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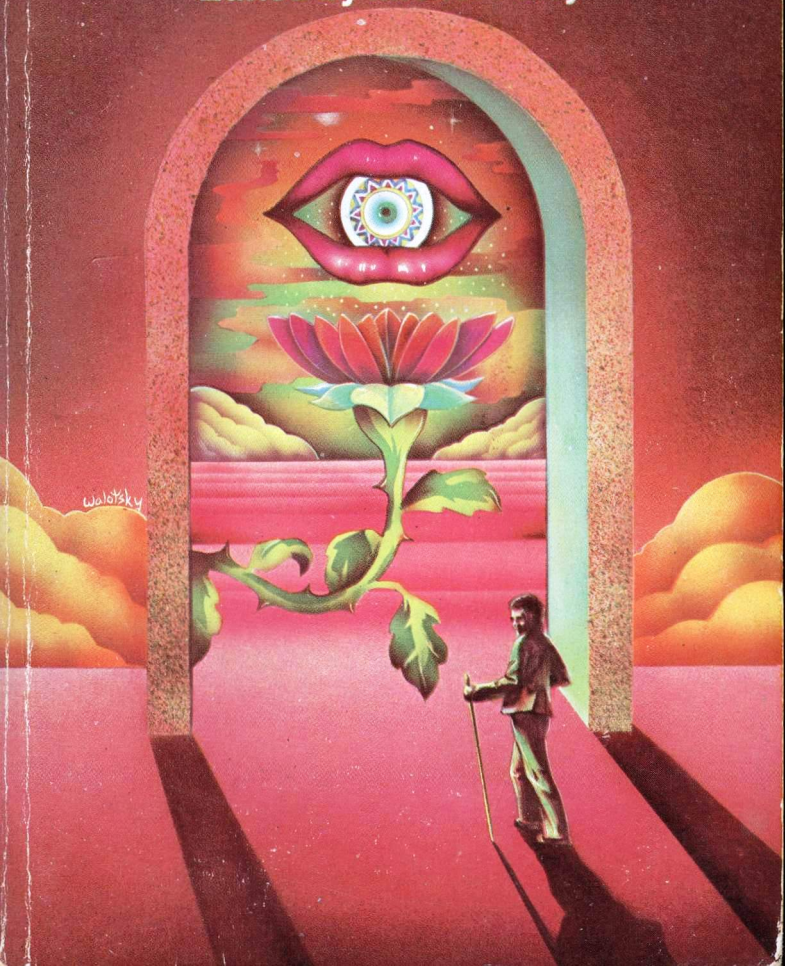
A mind-blowing fantasy anthology of unearthly drug stories

STRANGE ECSTASIES

Edited by Michel Parry



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Yet.

STRANGE ECSTASIES

Edited by Michel Parry

PINNACLE BOOKS • NEW YORK CITY

STRANGE ECSTASIES

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Thanks are also due to Martin Walsh for his services as Technicolor Consultant. And a special token of appreciation to Ken Brown for turning me on to *Pipe Dream*.

To Garry, the Psychedelic Ranger—
"Try a little of this," he said . . .

Contents

Introduction

MICHEL PARRY

DRUGS.

Whatever your personal reaction to these five cyphers, they add up to an awfully emotive word. A *loaded* word. For drugs have become a cultural obsession. They have almost ousted the Commie Specter as Number One Bugaboo of our time. And in the last decade or so there's been so much hysteria both for and against (mostly against) drug use and abuse that among all the minds blown or unblown it's just about impossible to find one that is *open*! On our left there's cheery Tim Leary and his fellows telling us that 'The only Hope is Dope!' And on our right is a solid body of concerned citizens warning us that the only trip we're likely to get from a drug is a fast ride to the morgue ... Unfortunately for their argument, these self-same well-meaning citizens tend to be of the coffee-drinking, chain-smoking, whiskey-swigging, aspirin-popping variety. Well, any kid—even their own—can see through *that* one! What these responsible citizens just don't realize is that some drugs are less dangerous than others:

Smoking marijuana, for instance, is probably better for your health than tobacco smoking.

Taking LSD is undoubtedly preferable to downing addictive barbiturates such as our doctors daily prescribe for thousands.

And injecting heroin, while not a pleasant sight to watch, is probably marginally safer than falling asleep across a busy railway track.

We hear a lot these days about our evolution into a drug culture. This seems to me characteristic of a tendency to look upon the problem (or solution—whichever appeals to you) as a recent one, perhaps going back no further than to 1943 when a Swiss scientist named Hoffman suddenly found himself alternately weeping and giggling with pleasure: he had just stumbled upon the manufacture of LSD-25. In actual fact, drug-taking among human beings has been a common practice since the beginning of recorded history. People in places as geographically unrelated as Peru and Siberia have, for centuries, been getting high on natural organic hallucinogens such as yajé and *Amanita Muscaria,* the celebrated Sacred Mushroom, in order to achieve mystical ecstasy. Possibly because of the intervention of the Catholic Church (itself evolved from a pagan drug cult if the theories expounded in John Allegro's *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross* are to be believed) the drug-taking tradition in Europe is less well recorded but according to Gerald Gardner, a modern witch, the psychedelic effects of *Amanita Muscaria* were well known to medieval witches who were certainly familiar with the properties of more physically harmful drugs such as aconite, henbane and belladonna. Maybe the witches flew to the great Sabbats not by broomstick but by 'Trans Love Airways' as the one popular Sixties song described the psychedelic experience . . .

After studying 'primitive' cultures where drug-taking ceremonies remain an essential part of normal life, some anthropologists have suggested that hallucinogenic plants may have been instrumental in the development of mankind by providing a pivotal intellectual stimulus. Remember that ape in Kubrick's *2001,* the one who realized

that a thigh bone made a useful tool as well as a handy head-smasher—and so led his tribe a few steps further along the evolutionary path? It seems far less likely that he got his inspiration from a slab of black alien concrete than that he'd been happily chewing on some ololioqui or a peyote button!

Drugs, then, or at least the beneficent non-addictive ones we call 'soft drugs,' are not part of a fiendish modern conspiracy to turn the whole world into a giant insane asylum but actually represent the *rediscovery* of a vital part of the harmonious Man-Nature relationship with which we in the materialist West (and, increasingly, the materialist East) have lost touch. The myth and folklore of many cultures lament the loss of half-remembered psychedelic agents like *Soma* which induced in the user instant states of transcendental ecstasy—so the rediscovery *ought* to be a joyful one. As with any other powerful natural force from electricity to atomic energy, the danger lies not in the drugs themselves but in Man's application of them. And what that application is depends entirely upon the individual user. In other words, dear reader, *You* . . .

Despite their illegality the proscribed drugs have had a tremendous influence on our cultural environment over the past few years. Their impact throughout the media is obvious—in music, in films, TV, advertising and in design of all kinds from clothes to book covers to carrier bags. In literature the influence of drugs has been most apparent among that ready-for-any-experience brigade, the writers of science fiction! Psychedelic drugs have probably been the most influential factor in the emergence of the Speculative Fiction school of younger writers. And assimilation of the psychedelic experience seems discernible also in the work of older hands such as Ballard, Moorcock, Philip K. Dick and the Brian Aldiss of *Barefoot in the Head.*

When treated as a theme unto themselves in contemporary Fantasy and SF, drugs usually serve one of three functions. The least interesting of these is as a species of what Alfred Hitchcock has labelled the 'MacGuffin'—that is, a highly desirable commodity around which a plot of murder and intrigue may be built. Gold has served the same purpose in countless horse operas just as consignments of smuggled opium or diamonds have been the basis of many a thriller. Louis Charbonneau's *Psychedelic 40* is one such SF treatment of the drug theme. A second function is as a utopiate or universal panacea around which ideal societies may be structured. Aldous Huxley, who had a very optimistic view of the civilizing potential of mescaline and LSD, introduced utopiates into two of his novels—*moksha*-medicine, 'the truth and beauty pill', in *Island,* and *Soma* in *Brave New World.* The third and most fascinating use of drugs in imaginative fiction is in direct continuation of the 'magic potion' and 'Elixir of Life' themes dear to oriental fantasies and to our own fairy tales.*

In this third group of stories, the drug serves as a catalyst which enables the protagonist to attain altered states of consciousness or even elaborate physical metamorphosis. A classic example is Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.* Very often the drug endows the protagonist with some kind of apparently super-human power—invisibility, the ability to fly, to traverse other dimensions, to travel back and forth in time and so on. After all, as Dr. Robert de Ropp, author of *Drugs and the Mind* has observed, Ecstasy means nothing more or less than standing outside of oneself. And like the sculptor Balcoth in *The Plutonian Drug,* generations of

* Open up any illustrated book of fairy tales and you are bound to come across a familiar spotty, red-topped fungus — *Amanita*

writers, painters and other sensory explorers seeking to get out of themselves and closer to their art have dutifully swigged, swallowed, sniffed and injected themselves with a variety of promising substances from absinthe, ether, laughing gas and morphine to toad sweat, electric bananas and toasted cheese!

As many such intrepid travellers before and after Aldous Huxley have discovered, the much-desired journey through the Doors of Perception may lead not to Heaven but straight down to Hell. So there are bad trips in store for you as well as good. In fact, there are some real *bummers*!

One such is Arthur Machen's tale of *The White Powder* in which some modern readers have seen a cocaine allegory. Although the story was written at the tail-end of the nineteenth century when the Romantic Imagination was still being replenished with copious doses of laudanum, it seems doubtful that Machen, a Welsh poet and mystic as well as a writer of soulful fantasy, would have had access to cocaine although he was unorthodox enough in his behavior possibly to have sampled other drugs. With characteristic relish, the now-famous writer of supernatural horror, H. P. Lovecraft, wrote that *The White Powder* (or *The Novel of the White Powder*, to give it is full title) 'approaches the absolute culmination of loathesome fright!' Somewhat more recently, a member of the 'Greatest Rock and Roll Band in the World' referred to this story in delivering a warning about the impurities of 'street' drugs. If you take dope and don't want to end your days dripping through the ceiling like the unfortunate Francis of this story, he warned, it's a good idea to know just who you're buying your stuff from . . .

A more palatable high is offered us by Frederick Hadland Davis in his whimsical tale of *The Dream Pills*, a

story which appeared in 1920 and which I am especially pleased to resurrect. Hadland spent many years in the Orient writing books on Japanese and Chinese folklore and mysticism and his short stories are much colored by his eastern impressions. Although once a prolific writer, his work is today almost completely unknown. Not so with Clark Ashton Smith whose dream-like fantasies are currently being successfully re-issued. It even seems possible that Smith's literary reputation may yet eclipse that of his fellow contributor to *Weird Tales* magazine, H. P. Lovecraft. Smith was an admirer and translator of Baudelaire and, in reading his own work which, at its best, is characterized by a decadent sensuality full of rich fluid textures, one cannot help but wonder if he followed the French poet's example in seeking *Le Paradis Artificiel* amid the fumes of opium and hashish . . .

Probably the only member of the Lovecraft circle who is still creatively active is Frank Belknap Long who wrote *The Hounds of Tindalos.* In a recent interview, 'Belknappius,' as Lovecraft re-christened him, reported that his story of the drug *Liao* and its fantastic effects has gained almost a cult status among certain West Coast hippies—which doesn't sound too good for the rest of humanity!

It's easy to see, as many have done, a parallel between present day amphetamines or *speed* and the zippy drug discovered in *The New Accelerator* by H. G. Wells. There is a difference, though. Wells's story, written at a time when scientific breakthroughs were viewed with more enthusiasm than today, ends on an optimistic note. Speed *kills.*

The Big Fix by Richard Wilson was written during the Beatnik era but apart from a few minor subsequent changes in Underground argot it might have been written about today. Wilson's work, incidentally, has been inexplicably overlooked in Great Britain and is well worth hunt-

ing down. About *The Secret Songs* there's not much I can say except that it's a contemporary Love Story with no part in it for Ali McGraw and that it's by Fritz Leiber which means that it's terrific. Anyone who, like me, is a Leiber addict—which must be just about everybody who's ever read a Leiber story—will have noticed that quite a number of his characters indulge in the *herb dangerous.* Take a peek for instance at knockout novels like *The Wanderer* or *A Specter is Haunting Texas.* Makes you think, doesn't it?

Norman Spinrad, the author of *Subjectivity*, is a young writer who made himself an instant reputation with a bawdy gut-punch of a novel entitled *Bug Jack Barron**. He's one of the New Wave of writers of SF—which in this instance means Speculative Fiction. The thing about Spinrad is that, unlike a lot of Speculative Fiction writers, he's *always* good fun to read. Fred Pohl, who scarcely needs an introduction to anyone reading an anthology of this kind, is still writing *Science* Fiction, thank goodness, and in *What to do Until the Analyst Comes* he predicts what might happen to our humdrum society when chewing-gum with suspiciously marijuana-like properties hits the market. Finally, there's more satire in *Pipe Dream* by Chris Miller, a thirty-year-old inhabitant of Greenwich Village whose lively contributions to the *National Lampoon* help make it the best humor magazine in the English language. He's been described as the funniest writer since S. J. Perelman—not without reason. In this dope story to end all dope stories, Chris takes a few gentle swipes at the Alternative Society—and scores some resounding hits!

I doubt if many people would consider reading imaginative fiction as a form of Yoga but it seems to me that's exactly what it is. Like the hallucinogens, they both feed what Baudelaire has described as Man's 'taste for the infi-

* Available in Panther Science Fiction.

nite.' Just as Yoga exercises open up the mind to higher states of consciousness, so reading stories such as these expand one's vision, open up the mind to all sorts of possibilities, alternatives and probabilities—leading slowly but pleasurably towards the attainment of Cosmic Consciousness.†

Certain drugs may achieve the same purpose but hardly in so entertaining a fashion. With drugs you've only got your own interior vision to get you high. With imaginative fiction, you can get high on the visions of many talented minds. And, like any other form of vicarious armchair tripping and travelling, it's a helluva lot safer!

So Read On and Turn On . . .

Or, as that archetypal Dope Fiend, Mr. Hyde put it: 'And now, you who have so long been bound to the most narrow and material views, you who have denied the virtue of transcendental medicine, you who have derided your superiors—*Behold!*'

Michel Parry, 1973

† And you thought you were just reading a book, didn't you?

The Plutonian Drug

CLARK ASHTON SMITH

'IT IS REMARKABLE,' said Dr. Manners, 'how the scope of our pharmacopoeia has been widened by interplanetary exploration. In the past thirty years, hundreds of hitherto unknown substances, employable as drugs or medical agents, have been found in other worlds of our own system. It will be interesting to see what the Allan Farquar expedition will bring back from the planets of *Alpha Centauri* when—or if—it succeeds in reaching them and returning to earth. I doubt, though, if anything more valuable than selenine will be discovered. Selenine, derived from a fossil lichen found by the first rocket-expedition to the moon in 1975*, has, as you know, practically wiped out the old-time curse of cancer. In solution, it forms the base of an infallible serum, equally useful for cure or prevention.'

'I fear I haven't kept up on a lot of the new discoveries,' said Rupert Balcoth the sculptor, Manners' guest, a little apologetically. 'Of course, everyone has heard of selenine. And I've seen frequent mention, recently, of a mineral water from Ganymede whose effects are like those of the mythical Fountain of Youth.'

'You mean *clithni*, as the stuff is called by the Ganymedians. It is a clear, emerald liquid, rising in lofty geysers

* Publisher's note: This story was originally published in 1934.

from the craters of quiescent volcanoes. Scientists believe that the drinking of *clithni* is the secret of the almost fabulous longevity of the Ganymedians; and they think that it may prove to be a similar elixir for humanity.'

'Some of the extraplanetary drugs haven't been so beneficial to mankind, have they?' queried Balcoth. 'I seem to have heard of a Martian poison that has greatly facilitated the gentle art of murder. And I am told that *mnophka*, the Venerian narcotic, is far worse, in its effects on the human system, than is any terrestrial alkaloid.'

'Naturally,' observed the doctor with philosophic calm, 'many of these new chemical agents are capable of dire abuse. They share that liability with any number of our native drugs. Man, as ever, has the choice of good and evil . . . I suppose that the Martian poison you speak of is *akpaloli*, the juice of a common russet-yellow weed that grows in the oases of Mars. It is colorless, and without taste or odor. It kills almost instantly, leaving no trace, and imitating closely the symptoms of heart-disease. Undoubtedly many people have been made away with by means of a surreptitious drop of *akpaloli* in their food or medicine. But even *akpaloli*, if used in infinitesimal doses, is a very powerful stimulant, useful in cases of syncope, and serving, not infrequently, to re-animate victims of paralysis in a quite miraculous manner.

'Of course,' he went on, 'there is an infinite lot still to be learned about many of these ultra-terrene substances. Their virtues have often been discovered quite by accident—and in some cases, the virtue is still to be discovered.

'For example, take *mnophka,* which you mentioned a little while ago. Though allied in a way, to the earth-narcotics, such as opium and hashish, it is of little use for anaesthetic or anodyne purposes. Its chief effects are an extraordinary acceleration of the time-sense, and a height-

ening and telescoping of all sensations, whether pleasurable or painful. The user seems to be living and moving at a furious whirlwind rate—even though he may in reality be lying quiescent on a couch. He exists in a headlong torrent of sense-impressions, and seems, in a few minutes, to undergo the experiences of years. The physical result is lamentable—a profound exhaustion, and an actual aging of the tissues, such as would ordinarily require the period of real time which the addict has "lived" through merely in his own illusion.

'There are some other drugs, comparatively little known, whose effects, if possible, are even more curious than those of *mnophka.* I don't suppose you have ever heard of plutonium?'*

'No, I haven't,' admitted Balcoth. 'Tell me about it.'

'I can do even better than that—I can show you some of the stuff, though it isn't much to look at—merely a fine white powder.'

Dr. Manners rose from the pneumatic-cushioned chair in which he sat facing his guest, and went to a large cabinet of synthetic ebony, whose shelves were crowded with flasks, bottles, tubes and cartons of various sizes and forms. Returning, he handed to Balcoth a squat and tiny vial, two-thirds filled with a starchy substance.

'Plutonium,' explained Manners, 'as its name would indicate, comes from forlorn, frozen Pluto, which only one terrestrial expedition has so far visited—the expedition led by the Cornell brothers, John and Augustine, which started in 1990 and did not return to earth till 1996, when nearly everyone had given it up as lost. John, as you may

* Publisher's note: This story was published six years before plutonium was first produced from uranium and eleven years before it was used in an atomic bomb. Clark Ashton Smith's 'plutonium' is, of course, completely unrelated to the actual fissionable metallic element.

have heard, died during the returning voyage, together with half the personnel of the expedition: and the others reached earth with only one reserve oxygen-tank remaining.

'This vial contains about a tenth of the existing supply of plutonium. Augustine Cornell, who is an old schoolfriend of mine, gave it to me three years ago, just before he embarked with the Allan Farquar crowd. I count myself pretty lucky to own anything so rare.

'The geologists of the party found the stuff when they began prying beneath the solidified gases that cover the surface of that dim, starlit planet, in an effort to learn a little about its composition and history. They couldn't do much under the circumstances, with limited time and equipment; but they made some curious discoveries—of which plutonium was far from being the least.

'Like selenine, the stuff is a by-product of vegetable fossilization. Doubtless it is many billion years old, and dates back to the time when Pluto possessed enough internal heat to make possible the development of certain rudimentary plant-forms on its blind surface. It must have had an atmosphere then; though no evidence of former animal life was found by the Cornells.

'Plutonium, in addition to carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen and oxygen, contains minute quantities of several unclassified elements. It was discovered in a crystalloid condition, but turned immediately to the fine powder that you see, as soon as it was exposed to air in the rocketship. It is readily soluble in water, forming a permanent colloid, without the least sign of deposit, no matter how long it remains in suspension.'

'You say it is a drug?' queried Balcoth. 'What does it do to you?'

'I'll come to that in a minute—though the effect is pretty hard to describe. The properties of the stuff were

discovered only by chance: on the return journey from Pluto, a member of the expedition, half delirious with space-fever, got hold of the unmarked jar containing it and took a small dose, imagining that it was bromide of potassium. It served to complicate his delirium for a while—since it gave him some brand-new ideas about space and time.

'Other people have experimented with it since then. The effects are quite brief (the influence never lasts more than half an hour) and they vary considerably with the individual. There is no bad aftermath, either neural, mental or physical, as far as anyone has been able to determine. I've taken it myself, once or twice, and can tesitfy to that.

'Just what it does to one, I am not sure. Perhaps it merely produces a derangement or metamorphosis of sensations, like hashish; or perhaps it serves to stimulate some rudimentary organ, some dormant sense of the human brain. At any rate there is, as clearly as I can put it, an altering of the perception of time—of actual duration—into sort of space-perception. One sees the past, and also the future, in relation to one's own physical self, like a landscape stretching away on either hand. You don't see very far, it is true—merely the events of a few hours in each direction; but it's a very curious experience; and it helps to give you a new slant on the mystery of time and space. It is altogether different from the delusions of *mnophka.*'

'It sounds very interesting,' admitted Balcoth. 'However, I've never tampered much with narcotics myself; though I did experiment once or twice, in my young, romantic days with *cannabis Indica.* I had been reading Gautier and Baudelaire, I suppose. Anyway, the result was rather disappointing.'

'You didn't take it long enough for your system to absorb a residuum of the drug, I imagine,' said Manners.

'Thus the effects were negligible, from a visionary standpoint. But plutonium is altogether different—you get the maximum result from the very first dose. I think it would interest you greatly, Balcoth, since you are a sculptor by profession: you would see some unusual plastic images, not easy to render in terms of Euclidean planes and angles. I'll gladly give you a pinch of it now, if you'd care to experiment.'

'You're pretty generous, aren't you, since the stuff is so rare?'

'I'm not being generous at all. For years, I've planned to write a monograph on ultra-terrestrial narcotics; and you might give me some valuable data. With your type of brain and your highly developed artistic sense, the visions of plutonium should be uncommonly clear and significant. All I ask is, that you describe them to me as fully as you can afterwards.'

'Very well,' agreed Balcoth. 'I'll try anything once.' His curiosity was inveigled, his imagination seduced, by Manners' account of the remarkable drug.

Manners brought out an antique whiskey-glass, which he filled nearly to the rim with some golden-red liquid. Uncorking the vial of plutonium, he added to this fluid a small pinch of the fine white powder, which dissolved immediately and without effervescence.

'The liquid is a wine made from a sweet Martian tuber known as *ovvra*,' he explained. 'It is light and harmless, and will counteract the bitter taste of the plutonium. Drink it quickly and then lean back in your chair.'

Balcoth hesitated, eyeing the golden-red fluid.

'Are you quite sure the effects will wear off as promptly as you say?' he questioned. 'It's a quarter past nine now, and I'll have to leave about ten to keep an appointment with one of my patrons at the Belvedere Club. It's the billionaire Claud Wishhaven, who wants me to do a bas-re-

lief in pseudo-jade and neo-jasper for the hall of his country mansion. He wants something really advanced and futuristic. We're to talk it over tonight—decide on the motifs, etc.'

'That gives you forty-five minutes,' assured the doctor—'and in thirty, at the most, your brain and senses will be perfectly normal again. I've never known it to fail. You'll have fifteen minutes to spare, in which to tell me all about your sensations.'

Balcoth emptied the little antique glass at a gulp and leaned back, as Manners had directed, on the deep pneumatic cushions of the chair. He seemed to be falling easily but endlessly into a mist that had gathered in the room with unexplainable rapidity; and through this mist he was dimly aware that Manners had taken the empty glass from his relaxing fingers. He saw the face of Manners far above him, small and blurred, as if in some tremendous perspective of alpine distance; and the doctor's simple action seemed to be occurring in another world.

He continued to fall and float through eternal mist, in which all things were dissolved as in the primordial nebulae of chaos. After a timeless interval, the mist, which had been uniformly grey and hueless at first, took on a flowing iridescence, never the same for two successive moments; and the sense of gentle falling turned to a giddy revolution, as if he were caught in an ever-accelerating vortex.

Coincidentally with his movement in this whirlpool of prismatic splendor, he seemed to undergo an indescribable mutation of the senses. The whirling colors, by subtle, ceaseless gradations, became recognizable as solid forms. Emerging, as if by an act of creation, from the infinite chaos, they appeared to take their place in an equally infinite vista. The feeling of movement, through decrescent spirals, was resolved into absolute immobility. Balcoth was no longer conscious of himself as a living organ-

ic body: he was an abstract eye, a discorporate center of visual awareness, stationed alone in space, and yet having an intimate relationship with the frozen prospect on which he peered from his ineffable vantage.

