I'm here to make terms. You're ready to invade us, in your turn. But there's no use fighting. What's happened was our Leaders' fault. We've started the job of chucking them out—it's mostly wiping them out—and we'll finish it. But I want to avoid fighting with you people if I can."

"You've been in this world long enough to know how

much authority I don't have," said Waldron, again dryly.

"But people will listen to you," Fran told him, "because you licked our Leaders. Now—we'll return everything that's been looted. We'll pay for everything that's been done. We'll return all prisoners, of course. And we invite settlers from your world. Partly, that'll be to prove we don't intend to let anything like this happen again. Partly it'll be to stiffen our backbones in case anybody tries to start up that *Leader* business again. Incidentally, if you people will hang our Leaders for us, we'll be much obliged. We're much too strongly tempted to execute them by their own approved methods."

Waldron was about to speak, when Fran held up his hand.

"Wait! We've less than a million civilized people—if you call us civilized. We need colonists. We'll welcome them, and we'll give them land, and we'll learn from them never to cringe to any other living man—"

Fran's eyes flamed, then. The five behind him nodded. One meditatively tightened a bandage about his arm. Blood was oozing from it. The five nodded again.

"Fran," said Waldron soberly, "it looks to me as if we couldn't ask any other terms. But—for guarantees—"

"March your men through!" said Fran Dutt fiercely. "We ask nothing better! They'll encourage waverers to join us. Only, tell them to grin, Steve, if they see anybody look scared, and everything will be all right."

There was a conference. So complete and bloodless a victory seemed suspicious to the naval officers. One of them began to stipulate the number of men and arms who should be allowed to pass through the helix.

"Damn it!" cried Fran. "I'm asking you to go through! My people went mad and fought, today. But tomorrow they might be scared and cringe before what Leaders survive, through pure habit. I'm begging you to come through so my people will have the courage to stay free! We've been slaves too long!"

In minutes there was the steady tramping of men marching into the helix which was the entrance to the other

world. Each man vanished, only to appear on the other side of here.

Fran turned suddenly to Waldron.

"One question," he said harshly. "Lucy?"

"All right," said Waldron. "She's on the destroyer. Safe. We're getting married right away."

Fran had been pale. He went paler yet.

"You would. . . . We got the laboratories where her father was. He'll probably get here in an hour or so. Wish Lucy happiness for me. And I mean it!"

He did not smile, but Waldron believed he meant it. He turned and walked into the helix again, between two detachments of sailors.

"Now," said Waldron, to nobody in particular—because Nick Bannerman was feverishly on the way to dictate the story of the "plague" for his newspaper to print—"now to get back to normal!"

It did not take too long. Full realization of the benefits that would come from the doubling—but it would later appear to be much more than doubling—of the space available to the human race did not come for many years. But the affairs of the world went back to normal in a surprisingly short time.

In fact, only the next day the wedding of Steve Waldron and Lucy Blair was interrupted by a conscientious health official who insisted that there was a warrant for the arrest of Waldron, which had never been dismissed and so had to be carried out. It seemed that Waldron was required to be arrested for having violated an order of quarantine, forbidding anybody either to enter or to leave the plague-stricken city of Newark, New Jersey.