Without surprise, he found that he was gazing simultaneously in two directions. On either hand, for a vast distance that was wholly void of normal perspective, a weird and peculiar landscape stretched away, traversed by an unbroken frieze or bas-relief of human figures that ran like a straight undeviating wall.

For a while, the frieze was incomprehensible to Balcoth, and he could make nothing of its glacial, flowing outlines with their background of repeated masses and complicated angles and sections of other human friezes that approached or departed, often in a very abrupt manner, from an unseen world beyond. Then the vision seemed to resolve and clarify itself, and he began to understand.

The bas-relief, he saw, was composed entirely of a repetition of his own figure, plainly distinct as the separate waves of a stream, and possessing a stream-like unity. Immediately before him, and for some distance on either hand, the figure was seated in a chair—the chair itself being subject to the same billowy repetition. The background was composed of the reduplicated figure of Dr. Manners, in another chair; and behind this, the manifold images of a medicine cabinet and a section of wall-panelling.

Following the vista on what, for lack of any better name, might be termed the left hand, Balcoth saw himself in the act of draining the antique glass, with Manners standing before him. Then, still further, he saw himself previous to this, with a background in which Manners was presenting him the glass, was preparing the dose of plutonium, was going to the cabinet for the vial, was rising

from his pneumatic chair. Every movement, every attitude of the doctor and himself during their past conversation, was visioned in a sort of reverse order, reaching away, unalterable as a wall of stone sculpture, into the weird, eternal landscape. There was no break in the continuity of his own figure; but Manners seemed to disappear at times, as if into a fourth dimension. These times, he remembered later, were the occasions when the doctor had not been in his line of vision. The perception was wholly visual; and though Balcoth saw his own lips and those of Manners parted in movements of speech, he could hear no word or other sound.

Perhaps the most singular feature of the vision was the utter absence of foreshortening. Though Balcoth seemed to behold it all from a fixed, immovable point, the landscape and the intersecting frieze presented themselves to him without diminution, maintaining a frontal fullness and distinctness to a distance that might have been many miles.

Continuing along the left-hand vista, he saw himself entering Manners' apartments, and then encountered his image standing in the elevator that had borne him to the ninth floor of the hundred story hotel in which Manners lived. Then the frieze appeared to have an open street for background, with a confused, ever-changing multitude of other faces and forms, of vehicles and sections of buildings, all jumbled together as in some old-time futuristic painting. Some of these details were full and clear, and others were cryptically broken and blurred, so as to be scarcely recognizable. Everything, whatever its spatial position and relation, was rearranged in the flowing frozen stream of this temporal pattern.

Balcoth retraced the three blocks from Manners' hotel to his own studio, seeing all his past movements, whatever their direction in tri-dimensional space, as a straight line in the time-dimension. At last he was in his studio; and

there the frieze of his own figure receded into the eerie prospect of space-transmuted time among other friezes formed of actual sculptures. He beheld himself giving the final touches with his chisel to a symbolic statue at the afternoon's end, with a glare of ruddy sunset falling through an unseen window and flushing the pallid marble. Beyond this there was a reverse fading of the glow, a thickening and blurring of the half-chiselled features of the image, a female form to which he had given the tentative name of Oblivion. At length, among half-seen statuary, the left-hand vista became indistinct, and melted slowly in amorphous mist. He had seen his own life as a continuous glaciated stream, stretching for about five hours into the past.

Reaching away on the right hand, he saw the vista of the future. Here there was a continuation of his seated figure under the influence of the drug, opposite the continued bas-relief of Dr. Manners and the repeated cabinet and wall-panels. After a considerable interval, he beheld himself in the act of rising from the chair. Standing erect, he seemed to be talking a while, as in some silent antique film, to the listening doctor. After that, he was shaking hands with Manners, was leaving the apartment, was descending in the lift and following the open, brightly-lighted street towards the Belvedere Club where he was to keep his appointment with Claud Wishhaven.

The Club was only three blocks away, on another street; and the shortest route, after the first block, was along a narrow alley between an office building and a warehouse. Balcoth had meant to take this alley; and in his vision, he saw the bas-relief of his future figure passing along the stright pavement with a background of deserted doorways and dim walls that towered from sight against the extinguished stars.

He seemed to be alone: there were no passers—only the

silent, glimmering endlessly repeated angles of arc-lit walls and windows that accompanied his repeated figure. He saw himself following the alley, like a stream in some profound canyon; and there, mid-way, the strange vision came to an abrupt, inexplicable end, without the gradual blurring into formless mist, that had marked his retrospective view of the past.

The sculpture-like frieze with its architectural ground appeared to terminate, broken off clean and sharp, in a gulf of immeasurable blackness and nullity. The last wave-like duplication of his own person, the vague doorway beyond it, the glimmering alley-pavement, all were seen as if shorn asunder by a falling sword of darkness, leaving a vertical line of cleavage beyond which there was—nothing.

Balcoth had a feeling of utter detachment from himself, an eloignment from the stream of time, from the shores of space, in some abstract dimension. The experience, in its full realization, might have lasted for an instant only—or for eternity. Without wonder, without curiosity or reflection, like a fourth-dimensional Eye, he viewed simultaneously the unequal cross-sections of his own past and future.

After that timeless interval of complete perception, there began a reverse process of change. He, the all-seeing eye, aloof in super-space, was aware of movement, as if he were drawn back by some subtle thread of magnetism into the dungeon of time and space from which he had momentarily departed. He seemed to be following the frieze of his own seated body towards the right, with a dimly felt rhythm or pulsation in his movement that corresponded to the merging duplications of the figure. With curious clearness, he realized that the time-unit, by which these duplications were determined, was the beating of his own heart.

Now with accelerative swiftness, the vision of petrific

form and space was re-dissolving into a spiral swirl of multitudinous colors, through which he was drawn upward. Presently he came to himself, seated in the pneumatic chair, with Dr. Manners opposite. The room seemed to waver a little, as if with some lingering touch of the weird transmutation; and webs of spinning iris hung in the corners of his eyes. Apart from this, the effect of the drug had wholly vanished, leaving, however, a singularly clear and vivid memory of the almost ineffable experience.

Dr. Manners began to question him at once, and Balcoth described his visionary sensations as fully and graphically as he could.

'There is one thing I don't understand,' said Manners at the end with a puzzled frown. 'According to your account, you must have seen five or six hours of the past, running in a straight spatial line, as a sort of continuous landscape; but the vista of the future ended sharply after you had followed it for three-quarters of an hour, or less. I've never known the drug to act so unequally: the past and future perspectives have always been about the same in their extent for others who have used plutonium.'

'Well,' observed Balcoth, 'the real marvel is that I could see into the future at all. In a way, I can understand the vision of the past. It was clearly composed of physical memories—of all my recent movements; and the background was formed of all the impressions my optic nerves had received during that time. But how could I behold something that hasn't yet happened?'

'There's the mystery, of course,' assented Manners. 'I can think of only one explanation at all intelligible to our finite minds. This is, that all the events which compose the stream of time have already happened, are happening, and will continue to happen forever. In our ordinary state of consciousness, we perceive with the physical senses merely that moment which we call the present. Under the influ-

ence of plutonium, you were able to extend the moment of present cognition in both directions, and to behold simultaneously a certain portion of that which is normally beyond perception. Thus appeared the vision of yourself as a continuous, immobile body, extending through the time-vista.'

Balcoth, who had been standing, now took his leave. 'I must be going,' he said, 'or I'll be late for my appointment.'

'I won't detain you any longer,' said Manners. He appeared to hesitate, and then added: 'I'm still at a loss to comprehend the abrupt cleavage and termination of your prospect of the future. The alley in which it seemed to end was Falman Alley, I suppose—your shortest route to the Belvedere Club. If I were you, Balcoth, I'd take another route, even if it requires a few minutes extra.'

'That sounds rather sinister,' laughed Balcoth. 'Do you think that something may happen to me in Falman Alley?'

'I hope not—but I can't guarantee that it won't.' Manners' tone was oddly dry and severe. 'You'd better do as I suggest.'

Balcoth felt the touch of a momentary shadow as he left the hotel—a premonition brief and light as the passing of some night-bird on noiseless wings. What could it mean—that gulf of infinite blackness into which the weird frieze of his future had appeared to plunge, like a frozen cataract? Was there a menace of some sort that awaited him in a particular place, at a particular moment?

He had a curious feeling of repetition, of doing something that he had done before, as he followed the street. Reaching the entrance of Falman Alley, he took out his watch. By walking briskly and following the alley, he would reach the Belvedere Club punctually. But if he went on around the next block, he would be a little late. Balcoth knew that his prospective patron, Claud Wish-

haven, was almost a martinet in demanding punctuality from himself and from others. So he took the alley.

The place appeared to be entirely deserted, as in his vision. Mid-way, Balcoth approached the half-seen door—a rear entrance of the huge warehouse—which had formed the termination of the time prospect. The door was his last visual impression, for something descended on his head at that moment, and his consciousness was blotted out by the supervening night he had previsioned. He had been sandbagged, very quietly and efficiently, by a twenty-first-century thug. The blow was fatal; and time, as far as Balcoth was concerned, had come to an end.

The Dream Pills

F. H. DAVIS

PROFESSOR TANTUM entered one of those marble halls in the city devoted to light refreshment. He took off his wide-brimmed felt hat and revealed a dome-shaped head usually associated with Shakespeare and one of our leading novelists. Having allowed his heavy coat to slip over his shoulders, he sat down.

The Professor waited patiently for ten minutes, and as no one seemed to have any idea of ascertaining his requirements, he thrust forth a fat, dumpy hand and rang a bell.

When the bell rang several customers looked round in alarm, and one or two waitresses, who had apparently never heard the sound before, raised their eyebrows. Tantum, however, enjoyed the joke, and repeated his performance several times.

At length a waitress condescended to approach him. 'Did you ring?' she inquired.

'I did,' said the Professor. 'Oblige me with a glass of hot milk and a piece of lunch cake.'

As soon as Tantum had given his order a young man sat down opposite to him. He was evidently impressed with the Professor's head, for he gazed at it solemnly for some time.

'Excuse me,' said the young man, 'but you have one of

the most remarkable craniums I have ever seen, and I should say that the weight of your brain is considerable.'

'It is,' said the Professor, raising the glass of hot milk to his lips and then removing it suddenly. 'I have the honor to be an inventor, but up to the present I am sorry to say that my inventions have not met with the success they so richly deserve. I am now engaged in concocting a lotion which will render shaving a thing of the past. It is easy enough to destroy permanently the growth of hair on the face. The difficulty is to do so without destroying or dreadfully disfiguring the physiognomy. I am most anxious to invent something which will confer a blessing upon humanity at large, but, alas, I have but little money. Money, sir, is the key to success, and without it the most promising doors of discovery remain locked and inaccessible.'

'I have money,' said the young man, 'any amount of it. Have another glass of milk, and allow me to pay for it.'

'Thanks. You said you had plenty of money?'

'Yes,' replied the young man, 'and what's more, I am willing to put that money at the disposal of anyone who will invent a new kind of pill.'

'Overdone,' said the Professor sadly, 'dreadfully overdone. I am proud to say that I have never taken a pill in my life. I find the sipping of cold water in the morning—'

'You misunderstand me. I am referring to what I call "Dream Pills".'

'Dream Pills?' murmured the Professor, allowing his hand to move slowly over the top of his head. 'You mean pills that will produce certain definite dreams?'

'I do,' replied the young man, leaning eagerly over the table. 'We spend six to eight hours in sleep, and those hours are, for the most part, a blank. We all dream occasionally, and sometimes we have horrible nightmares indeed; but, speaking broadly, our nights are dull and heavy

in the extreme when they might become a source of most fascinating entertainment without in any way overtaxing the semi-conscious brain. I have long been looking out for a large human head that should plainly indicate unusual mental development. You, sir, possess such a head, and I see in you the future inventor of Dream Pills.'

'My dear friend!' exclaimed the Professor, extending his hand. 'Your idea is brilliant, and I may say, without any hesitation, eminently practical and of a kind that simply must spell fame and fortune for us both.'

'Good,' said the young man. 'I place five thousand pounds at your disposal for the development of the Dream Pill scheme. I haven't my cheque book with me now, but if you care to call at my house this evening I shall have much pleasure in presenting you with the money.'

'My dear friend!' murmured the Professor again. 'Your generosity overwhelms me. As soon as I have the money—indeed, as soon as I return home—I shall commence experiments, and within a few days the pills will be ready.'

'When you have invented the pills,' said the young man earnestly, 'we must advertise them in a new and thrilling manner. We must have a swell establishment in the West End where you will wear an imposing robe and where you will be prepared to talk to our fashionable clients. I have already thought of a striking line for an advertisement—"A Cinema while you sleep". What do you think of that?'

'Beautiful!' said the Professor. 'Most striking, and so topical. There isn't the slightest doubt that as we sit together in this modest establishment we are on the eve of an epoch-making discovery—Dream Pills. Why, my dear sir, the sooner I make these new pills the better.'

When the young man had offered Tantum his card they shook hands cordially. They shook hands again in the street. Then the young man, whose name was Benjamin

Banks, went to his palatial rooms, while the Professor hurried to a boarding-house in Bloomsbury.

Tantum was at all times sanguine, but as he entered the boarding-house and ran upstairs to his dingy apartment, half sitting-room, half laboratory, he was more sanguine than usual.

'That young man,' he said, peering at test-tubes and retorts and Bunsen burners, 'is either mad or a genius. Since it is extremely difficult to draw a dividing line between the two, I shall give him the benefit of the doubt—provided he hands over the money tonight.'

The Professor lost no time in setting to work. Within a few minutes he had produced such a combination of horrible smells, compared with which sulphuretted hydrogen was a pleasant perfume, that his landlady came into the room, and, holding her handkerchief to her nose, gave Tantum notice to quit her house as soon as possible.

'Don't be a fool,' said the Professor sharply. 'I am about to make a stupendous discovery. Within a few months my name will be a household word, and I shall be simply rolling in money.'

'You have said that before,' observed the landlady acidly. 'This is my house, and I won't have every room filled with an abominable odor. You will have the goodness to clear out, you and your bottles and evil smells!'

'Tonight,' said the Professor, rising impressively from the table, 'I shall come into the possession of five thousand pounds. I am quite willing to go elsewhere—'

'Oh, very well,' replied the landlady gently. 'If you really come into that large sum of money, you may remain here, provided you pay extra for the privilege of turning this house into a sewage farm.'

'I have previously been paying you thirty-five shillings a week,' said the Professor blandly. 'In future you will receive twenty guineas for a similar period.'

With profuse thanks the landlady bowed herself out of the room.

Tantum continued his work with remarkable energy. Now he was busy concocting a pink-tinted paste; now he was ransacking a dilapidated volume of De Quincey.

'De Quincey's the man,' said the Professor excitedly. 'He seems to have had a devil of a lot of dreams. Our pills must be made from opium, hashish, an Indian poison not mentioned in the British Pharmacopoeia, powdered lobster, and a concentrated form of sponge cake, mixed together with some suitable adhesive. We must watch the results carefully, and before long we shall be able to produce certain pills for certain kinds of dreams. We must eliminate nightmare on the one hand and death on the other. Death?' Here the Professor chuckled. 'It would never do to invoke a dream without an awakening, a dream associated with undertakers and obituary notices!'

At dinner that evening the Professor was extremely jovial. He kept all the boarders convulsed with laughter, and gradually worked round to the subject of dreams.

'I simply love dreaming,' said Miss Flower, a pretty little typist who made a point of buying and reading all the seven-penny novels she could get hold of. 'I love dreaming really nice dreams, but the trouble is—'

'Pardon me,' said the Professor. 'I happen to know what the trouble is. I'm going to change all that. In future you will be able to dream at will by simply taking a pill.'

'You're joking,' said Miss Flower.

'Indeed I am not,' replied the Professor, rolling his bread into little pellets. 'What I say, I mean most emphatically. Pale people and ruddy people, plain people and pretty people, will all be able to dream deliciously, so that sleep will have new charms for the sleeper, charms that will be full of pleasant and exquisite surprises. The pomp of Babylon will be revealed again, and all the old

glory of the past will yield up its fragrance in a subtle dream. The sleeper will imagine himself reclining in a gondola, listening to the gondolier's romantic song. He will be able to participate in all the glamour of an Arabian Nights story, and he will be able to roam at will through the starry firmament. In short, my dear Miss Flower, there is nothing that the dreamer will not be able to see and revel in, when once he has taken one of my Dream Pills.'

When dinner was over the Professor returned to his room and placed a few pills and one or two other articles in a small black bag. He gazed affectionately at his fine head reflected in a mirror, put on his coat and came downstairs. He looked into the drawing-room, caught the eager eye of Miss Flower, and murmured mysteriously: 'I don't expect to be back tonight.' Then he bustled to the front door and hailed a taxi as if he had been hailing a car of the Gods.

Twenty minutes later, Tantum was treading upon a carpet that seemed to be made of moss. 'My dear good fellow,' he said, warmly grasping Mr. Banks' hand, 'you will be delighted to hear that I have what I may call the preliminary Dream Pills with me. You will be astonished—'

'No, no, Professor. Nothing you could do would ever astonish me now. Your head, you know, your head.'

'You are too kind. And the money?'

'Here it is,' said Mr. Banks. 'Allow me to present you with a check for five thousand pounds.'

'Don't mention it,' said Tantum, looking at the check, biting it, and putting it in his breast-pocket.

'In future,' said Mr. Banks, 'when the scheme is in working order, we will share profits. Does that arrangement suit you? I think it is quite fair, is it not?'

'It is not only fair,' replied the Professor, with much excitement, 'but it is an extremely generous proposal. By the

way, as I have brought the pills with me, perhaps you would like to try one. If so, I propose to remain with you. When you wake I shall be able to listen to your account of the dream.'

'Let me see the pills,' said Mr. Banks.

The Professor opened his bag and took out a small box.

'In there,' he said with a smile, 'are the wonderful Dream Pills.'

'Are they quite harmless?' inquired Mr. Banks.

'Practically,' replied Tantum. 'Later on I hope to be able to eliminate all danger.'

'Don't you think, Professor, that under the circumstances you had better make the experiment yourself and allow me to notify the dream?'

'No, no! The pleasure must be yours. As a matter of fact, it would require something like a thousand of these pills to kill an elephant.'

'I am not an elephant,' said Mr. Banks solemnly.

'True, but what I meant to infer was that these pills are really perfectly harmless if taken in small quantities.'

'Very well,' said Mr. Banks. 'I will take one of these pills. Just hand me that glass and jug of water, will you?'

The Professor did so, and in another moment Mr. Banks had swallowed one of the Dream Pills.

'I feel sleepy,' said Mr. Banks presently.

'It is beginning to work. Marvellous, isn't it?'

'Professor, I have a pain.'

'That's the powdered lobster and concentrated sponge cake. Don't be alarmed. The dewy balm of sleep is already on you. The Goddess of Dreams takes from her loom.... Don't snore so loudly, my dear young friend. Many a pleasant dream has been frightened away by excessive snoring.'

Presently the snoring ceased. Mr. Banks was smiling sweetly.

'Splendid!' whispered the Professor. 'Couldn't possibly be better. . . . Couldn't possibly—' But the great inventor of Dream Pills fell asleep, and never finished his remark.

When Tantum woke up, Mr. Banks was still smiling, and his breathing was regular.

The Professor bent over the young man and gently shook him. 'Wake up, my friend, wake up.'

'Hallo!' said Mr. Banks, opening his eyes. 'Are you there? I'm 1248 Central. Wrong number. Ring off, please.'

The Professor coughed. 'My dear young friend,' he began, 'you're not on the telephone. You're talking to me, to the maker of Dream Pills, you know.'

'Oh, yes! Awfully sorry. I had a Dream Pill, didn't I? Well, I must tell you that I've had a most extraordinary dream.'

'That was inevitable,' said the Professor with a smile. 'Tell me all about it.'

The dream was narrated with so much vividness that the Professor remained silent some time after Mr. Banks had ceased to speak.

'Wonderful!' said Tantum at last. 'I really must congratulate you on having met Helen of Troy under such pleasant circumstances. I think I may modestly claim that the experiment is entirely successful?'

'Entirely,' replied Mr. Banks. 'A factory must be built at once where the Dream Pills may be turned out in millions. When that is accomplished, we must secure, as I said before, an establishment in the West End where we shall be able to convert the Dream Pill boom into a sort of religious cult. After that wholesale advertisement, the winning over of the Fleet Street scribes, and, after that, a mammoth fortune for us both.'

When the factory was built and hundreds of thousands of boxes containing Dream Pills were in readiness for dis-

tribution, and when the Professor had secured an imposing room in Bond Street, people were surprised to see men going about with large white balls on their heads. The surprise increased when balls were discovered on the top of letter-boxes, on telegraph poles, on taxis and motor-'buses. There were two words on all these white balls, written in large letters—'DREAM PILLS'. Everyone was asking what these pills were, and everyone was anxious to try them. Just when curiosity was at fever heat all the London dailies had a full-page advertisement, and in the center of the page—'DREAM PILLS'—that was all. The next day detailed advertisements appeared, and London went mad about Dream Pills. Everyone, except babies in arms, seemed to be spending five shillings for a box of dreams.

'We've made a hit this time,' said Mr. Banks to the Professor; 'but we must keep on advertising. I intend to send a fleet of airships across London and all the big towns next week, and each airship will distribute papier mâché balls with our pills inscribed upon them.'

Dream Pills went on booming. Ten huge factories sprang up and poured forth countless dreams, and the originators reaped a rich harvest. The business extended to the four quarters of the globe, and even savage tribes in Central Africa were buying Dream Pills.

When the boom was at its height, the crash came.

'Banks,' said the Professor, staggering into the room so rich with Eastern hangings, 'Banks, it's all up! Before long we shall be responsible for something like thirty-five million deaths! The Dream Pills kill. I have only just discovered it. My God, what have we done? Thirty-five million!—Stop the damned, rotten, pernicious, wicked, frightful, death-giving Dream Pills! Banks, the people are swarming through the streets. They are coming here. Hark! A bell rings!'

A bell did ring. Professor Tantum's head had struck it in one of those marble halls devoted to light refreshment.

'Wake up,' said the manageress. 'We don't allow gentlemen to sleep here.'

'I beg your pardon,' said the Professor, rising. 'I must have been dreaming. Glass of hot milk and a piece of lunch cake, please.'

The White Powder

ARTHUR MACHEN

MY NAME IS Leicester; my father, Major-General Wyn Leicester, a distinguished officer of artillery, succumbed five years ago to a complicated liver complaint acquired in the deadly climate of India. A year later my only brother, Francis, came home after an exceptionally brilliant career at the University, and settled down with the resolution of a hermit to master what has been well called the great legend of the law. He was a man who seemed to live in utter indifference to everything that is called pleasure; and though he was handsomer than most men, and could talk as merrily and wittily as if he were a mere vagabond, he avoided society, and shut himself up in a large room at the top of the house to make himself a lawyer. Ten hours a day of hard reading was at first his allotted portion; from the first light in the east to the late afternoon he remained shut up with his books, taking a hasty half-hour's lunch with me as if he grudged the wasting of the moments, and going out for a short walk when it began to grow dusk. I thought that such relentless application must be injurious, and tried to cajole him from the crabbed textbooks, but his ardour seemed to grow rather than diminish, and his daily tale of hours increased. I spoke to him seriously, suggesting some occasional relaxation, if it were but an idle afternoon with a harmless novel; but he laughed, and said that he read about feudal tenures when

he felt in need of amusement, and scoffed at the notions of theaters, or a month's fresh air. I confessed that he looked well, and seemed not to suffer from his labors, but I knew that such unnatural toil would take revenge at last, and I was not mistaken. A look of anxiety began to lurk about his eyes, and he seemed languid, and at last he avowed that he was no longer in perfect health; he was troubled, he said, with a sensation of dizziness, and awoke now and then of nights from fearful dreams, terrified and cold with icy sweats. 'I am taking care of myself,' he said, 'so you must not trouble; I passed the whole of yesterday afternoon in idleness, leaning back in that comfortable chair you gave me, and scribbling nonsense on a sheet of paper. No, no; I will not overdo my work; I shall be well enough in a week or two, depend upon it.'

Yet in spite of his assurances I could see that he grew no better, but rather worse; he would enter the drawing-room with a face all miserably wrinkled and despondent, and endeavor to look gaily when my eyes fell on him, and I thought such symptoms of evil omen, and was frightened sometimes at the nervous irritation of his movements, and at glances which I could not decipher. Much against his will I prevailed on him to have medical advice, and with an ill grace he called in our old doctor.

Dr. Haberden cheered me after examination of his patient.

'There is nothing really much amiss,' he said to me. 'No doubt he reads too hard and eats hastily, and then goes back again to his books in too great a hurry, and the natural sequence is some digestive trouble and a little mischief in the nervous system. But I think—I do indeed, Miss Leicester—that we shall be able to set this all right. I have written him a prescription which ought to do great things. So you have no cause for anxiety.'

My brother insisted on having the prescription made up

by a chemist in the neighborhood. It was an odd, old-fashioned shop, devoid of the studied coquetry and calculated glitter that make so gay a show on the counters and shelves of the modern apothecary; but Francis liked the old chemist, and believed in the scrupulous purity of his drugs. The medicine was sent in due course, and I saw that my brother took it regularly after lunch and dinner. It was an innocent-looking white powder, of which a little was dissolved in a glass of cold water; I stirred it in, and it seemed to disappear, leaving the water clear and colorless. At first, Francis seemed to benefit greatly; the weariness vanished from his face, and he became more cheerful than he had ever been since the time when he left school; he talked gaily of reforming himself, and avowed to me that he had wasted his time.

'I have given too many hours to law,' he said, laughing; 'I think you have saved me in the nick of time. Come, I shall be Lord Chancellor yet, but I must not forget life. You and I will have a holiday together before long; we will go to Paris and enjoy ourselves, and keep away from the Bibliothèque Nationale.'

I confessed myself delighted with the prospect.

'When shall we go?' I said. 'I can start the day after to-morrow if you like.'

'Ah! that is perhaps a little too soon; after all, I do not know London yet, and I suppose a man ought to give the pleasures of his own country the first choice. But we will go off together in a week or two, so try and furbish up your French. I only know law French myself, and I am afraid that wouldn't do.'

We were just finishing dinner, and he quaffed off his medicine with a parade of carousal as if it had been wine from some choicest bin.

'Has it any particular taste?' I said.

'No; I should not know I was not drinking water,' and

he got up from his chair and began to pace up and down the room as if he were undecided as to what he should do next.

"Shall we have coffee in the drawing-room?' I said; 'or would you like to smoke?'

'No, I think I will take a turn; it seems a pleasant evening. Look at the afterglow; why, it is as if a great city were burning in flames, and down there between the dark houses it is raining blood fast. Yes, I will go out; I may be in soon, but I shall take my key; so good-night, dear, if I don't see you again.'

The door slammed behind him, and I saw him walk lightly down the street, swinging his malacca cane, and I felt grateful to Dr. Haberden for such an improvement.

I believe my brother came home very late that night, but he was in a merry mood the next morning.

'I walked on without thinking where I was going,' he said, 'enjoying the freshness of the air, and livened by the crowds as I reached more frequented quarters. And then I met an old college friend, Orford, in the press of the pavement, and then—well, we enjoyed ourselves. I have felt what it is to be young and a man; I find I have blood in my veins, as other men have. I made an appointment with Orford for tonight; there will be a little party of us at the restaurant. Yes; I shall enjoy myself for a week or two, and hear the chimes at midnight, and then we will go for our little trip together.'

Such was the transmutation of my brother's character that in a few days he became a lover of pleasure, a careless and merry idler of western pavements, a hunter out of snug restaurants, and a fine critic of fantastic dancing; he grew fat before my eyes, and said no more of Paris, for he had clearly found his paradise in London. I rejoiced, and yet wondered a little; for there was, I thought, something in his gaiety that indefinitely displeased me, though I

could not have defined my feeling. But by degrees there came a change; he returned still in the cold hours of the morning, but I heard no more about his pleasures, and one morning as we sat at breakfast together I looked suddenly into his eyes and saw a stranger before me.

'Oh, Francis!' I cried. 'Oh, Francis, Francis, what have you done?' and rending sobs cut the words short. I went weeping out of the room; for though I knew nothing, yet I knew all, and by some odd play of thought I remembered the evening when he first went abroad, and the picture of the sunset sky glowed before me; the clouds like a city in burning flames, and the rain of blood. Yet I did battle with such thoughts, resolving that perhaps, after all, no great harm had been done, and in the evening at dinner I resolved to press him to fix a day for our holiday in Paris. We had talked easily enough, and my brother had just taken his medicine, which he continued all the while. I was about to begin my topic when the words forming in my mind vanished, and I wondered for a second what icy and intolerable weight oppressed my heart and suffocated me as with the unutterable horror of the coffin lid nailed down on the living.

We had dined without candles; the room had slowly grown from twilight to gloom, and the walls and corners were indistinct in the shadow. But from where I sat I looked out into the street; and as I thought of what I would say to Francis, the sky began to flush and shine, as it had done on a well-remembered evening, and in the gap between two dark masses that were houses an awful pageantry of flame appeared—lurid whorls of writhed cloud, and utter depths burning, grey masses like the fume blown from a smoking city, and an evil glory blazing far above shot with tongues of more ardent fire, and below as if there were a deep pool of blood. I looked down to where my brother sat facing me, and the words were shaped on

my lips, when I saw his hand resting on the table. Between the thumb and forefinger of the closed hand there was a mark, a small patch about the size of a sixpence, and somewhat of the color of a bad bruise. Yet, by some sense I cannot define, I knew that what I saw was no bruise at all; oh! if human flesh could burn with flame, and if flame could be black as pitch, such was that before me. Without thought or fashioning of words grey horror shaped within me at the sight, and in an inner cell it was known to be a brand. For the moment the stained sky became dark as midnight, and when the light returned to me I was alone in the silent room, and soon after I heard my brother go out.

Late as it was, I put on my hat and went to Dr. Haberden, and in his great consulting room, ill lighted by a candle which the doctor brought in with him, with stammering lips, and a voice that would break in spite of my resolve, I told him all, from the day on which my brother began to take the medicine down to the dreadful thing I had seen scarcely half an hour before.

When I had done, the doctor looked at me for a minute with an expression of great pity on his face.

'My dear Miss Leicester,' he said, 'you have evidently been anxious about your brother; you have been worrying over him, I am sure. Come now, is it not so?'

'I have certainly been anxious,' I said. 'For the last week or two I have not felt at ease.'

'Quite so; you know, of course, what a queer thing the brain is?'

'I understand what you mean; but I was not deceived. I saw what I have told you with my own eyes.'

'Yes, yes, of course. But your eyes had been staring at that very curious sunset we had tonight. That is the only explanation. You will see it in the proper light tomorrow, I am sure. But, remember, I am always ready to give any

help that is in my power; do not scruple to come to me, or to send for me if you are in any distress.'

I went away but little comforted, all confusion and terror and sorrow, not knowing where to turn. When my brother and I met the next day, I looked quickly at him, and noticed, with a sickening at heart, that the right hand, the hand on which I had clearly seen the patch as of a black fire, was wrapped up with a handkerchief.

'What is the matter with your hand, Francis?' I said in a steady voice.

'Nothing of consequence. I cut a finger last night, and it bled rather awkwardly. So I did it up roughly to the best of my ability.'

'I will do it neatly for you, if you like.'

'No, thank you, dear; this will answer very well. Suppose we have breakfast; I am quite hungry.'

We sat down and I watched him. He scarcely ate or drank at all, but tossed his meat to the dog when he thought my eyes were turned away; there was a look in his eyes that I had never yet seen, and the thought flashed across my mind that it was a look that was scarcely human. I was firmly convinced that awful and incredible as was the thing I had seen the night before, yet it was no illusion, no glamour of bewildered sense, and in the course of the evening I went again to the doctor's house.

He shook his head with an air puzzled and incredulous, and seemed to reflect for a few minutes.

'And you say he still keeps up the medicine? But why? As I understand, all the symptoms he complained of have disappeared long ago; why should he go on taking the stuff when he is quite well? And by the by, where did he get it made up? At Sayce's? I never send anyone there; the old man is getting careless. Suppose you come with me to the chemist's; I should like to have some talk with him.'

We walked together to the shop; old Sayce knew Dr. Haberden, and was quite ready to give any information.

'You have been sending that in to Mr. Leicester for some weeks, I think, on my prescription,' said the doctor, giving the old man a pencilled scrap of paper.

The chemist put on his great spectacles with trembling uncertainty and held up the paper with a shaking hand.

'Oh, yes,' he said, 'I have very little of it left; it is rather an uncommon drug, and I have had it in stock some time. I must get in some more, if Mr. Leicester goes on with it.'

'Kindly let me have a look at the stuff,' said Haberden, and the chemist gave him a glass bottle. He took out the stopper and smelt the contents, and looked strangely at the old man.

'Where did you get this?' he said, 'and what is it? For one thing, Mr. Sayce, it is not what I prescribed. Yes, yes, I see the label is right enough, but I tell you this is not the drug.'

'I have had it a long time,' said the old man in feeble terror; 'I got it from Burbage's in the usual way. It is not prescribed often, and I have had it on the shelf for some years. You see there is very little left.'

'You had better give it to me,' said Haberden. 'I am afraid something wrong has happened.'

We went out of the shop in silence, the doctor carrying the bottle neatly wrapped in paper under his arm.

'Dr. Haberden,' I said, when he had walked a little way—'Dr. Haberden.'

'Yes,' he said, looking at me gloomily enough.

'I should like you to tell me what my brother has been taking twice a day for the last month or so.'

'Frankly, Miss Leicester, I don't know. We will speak of this when we get to my house.'

We walked on quickly without another word till we reached Dr. Haberden's. He asked me to sit down, and

began pacing up and down the room, his face clouded over, as I could see, with no common fears.

'Well,' he said at length, 'this is all very strange; it is only natural that you should feel alarmed, and I must confess that my mind is far from easy. We will put aside, if you please, what you told me last night and this morning, but the fact remains that for the last few weeks Mr. Leicester has been impregnating his system with a drug which is completely unknown to me. I tell you, it is not what I ordered; and what the stuff in the bottle really is remains to be seen.'

He undid the wrapper, and cautiously tilted a few grains of the white powder on to a piece of paper, and peered curiously at it.

'Yes,' he said, 'it is like the sulphate of quinine, as you say; it is flaky. But smell it.'

He held the bottle to me, and I bent over it. It was a strange, sickly smell, vaporous and overpowering, like some strong anaesthetic.

'I shall have it analysed,' said Haberden; 'I have a friend who has devoted his whole life to chemistry as a science. Then we shall have something to go upon. No, no; say no more about that other matter; I cannot listen to that; and take my advice and think no more about it yourself.'

That evening my brother did not go out as usual after dinner.

'I have had my fling,' he said with a queer laugh, 'and I must go back to my old ways. A little law will be quite a relaxation after so sharp a dose of pleasure,' and he grinned to himself, and soon after went up to his room. His hand was still all bandaged.

Dr. Haberden called a few days later.

'I have no special news to give you,' he said. 'Chambers

is out of town, so I know no more about that stuff than you do. But I should like to see Mr. Leicester, if he is in.'

'He is in his room,' I said; 'I will tell him you are here.'

'No, no, I will go up to him; we will have a little quiet talk together. I dare say that we have made a good deal of fuss about a very little; for, after all, whatever the powder may be, it seems to have done him good.'

The doctor went upstairs, and standing in the hall I heard his knock, and the opening and shutting of the door, and then I waited in the silent house for an hour, and the stillness grew more and more intense as the hands of the clock crept round. Then there sounded from above the noise of a door shut sharply, and the doctor was coming down the stairs. His footsteps crossed the hall, and there was a pause at the door; I drew a long, sick breath with difficulty, and saw my face white in a little mirror, and he came in and stood at the door. There was an unutterable horror shining in his eyes; he steadied himself by holding the back of a chair with one hand, his lower lip trembled like a horse's, and he gulped and stammered unintelligible sounds before he spoke.

'I have seen that man,' he began in a dry whisper. 'I have been sitting in his presence for the last hour. My God! And I am alive and in my senses! I, who have dealt with death all my life, and have dabbled with the melting ruins of the earthly tabernacle. But not this, oh! not this,' and he covered his face with his hands as if to shut out the sight of something before him.

'Do not send for me again, Miss Leicester,' he said with more composure. 'I can do nothing in this house. Goodbye.'

As I watched him totter down the steps, and along the pavement towards his house, it seemed to me that he had aged by ten years since the morning.

My brother remained in his room. He called out to me

in a voice I hardly recognized that he was very busy, and would like his meals brought to his door and left there, and I gave the order to the servants. From that day it seemed as if the arbitrary conception we call time had been annihilated for me; I lived in an ever-present sense of horror, going through the routine of the house mechanically, and only speaking a few necessary words to the servants. Now and then I went out and paced the streets for an hour or two and came home again; but whether I were without or within, my spirit delayed before the closed door of the upper room, and shuddering, waited for it to open. I have said that I scarcely reckoned time; but I suppose it must have been a fortnight after Dr. Harberden's visit that I came home from my stroll a little refreshed and lightened. The air was sweet and pleasant, and the hazy form of green leaves, floating cloud-like in the square, and the smell of blossoms, had charmed my senses, and I felt happier and walked more briskly. As I delayed a moment at the verge of the pavement, waiting for a van to pass by before crossing over to the house, I happened to look up at the windows, and instantly there was the rush and swirl of deep cold waters in my ears, my heart leapt up and fell down, down as into a deep hollow, and I was amazed with a dread and terror without form or shape. I stretched out a hand blindly through the folds of thick darkness, from the black and shadowy valley, and held myself from falling, while the stones beneath my feet rocked and swayed and tilted, and the sense of solid things seemed to sink away from under me. I had glanced up at the window of my brother's study, and at that moment the blind was drawn aside, and something that had life stared out into the world. Nay, I cannot say I saw a face or any human likeness; a living thing, two eyes of burning flame glared at me, and they were in the midst of something as formless as my fear, the symbol and

presence of all evil and all hideous corruption. I stood shuddering and quaking as with the grip of ague, sick with unspeakable agonies of fear and loathing, and for five minutes I could not summon force or motion to my limbs. When I was within the door, I ran up the stairs to my brother's room and knocked.

'Francis, Francis,' I cried, 'for Heaven's sake, answer me. What is the horrible thing in your room? Cast it out, Francis; cast it from you.'

I heard a noise as of feet shuffling slowly and awkwardly, and a choking, gurgling sound, as if someone was struggling to find utterance, and then the noise of a voice, broken and stifled, and words that I could scarcely understand.

'There is nothing here,' the voice said. 'Pray do not disturb me. I am not very well today.'

I turned away, horrified, and yet helpless. I could do nothing, and I wondered why Francis had lied to me, for I had seen the appearance beyond the glass too plainly to be deceived, though it was but the sight of a moment. And I sat still, conscious that there had been something else, something I had seen in the first flash of terror, before those burning eyes had looked at me. Suddenly I remembered; as I lifted my face the blind was being drawn back, and I had had an instant's glance of the thing that was moving it, and in my recollection I knew that a hideous image was engraved forever on my brain. It was not a hand; there were no fingers that held the blind, but a black stump pushed it aside, the mouldering outline and the clumsy movement as of a beast's paw had glowed into my senses before the darkling waves of terror had overwhelmed me as I went down quick into the pit. My mind was aghast at the thought of this, and of the awful presence that dwelt with my brother in his room; I went to his door and cried to him again, but no answer came.

That night one of the servants came up to me and told me in a whisper that for three days food had been regularly placed at the door and left untouched; the maid had knocked but had received no answer; she had heard the noise of shuffling feet that I had noticed. Day after day went by, and still my brother's meals were brought to his door and left untouched; and though I knocked and called again and again, I could get no answer. The servants began to talk to me; it appeared they were as alarmed as I; the cook said that when my brother first shut himself up in his room she used to hear him come out at night and go about the house; and once, she said, the hall door had opened and closed again, but for several nights she had heard no sound. The climax came at last; it was in the dusk of the evening, and I was sitting in the darkening dreary room when a terrible shriek jarred and rang harshly out of the silence, and I heard a frightening scurry of feet dashing down the stairs. I waited, and the servant maid staggered into the room and faced me, white and trembling.

'Oh, Miss Helen!' she whispered. 'Oh! for the Lord's sake, Miss Helen, what has happened? Look at my hand, miss; look at that hand.'

I drew her to the window, and saw there was a black wet stain upon her hand.

'I do not understand you,' I said. 'Will you explain to me?'

'I was doing your room just now,' she began. 'I was turning down the bedclothes, and all of a sudden something fell upon my hand, wet, and when I looked up, the ceiling was black and dripping on me.'

I looked hard at her and bit my lip.

'Come with me,' I said. 'Bring your candle with you.'

The room I slept in was beneath my brother's, and as I went in I felt I was trembling. I looked up at the ceiling,

and saw a patch, all black and wet, and a dew of black drops upon it, and a pool of horrible liquor soaking into the white bedclothes.

I ran upstairs, and knocked loudly.

'Oh, Francis, Francis, my dear brother,' I cried, 'what has happened to you?'

And I listened. There was a sound of choking, and a noise like water bubbling and regurgitating, but nothing else, and I called louder, but no answer came.

In spite of what Dr. Haberden had said, I went to him; with tears streaming down my cheeks I told him all that had happened, and he listened to me with a face set hard and grim.

'For your father's sake,' he said at last, 'I will go with you, though I can do nothing.'

We went out together; the streets were dark and silent, and heavy with heat and a drought of many weeks. I saw the doctor's face white under the gas-lamps, and when we reached the house his hand was shaking.

We did not hesitate, but went upstairs directly. I held the lamp, and he called out in a loud, determined voice.

'Mr. Leicester, do you hear me? I insist on seeing you. Answer me at once.'

There was no answer, but we both heard that choking noise I have mentioned.

'Mr. Leicester, I am waiting for you. Open the door this instant, or I shall break it down.' And he called a third time in a voice that rang and echoed from the walls:

'Mr. Leicester! For the last time I order you to open the door.'

'Ah!' he said, after a pause of heavy silence, 'we are wasting time here. Will you be so kind as to get me a poker, or something of the kind?'

I ran into a little room at the back where odd articles

were kept, and found a heavy adze-like tool that I thought might serve the doctor's purpose.

'Very good,' he said, 'that will do, I dare say. I give you notice, Mr. Leicester,' he cried loudly at the keyhole, 'that I am now about to break into your room.'

Then I heard the wrench of the adze, and the woodwork split and cracked under it; with a loud crash the door suddenly burst open, and for a moment we started back aghast at a fearful screaming cry, no human voice, but as the roar of a monster, that burst forth inarticulate and struck at us out of the darkness.

'Hold the lamp,' said the doctor, and we went in and glanced quickly round the room.

'There it is,' said Dr. Haberden, drawing a quick breath; 'look, in that corner.'

I looked, and a pang of horror seized my heart as with a white-hot iron. There upon the floor was a dark and putrid mass, seething with corruption and hideous rottenness, neither liquid nor solid, but melting and changing before our eyes, and bubbling with unctuous oily bubbles like boiling pitch. And out of the midst of it shone two burning points like eyes, and I saw a writhing and stirring as of limbs, and something moved and lifted up what might have been an arm. The doctor took a step forward, raised the iron bar and struck at the burning points; he drove in the weapon, and struck again and again in the fury of loathing.

A week or two later, when I had recovered to some extent from the terrible shock, Dr. Haberden came to see me.

'I have sold my practice,' he began, 'and tomorrow I am sailing on a long voyage. I do not know whether I shall ever return to England; in all probability I shall buy a little land in California, and settle there for the remainder of my life. I have brought you this packet, which you

may open and read when you feel able to do so. It contains the report of Dr. Chambers on what I submitted to him. Good-bye, Miss Leicester, good-bye.'

When he was gone I opened the envelope; I could not wait, and proceeded to read the papers within. Here is the manuscript, and if you will allow me, I will read you the astounding story it contains.

My dear Haberden, the letter began, *I have delayed inexcusably in answering your questions as to the white substance you sent me. To tell you the truth, I have hesitated for some time as to what course I should adopt, for there is a bigotry and orthodox standard in physical science as in theology, and I knew that if I told you the truth I should offend rooted prejudices which I once held dear myself. However, I have determined to be plain with you, and first I must enter into a short personal explanation.*

You have known me, Haberden, for many years as a scientific man; you and I have often talked of our profession together, and discussed the hopeless gulf that opens before the feet of those who think to attain to truth by any means whatsoever except the beaten way of experiment and observation in the sphere of material things. I remember the scorn with which you have spoken to me of men of science who have dabbled a little in the unseen, and have timidly hinted that perhaps the senses are not, after all, the eternal, impenetrable bounds of all knowledge, the everlasting walls beyond which no human being has ever passed. We have laughed together heartily, and I think justly, at the 'occult' follies of the day, disguised under various names—the mesmerisms, spiritualisms, materialisms, theosophies, all the rabble rout of imposture, with their machinery of poor tricks and feeble conjuring, the true back parlour of shabby London streets. Yet, in

spite of what I have said, I must confess to you that I am no materialist, taking the word of course in its usual signification. It is now many years since I have convinced myself—convinced myself, a sceptic, remember—that the old iron-bound theory is utterly and entirely false. Perhaps this confession will not wound you so sharply as it would have done twenty years ago; for I think you cannot have failed to notice that for some time hypotheses have been advanced by men of pure science which are nothing less than transcendental, and I suspect that most modern chemists and biologists of repute would not hesitate to subscribe the dictum *of the old Schoolman,* Omnia exeunt in mysterium, *which means, I take it, that every branch of human knowledge if traced up to its source and final principles vanishes into mystery. I need not trouble you now with a detailed account of the painful steps which led me to my conclusions; a few simple experiments suggested a doubt as to my then standpoint, and a train of thought that rose from circumstances comparatively trifling brought me far; my old conception of the universe has been swept away, and I stand in a world that seems as strange and awful to me as the endless waves of the ocean seen for the first time, shining, from a peak in Darien. Now I know that the walls of sense that seemed so impenetrable, that seemed to loom up above the heavens and to be founded below the depths, and to shut us in for evermore, are no such everlasting impassable barriers as we fancied, but thinnest and most airy veils that melt away before the seeker, and dissolve as the early mist of the morning about the brooks. I know that you never adopted the extreme materialistic position; you did not go about trying to prove a universal negative, for your logical sense withheld you from that crowning absurdity; but I am sure that you will find all that I am saying strange and repellent to your habits of thought. Yet, Haberden, what I tell*

you is the truth, nay, to adopt our common language, the sole and scientific truth, verified by experience; and the universe is verily more splendid and more awful than we used to dream. The whole universe, my friend, is a tremendous sacrament; a mystic, ineffable force and energy, veiled by an outward form of matter; and man, and the sun and the other stars, and the flower of the grass, and the crystal in the test-tube, are each and every one as spiritual, as material, and subject to an inner working.

You will perhaps, wonder, Haberden, whence all this tends; but I think a little thought will make it clear. You will understand that from such a standpoint the whole view of things is changed, and what we thought incredible and absurd may be possible enough. In short, we must look at legend and belief with other eyes, and be prepared to accept tales that had become mere fables. Indeed, this is no such great demand. After all, modern science will concede as much, in a hypocritical manner; you must not, it is true, believe in witchcraft, but you may credit hypnotism; ghosts are out of date, but there is a good deal to be said for the theory of telepathy. Give superstition a Greek name, and believe in it, should almost be a proverb.

So much for my personal explanation. You sent me, Haberden, a phial, stoppered and sealed, containing a small quantity of flaky white powder, obtained from a chemist who has been dispensing it to one of your patients. I am not surprised to hear that this powder refused to yield any results to your analysis. It is a substance which was known to a few many hundred years ago, but which I never expected to have submitted to me from the shop of a modern apothecary. There seems no reason to doubt the truth of the man's tale; he no doubt got, as he says, the rather uncommon salt you prescribed from the wholesale chemist's; and it has probably remained on his shelf for twenty years, or perhaps longer. Here what we

call chance and coincidence begin to work; during all these years the salt in the bottle was exposed to certain recurring variations of temperature, variations probably ranging from 40° to 80°. And, as it happens, such changes, recurring year after year at irregular intervals, and with varying degrees of intensity and duration, have constituted a process, and a process so complicated and so delicate, that I question whether modern scientific apparatus directed with the utmost precision could produce the same result. The white powder you sent me is something very different from the drug you prescribed; it is the powder from which the wine of the Sabbath, the Vinum Sabbati, *was prepared. No doubt you have read of the Witches' Sabbath, and have laughed at the tales which terrified our ancestors; the black cats, and the broomsticks, and dooms pronounced against some old woman's cow. Since I have known the truth I have often reflected that it is on the whole a happy thing that such burlesque as this is believed, for it serves to conceal much that it is better should not be known generally. However, if you care to read the appendix to Payne Knight's monograph, you will find that the true Sabbath was something very different, though the writer has very nicely refrained from printing all he knew. The secrets of the true Sabbath were the secrets of remote times surviving into the Middle Ages, secrets of an evil science which existed long before Aryan man entered Europe. Men and women, seduced from their homes on specious pretences, were met by beings well qualified to assume, as they did assume, the part of devils, and taken by their guides to some desolate and lonely place, known to the initiate by long tradition, and unknown to all else. Perhaps it was a cave in some bare and windswept hill, perhaps some inmost recess of a great forest, and there the Sabbath was held. There, in the blackest hour of night, the* Vinum Sabbati *was prepared, and this evil graal was*

poured forth and offered to the neophytes, and they partook of an infernal sacrament; sumentes calicem principis inferorum, *as an old author well expresses it. And suddenly, each one that had drunk found himself attended by a companion, a shape of glamour and unearthly allurement, beckoning him apart, to share in joys more exquisite, more piercing than the thrill of any dream, to the consummation of the marriage of the Sabbath. It is hard to write of such things as these, and chiefly because that shape that allured with loveliness was no hallucination, but, awful as it is to express, the man himself. By the power of that Sabbath wine, a few grains of white powder thrown into a glass of water, the house of life was riven asunder and the human trinity dissolved, and the worm which never dies, that which lies sleeping within us all, was made tangible and an external thing, and clothed with a garment of flesh. And then, in the hour of midnight, the primal fall was repeated and re-presented, and the awful thing veiled in the mythos of the Tree in the Garden was done anew. Such was the* nuptiae Sabbati.

I prefer to say no more; you, Haberden, know as well as I do that the most trivial laws of life are not to be broken with impunity; and for so terrible an act as this, in which the very inmost place of the temple was broken open and defiled, a terrible vengeance followed. What began with corruption ended also with corruption.

Underneath is the following in Dr. Haberden's writing:—

The whole of the above is unfortunately strictly and entirely true. Your brother confessed all to me on that morning when I saw him in his room. My attention was first attracted to the bandaged hand, and I forced him to show it me. What I saw made me, a medical man of many years' standing, grow sick with loathing, and the story I was forced to listen to was infinitely more frightful than I could have believed possible. It has tempted me to doubt

the Eternal Goodness, which can permit nature to offer such hideous possibilities; and if you had not with your own eyes seen the end, I should have said to you—disbelieve it all. I have not, I think, many more weeks to live, but you are young, and may forget all this.

Joseph Haberden, M.D.

In the course of two or three months I heard that Dr. Haberden had died at sea shortly after the ship left England.

The New Accelerator

H. G. WELLS

CERTAINLY, if ever a man found a guinea when he was looking for a pin it is my good friend Professor Gibberne. I have heard before of investigators overshooting the mark but never quite to the extent that he has done. He has really, this time at any rate, without any touch of exaggeration in the phrase, found something to revolutionize human life. And that when he was simply seeking an all-round nervous stimulant to bring languid people up to the stresses of these pushful days. I have tasted the stuff now several times, and I cannot do better than describe the effect the thing had on me. That there are astonishing experiences in store for all in search of new sensations will become apparent enough.

Professor Gibberne, as many people know, is my neighbor in Folkestone. Unless my memory plays me a trick, his portrait at various ages has already appeared in *The Strand Magazine*—I think late in 1899; but I am unable to look it up because I have lent that volume to someone who has never sent it back. The reader may, perhaps, recall the high forehead and the singularly long black eyebrows that give such a Mephistophelian touch to his face. He occupies one of those pleasant detached houses in the mixed style that make the western end of the Upper Sandgate Road so interesting. His is the one with the Flemish gables and the Moorish portico, and it is in the room

with the mullioned bay window that he works when he is down here, and in which of an evening we have so often smoked and talked together. He is a mighty jester, but, besides, he likes to talk to me about his work; he is one of those men who find a help and stimulus in talking, and so I have been able to follow the conception of the New Accelerator right up from a very early stage. Of course, the greater portion of his experimental work is not done in Folkestone, but in Gower Street, in the fine new laboratory next to the hospital that he has been the first to use.

As everyone knows, or at least as all intelligent people know, the special department in which Gibberne has gained so great and deserved a reputation among physiologists is the action of drugs upon the nervous system. Upon soporifics, sedatives, and anaesthetics he is, I am told, unequalled. He is also a chemist of considerable eminence, and I suppose in the subtle and complex jungle of riddles that centers about the ganglion cell and the axis fiber there are little cleared places of his making, glades of illumination that, until he sees fit to publish his results, are inaccessible to every other living man. And in the last few years he has been particularly assiduous upon this question of nervous stimulants, and already, before the discovery of the New Accelerator, very successful with them. Medical science has to thank him for at least three distinct and absolutely safe invigorators of unrivalled value to practising men. In cases of exhaustion the preparation known as Gibberne's B Syrup has, I suppose, saved more lives already than any lifeboat round the coast.

'But none of these things begin to satisfy me yet,' he told me nearly a year ago. 'Either they increase the central energy without affecting the nerves or they simply increase the available energy by lowering the nervous conductivity; and all of them are unequal and local in their operation. One wakes up the heart and viscera and leaves the brain

stupefied, one gets at the brain champagne fashion and does nothing good for the solar plexus, and what I want—and what, if it's an earthly possibility, I mean to have is a stimulant that stimulates all round, that wakes you up for a time from the crown of your head to the tip of your great toe, and makes you go two or even three to everybody else's one. Eh? That's the thing I'm after.'

'It would tire a man,' I said.

'Not a doubt of it. And you'd eat double or treble—and all that. But just think what the thing would mean. Imagine yourself with a little phial like this'—he held up a bottle of green glass and marked his points with it—'and in this precious phial is the power to think twice as fast, move twice as quickly, do twice as much work in a given time as you could otherwise do.'

'But is such a thing possible?'

'I believe so. If it isn't, I've wasted my time for a year. These various preparations of the hypophosphites, for example, seem to show that something of the sort. . . . Even if it was only one and a half times as fast it would do.'

'It *would* do,' I said.

'If you were a statesman in a corner, for example, time rushing up against you, something urgent to be done, eh?'

'He could dose his private secretary,' I said.

'And gain—double time. And think if *you*, for example, wanted to finish a book.'

'Usually,' I said, 'I wish I'd never begun 'em.'

'Or a doctor, driven to death, wants to sit down and think out a case. Or a barrister—or a man cramming for an examination.'

'Worth a guinea a drop,' said I, 'and more—to men like that.'

'And in a duel again,' said Gibberne, 'where it all depends on your quickness in pulling the trigger.'

'Or in fencing,' I echoed.

'You see,' said Gibberne, 'if I get it as an all-round thing it will really do you no harm at all—except perhaps to an infinitesimal degree it brings you nearer old age. You will just have lived twice to other people's once—'

'I suppose,' I meditated, 'in a duel—it would be fair?'

'That's a question for the seconds,' said Gibberne.

I harked back further. 'And you really think such a thing *is* possible?' I said.

'As possible,' said Gibberne, and glanced at something that went throbbing by the window, 'as a motor-bus. As a matter of fact—'

He paused and smiled at me deeply, and tapped slowly on the edge of his desk with the green phial. 'I think I know the stuff. . . . Already I've got something coming.' The nervous smile upon his face betrayed the gravity of his revelation. He rarely talked of his actual experimental work unless things were very near the end. 'And it may be, it may be—I shouldn't be surprised—it may even do the thing at a greater rate than twice.'

'It will be rather a big thing,' I hazarded.

'It will be, I think, rather a big thing.'

But I don't think he quite knew what a big thing it was to be, for all that.

I remember we had several subsequent talks about the stuff. 'The New Accelerator' he called it, and his tone about it grew more confident on each occasion. Sometimes he talked nervously of unexpected physiological results its use might have, and then he would get a bit unhappy; at others he was frankly mercenary, and we debated long and anxiously how the preparation might be turned to commercial account. 'It's a good thing,' said Gibberne, 'a tremendous thing. I know I'm giving the world something, and I think it only reasonable we should expect the world to pay. The dignity of science is all very well, but I think somehow I must have the monopoly of the stuff for, say,

ten years. I don't see why *all* the fun in life should go to the dealers in ham.'

My own interest in the coming drug certainly did not wane in the time. I have always had a queer twist towards metaphysics in my mind. I have always been given to paradoxes about space and time, and it seemed to me that Gibberne was really preparing no less than the absolute acceleration of life. Suppose a man repeatedly dosed with such a preparation: he would live an active and record life indeed, but he would be an adult at eleven, middle-aged at twenty-five, and by thirty well on the road to senile decay. It seemed to me that so far Gibberne was only going to do for anyone who took his drug exactly what Nature has done for the Jews and Orientals, who are men in their teens and aged by fifty, and quicker in thought and act than we are all the time. The marvel of drugs has always been great to my mind; you can madden a man, calm a man, make him incredibly strong and alert or a helpless log, quicken this passion and allay that, all by means of drugs, and here was a new miracle to be added to this strange armory of phials the doctors use! But Gibbern was far too eager upon his technical points to enter very keenly into my aspect of the question.

It was the 7th or 8th of August when he told me the distillation that would decide his failure or success for a time was going forward as we talked, and it was on the 10th that he told me the thing was done and the New Accelerator a tangible reality in the world. I met him as I was going up the Sandgate Hill towards Folkestone—I think I was going to get my hair cut; and he came hurrying down to meet me—I suppose he was coming to my house to tell me at once of his success. I remember that his eyes were unusually bright and his face flushed, and I noted even then the swift alacrity of his step.

'It's done,' he cried, and gripped my hand, speaking

very fast; 'it's more than done. Come up to my house and see.'

'Really?'

'Really!' he shouted. 'Incredibly! Come up and see.'

'And it does—twice?'

'It does more, much more. It scares me. Come up and see the stuff. Taste it! Try it! It's the most amazing stuff on earth.' He gripped my arm and, walking at such a pace that he forced me into a trot, went shouting with me up the hill. A whole charabancful of people turned and stared at us in unison after the manner of people in charabancs. It was one of those hot, clear days, that Folkestone sees so much of, every color incredibly bright and every outline hard. There was a breeze, of course, but not so much breeze as sufficed under these conditions to keep me cool and dry. I panted for mercy.

'I'm not walking fast, am I?' cried Gibberne, and slacked his pace to a quick march.

'You've been taking some of this stuff,' I puffed.

'No,' he said. 'At the utmost a drop of water that stood in a beaker from which I had washed out the last traces of the stuff. I took some last night, you know. But that is ancient history, now.'

'And it goes twice?' I said, nearing his doorway in a grateful perspiration.

'It goes a thousand times, many thousand times!' cried Gibberne, with a dramatic gesture, flinging open his Early English carved oak gate.

'Phew!' said I, and followed him to the door.

'I don't know how many times it goes,' he said, with his latchkey in his hand.

'And you—'

'It throws all sorts of light on nervous physiology, it kicks the theory of vision into a perfectly new shape! . . .

Heaven knows how many thousand times. We'll try all that after— The thing is to try the stuff now.'

'Try the stuff?' I said, as we went along the passage.

'Rather,' said Gibberne, turning on me in his study. 'There it is in that little green phial there! Unless you happen to be afraid?'

I am a careful man by nature, and only theoretically adventurous. I *was* afraid. But on the other hand there is pride.

'Well,' I haggled. 'You say you've tried it?'

'I've tried it,' he said, 'and I don't look hurt by it, do I? I don't even look livery and I *feel*—'

I sat down. 'Give me the potion,' I said. 'If the worst comes to the worst it will save having my hair cut, and that I think is one of the most hateful duties of a civilized man. How do you take the mixture?'

'With water,' said Gibberne, whacking down a carafe.

He stood up in front of his desk and regarded me in his easy chair; his manner was suddenly affected by a touch of the Harley Street specialist. 'It's rum stuff, you know,' he said.

I made a gesture with my hand.

'I must warn you in the first place as soon as you've got it down to shut your eyes, and open them very cautiously in a minute or so's time. One still sees. The sense of vision is a question of length of vibration, and not of multitude of impacts; but there's a kind of shock to the retina, a nasty giddy confusion just at the time if the eyes are open. Keep 'em shut.'

'Shut,' I said. 'Good!'

'And the next thing is, keep still. Don't begin to whack about. You may fetch something a nasty rap if you do. Remember you will be going several thousand times faster than you ever did before, heart, lungs, muscles, brain—everything—and you will hit hard without knowing it.

You won't know it, you know. You'll feel just as you do now. Only everything in the world will seem to be going ever so many thousand times slower than it ever went before. That's what makes it so deuced queer.'

'Lor',' I said. 'And you mean—'

'You'll see,' said he, and took up a measure. He glanced at the material on his desk. 'Glasses,' he said, 'water. All here. Mustn't take too much for the first attempt.'

The little phial glucked out its precious contents. 'Don't forget what I told you,' he said, turning the contents of the measure into a glass in the manner of an Italian waiter measuring whiskey. 'Sit with the eyes tightly shut and in absolute stillness for two minutes,' he said. 'Then you will hear me speak.'

He added an inch or so of water to the dose in each glass.

'By the bye,' he said, 'don't put your glass down. Keep it in your hand and rest your hand on your knee. Yes—so. And now—'

He raised his glass.

'The New Accelerator,' I said.

'The New Accelerator,' he answered, and we touched glasses and drank, and instantly I closed my eyes.

You know that blank non-existence into which one drops when one has taken 'gas.' For an indefinite interval it was like that. Then I heard Gibberne telling me to wake up, and I stirred and opened my eyes. There he stood as he had been standing, glass still in hand. It was empty, that was all the difference.

'Well?' said I.

'Nothing out of the way?'

'Nothing. A slight feeling of exhilaration, perhaps. Nothing more.'

'Sounds?'

'Things are still,' I said. 'By Jove! yes! They *are* still. Except the sort of faint pat, patter, like rain falling on different things. What is it?'

'Analysed sounds,' I think he said, but I am not sure. He glanced at the window. 'Have you ever seen a curtain before a window fixed in that way before?'

I followed his eyes, and there was the end of the curtain, frozen, as it were, corner high, in the act of flapping briskly in the breeze.

'No,' said I; 'that's odd.'

'And here,' he said, and opened the hand that held the glass. Naturally I winced, expecting the glass to smash. But so far from smashing it did not even seem to stir; it hung in mid-air—motionless. 'Roughly speaking,' said Gibberne, 'an object in these latitudes falls 16 feet in the first second. This glass is falling 16 feet in a second now. Only, you see, it hasn't been falling yet for the hundredth part of a second. That gives you some idea of the pace of my Accelerator.' And he waved his hand round and round, over and under the slowly sinking glass. Finally he took it by the bottom, pulled it down and placed it very carefully on the table. 'Eh?' he said to me, and laughed.

'That seems all right,' I said, and began very gingerly to raise myself from my chair. I felt perfectly well, very light and comfortable, and quite confident in my mind. I was going fast all over. My heart, for example, was beating a thousand times a second, but that caused me no discomfort at all. I looked out of the window. An immovable cyclist, head down and with a frozen puff of dust behind his driving-wheel, scorched to overtake a galloping charabanc that did not stir. I gaped in amazement at this incredible spectacle. 'Gibberne,' I cried, 'how long will this confounded stuff last?'

'Heaven knows!' he answered. 'Last time I took it I went to bed and slept it off. I tell you, I was frightened. It

must have lasted some minutes, I think—it seemed like hours. But after a bit it slows down rather suddenly, I believe.'

I was proud to observe that I did not feel frightened—I suppose because there were two of us. 'Why shouldn't we go out?' I asked.

'Why not?'

'They'll see us.'

'Not they. Goodness, no! Why, we shall be going a thousand times faster than the quickest conjuring trick that was ever done. Come along! Which way shall we go? Window, or door?'

And out by the window we went.

Assuredly of all the strange experiences that I have ever had, or imagined, or read of other people having or imagining, that little raid I made with Gibberne on the Folkestone Leas, under the influence of the New Accelerator, was the strangest and maddest of all. We went out by his gate into the road, and there we made a minute examination of the statuesque passing traffic. The tops of the wheels and some of the legs of the horses of this charabanc, the end of the whip-lash and the lower jaw of the conductor—who was just beginning to yawn—were perceptibly in motion, but all the rest of the lumbering conveyance seemed still. And quite noiseless except for a faint rattling that came from one man's throat! And as parts of this frozen edifice there were a driver, you know, and a conductor, and eleven people! The effect as we walked about the thing began by being madly queer and ended by being—disagreeable. There they were, people like ourselves and yet not like ourselves, frozen in careless attitudes, caught in mid-gesture. A girl and a man smiled at one another, a leering smile that threatened to last for evermore; a woman in a floppy capelline rested her arm on the rail and stared at Gibberne's house with the un-

winking stare of eternity; a man stroked his moustache like a figure of wax, and another stretched a tiresome stiff hand with extended fingers towards his loosened hat. We stared at them, we laughed at them, we made faces at them, and then a sort of disgust of them came upon us, and we turned away and walked round in front of the cyclist towards the Leas.

'Goodness!' cried Gibberne suddenly; 'look there!'

He pointed, and there at the tip of his finger and sliding down the air with wings flapping slowly and at the speed of an exceptionally languid snail—was a bee.

And so we came out upon the Leas. There the thing seemed madder than ever. The band was playing in the upper stand, though all the sound it made for us was a low-pitched, wheezy rattle, a sort of prolonged last sigh that passed at times into a sound like the slow, muffled ticking of some monstrous clock. Frozen people stood erect; strange, silent, self-conscious-looking dummies hung unstably in mid-stride, promenading upon the grass. I passed close to a poodle dog suspended in the act of leaping, and watched the slow movement of his legs as he sank to earth. 'Lord, look *here*!' cried Gibberne, and we halted for a moment before a magnificent person in white faint-striped flannels, white shoes, and a Panama hat, who turned back to wink at two gaily dressed ladies he had passed. A wink, studied with such leisurely deliberation as we could afford, is an unattractive thing. It loses any quality of alert gaiety, and one remarks that the winking eye does not completely close, that under its drooping lid appears the lower edge of an eyeball and a line of white. 'Heaven give me memory,' said I, 'and I will never wink again.'

'Or smile,' said Gibberne, with his eye on the lady's answering teeth.

'It's infernally hot, somehow,' said I. 'Let's go slower.'

'Oh, come along!' said Gibberne.

We picked our way among the bath-chairs in the path. Many of the people sitting in the chairs seemed almost natural in their passive poses, but the contorted scarlet of the bandsmen was not a restful thing to see. A purple-faced gentleman was frozen in the midst of a violent struggle to refold his newspaper against the wind; there were many evidences that all these people in their sluggish way were exposed to a considerable breeze, a breeze that had no existence so far as our sensations went. We came out and walked a little way from the crowd, and turned and regarded it. To see all that multitude changed to a picture, smitten rigid, as it were, into the semblance of realistic wax, was impossibly wonderful. It was absurd, of course; but it filled me with an irrational, an exultant sense of superior advantage. Consider the wonder of it! All that I had said and thought and done since the stuff had begun to work in my veins had happened, so far as those people, so far as the world in general went, in the twinkling of an eye. 'The New Accelerator—' I began, but Gibberne interrupted me.

'There's that infernal old woman!' he said.

'What old woman?'

'Lives next door to me,' said Gibberne. 'Has a lapdog that yaps. Gods! The temptation is strong!'

There is something very boyish and impulsive about Gibberne at times. Before I could expostulate with him he had dashed forward, snatched the unfortunate animal out of visible existence, and was running violently with it towards the cliff of the Leas. It was most extraordinary. The little brute, you know, didn't bark or wriggle or make the slightest sign of vitality. It kept quite stiffly in an attitude of somnolent repose, and Gibberne held it by the neck. It was like running about with a dog of wood. 'Gibberne,' I cried, 'put it down!' Then I said something else.

'If you run like that, Gibberne,' I cried, 'you'll set your clothes on fire. Your linen trousers are going brown as it is!'

He clapped his hand on his thigh and stood hesitating on the verge. 'Gibberne,' I cried, coming up, 'put it down. This heat is too much! It's our running so! Two or three miles a second! Friction of the air!'

'What?' he said, glancing at the dog.

'Friction of the air,' I shouted. 'Friction of the air. Going too fast. Like meteorites and things. Too hot. And, Gibberne! Gibberne! I'm all over pricking and a sort of perspiration. You can see people stirring slightly. I believe the stuff's working off! Put that dog down.'

'Eh?' he said.

'It's working off,' I repeated. 'We're too hot and the stuff's working off! I'm wet through.'

He stared at me. Then at the band, the wheezy rattle of whose performance was certainly going faster. Then with a tremendous sweep of the arm he hurled the dog away from him and it went spinning upward, still inanimate and hung at last over the grouped parasols of a knot of chattering people. Gibberne was gripping my elbow. 'By Jove!' he cried. 'I believe it is! A sort of hot pricking and—yes. That man's moving a pocket-handkerchief! Perceptibly. We must get out of this sharp.'

But we could not get out of it sharply enough. Luckily perhaps! For we might have run, and if we had run we should, I believe, have burst into flames. Almost certainly we should have burst into flames! You know we had neither of us thought of that.... But before we could even begin to run the action of the drug had ceased. It was the business of a minute fraction of a second. The effect of the New Accelerator passed like the drawing of a curtain, vanished in the movement of a hand. I heard Gibberne's voice in infinite alarm. 'Sit down,' he said, and flop, down

upon the turf at the edge of the Leas I sat—scorching as I sat. There is a patch of burnt grass there still where I sat down. The whole stagnation seemed to wake up as I did so, the disarticulated vibration of the band rushed together into a blast of music, the promenaders put their feet down and walked their ways, the papers and flags began flapping, smiles passed into words, the winker finished his wink and went on his way complacently, and all the seated people moved and spoke.

The whole world had come alive again, was going as fast as we were, or rather we were going no faster than the rest of the world. It was like slowing down as one comes into a railway station. Everything seemed to spin round for a second or two. I had the most transient feeling of nausea, and that was all. And the little dog which had seemed to hang for a moment when the force of Gibberne's arm was expended fell with a swift acceleration clean through a lady's parasol!

That was the saving of us. Unless it was for one corpulent old gentleman in a bath-chair, who certainly did start at the sight of us and afterwards regarded us at intervals with a darkly suspicious eye, and finally, I believe, said something to his nurse about us, I doubt if a solitary person remarked our sudden appearance among them. Plop! We must have appeared abruptly. We ceased to smoulder almost at once, though the turf beneath me was uncomfortably hot. The attention of every one—including even the Amusements' Association band, which on this occasion, for the only time in its history, got out of tune—was arrested by the amazing fact, and the still more amazing yapping and uproar caused by the fact, that a respectable, over-fed lapdog sleeping quietly to the east of the bandstand should suddenly fall through the parasol of a lady on the west—in a slightly singed condition due to the extreme velocity of its movements through the air. In these

absurd days, too, when we are all trying to be as psychic and silly and superstitious as possible! People got up and trod on other people, chairs were overturned, the Leas policeman ran. How the matter settled itself I do not know—we were much too anxious to disentangle ourselves from the affair and get out of range of the eye of the old gentleman in the bath-chair to make minute inquiries. As soon as we were sufficiently cool and sufficiently recovered from our giddiness and nausea and confusion of mind to do so we stood up and, skirting the crowd, directed our steps back along the road below the Metropole towards Gibberne's house. But amidst the din I heard very distinctly the gentleman who had been sitting beside the lady of the ruptured sunshade using quite unjustifiable threats and language to one of those chair-attendants who have 'Inspector' written on their caps. 'If you didn't throw the dog,' he said, 'who *did*?'

The sudden return of movement and familiar noises, and our natural anxiety about ourselves (our clothes were still dreadfully hot, and the fronts of the thighs of Gibberne's white trousers were scorched a drabbish brown), prevented the minute observations I should have liked to make on all these things. Indeed, I really made no observations of any scientific value on that return. The bee, of course, had gone. I looked for that cyclist, but he was already out of sight as we came into the Upper Sandgate Road or hidden from us by traffic; the charabanc, however, with its people now all alive and stirring, was clattering along at a spanking pace almost abreast of the nearer church.

We noted, however, that the window-sill on which we had stepped in getting out of the house was slightly singed, and that the impressions of our feet on the gravel of the path were unusually deep.

So it was I had my first experience of the New Accelerator. Practically we had been running about and saying and doing all sorts of things in the space of a second or so of time. We had lived half an hour while the band had played, perhaps, two bars. But the effect it had upon us was that the whole world had stopped for our convenient inspection. Considering all things, and particularly considering our rashness in venturing out of the house, the experience might certainly have been much more disagreeable than it was. It showed, no doubt, that Gibberne has still much to learn before his preparation is a manageable convenience, but its practicability it certainly demonstrated beyond all cavil.

Since that adventure he has been steadily bringing its use under control, and I have several times, and without the slightest bad result, taken measured doses under his direction; though I must confess I have not yet ventured abroad again while under its influence. I may mention, for example, that this story has been written at one sitting and without interruption, except for the nibbling of some chocolate, by its means. I began at 6.25, and my watch is now very nearly at the minute past the half-hour. The convenience of securing a long, uninterrupted spell of work in the midst of a day full of engagements cannot be exaggerated. Gibberne is now working at the quantitative handling of his preparation, with especial reference to its distinctive effects upon different types of constitution. He then hopes to find a Retarder with which to dilute its present rather excessive potency. The Retarder will, of course, have the reverse effect to the Accelerator; used alone it should enable the patient to spread a few seconds over many hours of ordinary time, and so to maintain an apathetic inaction, a glacierlike absence of alacrity, amidst the most animated or irritating surroundings. The two things together must necessarily work an entire revolution

in civilized existence. It is the beginning of our escape from that Time Garment of which Carlyle speaks. While this Accelerator will enable us to concentrate ourselves with tremendous impact upon any moment or occasion that demands our utmost sense and vigor, the Retarder will enable us to pass in passive tranquillity through infinite hardship and tedium. Perhaps I am a little optimistic about the Retarder, which has indeed still to be discovered, but about the Accelerator there is no possible sort of doubt whatever. Its appearance upon the market in a convenient, controllable, and assimilable form is a matter of the next few months. It will be obtainable of all chemists and druggists, in small green bottles, at a high but, considering its extraordinary qualities, by no means excessive price. Gibberne's Nervous Accelerator it will be called, and he hopes to be able to supply it in three strengths: one in 200, one in 900, and one in 2000, distinguished by yellow, pink, and white labels respectively.

No doubt its use renders a great number of very extraordinary things possible; for, of course, the most remarkable and, possibly, even criminal proceedings may be effected with impunity by thus dodging, as it were, into the interstices of time. Like all potent preparations it will be liable to abuse. We have, however, discussed this aspect of the question very thoroughly, and we have decided that this is purely a matter of medical jurisprudence and altogether outside our province. We shall manufacture and sell the Accelerator, and as for the consequences—we shall see.

The Big Fix

RICHARD WILSON

I WAS MEETING The Man in a cafeteria on West End Avenue—the rundown part of the avenue south of 72nd Street where all the garages and auto parts places are.

I didn't need a fix. I'd been off the junk for three months and I was all right. I was drinking a lot, but that was all.

The meet in the cafeteria was set up by an old connection of mine who'd heard I was interested in this new stuff. My connection's name was Rollo, sometimes called Rollo the Roller because he rolled lushes in the subway.

Rollo and I had coffee while we waited for The Man.

'He's a funny one,' Rollo said. 'Not like any other pusher I ever dig.'

'You're sure he's straight?' I asked. 'He wouldn't be one of The People, would he?'

'Nah, he's no agent. Don't you think I can make a cop or a Federal by now?'

'All right. I wasn't trying to insult you.'

We sipped our coffee and talked in low voices. The cafeteria wasn't a regular joint. It might be in time, and then it would be one till it got too hot, but it wasn't now.

I didn't see the guy come in. The first thing I knew he was standing at the table over us. Tall, wearing a black suit like an undertaker or a preacher, but with a dark blue shirt and a white tie. He had a young-old face and his

skin was a light tan. Not the tan you get at Miami Beach or from a sun lamp, but as if he had Chinese or Malay-blood in him somewhere.

Rollo jumped a little when he noticed him at his elbow.

'Oh, hello, Jones. Creepin' up on people again. Sit down. This is Barry.'

I acknowledged the introduction. I was sure Jones wasn't his real name any more than Barry was mine. I asked him if I could buy him a cup of coffee and he said *no*, and then Rollo left. Rollo'd mumbled something about business, but I got the feeling he didn't like being around Jones any more than he had to.

'I understand you are interested in my product,' Jones said. He had dark brown eyes, almost black. He didn't talk like a pusher, but you can't always make generalizations.

'I don't want to score any,' I said. 'At least not right now. I'm off the stuff, but I take a sort of philosophical interest in it, you might say.'

'I could not sell you any at the moment, in any case,' Jones said. 'I do not make a practice of carrying it on my person.'

'Of course not. But what is it? Rollo tells me it's not the usual junk. I wondered if maybe it was *yage*.'

Yage was something you kept hearing about but never saw yourself. It was always somebody who knew somebody else who'd tried it. *Yage* was the junkie's dream. You never caught up with it, but you heard hints in conversation.

An addict would give himself a fix of Henry, sliding the needle into the vein, and later, as his tension relaxed, he'd say to his connection, 'I hear *yage* is the real kick—they tell me that compared to *yage*, heroin is the least.' And the connection would say, 'That's what they tell me, but I

never seen any of it myself. They have it in the Amazon or someplace, I hear.'

It's always hearsay. But after a while you hear so much about it that you believe it's got to be around somewhere, so you keep asking. I asked Jones.

'I could show you *yage*,' Jones said, and I felt a tingle, like a kid promised his first kiss. 'But it would disappoint you.'

'Why?'

'It is like *peyote*—just another herb. It has a similar effect to that of the Mescal cactus button, but since you would not seem to be a devotee of the Sun Dance I do not think it would interest you.'

I went into a slump again when I heard him run down *yage*. I knew what *peyote* was. It might be all right for Indians, but it just made the average junkie sick to his stomach.

'What would interest me, then?' I asked him.

'I have a certain amount of a substance called *uru*,' he said. 'It is—and I do not exaggerate when I say this—the most.'

I couldn't help grinning. Jones had been speaking the store-bought English of the educated foreigner and then he came out with this hep expression.

'Tell me more, professor,' I said. 'You're ringing my bell.'

'You tell *me* more, my friend,' he came back. 'What is your great interest in this will-o'-the-wisp *yage* that so excites you, although you claim to be "off the stuff"?'

I could almost hear the quotation marks he put around the phrase.

'Okay,' I said. 'I'll tell you.'

So I went into the crazy old dream—the feeling that there's something better someplace, something you can take or leave alone, that doesn't leave you with that

wrung-out, hopeless horror of junk sickness when you can't get the stuff.

I told him about the other addicts—how they feel this kinship that's not like any other relationship anywhere—how you have that exalted feeling of mingled hope and despair when another junkie is coming with a fix for you—and how by just drifting around in a strange city you find yourself drawn to the right district to score the stuff. How it's almost telepathic.

I told him what they said about *yage*, that some South American croaker had isolated from it a fix he called telepathine. How it was supposed to be some kind of miracle dope that you could take when you wanted it without actually *need*ing it, and it would open up the world for you so you'd be close, really close, to others like you. So your mind would be their mind. A union more terrific than any other kind—as far beyond even the ideal sexual climax, for instance, as sex is beyond a bow or a handshake. So there'd be a togetherness you couldn't achieve any other way. So you wouldn't be so . . . alone.

I felt embarrassed after talking like that, even though Jones listened as sympathetically as anybody could, so I got up to get another cup of coffee at the counter.

'Okay,' I said defensively as I spooned in the sugar. 'I've told you about me. Now what about that stuff of yours—what do you call it again?'

'Uru,' he said. 'It is what *yage* is said to be, but is not. You would like it. But you tell me you are "off the stuff".'

'Off the old stuff. It's no good and I've licked it. Off with the old,' I said, beginning to feel a little high already, 'and on with the new. *Uru,* eh?'

This might be it. The most. The big fix. I had to have it.

'You shall try it,' Jones said. 'You shall judge for your-

self. Then if you want more I will provide it for you. There will be no charge.'

Right away I got suspicious. Nobody gives anything away. I could be a come-on. Jones might figure I'd like it so much I'd have to have more and then I'd pay and pay. But on the other hand maybe he figured wrong. Nothing is habit-forming once. I didn't know anything about this *uru,* but I knew all there was to know about everything else.

'Okay,' I said. 'When?'

'I will call you,' Jones said.

I gave him my number.

He had a place on East 45th, a ratty old brownstone. It didn't look as if he'd lived in it long. But that was to be expected; if you were a pusher you had to keep on the move. After a while a landlady got suspicious about all the queer characters visiting this one guy and the next step was the cops.

Jones had called me the day after our talk in the cafeteria, setting up a meet for that afternoon. I'd had a dream about *uru,* a wild and wonderful dream that made it impossible for me not to go. I'm a hunch-player, anyway. So I went.

But I was cautious enough to leave my money home and not to wear my best clothes. Then if it turned out that Jones was pulling a lush-worker switch, feeding junkies a knockout fix and rolling them, I wouldn't lose much.

He was wearing the same black suit. His closet door was open and I could see that there were no clothes hanging in it. Maybe he hadn't unpacked yet, though I didn't see a suitcase anywhere.

I didn't think much about these things at the time. Jones smiled and shook hands with me. Then he excused himself and went out into the hall. So far so good. No

smart pusher keeps the stuff in his room. Possession carried a stiff rap.

I had my works with me—needle and eyedropper—but Jones told me I wouldn't need it. I was surprised. If his place wasn't a shooting gallery, what was it? A weed joint? Weed was no good—that was fag stuff. Marijuana, bennies, goof balls, nembies—that stuff was nowhere for a cat who'd been mainlining it for a decade. I told that to Jones.

He smiled and told me to relax. He meant it literally.

'Lie down on the bed,' he said. 'Take your coat off. No, don't roll up your sleeve.'

He pulled down a blue shade over the single window and the room got dim. Sunlight squeezed through the cracks at the edges and made shimmering little patterns on the walls and ceiling.

He took a cigarette holder out of his pocket. It was green, like jade, and carved around its fat middle was a design of some kind. I couldn't make it out, even when I held it in my hand.

Jones put a cigarette in the holder. It looked like an ordinary king-size smoke and I told him so.

'That is correct,' he said. 'It is not the cigarette that provides the effect, but the *uru* in the holder. The smoke travels over the *uru* and activates it. Enough of it is absorbed by the warm smoke for the desired result. Do not inhale too deeply the first time.'

I took a short drag, half suspecting he was conning me. Nothing happened right away. It didn't taste any different from any cigarette smoked through a holder. I took another drag, deeper this time.

I was off.

I became a tiny replica of myself, swimming effortlessly within my own eyeball, looking down the length of that other me lying on the bed. My feet looked a mile away. I

moved them and it seemed to take almost a minute for the impulse to communicate itself from my mind along the vast body.

Then I lost interest in my body as the flecks of sunlight on the ceiling became tiny planets, whirling in perfect, intricate orbits around a fiery blue-white sun.

The smoke in the room climbed up in a graceful dance and became a dust-cloud in the sparkling solar system. The dark head of Jones came into view among the tiny worlds, not obscuring them. The little jewel-like planets were a shimmering crown hovering about him.

He spoke then, and his words echoed to me as if through the vastness of infinity itself.

'Barry,' the voice said, powerful but warm, far away but deliciously close, awesome but comfortable. 'Barry, my good friend.'

I could see the great face, both with my real eyes and with the eyes of that tiny other me swimming within. It was a mighty face, but reassuring—the face of a kind father and loving wife and adoring son all in one. The face was smiling a dear familiar smile.

But the lips were not moving. The voice was that of a mind, reaching out through vastness and into my own thoughts.

'You are not alone,' the mind-voice said, and it was what I had been waiting to hear. 'You are one with all good things. The door you have been seeking is open. You have only to walk through.'

I had been swimming, but now I walked. It was like no other kind of walking. It was like ice-skating in a way, a smooth, effortless glide. The tiny me walked, glided, out of my body and up, up in a curl of smoke, across a million miles of blackness towards the shimmering worlds.

'I found the door,' I thought, and knew the words were being communicated to him. 'I thank you and I am walk-

ing through. It is a beautiful world you have. It sparkles so. I love it.'

I could say these things to him with my mind, meaning them, unashamed of the innermost feelings that would have been throttled off unspoken if I'd had to use the vulgarity of speech.

He understood that, too, and his smile became warmer. There was a bond here I'd never experienced, a warm gushing of myself to him and to this world he'd opened for me. The warmth was reciprocated instantly. His face showed it, his mind told me and the glittering worlds seemed to join in his message of esteem and one-ness.

There was more; but later I couldn't remember it all. The beauty of a thing can't be recreated in its absence. Only the memory of it lingers. But the memory of an exalted experience has a beauty of its own.

After a while I came back. Back to my gross self lying on the bed, the jade-green cigarette holder in my fingers, a long ash on the end of the cigarette. So I had been away only a minute or two in our time. It had seemed hours in his.

Gradually the sparkling worlds reverted to patches of sunlight and the dust-cloud to tobacco smoke.

Jones stood near the bed. Gently he took the holder from my fingers and snuffed out the cigarette in the ashtray.

'You are pleased,' he said, speaking with his voice now. 'You have told me that.'

'Yes,' I said. 'Oh, yes.' I wanted to say much more, but the inhibition of speech was on me now.

'I understand. Do not talk. You are still too close to it. The change is too great. But some of it remains with you, does it not?'

I nodded. It did. There was no great letdown. No harsh awakening to the detested world of everyday. It must have

been because I carried over with me enough of the memory to cushion the shock of adjustment. I sat up. I felt fine.

'You have had only a glimpse,' he said. 'You must go now. But perhaps you will come back?'

'Please,' I said.

'Of course. I will call you.'

He helped me on with my coat. I went down the stairs and out into the sunlight.

Jones didn't call for days. I hardly left my room, waiting for the phone to ring. Once I walked over towards 45th Street, but I turned back before I got there. Jones had said he'd call me and I didn't want to get him angry with me.

Rollo came over to my place one night. He had some junk left over from scoring and offered me a fix. I didn't want it.

'Still off the stuff?' he asked.

'Off that stuff,' I said. 'That stuff is nowhere.'

'You sound like you're somewhere else. Did The Man make it for you on the *yage* kick?'

'Yage's over the rainbow,' I told him. *'Uru* is here and now.'

'Uru. Is that what Jones serves? Never heard of it. Mind if I shoot a little old-fashioned horse here? I got trouble finding a vein lately. Maybe you'll help me.'

He rolled up his sleeve and took out his equipment. He tied a handkerchief around his arm to make the veins stand out and I helped him locate one. I cooked up the stuff and shot it home for him. He cleaned out the needle under the faucet and we sat down and had cigarettes.

'So tell me about this *uru,'* Rollo said.

'It's truly the most, man,' I said.

But I couldn't go on. Rollo was a lush-worker, a cheap

hood. 'I'd feel self-conscious trying to describe how it was. Telling him would be like dirtying it up. So I generalized.

'It's a real bang,' I said. 'A speedball with a jet assist. It's gone, brother. It takes you there, but *there.*'

'You sound like a teahead,' he said. 'Is that what it is, tea?'

So I told him that was about right and he went away feeling superior. He used the white stuff and I was only a viper. So he thought. Let him think what he wanted. I'd been with it; I knew, and that was enough. It was like being one of the elite.

The phone rang and sweat came out in my palms as I picked it up.

It was Jones, asking if I wanted to travel with him again.

Travel. That was a new one. But it certainly described it. I told him yes, trying not to let him know how eager I was. But I had the feeling he understood, even over the phone. And it didn't matter. I didn't have anything to hide from him. He was my friend.

I went over to his place prepared to travel.

It was the same thing again to start with. The cigarette in the jade-green holder and lying down on the bed and relaxing.

But this time I seemed to reach the glittering worlds a lot sooner. Then one of the worlds spun closer. It looked bigger and its surface separated into oceans and continents. Unfamiliar ones.

There was a rushing, roaring sensation as I turned over and over, and then I was walking along a lane in a peaceful countryside, with Jones beside me.

'Do you like it?' he asked, without speaking the words. My mind answered, 'It's beautiful. This isn't our world.'

'This is Uru,' he said, 'It is my world.'

Then I noticed that he wasn't dressed the same. Instead of the black suit and the blue shirt and white tie, he was wearing knee-length shorts, blue, topped by a wide belt of metallic-looking leather. He wore a thin circlet of the same material around his head. It held in the center of his forehead a heraldic device, as if it were a mark of rank. Except for sandals he wore nothing else. His body was a light tan.

I noticed then that I was dressed similarly, except that there was no circlet around my head.

We went by a field under cultivation. A few people were among the rows, working easily, chatting and laughing. They waved as we passed. There was a mental exchange of greetings between them and Jones which I also heard.

We walked effortlessly, even uphill. The gravity seemed less than on Earth. The air was clean and invigorating. It was warm but not humid.

A blue-white sun was in the sky. I could look at it without hurting my eyes. It was larger, apparently closer, then Earth's sun, and I thought I could make out markings on it. Were they the same as those on the oval Jones wore on his forehead? I could not be sure.

We were coming to a city, or a big town.

'Urula,' Jones told me. 'Our capital.'

He had been out of communication with me since we passed the people in the field, though I felt that my thoughts were being transmitted to him. It was as if he knew all my thoughts but permitted me to know his only when he wished. Or it might have been that I was so engrossed in my new experience that he had let me enjoy it without interfering, by keeping his thoughts neutral.

'Where is Uru?' I asked then.

He showed me a mind-picture so vast I could not fully comprehend it. He showed me the sky of Earth, with the

moon low on the horizon. Then up beyond the moon, so that the Earth was in eclipse behind it. Then farther still, and the mighty sun faded into insignificance among other stars.

I was whirled around in the opposite direction and rushed through space as the stars ran together and melted into a shivering puddle of luminescence which instantly flew apart into stars again, leaving one of them closer than the others. It grew in size, became blue-white, and five planets came into view, circling it in precision, equal distances away.

One of the planets began to swell and again I saw the continents and oceans of Uru and was whisked to its surface, and again I was walking along the lane towards the city.

'It is far, you see,' Jones told me.

I nodded, dazed.

The city, Urula, was impeccably clean. It had a feeling of openness about it; it didn't close in and tower over you like Earth cities.

The streets were wide and landscaped with shrubs and trees. The walks were of turf and the lush trimmed grass provided a pleasant cushion for the feet. The buildings were low and rambling, set well back from the walks. There was no lack of room to force them up into the air beyond a storey or two.

People passed us occasionally, never in crowds, radiating cordially as they nodded to Jones and me. Other people lounged idly on benches or on the lawns in front of the buildings. I couldn't tell whether they were homes or business offices, or a combination of both.

I looked in vain for factories, for ugly smokestacks thrusting into the clean sky. Nor were there any automobiles, railroads or machines of any kind to foul the air with their exhausts or rend it with their din.

I asked a mental question and Jones said they had none of these things simply because they weren't needed. If one wanted to go somewhere he walked. There was no exertion and there was never any hurry. As for travelling to another city, there was no need to; one city was exactly like another. Each was self-sufficient and there was no trade among them. If one wished to see a friend in another city, why, the journey was a pleasant one, and since it was a pleasure trip it didn't matter whether the journey took a day or thirty days.

Because there were no factories or railroad yards there were no slums where people lived a marginal existence between the animal and human levels.

We turned off the main street and up a wide path to a building set back under tall shade trees.

'My home,' Jones said.

We sat on the broad porch and a servant appeared, carrying delicate bowls on a tray. The bowls, cool to the touch, held a dark liquid that was better than any good thing I had ever drunk, without being in any way recognizable.

I sent a thought of thanks to the servant, an old white-haired man with a lighter skin than Jones', but he did not reciprocate it. For an instant, when the old man was facing me with his back to Jones, I caught a curious expression in his eyes, a combination of warning and beseeching. There was also the beginning of a message, I felt, but instantly it was swept away and Jones' thoughts came.

'You are wondering why we went so far in our star journey—from Uru to Earth.'

I had wondered about that earlier, when Jones showed me the mind-picture of the vast rushing through space.

'Yes,' I said, and the old servant, his face impassive again, trudged back into the house.

Jones showed me another picture of travels from Uru to the other four worlds of Uru's blue-white sun. I could not make out the type of craft, if a craft was used. The older worlds seemed the same, but death was on them. Man could never live there, Jones showed me, because of poisonous atmosphere, or unstable boiling land, or forbidding ice-locked vastness, or impenetrable fog. Only Uru, of the five, had evolved in a way harmonious to man.

Then I travelled with him farther from Uru's sun to other suns and explored their planets. But they held only desolation and potential death for a colonizer. Again the stars ran together in that glittering display of luminescence that I was allowed to understand now was the effect of crashing through the barrier of hyperspace. Only then did Earth's sun come into view. And then her planets. And then Earth herself.

I felt a foreboding now and tried to communicate it to my companion, but Earth came inevitably closer.

A moment later I was again in Jones' dingy room, lying on his bed with the jade-green cigarette holder in my fingers.

I felt cheated and frustrated.

I tried to take another puff, to return to Uru, but Jones took away the holder.

'I am sorry,' he said, 'but only so much time is permitted for our visits—unless you decide to join us permanently.'

This was new. I hadn't even considered the possibility. I suppose I'd been thinking of these *uru* smokes as nothing more than pipe dreams—exciting and logical, even consecutive, but still only fragments of the poppy ember.

But apparently *uru* was merely the key that opened the door to the real world for which it was named, a finite and beautiful planet spinning in a vastly distant galaxy at the other side of the spacial barrier. A world that Earth-

men would never reach in this lifetime without the invitation and assistance of a native of that world who had developed mental powers beyond our comprehension.

And Jones, not only a native but apparently a noble of Uru, was extending that invitation to me.

Me, a dope addict, temporarily between kicks. Me, a dreg of humanity.

Why?

Jones was following my thoughts, I knew, but he only smiled and said I would have to leave. He would call me again. In the meantime I must consider his invitation. He had not made it frivolously, but had weighed all factors. If I accepted, it would have to be unquestioningly, trusting him as my brother.

And it would be permanent. Once I chose Uru, there would be no returning to Earth.

'Until we meet again,' he said.

I walked out into the street, pondering my choice.

My place depressed me.

I poured myself half a tumbler of whiskey and walked around, holding the drink in my hand. I opened the medicine cabinet in the bathroom and looked at my works—the hypo, the eye-dropper and the old spoon, blackened on the bottom, in which I'd cooked so many batches of heroin. Sooner or later I'd go back to it, I knew, even though I kidded myself into thinking I might be off the stuff for good.

Then the old round would begin again. The frantic search for a pusher when my supply ran low. Setting up a meet in some cafeteria or lunch counter to get the stuff. Rushing back to my place, with every stranger looking like a copper ready to tap me. The search in my poor scarred arm for a vein that hadn't withdrawn out of sight.

Maybe even the necessity for a messy skin injection. The fleeting relief.

And then the anxiety of no money. A dirty job, possibly washing dishes in some greasy kitchen if the heat was on. Or risking a stint of lush-working in the subway, haunted by copper jitters and five-twenty-nine—five months and twenty-nine days in the workhouse—if they nabbed me 'jostling' a drink.

I couldn't go back to that life. I couldn't—but I would. I always had. You reach a point where you can't change any more. It's too late—you're too old—you don't know anything else—you've got no connections outside the squalid circle of users, pushers, teaheads, queers and petty crooks who are nowhere and never will be anywhere.

It was a limbo, a hell on Earth.

I swallowed my drink in burning gulps.

But Uru was paradise. And through Jones—The Man—the archangel?—I could achieve it. All I had to do was make up my mind.

But why had he chosen me to make the trip with him, past the place where the stars melted together in the speed of our journey through mental space, to the planet that was named for a drug or gave its name to a drug?

Since *uru* was a drug maybe it was only natural that Jones' first contact would be with users of narcotics. The natives an explorer first meets in a new land are not necessarily people of the highest class. He meets the adventurers, the ones with spirit enough to canoe out to meet his ship.

So with Jones, perhaps. He would meet the other eventually—the normal, respectable person to whom we users were a despised, hunted minority. And when he had met the moral people, and through them Earth's leaders, it was possible he would have no further use for me and my kind. It was more than possible; it stood to reason.

If that was the case I had better grab my chance while I could—while Jones still thought of me as his brother.

He had already bypassed one level of our outcast society—the stratum typified by Rollo, habitual user and cheap crook—to reach me. I didn't have to flatter myself to know I was better than Rollo and his kind. I'd had some education, I avoided crime except when necessary, and I had the will power to quit the stuff at least occasionally.

Was this mere rationalization? I didn't think so. But whatever it was I would do well to accept Jones' offer without further demur and give up Earth for life on Uru. I could start out fresh there, make a clean break with my sordid past, and live the life of serenity and good will he had shown me.

I made my decision.

The telephone rang and I knew before I picked it up that it was Jones calling.

'I know your choice, my brother,' he said, 'and I am pleased. We will travel immediately.'

A great joy surged through me. Here was the Messiah to deliver me from the slavery of my Earthbound existence to the paradise of Uru.

'I'm on my way!' I cried. I shut the door of my squalid room without a backward glance or a moment of regret.

Life was even more beautiful in Urula than I had dared hope. I had my own home and a man-servant. I ate the finest foods, drank choice liquors.

I learned the written language and read the great literature of Uru.

I met the charming, intelligent, nubile women of the society that had adopted me.

I also practiced the Sport of Uru, in which Jones was my teacher. I called him Joro now; that was his real name, and my name had become Boru.

As Boru I was something of a celebrity in my adopted world. When I went to the great gamesward, for the Sport, they cheered and often crowded to press gifts on me.

Oh, I was well regarded. I had been assimilated. I, Boru. Boru the Fighting Man.

Twice I had engaged in hand-to-hand combat, as Joro's Fighting Man, in the Annual Sport—the wars between the cities. Twice I had fought, and now one contest remained.

I had a long ugly scar on the inside of my right arm. My left foot was prosthetic from the calf down. My right eye was gone; I wore a false one next to the cheekbone that had been restored by a series of grafts. Flesh healed quickly and bone knitted fast in Uru. The Uru doctors could heal anyone who lived.

But they could not heal the dead and there was no quarter in the Sport. I expected none for myself as I had given none to the other two men I had killed. Two down and one to go. If I won the third I'd be a noble like Joro, my patron, my fighting days over. If I didn't I'd be dead.

Joro had started me out in the back rank, where the danger was least. But I moved up fast, and fought.

Again I was in the back rank, because of my old wounds—but I knew I'd move up this time, too, though there were two good men ahead of me. They were Joro's men, each of us equipped for the Sport.

The equipment:

Steel-claw appendages on our hands.

Feet shod in hooves, sharpened to razor-edge.

Teeth fitted with fangs.

A diagram explained the pattern of battle better—U for Urula, T for Tara. Us against Them, even as in Madison Square Garden or the San Francisco Cow Palace:

T T T T T
T T T T T

T T T T T
U U U U U
U U U U U
U U U U U

Joro's men were in the file at the extreme right. I, Boru, was in the southeast corner, standing in the crowded arena naked except for armour at my loins and the fearful appendages of hand, foot and mouth.

At last the ceremonial speeches and blessings were over. Joro took his place to our rear, on a high seat, our coach and our mentor. There was a clang of great cymbals and the battle was joined.

I watched tensely as the first man in my line advanced to meet his opponent in the Circle of Death. To their left, in the other four circles, similar battles were taking place, but I had eyes only for the struggle in my own file.

Rans, our lead-off man, was down! Before he could recover, his opponent had slashed his neck with a razored hoof and Rans was dead.

Rans was dragged off and our file was moved up, as the other battles continued. Now the man ahead of me, Karn, was in the Circle of Death with Rans' killer. Karn of Karna, whose planet was as far from Uru as my own and who, fleeing Karna's law when Joro found him, had been as glad to come as I had been. And poor dead Rans, from still a third world among the galaxies that Joro had explored to recruit his Fighting Men.

Karn, toe to toe with his tiring opponent, feinted and enticed his man to lunge. Karn sidestepped and his steel claws raked the other from neck to waist. A pivot then, a well-placed kick and Karn alone still lived in the Circle of Death.

The blood had sickened me a little. I turned to Joro, sitting high behind me, his glance darting from one circle

to another. Joro's face reflected his swiftly-changing emotions. He was fighting five battles at once, vicariously, directing his men by concentration of will. His thoughts flicked to mine for an instant.

Courage, Boru! The game goes well!

And so it did. There was a roar from the crowd as Karn won again. Now only one of the enemy remained in our file. When he was disposed of our job would be done for another year—and mine for ever.

But Karn was weary and his opponent fresh. Clumsily Karn tried a slash at the other's eyes. The other dodged and struck, his fanged teeth closing on Karn's wrist. A wrench and Karn stood dazed, his arm hanging loose while blood gushed over his steel claws. Then a quick horrible thrust and Karn was down, dying slowly.

Another great roar came from the crowd and I saw that the battles in the other files had ended. Joro's men had won two and lost two. It was in my file that the Sport would be decided. It was no longer us against them. It was the most primitive of all contests—him or me.

I had a moment to look out across the gamesward as they removed poor lifeless Karn. Festive pennants flew. The blue-white sun, serene in a cloudless sky. The field was green and soothing, except in the bloodstained Circles of Death.

In two of the circles stood Joro's men, proud in victory. In two others stood victorious men of Tara. In the fifth stood the man who had killed Karn—the man I must kill if I was to live.

The crowd was in a frenzy, the blood lust on them now. I understood for the first time the purpose of the Sport. It was a purge of emotion.

Once a year the thousands gathered in the cities and satisfied their primitive instincts. They were more than

spectators: they were vicarious participants in each battle. Their telepathy identified them completely with the Fighting Men of their city.

Their empathy was such that they felt every blow, exulted in animal passion when their fighter retaliated and drew blood. In the course of an afternoon all their base instincts were satisfied. They knew violence, pain, triumph, death.

It was an orgy of absolution that ended with a maximum of fifteen deaths a year, instead of the thousands or hundreds of thousands that would occur on the battlefields if they themselves fought.

It was a solution to war, this Annual Sport. Only then did I realize it fully. Besides purging the emotions, it was a way of settling disputes that were matters of honor transcending the courts. Once a year the disputes were settled on the gamesward, the miniature battleground, a concentration of blood and death that permitted them to avoid the greater vulgarity of war.

And I was part of their mass catharsis, one of the hired instruments of their annual exorcism. For an instant I saw the tiers of humanity as a great analyst's couch, and the gamesward as the unlocked unconscious where ugly passion was set free.

This fancy passed and I found myself staring at a woman in a box at the edge of the field near me. Her face was contorted and almost unrecognizable as that of a charming hostess whose guest I twice had been—and whose guest I would be tonight at a fashionable, dignified reception if I lived. Fiendish delight now twisted her usually serene features and I had a quick flash of her thoughts projected into mine, urging me to kill the enemy, *kill, kill,* and in doing so to rend his body most abominably.

But then the great cymbals clashed and her face re-

ceded to a blur in the crowd. It was time for me to kill or be killed.

I strode forward confidently, giving no sign that one of my legs was false. I held my head high and tilted slightly to the right so that my good left eye could do part of the work of its missing fellow.

At the edge of the Circle of Death I stopped and bowed stiffly to my opponent from Tara. I studied him as he returned my bow. I had never seen him fight and didn't know if any of his limbs were false, like mine.

But then I knew. The left forearm of the man of Tara was prosthetic and it would be useless to try to draw blood from it. I knew because Joro was in my mind now, directing my thoughts, just as the noble from Tara was in the mind of my opponent, directing his. Now Joro would live every blow, feel the pain of wounds, smell the blood and sweat and experience the exhilaration of battle, even as I. But if I lost I would die, not Joro. He would withdraw and live to fight another time, in another hired body.

Yet while he guided and directed me he would have the same urgency to live, the same fear of death.

I stepped into the circle now and there was an animal roar from the crowd. Tara's man did a vicious little dance step and kicked. As I leaped aside his left hand slashed at my face. I dodged the blow and blocked the right that followed it. There was a tinkle of steel on steel as our fingers met.

We circled then, each of us seeking a weakness in the other. I had a glimpse of Joro, tense in concentration at the edge of his high seat. It was odd to see him at a distance and at the same time to know he was inside me, fighting my fight.

I felt the power of his mind and doubled over to avoid a slash that had been aimed at my eye. Then, with my opponent off balance, Joro directed a blow at his shoulder. I

felt my claws dig into the man's flesh and he went down on one knee. Quickly I kicked and saw my steel hoof slice his ear so that it dangled by a thread of flesh. Before I could follow thorugh for the kill Tara's man was up with a thrust that sought to disembowel me. I stepped back in time.

But I was shaken. His sharp claws had brushed my belly. An inch more and I would have been bleeding my life out, red on the green of the gamesward. I felt nauseated. The noise of the crowd was like the surf, rolling in over me, but dirty, filled with garbage.

Barbarians! I thought.

Suddenly I didn't want to win. I didn't want to die, either, but the price for that was to kill this other man with whom I had no quarrel.

He was facing me again, his ear hanging down grotesquely, and throwing a series of orthodox feints with his left to set me up for a right cross. He had a strange expression on his contorted face.

'. . . television,' I heard him grunt.

It was clearly that word—that Earth word. I had to give him a word he'd recognize in turn as non-Uru.

'What channel?' I said. 'What channel was that on?'

He looked at me in surprise.

'Any channel that had one,' he said. 'I was telling myself how I used to scream for blood when I watched fights on television. Crazy. Who the hell are you?'

I swung a slow-motion left that missed by eight inches. He sent out an uppercut that missed by as much.

'New York,' I said. 'I wish I was back.'

'Me too, pal,' he said. 'Chicago was never like this.'

'Rome was, though,' I said, doing fancy footwork and throwing punches at the air. 'And one of us is going to be carried out.'

'I was looking for *yage* on South State Street.' He weaved and shadow-boxed, not touching me.

'And they gave you *uru*. The big fix. We're fixed, all right.'

'It's the least, Dad,' he said. 'Believe me.'

There was a voice inside my skull. 'Boru!' it said. It was Joro's, or Jones's.

'The Man is complaining,' I said to Chicago. 'The Man named Jones, an *uru* pusher. Thinks we're not giving the customers their money's worth.' I crouched and tapped him lightly on the chest.

'Bleed on the bleeding customers,' he said, nudging me gently on the shoulder. 'English expression.'

'Boru!' the voice in my skull said again. '*Barry!* What has happened? Fight, man, for the honor of Urula!'

'He wants me to kill you,' I told Chicago. 'But maybe he can't make me.' I had thought Jones was in complete control.

'Mine, too,' Chicago said. 'Pusher name of Robinson. He's popping his cork but I think I can stand him off.' I got a light punch in the ribs and retaliated with a caress to the jaw.

'Sorry about the ear,' I said.

'Forget it. Where do we go from here? We can't waltz for ever.'

The crowd was catching on. I'd heard boos like that in the Garden and Ebbets Field. They must have known by now that the big fight was a fake and that the boys in the ring were a couple of bums anxious to get to the showers.

The crowd might not have known exactly what was up but Chicago's manager and mine did. I could feel Jones probing around in my mind, trying to reestablish control and rekindle the blood lust.

But apparently he had no power to direct my actions except when I cooperated. He could still read my mind

and communicate with it. He could cajole, threaten and curse, but he couldn't make me kill Chicago.

Jones came down from his high seat and started towards me. I stepped back to the edge of the circle and Chicago did the same. His man was also on the way over. The crowd was having a fit.

Chicago winked at me. 'I guess it's a draw. The customers are going to start tearing up the seats.'

Joro-Jones and his opposite number met near the circle and bowed stiffly to each other. They said nothing, but from the expressions on their faces I gathered that they were having a riproaring telepathic conversation. Finally they bowed again and Jones took my elbow to lead me back to the sidelines.

'So long, Chicago,' I called. 'Good luck.'

'Thanks,' he said. 'Same to you. See you around, maybe.'

One of the officials was trying to make an announcement to the outraged crowd as Jones and I went under the stands to the dressing room.

Sorrow and shame seemed to be Jones's chief emotions as he helped me off with my steel claws and the other lethal paraphernalia.

'I suppose this is worse than if I got killed,' I said.

'Infinitely,' he said. 'Never before has cowardice besmirched the Sport.'

'You know it wasn't cowardice,' I told him. 'Your honor would have been intact if you hadn't run in one of my own people to the slaughter. I'd always done your dirty work before.'

'You knew the rules,' he said sadly. 'The traditions, the hazards, the rewards. You accepted them. But now, by having rejected them, you've put yourself in limbo. You

are no longer Boru the Fighting Man. You can never achieve the nobility that your prowess could have brought you. Now you are Barry the Alien, and there is no place in our world for you.'

'Then I'm fired?' I asked.

'A man in disgrace should be less facetious. There should be a penalty for what you have done, but it was unprecedented. There is only one thing to do. You must be deported.'

'To Earth?' All at once this was what I wanted.

'Yes,' he said. 'To the ugly planet from which you came. It is no more than you deserve. I sorrow that you were not worthy of us.'

I felt like making a speech then, about my land and my people. About the Earth being a thousand Earths—a million—two billion—meaning a different thing to every individual whose home it was. How Jones, with his *uru* drug, roaming the underworld of one city, had naturally seen only the dregs of his society—the users and pushers, the drifters and dreamers, the seekers after the big deal, the short cut, the unearned reward, the big fix. He hadn't seen the Earth I'd known once, the clean and straight world where you earned your way with dignity and integrity . . .

I didn't make the speech. I didn't have to, of course, because he read it all in my mind. I doubt if it meant anything to him.

'Here,' he said.

He handed me a bowl of pungent green liquid. I didn't ask what it was. It was bitter and sickeningly warm but I drank every last drop. Jones watched me sadly. For just a moment, I felt ashamed for having let him down.

Then the whirling rushing took me up and flung me into space and the stars ran together as before.

I suppose Earth is the same as it ever was. Yet it seems to me now to be an infinitely better place than I remembered.

Of course my viewpoint is different. Though I see out of only one eye now, I see much more. It is possible to look beyond the petty circle of addicts that had been my world. I am ashamed that I once was one of those poor deluded creatures, the cravers of the quick kick and the brief relief. They are noplace, going nowhere.

They still talk of *yage,* the unreachable pie in their murky sky. They want to be up there, out and away, anywhere but here. They are fools. Uru taught me that. There is no real escape from here and now. Therefore that is the thing to embrace. The inner propinquity of the here, the time-extended everlastingness of the now.

Crazy, Jack?

No. I've gone scientific. I've gone back along the dreamy trail and found the place where I took the wrong fork. I'd followed that fork a little way but then turned back without giving it a fair shake.

Peyote's what I'm talking about, friend. The thing Jones ran down. Mescalin. That's right, back to the Indians.

Only it's gone respectable since I've been away. They don't call it a fix, big or otherwise. Not the serious group of investigators I work with. It's called the Huxley effect.

It's the study of *is*ness, if you know what I mean; the hereness and nowness that is the all of everywhere within. It's the slowing of time's rush to a standstill so you can spend a century studying the intricate truth-in-beauty of a detail in the wallpaper or the eloquent message of a rose petal.

And if that's good enough for Aldous, Jack, it's good enough for me.

I look and describe, and my one eye becomes a thou-

sand. I talk and they tape-record. They publish and compare the perceptions with those of other subjects in other groups.

Once I saw the blue-white sun of Uru in a delft vase. This excited them because there had been a similar perception by a subject in Chicago. It excited me too. I'm glad he got back all right.

The Secret Songs

FRITZ LEIBER

PROMPTLY AFTER SUPPER, before Gwen had cleared away the dishes, Donnie began the Sleep Ritual. He got a can of beer from the refrigerator, selected a science-fiction magazine and shut off the TV sound.

'The picture too?' he asked. 'Might as well.'

Gwen smiled at him as she shook her head. With the gesture of one who eats peanuts she threw her right hand to her mouth, swallowed, then dropped her hand with the tiny bottle it held back to the pocket of her smock.

Donnie sighed, shrugged his shoulders, settled himself in the easy chair, opened his magazine, and began to read and sip rapidly.

Gwen, who had been ignoring the TV, now began to study the screen. A kindly old rancher and a tall young cowpoke, father and son, were gazing out across broad acres framed by distant mountains. Gwen tuned her ears and after a bit she could faintly hear what they were saying.

THE OLD RANCHER: *Aim to plant hemp and opium poppy, Son, with benzedrine bushes between the rows.*

THE YOUNG COWPOKE: *Yeah, but what legal crop you fixin' to raise, Dad?*

THE OLD RANCHER (smiling like God): *Gonna raise babies, Son.*

Gwen looked away quickly from the screen. It never paid to try to hear too much too soon.

Donnie was studying her with a teasing grin.

'I bet you imagine all sorts of crazy things while you watch it,' he said. 'Those terrible bennies get your mind all roiled up.'

Gwen shrugged. 'You won't allow any noise while you're putting yourself to sleep. I have to have something,' she said reasonably. 'Besides,' she added, 'you're having orgies out in space with those girls in fluorescent bikinis.'

'That shows how little you know about science fiction,' Donnie said. 'They dropped the sex angle years ago. Now it's all philosophy and stuff. See this old guy?'

He held up the magazine, keeping his place with his forefinger. On the cover was a nicely drawn picture of a smiling intelligent-looking young man in a form-fitting futuristic uniform and standing beside him, topping him by a long head, a lean green-scaled monster with a large silver purse slung over his crested shoulder. The monster had a tentacle resting in comradely fashion across the young man's back and curling lightly past his feather epaulet.

'You mean that walking crocodile?' Gwen asked.

Donnie sniffed. 'That walking crocodile,' he said, 'happens to be a very wise old member of a civilization that's advanced far beyond man's.' He lifted his other hand with two fingers pressed together. 'Him and me are like that. He tells me all sorts of things. He even tells me things about you.'

'Science fiction doesn't interest me,' Gwen said lightly, looking back to the TV. There was a commercial on now, first a white-on-black diagram of the human body with explosions of bubbles occurring in sequence at various points, then a policeman. Gwen expertly retuned her ears.

VOICE OF MEDICAL EXPERT: *Benzedrine strikes at hid-*

den sleepiness! Tones muscles! Strengthens the heart! Activates sluggish wake centres . . . One . . . Two . . . Three!

THE BEAUTIFUL PRINCESS (looking depressed): *Yesterday I was overweight, listless, intensely unhappy. Mother called me The Ugly Dumpling. Now* (becoming radiant) *I build beauty with benzedrine!*

THE HANDSOME POLICEMAN (flashing badge with huge 'N' for Narcotic Squad): *You're all under arrest! Grrr . . . aarrar rgghhh!*

Gwen quickly looked away. It was the only thing you could do when you got static or the wrong voice channel. She began to carry the supper dishes to the sink.

Donnie winced violently without putting down his beer can or looking up from his page. 'Don't clank them,' he said. Gwen removed her shoes and began to do the dishes as if she were a diver in the silent world under the surface of the sea, ghosting between table, sink and cupboard.

She was still lost in this rather fascinating operation and even beginning to embroider it with little arabesques when Donnie continued the Sleep Ritual by opening his second can of beer, this time a warm one by choice. Before taking the first sip he swallowed a blue capsule of amytal. At the *kerzing!* of the opener Gwen stopped to watch him. She carefully dried the suds off her right hand, popped on to her tongue another benzedrine tablet from the bottle in her smock pocket, and still watching him, thoughtfully rinsed a glass, ran an inch of water into it and drank it.

If Donnie had his Sleep Ritual, she told herself in not exactly those words, she had her vigil.

Donnie stood shaking his head at her.

'I suppose now you'll be wandering around all night,' he said, 'making all sorts of noise and disturbing me.'

'I don't make any more noise than a snowflake,' Gwen countered. 'Not one-tenth as much as the autos and

streetcars and planes. Almost every night the people next door have their TV on high.'

'Yes, but those noises are outside,' Donnie said. 'It's your noises that bother me—the inside noises.' He looked at Gwen speculatively. 'Why don't you try a sleeping pill just for once?' he said with insidious appeal.

'No,' Gwen answered instantly.

'A three-grain amytal,' Donnie persisted, 'would cancel those bennies and still have enough left over to make you nice and dozy. We'd go to sleep together and I wouldn't worry about noises.'

'You don't want to go to sleep until you know everyone else is asleep,' Gwen said. 'Just like my mother. If I took one of your pills, you'd watch me sleep and you'd gloat.'

'Well, isn't that what you do to me?'

'No, I do other things. By myself.'

Donnie shrugged resignedly and went back to his chair and magazine.

Gwen wiped the itchy suds off her left hand, and leaving the rest of the dishes soaking, sat down opposite the TV. A curly haired disc jockey was looking out thoughtfully across a record he was holding:

THE DISC JOCKEY: *Some might think it strange that with such divergent tastes in drugs Donnie and Gwen Martin should seek happiness together and in their fashion find it . . . but life holds many mysteries, my friends. I could mention Jack Sprat and wife. We'll all hope the Hubbard . . . oops! . . . Martin medicine cupboard is never bare. And now we will hear, by the joint request of Mr. and Mrs. Martin—are you out there, Don and Gwennie?—that popular old favorite* (glancing down at record) *The Insane Asylum Blues!*

The music was real gone.

Donnie leaned back from his magazine and looked up at the ceiling. Gwen wondered if he were watching one of

the glittering stars he'd named and pointed out to her on one of the rare Saturday nights they got outdoors. But after a while he said, 'Benzedrine is an utterly evil drug, worse than coffee. Other drugs soothe and heal, but benzedrine only creates tension and confusion. I'll bet if I ask the Wise Old Crocodile he'll tell me the devil invented it.'

Gwen said, 'If we ever went out nights and did anything, maybe I wouldn't need so much benzedrine. Besides, you have your sleeping pills and things.'

'You don't need less benzedrine when you go out, you need more,' Donnie asserted unalterably. 'And if I ever went out on week nights, I'd get excited and start to drink and you know what would happen. How often do I have to tell you, Woman, that the only reason I take my barbiturates and "things," as you call them, is to keep me calm and get enough sleep. If I didn't get enough sleep, I wouldn't be able to stand my job. If I couldn't stand my job, I'd start to drink. And if I started to drink, I'd be back in the Booby Hatch. And since the only reason you're outside is that I'm outside, holding a job, why you'd be back in the Booby Hatch too and they'd put you on tranquilizers and you wouldn't like it at all. So don't criticize my sleeping medicines, Woman. They're a matter of pure necessity whatever the doctors and psychologists say. Whereas your bennies and dexies—'

'We've been through all this before,' Gwen interrupted without rancor.

Donnie nodded owlishly. 'Sho we haf,' he agreed, his words blurring for the first time.

'Besides,' Gwen said, 'you're behind schedule.'

Donnie squinted at the clock and snapped his fingers. The sound was dull but there was no unsteadiness in his walk as he went to the refrigerator and poured himself two fingers of grapejuice. Then he reached down from the top shelf of the cupboard the bottle of paraldehyde and

poured himself a glistening tablespoonful. Swift, almost as though the intense odor, midway between gasoline and banana oil, leaped to the corners of the half-merged living room and kitchen. Gwen momentarily wrinkled her nose.

Donnie mixed the paraldehyde with the grapejuice and licked the spoon. 'Here's to the druggists and the one understanding doctor in ten,' he said and took a sip.

Gwen nodded solemnly and swallowed another benzedrine tablet.

Donnie transported his cocktail back to the armchair with great care and did not take his eye off the purple drink until he felt himself firmly anchored. He found his place in the science-fiction lead novelette, but the print began to slip sideways and so, as he sipped his stinging drink, he began to imagine the secrets the Wise Old Crock might tell him if he were the young man on the cover.

THE WISE OLD CROCK: *Got a hot trip shaping for tonight, Son. Three new novas flaring in the next galaxy southeast-by-up and dust cloud billowing out of Andromeda like black lace underwear.* (Dips in his purse.) *Drop this silver sphere in your pocket, Son. It's a universal TV pickup on the old crystal ball principle. It lets you tune in on any scene in the universe. Use it wisely, Son, for character building as well as delight. Don't use it to spy on your wife.* (Dips again.) *Now I want to give you this small black cylinder. Keep it always on your person. It's a psychic whistle by which you can summon me at all times. All you have to do is concentrate on me, Son. Concentrate . . .*

There was a courtroom scene on the TV screen. A lawyer with friendly eyes but a serious brow was talking quietly to the jury, resting his hand on the rail of the box.

Gwen had her ears fine-tuned by now and his voice synchronized perfectly with the movement of his lips.

THE FRIENDLY LAWYER: *I have no wish to conceal the circumstance that my client met her husband-to-be while they were both patients in a mental hospital. Believe me, folks, some of life's sweetest romances begin in the nut house. Gwen's affection inspired Don to win his release, obtain employment as a precision machinist, offer my client marriage upon her release, and shower her with love and the yellow health tablets, so necessary to her existence, which you have watched her consume during these weary days in court. Needless to remark, this was before Don Martin began travelling in space, where he came under the influence of* (suddenly scowls) *a certain green crocodile, who shall be referred to hereinafter as Exhibit A. Enter it, clerk.*

Donnie rose up slowly from the armchair. His drink was finished. He was glaring at the TV.

'The Old Crock wouldn't be seen dead looking at junk like that,' he cried thickly. 'He's wired for real life experience.'

Donnie was half of a mind to kick in the picture tube when he looked towards the bedroom doorway and saw the Wise Old Crocodile standing in it, stooping low, his silver purse swinging as it dangled from his crested shoulder. Donnie knew it wasn't a hallucination, only a friendly faint green film on the darkness.

Fixing his huge kindly eyes on Donnie, the Wise Old Crock impatiently uncurled a long tentacle towards the darkness beyond him, as if to say, 'Away! Away!' and then faded into it. Donnie followed him in a slow motion like Gwen's underwater ballet, shedding his shoes and shirt on the way. He was pulling his belt from the trouser loops with the air of drawing a sword as he closed the door behind him.

Gwen gave a sigh of pure joy and for a moment even closed her eyes. This was the loveliest time of the night, the time of the Safe Freedom, the time of the Vigil. She started to roam.

First she thought she'd brush the bread crumbs from the supper table, but she got to studying their pattern and ended by picking them up one by one—she thought of it as a problem in subtraction. The pattern of the crumbs had been like that of the stars Donnie had showed her, she decided afterwards, and she was rather sorry she'd disturbed them. She carried them tenderly to the sink and delicately dusted them on to the cold grey dishwasher, around which a few suds still lifted stubbornly, like old foam on an ocean beach. She saw the water glass and it reminded her to take another benzedrine tablet.

Four bright spoons caught her eye. She lifted them one by one, turning them over slowly to find all the highlights. Then she looked through the calendar on the wall, studying the months ahead and all the numbers of the days.

Every least thing was enormously fascinating! She could lose herself in one object for minutes or let her interest dart about and effortlessly follow it.

And it was easy to think good thoughts. She could think of every person she knew and wish them each well and do all kinds of wonderful things for them in her mind. A kind of girl Jesus, that's what I am, she told herself with a smile.

She drifted back into the living room. On the TV a bright blonde housewife was leading a dull brunette housewife over to a long couch. Gwen gave a small cry of pleasure and sat down on the floor. This show was always good.

THE BRIGHT BLONDE: *What do you feed your husband when he comes home miserable?*

THE DULL BRUNETTE: *Poison.*

THE BRIGHT BLONDE: *What do you feed yourself?*

THE DULL BRUNETTE: *Sorrow.*

THE BRIGHT BLONDE: *I keep my spirits high with benzedrine. Oh happy junior high!*

THE DULL BRUNETTE: *What was happy about it? I had acne.*

THE BRIGHT BLONDE (bouncing as they sit on the couch): *You mean to say I never told you how I got started on benzedrine? I was in junior high and unhappy. My mother sent me to the doctor because I was fat and at the foot of my class. He gave me some cute little pills and zowie!—I was getting slim, smart and giddy. But pretty soon they found I was going back for an extra refill between refills. They cut me off. I struck. Uh-huh, little old me called a lie down strike. No more school, I said, unless I had my pills. If the doctor wouldn't give them to me, I'd forage for them—and I did. Two years later my mother had me committed. If I hadn't become a TV star I'd still be in the Loony Bin.*

THE DULL BRUNETTE: *Did they give you electroshock?*

THE BRIGHT BLONDE: *Think happy thoughts. What do you do for kicks? Are you on bennies too?*

THE DULL BRUNETTE: *No.* (Her face grows slack and subtly ugly.) *I practice witchcraft.*

Gwen switched off her ears and looked away from the screen. She did not like the thought that had come to her: that she had somehow planted that idea about witchcraft in the brunette's mind. It was months since Gwen had let herself think about witchcraft, either white or black.

There came a long low groan from the bedroom, adding to Gwen's troubled feeling because it seemed too much of a coincidence that it should have come just after the word witchcraft had been spoken.

DONNIE was twisting on the bed, going through hell in his dreams. The Wise Old Crock had abandoned him in a

cluster of dead stars and cosmic dust on the far side of the Andromeda Galaxy, first blindfolding him, turning him around three times, and giving him a mighty shove that had sent him out of sight of whatever asteroid they had been standing on. Floating in space, Donnie went through his pockets and found only a Scout knife and a small silver sphere and black cylinder, the purpose of which he had forgotten. A cameo-small image of Gwen's face smiled at him from the sphere. He looked up. Worms twenty feet long and glowing dull red were undulating towards him through the dusty dark. He had an intense sensation of the vast distance of the Earth. He made swimming movements only to discover that a cold paralysis was creeping through his limbs. Eternities passed.

GWEN had got out her glue and glitter and sequins and had spread newspapers on the table and was making a design on a soup plate that she hoped would catch something of the remembered pattern of the bread crumbs. The idea was to paint with glue the design for one color of glitter and then sprinkle the glitter on it, knocking off the excess by tapping the edge of the plate on the table. Sprinkling the glitter was fun, but the design was not developing quite the way she wanted it to. Besides she had just discovered that she didn't have any red or gold glitter, though there were three bottles of green. Some of the green glitter stuck to the back of her finger where she had got glue on it.

She stole a look over her shoulder at the TV. The two women had been replaced by a large map of the United States and a rugged young man wearing glasses and holding a pointer. The first word she heard told her she wasn't going to like it, but she hitched her chair around just the same, deciding that in the long run it would be best to know the worst.

THE THINGS FORECASTER: *A witchcraft high is moving*

down from Western Canada. Werewolf warnings have been posted in three states. Government planes are battling in the black front with white radio rays, but they're being forced back. Old folks who ought to know say it's the end of the world. (Scans sheet handed him by page girl.) *Flash from outer space! Don Martin, famed astronaut, is facing nameless perils in the Lesser Magellanic Cloud!*

DONNIE had just blown the psychic whistle, having remembered its use only as the red worms began to spiral in around him, and the Wise Old Crock had appeared at once, putting the worms to flight with a shower of green sparks flicked from the tip of his right hand tentacle.

THE WISE OLD CROCK: *You passed the test, Son, but don't pride yourself on it. Some night we're going to give it to you without paraldehyde. Now it's time you returned to Terra. Think of your home planet, Son, think of the Earth. Concentrate. . . .* They are suddenly in orbit a thousand miles above North America. The larger cities gleam dully, the moon is reflected in the Great Lakes. Donnie has become a green scaled being a head shorter than the Wise Old Crock, who weaves a tentacle majestically downwards. *Observe the cities of men, my Son. Think of the millions sleeping and dreaming there, lonely as death in their apartment dwellings and all hating their jobs. The outward appearance of these men-beings may horrify you a little at first, but you have my word that they're not fiends, only creatures like you and me, trying to control themselves with drugs, dreads, incantations, ideals, self hypnosis and surrender, so that they may lead happy lives and show forth beauty.*

GWEN was looking intently in the living-room mirror, painting evenly spaced bands of glue on her face. The bands curved under her eyes and outward, following the line of her jaw. She painted another band down the mid-

dle of her forehead and continued it straight down her nose. Then she closed her eyes, held her breath, lifted her face and shook green glitter on it for a long time. At last she lowered her face with a jerk, shook it from side to side, puffed out through her nostrils what breath she had left, and inhaled very slowly. Then she looked at herself again in the mirror and smiled. The green glitter clung to her face as it had to her finger.

A feeling of deadly fatigue struck her then, the first of the night, and the room momentarily swam. When it came to rest she was looking at a flashing eyed priest in a gorgeous cloak who was weaving across the TV screen.

THE GORGEOUS PRIEST: *The psychology of Donnie and Gwen must be clear to you by now. Each wants the other to sleep so that he may stand guard over her, or she over him, while yet adventuring alone. They have found a formula for this. But what of the future? What of their souls? Drugs are no permanent solution, I can assure them. What if the bars of the Safe Freedom should blow away? What if one night one of them should go out and never come in?*

DONNIE and the Wise Old Crock were hovering just outside the bedroom window three stories up. Friendly trees shaded them from the street lights below.

THE WISE OLD CROCK: *Goodbye, my Son, for another night. Use your Earthly tenement well. Do not abuse your powers. And go easy on the barbiturates.*

DONNIE: *I will, Father, believe me.*

THE WISE OLD CROCK: *Hold. There is one further secret of great consequence that I must impart to you tonight. It concerns your wife.*

DONNIE: *Yes, Father?*

THE WISE OLD CROCK: *She is one of us!*

DONNIE flowed through the four-inch gap at the bottom of the bedroom window. He saw his body lying on its back on the bed and he surged towards it through the air,

paddling gently with his tentacle tips. His body opened from the crotch to the chin like a purse and he flowed inside and the lips of the purse closed over his back with a soft *click*. Then he squirmed around gently as if in a sleeping bag, and looked through the two holes in the front of his head and thrust his tentacles down into his arms and lifted his hands above his eyes and wriggled his fingers. It felt very strange to have fingertipped arms with bones in them instead of tentacles. Just then he heard laughter from the living-room.

Gwen was laughing admiringly at the reflection of her breasts. She had taken off her smock and brassière and painted circles of glue around the nipples and sprinkled on more glitter.

Although her ears were switched off, she thought she heard the priest call from behind her, 'Gwen Martin, you ought to be ashamed of yourself!' And she called back to the TV, 'You shouldn't peek, Father!' and she turned around, haughtily shielding her breasts with a forearm held crosswise.

The bedroom door was open and Donnie was standing in it, swaying and staring. Gwen felt another surge of deadly fatigue but she steadied herself and stared back at her husband.

Woman, the Cave Keeper, the Weaver of Words, faced Man, the Bread Winner, the Far Ranger.

They moved together slowly, dragging their feet, until they were leaning against each other. Then more slowly, still, as if they were supporting each other through quicksands, they moved towards the bedroom.

'Do you like me, Donnie?' Gwen asked.

Donnie's gaze brushed across her glittering green-striped face and breasts. His hand tightened on her shoulder and he nodded.

'You're one of us,' he said.

The Hounds of Tindalos

FRANK BELKNAP LONG

'I'M GLAD YOU CAME,' said Chalmers. He was sitting by the window and his face was very pale. Two tall candles guttered at his elbow and cast a sickly amber light over his long nose and slightly receding chin. Chalmers would have nothing modern about his apartment. He had the soul of a medieval ascetic, and he preferred illuminated manuscripts to automobiles, and leering stone gargoyles to radios and adding machines.

As I crossed the room to the settee he had cleared for me I glanced at his desk and was surprised to discover that he had been studying the mathematical formula of a celebrated contemporary physicist, and that he had covered many sheets of thin yellow paper with curious geometric designs.

'Einstein and John Dee are strange bedfellows,' I said as my gaze wandered from his mathematical charts to the sixty or seventy quaint books that comprised his strange little library. Plotinus and Emanuel Moscopulus, St. Thomas Aquinas and Frenicle de Bessy stood elbow to elbow in the sombre bookcase, and chairs, table and desk were littered with pamphlets about medieval sorcery and witchcraft and black magic, and all of the valiant glamorous things that the modern world has repudiated.

Chalmers smiled engagingly, and passed me a Russian cigarette on a curiously carved tray. 'We are just discover-

ing now,' he said, 'that the old alchemists and sorcerers were two-thirds *right,* and that your modern biologist and materialist are nine-tenths *wrong.*'

'You have always scoffed at modern science,' I said, a little impatiently.

'Only at scientific dogmatism,' he replied. 'I have always been a rebel, a champion of originality and lost causes; that is why I have chosen to repudiate the conclusions of contemporary biologists.'

'And Einstein?' I asked.

'A priest of transcendental mathematics!' he murmured reverently. 'A profound mystic and explorer of the great *suspected.*'

'Then you do not entirely despise science.'

'Of course not,' he affirmed. 'I merely distrust the scientific positivism of the past fifty years, the positivism of Haeckel and Darwin and of Mr. Bertrand Russell. I believe that biology has failed pitifully to explain the mystery of man's origin and destiny.'

'Give them time,' I retorted.

Chalmers' eyes glowed. 'My friend,' he murmured, 'your pun is sublime. Give them *time.* That is precisely what I would do. But your modern biologist scoffs at time. He has the key but he refuses to use it. What do we know of time, really? Einstein believes that it is relative, that it can be interpreted in terms of space, of *curved* space. But must we stop there? When mathematics fails us can we not advance by—insight?'

'You are treading on dangerous ground,' I replied. 'That is a pitfall that your true investigator avoids. That is why modern science has advanced so slowly. It accepts nothing that it cannot demonstrate. But you—'

'I would take hashish, opium, all manner of drugs. I would emulate the sages of the East. And then perhaps I would apprehend—'

'What?'

'The fourth dimension.'

'Theosophical rubbish!'

'Perhaps. But I believe that drugs expand human consciousness. William James agreed with me. And I have discovered a new one.'

'A new drug?'

'It was used centuries ago by Chinese alchemists, but it is virtually unknown in the West. Its occult properties are amazing. With its aid and the aid of my mathematical knowledge I believe that I can *go back through time.*'

'I do not understand.'

'Time is merely our imperfect perception of a new dimension of space. Time and motion are both illusions. Everything that has existed from the beginning of the world *exists now.* Events that occurred centuries ago on this planet continue to exist in another dimension of space. Events that will occur centuries from now *exist already.* We cannot perceive their existence because we cannot enter the dimension of space that contains them. Human beings as we know them are merely fractions, infinitesimally small fractions of one enormous whole. Every human being is linked with *all* the life that has preceded him on this planet. All of his ancestors are parts of him. Only time separates him from his forebears, and time is an illusion and does not exist.'

'I think I understand,' I murmured.

'It will be sufficient for my purpose if you can form a vague idea of what I wish to achieve. I wish to strip from my eyes the veils of illusion that time has thrown over them, and see the *beginning and the end.*'

'And you think this new drug will help you?'

'I am sure that it will. And I want you to help me. I intend to take the drug immediately. I cannot wait. I must

see.' His eyes glittered strangely. 'I am going back, back through time.'

He rose and strode to the mantel. When he faced me again he was holding a small square box in the palm of his hand. 'I have here five pellets of the drug Liao. It was used by the Chinese philosopher Lao Tze, and while under its influence he visioned Tao. Tao is the most mysterious force in the world; it surrounds and pervades all things; it contains the visible universe and everything that we call reality. He who apprehends the mysteries of Tao sees clearly all that was and will be.'

'Rubbish!' I retorted.

'Tao resembles a great animal, recumbent, motionless, containing in its enormous body all the worlds of our universe, the past, the present and the future. We see portions of this great monster through a slit, which we call time. With the aid of this drug I shall enlarge the slit. I shall behold the great figure of life, the great recumbent beast in its entirety.'

'And what do you wish me to do?'

'Watch, my friend. Watch and take notes. And if I go back too far you must recall me to reality. You can recall me by shaking me violently. If I appear to be suffering acute physical pain you must recall me at once.'

'Chalmers,' I said, 'I wish you wouldn't make this experiment. You are taking dreadful risks. I don't believe that there is any fourth dimension and I emphatically do not believe in Tao. And I don't approve of your experimenting with unknown drugs.'

'I know the properties of this drug,' he replied. 'I know precisely how it affects the human animal and I know its dangers. The risk does not reside in the drug itself. My only fear is that I may become lost in time. You see, I shall assist the drug. Before I swallow this pellet I shall give my undivided attention to the geometric and alge-

braic symbols that I have traced on this paper.' He raised the mathematical chart that rested on his knee. 'I shall prepare my mind for an excursion into time. I shall approach the fourth dimension with my conscious mind before I take the drug which will enable me to exercise occult powers of perception. Before I enter the dream world of the Eastern mystics I shall acquire all of the mathematical help that modern science can offer. This mathematical knowledge, this conscious approach to an actual apprehension of the fourth dimension of time will supplement the work of the drug. The drug will open up stupendous new vistas—the mathematical preparation will enable me to grasp them intellectually. I have often grasped the fourth dimension in dreams, emotionally, intuitively, but I have never been able to recall, in waking life, the occult splendors that were momentarily revealed to me.

'But with your aid, I believe that I can recall them. You will take down everything that I say while I am under the influence of the drug. No matter how strange or incoherent my speech may become you will omit nothing. When I awake I may be able to supply the key to whatever is mysterious or incredible. I am not sure that I shall succeed, but if I *do* succeed'—his eyes were strangely luminous—*'time will exist for me no longer!'*

He sat down abruptly. 'I shall make the experiment at once. Please stand over there by the window and watch. Have you a fountain pen?'

I nodded gloomily and removed a pale green Waterman from my upper vest pocket.

'And a pad, Frank?'

I groaned and produced a memorandum book. 'I emphatically disapprove of this experiment,' I muttered. 'You're taking a frightful risk.'

'Don't be an asinine old woman!' he admonished.

'Nothing that you can say will induce me to stop now. I entreat you to remain silent while I study these charts.'

He raised the charts and studied them intently. I watched the clock on the mantel as it ticked out the seconds, and a curious dread clutched at my heart so that I choked.

Suddenly the clock stopped ticking, and exactly at that moment Chalmers swallowed the drug.

I rose quickly and moved towards him, but his eyes implored me not to interfere. 'The clock has stopped,' he murmured. 'The forces that control it approve of my experiment. *Time* stopped, and I swallowed the drug. I pray God that I shall not lose my way.'

He closed his eyes and leaned back on the sofa. All of the blood had left his face and he was breathing heavily. It was clear that the drug was acting with extraordinary rapidity.

'It is beginning to get dark,' he murmured. 'Write that. It is beginning to get dark and the familiar objects in the room are fading out. I can discern them vaguely through my eyelids, but they are fading swiftly.'

I shook my pen to make the ink come and wrote rapidly in shorthand as he continued to dictate.

'I am leaving the room. The walls are vanishing and I can no longer see any of the familiar objects. Your face, though, is still visible to me. I hope that you are writing. I think that I am about to make a great leap—a leap through space. Or perhaps it is through time that I shall make the leap. I cannot tell. Everything is dark, indistinct.'

He sat for a while silent, with his head sunk upon his breast. Then suddenly he stiffened and his eyelids fluttered open. 'God in heaven!' he cried. 'I *see!*'

He was straining forward in his chair, staring at the opposite wall. But I knew that he was looking beyond the

wall and that the objects in the room no longer existed for him. 'Chalmers,' I cried, 'Chalmers, shall I wake you?'

'Do not!' he shrieked. 'I see *everything*. All of the billions of lives that preceded me on this planet are before me at this moment. I see men of all ages, all races, all colours. They are fighting, killing, building, dancing, singing. They are sitting about rude fires on lonely grey deserts, and flying through the air in monoplanes. They are riding the seas in bark canoes and enormous steamships: they are painting bison and mammoths on the walls of dismal caves and covering huge canvases with queer futuristic designs. I watch the migrations from Atlantis. I watch the migrations from Lemuria. I see the elder races—a strange horde of black dwarfs overwhelming Asia, and the Neanderthalers with lowered heads and bent knees ranging obscenely across Europe. I watch the Acheans streaming into the Greek islands, and the crude beginnings of Hellenic culture. I am in Athens and Pericles is young. I am standing on the soil of Italy. I assist in the rape of the Sabines; I march with the Imperial legions. I tremble with awe and wonder as the enormous standards go by and the ground shakes with the tread of the victorious *hastati*. A thousand naked slaves grovel before me as I pass in a litter of gold and ivory drawn by night-black oxen from Thebes, and the flower girls scream '*Ave Caesar*' as I nod and smile. I am myself a slave on a Moorish galley. I watch the erection of a great cathedral. Stone by stone it rises, and through months and years I stand and watch each stone as it falls into place. I am burned on a cross head downward in the thyme scented gardens of Nero, and I watch with amusement and scorn the torturers at work in the chambers of the Inquisition.

'I walk in the holiest sanctuaries; I enter the temples of Venus. I kneel in adoration before the Magna Mater, and I throw coins on the bare knees of the sacred courtesans

who sit with veiled faces in the groves of Babylon. I creep into an Elizabethan theatre and with the stinking rabble about me I applaud *The Merchant of Venice*. I walk with Dante through the narrow streets of Florence. I meet the young Beatrice, and the hem of her garment brushes my sandals as I stare enraptured. I am a priest of Isis, and my magic astounds the nations. Simon Magus kneels before me, imploring my assistance, the Pharaoh trembles when I approach. In India I talk with the Masters and run screaming from their presence, for their revelations are as salt on wounds that bleed.

'I perceive everything *simultaneously*. I perceive everything from all sides; I am a part of all the teeming billions about me. I exist in all men and all men exist in me. I perceive the whole of human history in a single instant, the past and the present.

'By simply *straining* I can see further and further back. Now I am going back through strange curves and angles. Angles and curves multiply about me. I perceive great segments of time through *curves*. There is *curved time*, and *angular time*. The beings that exist in angular time cannot enter curved time. It is very strange.

'I am going back and back. Man has disappeared from the earth. Gigantic reptiles crouch beneath enormous palms and swim through the loathly black waters of dismal lakes. Now the reptiles have disappeared. No animals remain upon the land, but beneath the waters, plainly visible to me, dark forms move slowly over the rotting vegetation.

'The forms are becoming simpler and simpler. Now they are single cells. All about me there are angles—strange angles that have no counterparts on the earth. I am desperately afraid.

'There is an abyss of being which man has never fathomed.'

I stared. Chalmers had risen to his feet and he was gesticulating helplessly with his arms. 'I am passing through unearthly angles; I am approaching—oh, the burning horror of it.'

'Chalmers!' I cried. 'Do you wish me to interfere?'

He brought his right hand quickly before his face, as though to shut out a vision unspeakable. 'Not yet!' he cried. 'I will go on. I will see—what—lies—beyond—'

A cold sweat streamed from his forehead and his shoulders jerked spasmodically. 'Beyond life there are'—his face grew ashen with terror—'*things* that I cannot distinguish. They move slowly through angles. They have no bodies, and they move slowly through outrageous angles.'

It was then that I became aware of the odor in the room. It was a pungent, indescribable odor, so nauseous that I could scarcely endure it. I stepped quickly to the window and threw it open. When I returned to Chalmers and looked into his eyes I nearly fainted.

'I think they have scented me!' he shrieked. 'They are slowly turning towards me.'

He was trembling horribly. For a moment he clawed at the air with his hands. Then his legs gave way beneath him and he fell forward on his face, slobbering and moaning.

I watched him in silence as he dragged himself across the floor. He was no longer a man. His teeth were bared and saliva dropped from the corners of his mouth.

'Chalmers,' I cried. 'Chalmers, stop it! Stop it, do you hear?'

As if in reply to my appeal he commenced to utter hoarse convulsive sounds which resembled nothing so much as the barking of a dog, and began a sort of hideous writhing in a circle about the room. I bent and seized him by the shoulders. Violently, desperately, I shook him. He turned his head and snapped at my wrist. I was sick with

horror, but I dared not release him for fear that he would destroy himself in a paroxysm of rage.

'Chalmers,' I muttered, 'you must stop that. There is nothing in this room that can harm you. Do you understand?'

I continued to shake and admonish him, and gradually the madness died out of his face. Shivering convulsively, he crumpled into a grotesque heap on the Chinese rug.

I carried him to the sofa and deposited him upon it. His features were twisted in pain, and I knew that he was still struggling dumbly to escape from abominable memories.

'Whiskey,' he muttered. 'You'll find a flask in the cabinet by the window—upper left-hand drawer.'

When I handed him the flask his fingers tightened about it until the knuckles showed blue. 'They nearly got me,' he gasped. He drained the stimulant in immoderate gulps, and gradually the colour crept back into his face.

'That drug was the very devil!' I murmured.

'It wasn't the drug,' he moaned.

His eyes no longer glared insanely, but he still wore the look of a lost soul.

'They scented me in time,' he moaned, 'I went too far.'

'What were *they* like?' I said, to humor him.

He leaned forward and gripped my arm. He was shivering horribly. 'No words in our language can describe them!' He spoke in a hoarse whisper. 'They are symbolized vaguely in the myth of the Fall, and in an obscene form which is occasionally found engraved on the ancient tablets. The Greeks had a name for them, which veiled their essential foulness. The tree, the snake and the apple—these are the vague symbols of a most awful mystery.'

His voice had risen to a scream. 'Frank, Frank, a terri-

ble and unspeakable *deed* was done in the beginning. Before time, the *deed,* and from the deed—'

He had risen and was hysterically pacing the room. 'The seeds of the deed move through angles in dim recesses of time. They are hungry and athirst!'

'Chalmers,' I pleaded to quiet him. 'We are living in the twentieth century.'

'They are lean and athirst!' he shrieked. *'The Hounds of Tindalos!'*

'Chalmers, shall I phone for a physician?'

'A physician cannot help me now. They are horrors of the soul, and yet'—he hid his face in his hands and groaned—'they are real, Frank, I saw them for a ghastly moment. For a moment I stood on the *other side.* I stood on the pale grey shores beyond time and space. In an awful light that was not light, in a silence that shrieked, I saw *them.*

'All the evil in the universe was concentrated in their lean, hungry bodies. Or had they bodies? I saw them only for a moment; I cannot be certain. *But I heard them breathe.* Indescribably for a moment I felt their breath upon my face. They turned towards me and I fled screaming. In a single moment I fled screaming through time. I fled down quintillions of years.

'But they scented me. Men awake in them cosmic hungers. We have escaped, momentarily, from the foulness that rings them round. They thirst for that in us which is clean, which emerged from the deed without stain. There is a part of us which did not partake in the deed, and that they hate. But do not imagine that they are literally, prosaically evil.

'They are beyond good and evil as we know it. They are that which in the beginning fell away from cleanliness. Through the deed they became bodies of death, receptacles of all foulness. But they are not evil in *our* sense be-

cause in the spheres through which they move there is no thought, no morals, no right or wrong as we understand it. There is merely the pure and the foul. The foul expresses itself through angles; the pure through curves. Man, the pure part of him, is descended from a curve. Do not laugh. I mean that literally.'

I rose and searched for my hat. 'I'm dreadfully sorry for you, Chalmers,' I said, as I walked towards the door. 'But I don't intend to stay and listen to such gibberish. I'll send my physician to see you. He's an elderly, kindly chap and he won't be offended if you tell him to go to the devil. But I hope you'll respect his advice. A week's rest in a good sanatorium should benefit you immeasurably.'

I heard him laughing as I descended the stairs, but his laughter was so utterly mirthless that it moved me to tears.

When Chalmers phoned the following morning my first impulse was to hang up the receiver immediately. His request was so unusual and his voice was so wildly hysterical that I feared any further association with him would result in the impairment of my own sanity. But I could not doubt the genuineness of his misery, and when he broke down completely and I heard him sobbing over the wire I decided to comply with his request.

'Very well,' I said. 'I will come over immediately and bring the plaster.'

En route to Chalmers' home I stopped at a hardware store and purchased twenty pounds of plaster of Paris. When I entered my friend's room he was crouching by the window watching the opposite wall out of eyes that were feverish with fright. When he saw me he rose and seized the parcel containing the plaster with an avidity that amazed and horrified me. He had extruded all of the furniture and the room presented a desolate appearance.

'It is just conceivable that we can thwart them!' he exclaimed. 'But we must work rapidly. Frank, there is a stepladder in the hall. Bring it here immediately. And fetch a pail of water.'

'What for?' I murmured.

He turned sharply and there was a flush on his face. 'To mix the plaster, you fool!' he cried. 'To mix the plaster that will save our bodies and souls from a contamination unmentionable. To mix the plaster that will save the world from—Frank, *they must be kept out!*'

'Who?' I murmured.

'The Hounds of Tindalos!' he muttered. 'They can only reach us through angles. We must eliminate all angles from this room. I shall plaster up all of the corners, all of the crevices. We must make this room resemble the interior of a sphere.'

I knew that it would have been useless to argue with him. I fetched the stepladder, Chalmers mixed the plaster, and for three hours we labored. We filled in the four corners of the wall and the intersections of the floor and wall and the wall and ceiling, and we rounded the sharp angles of the window seat.

'I shall remain in this room until they return in time,' he affirmed when our task was completed. 'When they discover that the scent leads through curves they will return. They will return ravenous and snarling and unsatisfied to the foulness that was in the beginning, before time, beyond space.'

He nodded graciously and lit a cigarette. 'It was good of you to help,' he said.

'Will you not see a physician, Chalmers?' I pleaded.

'Perhaps—tomorrow,' he murmured. 'But now I must watch and wait.'

'Wait for what?' I urged.

Chalmers smiled wanly. 'I know that you think me in-

sane,' he said. 'You have a shrewd but prosaic mind, and you cannot conceive of an entity that does not depend for its existence on force and matter. But did it never occur to you, my friend, that force and matter are merely the barriers to perception imposed by time and space? When one knows, as I do, that time and space are identical and that they are both deceptive because they are merely imperfect manifestations of a higher reality, one no longer seeks in the visible world for an explanation of the mystery and terror of being.'

I rose and walked towards the door.

'Forgive me,' he cried. 'I did not mean to offend you. You have a superlative intellect, but I—I have a *superhuman* one. It is only natural that I should be aware of your limitations.'

'Phone if you need me,' I said, and descended the stairs two steps at a time. 'I'll send my physician over at once,' I muttered to myself. 'He's a hopeless maniac, and heaven knows what will happen if someone doesn't take charge of him immediately.'

The following is a condensation of two announcements which appeared in the Partridgeville Gazette *for July 3, 1928:*

EARTHQUAKE SHAKES FINANCIAL DISTRICT

At 2 o'clock this morning an earth tremor of unusual severity broke several plate glass windows in Central Square and completely disorganized the electric and street railway systems. The tremor was felt in the outlying districts and the steeple of the First Baptist Church on Angell Hill (designed by Christopher Wren in 1717) was entirely demolished. Firemen are now attempting to put out a blaze which threatens to destroy the Partridgeville Glue Works. An investigation is promised by the mayor and an

immediate attempt will be made to fix responsibility for this disastrous occurrence.

OCCULT WRITER MURDERED BY UNKNOWN GUEST

HORRIBLE CRIME IN CENTRAL SQUARE

Mystery Surrounds Death of Halpin Chalmers

At 9 a.m. today the body of Halpin Chalmers, author and journalist, was found in an empty room above the jewellery store of Smithwick and Isaacs, 24 Central Square. The coroner's investigation revealed that the room had been rented furnished to Mr. Chalmers on May 1, and that he had himself disposed of the furniture a fortnight ago. Chalmers was the author of several recondite books on occult themes, and a member of the Bibliographic Guild. He formerly resided in Brooklyn, New York.

At 7 a.m. Mr. L. E. Hancock, who occupies the apartment opposite Chalmers' room in the Smithwick and Isaacs establishment, smelt a peculiar odor when he opened his door to take in his cat and the morning edition of the *Partridgeville Gazette*. The odor he describes as extremely acrid and nauseous, and he affirms that he was obliged to hold his nose when he approached that section of the hall.

He was about to return to his own apartment when it occurred to him that Chalmers might have accidentally forgotten to turn off the gas in his kitchenette. Becoming considerably alarmed at the thought, he decided to investigate, and when repeated tappings on Chalmers' door brought no response he notified the superintendent. The latter opened the door by means of a pass key, and the two men quickly made their way into Chalmers' room. The room was utterly destitute of furniture, and Hancock asserts that when he first glanced at the floor his heart

went cold within him, and the superintendent, without saying a word, walked to the open window and stared at the building opposite for fully five minutes.

Chalmers lay stretched upon his back in the center of the room. He was starkly nude, and his chest and arms were covered with a peculiar bluish pus or ichor. His head lay grotesque upon his chest. It had been completely severed from his body, and the features were twisted and torn and horribly mangled. Nowhere was there a trace of blood.

The room presented a most astonishing appearance. The intersections of the walls, ceiling and floor had been thickly smeared with plaster of Paris, but at intervals fragments had cracked and fallen off, and someone had grouped these upon the floor about the murdered man so as to form a perfect triangle.

Beside the body were several sheets of charred yellow paper. These bore fantastic geometric designs and symbols and several hastily scrawled sentences. The sentences were almost illegible and so absurd in context that they furnished no possible clue to the perpetrator of the crime. 'I am waiting and watching,' Chalmers wrote. 'I sit by the window and watch walls and ceiling. I do not believe they can reach me, but I must beware of the Doels. Perhaps *they* can help them break through. The satyrs will help, and they can advance through the scarlet circles. The Greeks knew a way of preventing that. It is a great pity that we have forgotten so much.'

On another sheet of paper, the most badly charred of the seven or eight fragments found by Detective Sergeant Douglas (of the Partridgeville Reserve), was scrawled the following:

'Good God, the plaster is falling! A terrific shock has loosened the plaster and it is falling. An earthquake per-

haps! I never could have anticipated this. It is growing dark in the room. I must phone Frank. But can he get here in time? I will try. I will recite the Einstein formula. I will—God, they are breaking through! They are breaking through! Smoke is pouring from the corners of the wall. Their tongues—ahhh—'

In the opinion of Detective Sergeant Douglas, Chalmers was poisoned by some obscure chemical. He has sent specimens of the strange blue slime he found on Chalmers' body to the Partridgeville Chemical Laboratories; and he expects the report will shed new light on one of the most mysterious crimes of recent years. That Chalmers entertained a guest on the evening preceding the earthquake is certain, for his neighbour distinctly heard a low murmur of conversation in the former's room as he passed it on his way to the stairs. Suspicion points to the unknown visitor and the police are diligently endeavouring to discover his identity.

Report of James Morton, chemist and bacteriologist:

MY DEAR MR. DOUGLAS,

The fluid sent to me for analysis is the most peculiar that I have ever examined. It resembles living protoplasm, but it lacks the peculiar substance known as enzymes. Enzymes catalyze the chemical reactions occurring in living cells, and when the cell dies they cause it to disintegrate by hydrolyzation. Without enzymes protoplasm should possess enduring vitality, i.e., immortality. Enzymes are the negative components, so to speak, of unicellular organism, which is the basis of all life. That living matter can exist without enzymes biologists emphatically deny. And yet the substance that you have sent me is alive and it lacks these 'indispensable' bodies. Good God, sir, do you realize what astounding new vistas this opens up?

Excerpt from The Secret Watchers *by the late Halpin Chalmers:*

What if, parallel to the life we know, there is another life that does not die, which lacks the elements that destroy *our* life? Perhaps in another dimension there is a *different* force from that which generates our life. Perhaps this force emits energy, or something similar to energy, which passes from the unknown dimension where *it* is and creates a new form of cell life in our dimension. Ah, but I have seen *its* manifestations. I have *talked* with them. In my room at night I have talked with the Doels. And in dreams I have seen their maker. I have stood on the dim shore beyond time and matter and seen *it*. *It* moves through strange curves and outrageous angles. Some day I shall travel in time and meet *it* face to face.

Subjectivity

NORMAN SPINRAD

INTERPLANETARY FLIGHT having been perfected, the planets and moons of the Sol system having been colonized, Man turned his attention to the stars.

And ran into a stone wall.

After three decades of trying, scientists reluctantly concluded that a faster-than-light drive was an impossibility, at least within the realm of any known theory of the Universe. They gave up.

But a government does not give up so easily, especially a unified government which already controls the entire habitat of the human race. *Most* especially a psychologically and sociologically enlightened government which sees the handwriting on the wall, and has already noticed the first signs of racial claustrophobia—an objectless sense of frustrated rage, increases in senseless crimes, proliferation of perversions and vices of every kind. Like grape juice sealed in a bottle, the human race had begun to ferment.

Therefore, the Solar Government took a slightly different point of view towards interstellar travel—Man *must* go to the stars. Period. Therefore, Man *will* go to the stars.

If the speed of light could not be exceeded, then Man would go to the stars within that limit.

When a government with tens of billions of dollars to

spend becomes monomaniacal, Great Things can be accomplished. Also, unfortunately, Unspeakable Horrors.

Stage One: A drive was developed which could propel a spaceship at half the speed of light. This was merely a matter of technological concentration, and several billion dollars.

Stage Two: A ship was built around the drive, and outfitted with every conceivable safety device. A laser-beam communication system was installed, so that Sol could keep in contact with the ship all the way to Centaurus. A crew of ten carefully screened, psyched and trained near-supermen was selected, and the ship was launched on a sixteen-year round-trip to Centaurus.

It never came back.

Two years out, the ten near-supermen became ten raving maniacs.

But the Solar Government did not give up. The next ship contained five near-supermen, and five near-superwomen.

They only lasted for a year and a half.

The Solar Government intensified the screening process. The next ship was manned by ten bona-fide supermen.

They stayed sane for nearly three years.

The Solar Government sent out a ship containing five supermen and five superwomen. In two years, they had ten superlunatics.

The psychologists came to the unstartling conclusion that even the cream of humanity, in a sexually balanced crew, could not stand up psychologically to sixteen years in a small steel womb, surrounded by billions of cubic miles of nothing.

One would have expected reasonable men to have given up.

Not the Solar Government. Monomania had produced

Great Things, in the form of a c/2 drive. It now proceeded to produce Unspeakable Horrors.

The cream of the race has failed, reasoned the Solar Government, therefore, we will give the dregs a chance.

The fifth ship was manned by homosexuals. They lasted only six months. A ship full of lesbians bettered that by only two weeks.

Number seven was manned by schizophrenics. Since they were *already* mad, they did not go crazy. Nevertheless, they did not come back. Number Eight was catatonics. Nine was paranoids. Ten was sadists. Eleven was masochists. Twelve was a mixed crew of sadists and masochists. No luck.

Maybe it was because thirteen was still a mystic number, or maybe it was merely that the Solar Government was running out of ideas. At any rate, ship Number Thirteen was the longest shot of all.

Background: From the beginnings of Man it had been known that certain plants—mushrooms, certain cacti—produced intense hallucinations. In the mid-twentieth century, scientists—and others less scientifically minded—had begun to extract those hallucinogenic compounds, chiefly mescalin and psilocybin. The next step was the synthesis of hallucinogens—LSD-25 was the first, and it was far more powerful than the extracts.

In the next few centuries, more and more different hallucinogens were synthesized—LSD-105, Johannic acid, huxleyon, baronite.

So by the time the Solar Government had decided that the crew of ship Number Thirteen would attempt to cope with the terrible reality of interstellar space by denying that reality, they had quite an assortment of hallucinogens to choose from.

The one they chose was a new, as yet untested ('Two experiments for the price of one,' explained economy-

minded officials) and unbelievably complex compound tentatively called Omnidrene.

Omnidrene was what the name implied—a hallucinogen with all the properties of the others, some of which had proven to be all its own, and some which were as yet unknown. As ten micrograms was one day's dose for the average man, it was the ideal hallucinogen for a starship.

So they sealed five men and five women—they had given up on sexually unbalanced crews—in ship Number Thirteen, along with half a ton of Omnidrene.

In a way they could not possibly have foreseen, they got it.

As starship Thirteen passed the orbit of Pluto, a meeting was held, since this could be considered the beginning of interstellar space.

The ship was reasonably large—ten small private cabins, a bridge that would only be used for planetfalls, large storage areas, and a big common room, where the crew had gathered.

They were sitting in All-Purpose Lounges, arranged in a circle. A few had their Lounges at full recline, but most preferred the upright position.

Oliver Brunei, the nominal captain, had just opened the first case of Omnidrene, and taken out a bottle of the tiny pills.

'This, fellow inmates,' he said, 'is Omnidrene. The time has come for us to indulge. The automatics are all set, we won't have to do a thing we don't want to do for the next eight years.'

He poured ten of the tiny blue pills into the palm of his right hand. 'On Earth, they used to have some kind of traditional ceremony when a person crossed the equator for the first time. Since we are crossing a far more important

equator, I thought we should have some kind of ceremony.'

The crew squirmed irritably.

I *do* tend to be verbose, Brunei thought.

'Well . . . anyway, I just thought we all oughta take the first pills together,' he said, somewhat defensively.

'So come on, Ollie,' said a skinny, sour-looking man of about thirty years.

'O.K., Lazar, O.K.' Marashovski's gonna be trouble, Brunei thought. Why did they put *him* on the ship?

He handed the pills around. Lazar Marashovski was about to gulp his down.

'Wait a minute!' said Brunei. 'Let's all do it together.'

'One, two, *three!*'

They swallowed the pills. In about ten minutes, thought Brunei, we should be feeling it.

He looked at the crew. Ten of us, he thought, ten brilliant misfits. Lazar, who has spent half his life high on baronite; Vera Galindez, would-be medium, trying to make herself telepathic with mescalin; Jorge Donner . . . Why *is* he here?

Me, at least with me it's simple—this or jail.

What a crew! Drug addicts, occultists, sensationalists . . . *and what else?* What makes a person do a thing like this?

It'll all come out, thought Brunei. In sixteen years, it'll all come out.

'Feel anything yet, Ollie?' said Marsha Johnson. No doubt why *she* came along. Just an ugly old maid liking the idea of being cooped up with five men.

'Nothing yet,' said Brunei.

He looked around the room. Plain steel walls, lined with cabinets full of Omnidrene on two sides, viewscreen on the ceiling, bare floor, the other two walls decked out like an automat. Plain, grey steel walls . . .

Then why were the grey steel walls turning pink?

'Oh, oh . . .' said Joby Krail, rolling her pretty blond head, 'oh, oh . . . here it comes. The walls are dancing . . .'

'The ceiling is a spiral,' muttered Vera, 'a winding red spiral.'

'O.K., fellow inmates,' said Brunei, 'it's hitting.' Now the walls were red, bright fire-engine red, and they were melting. No, not melting, but evaporating . . .

'Like crystal it is,' said Lin Pey, waving his delicate oriental hands, 'like jade as transparent as crystal.'

'There is a camel in the circle,' said Lazar, 'a brown camel.'

'Let's all try and see the camel together,' said Vera Galindez sharply. 'Tell us what it looks like, Lazar.'

'It's brown, it's the two-humped kind, it has a two-foot tail.'

'And big feet,' said Lin Pey.

'A stupid face,' said Donner.

'Very stupid.'

'Your camel is a great bore,' said the stocky, scowling Bram Daker.

'Let's have something else,' said Joby.

'Okay,' replied Brunei, 'now someone else tell what they see.'

'A lizard,' said Linda Tobias, a strange, sombre girl, inclined to the morbid.

'A lizard?' squeaked Ingrid Solin.

'No,' said Lin Pey, 'a dragon. A green dragon, with a forked red tongue . . .'

'He has little useless wings,' said Lazar.

'He is totally oblivious to us,' said Vera.

Brunei saw the dragon. It was five feet long, green and scaly. It was a conventional dragon, except for the most bovine expression in its eyes . . .

Yes, he thought, the dragon is *here*. But the greater part of him knew that it was an illusion.

How long would this go on?

'It's *good* that we see the same things,' said Marsha. 'Let's always see the same things . . .'

'Yes.'

'Yes!'

'Now, a mountain, a tall blue mountain.'

'With snow on the peak.'

'Yes, and clouds . . .'

One week out:

Oliver Brunei stepped into the common room. Lin Pey, Vera and Lazar were sitting together, on what appeared to be a huge purple toadstool.

But that's *my* hallucination, thought Brunei. *At least,* I *think it is.*

'Hello Ollie,' said Lazar.

'Hi. What're you doing?'

'We're looking at the dragon again,' said Vera. 'Join us?'

Brunei thought of the dragon for a moment. The toadstool disappeared, and the by-now-familiar bovine dragon took its place. In the last few days, they had discovered that if any two of them concentrated on something long enough to 'materialize' it, anyone who wanted to could see it in a moment.

'What's so interesting about that silly dragon?' said Brunei.

'How about the camel?' said Lazar.

The dragon turned into the two-humped brown camel.

'Phooey!' said Lin Pey.

'O.K.,' said Vera, 'so what do *you* want?'

Lin Pey thought for a moment.

'How about a meadow?' he said. 'A soft lawn of

green grass, the sky is blue, and there are a few white clouds . . .'

'Clover is blooming,' said Lazar. 'Smell it.'

Brunei reclined on the soft green grass. The smell of the earth beneath him was warm and moist. 'A few apple trees here and there,' he said, and there was shade.

'Look over the hill!' said Lazar. 'There's the dragon!'

'Will you *please* get rid of that dragon?' snapped Brunei.

'O.K., Ollie, O.K.'

One month out:

'Get out of the way!' yelled Brunei. He gave the dragon a kick. It mooed plaintively.

'That wasn't very nice, Ollie,' said Lazar.

'That dragon is always underfoot,' said Brunei. 'Why don't you get rid of it?'

'I've taken a liking to it,' said Lazar. 'Besides, what about your Saint Bernard?'

'This ship is getting too cluttered up with everyone's hallucinations,' said Brunei. 'Ever since . . . when was it, a week ago? . . . ever since we've been able to conjure 'em up by ourselves, and make everyone else see 'em.'

Daker dematerialized the woman on his lap. 'Why don't we get together?' he said.

'Get together?'

'Yes. We could agree on an environment. Look at this common room for example. What a mess! Here, it's a meadow, there it's a beach, a palace, a boudoir.'

'You mean we should make it the same for all of us?' asked Lazar.

'Sure. We can have whatever we want in our cabins, but let's make some sense of the common room.'

'Good idea,' said Brunei. 'I'll call the others.'

Three months out:

Brunei stepped through the stuccoed portal, and into the central Spanish garden. He noticed that the sky was blue, with a few fleecy white clouds.

But then, the weather was always good. They had agreed on it.

Lazar, Ingrid, Lin Pey and Vera were sitting on the green lawn surrounding the fountain.

Daker, Joby, Linda and Donner preferred the shade, and lounged against the white arabesqued wall which enclosed the garden on four sides, broken only by four arched entrance portals.

The garden had been a good compromise, thought Brunei. Something for everyone. Fresh air and sunshine, but also the mental security offered by the walls, which also provided shade for those who wanted it. A fountain, a few palm trees, grass, flowers, even the little formal Japanese rock garden that Lin Pey had insisted on.

'Hello, Ollie,' said Lazar. 'Nice day.'

'Isn't it always?' replied Brunei. 'How about a little shower?'

'Maybe tomorrow.'

'I notice a lot of sleeping people today,' said Brunei.

'Yes,' said Lin Pey. 'By now, the garden seems to be able to maintain itself.'

'You think it has a separate existence?' asked Ingrid.

'Of course not,' said Vera. 'Our subconscious minds are maintaining it. It's probably here when we're all asleep.'

'No way of telling *that,*' said Brunei. 'Besides, how can it exist when we're asleep, when it doesn't really exist to begin with?'

'Semantics, Ollie, semantics.'

Brunei took a bottle of Omnidrene out of his pocket. 'Time to charge up the old batteries again,' he said.

He passed out the pills.

'I notice Marsha is still in her cabin.'

'Yeah,' said Lazar, 'she keeps to herself a lot. No great—'

Just then, Marsha burst into the garden, screaming: 'Make it go away! Make it go away!'

Behind her slithered a gigantic black snake, with a head as big as a horse's, and bulging red eyes.

'I thought we agreed to leave our private hallucinations in our cabins,' snapped Brunei.

'I tried! I tried! I *don't want* it around, but it won't go away! Do something!'

Ten feet of snake had already entered the garden. The thing seemed endless.

'Take it easy,' said Lazar. 'Let's all concentrate and think it away.'

They tried to erase the snake, but it just rolled its big red eyes.

'That won't work,' said Vera. 'Her subconscious is still fighting us. Part of her must *want* the snake here. We've *all* got to be together to erase it.'

Marsha began to cry. The snake advanced another two feet.

'Oh, quiet!' rasped Lazar. 'Ollie, do I have your permission to bring my dragon into the garden? He'll make short work of the snake.'

Brunei scowled. 'You and your dragon . . . Oh, maybe it'll work.'

Instantly, the green dragon was in the garden. But it was no longer five feet long and bovine.

It was a good *twelve* feet long, with cold reptillian eyes and big yellow fangs.

It took one look at the snake, opened its powerful jaws and belched a huge tongue of orange flame.

The serpent was incinerated. It disappeared.

Brunei was trembling. 'What happened, Lazar?' he said. 'That's not the same stupid little dragon.'

'Hah . . . hah . . .' squeaked Lazar. 'He's . . . uh . . . grown . . .'

Brunei suddenly noticed that Lazar was ashen. He also noticed that the dragon was turning in their direction.

'Get it out of here, Lazar! Get it out of here!'

Lazar nodded. The dragon flickered and went pale, but it was over a minute before it disappeared entirely.

Six months out:

Things wandered the passageways and haunted the cabins. Marsha's snake was back. There was Lazar's dragon, which seemed to grow larger every day. There was also a basilisk, a pterodactyl, a vampire bat with a five-foot wingspread, an old-fashioned red spade-tailed demon and other assorted horrors.

Even Oliver Brunei's friendly Saint Bernard had grown to monstrous size, turned pale green and grown large yellow fangs.

Only the Spanish garden in the common room was free of the monstrosities. Here, the combined conscious minds of the ten crew members were still strong enough to banish the rampaging hallucinations.

The ten of them sat around the fountain, which seemed a shade less sparkling.

There were even rainclouds in the sky.

'I don't like it,' said Bram Daker. 'It's getting completely out of control.'

'So we just have to stay in the garden, that's all,' said Brunei. 'The food's all here, and so is the Omnidrene. And *they* can't come here.'

'Not yet,' said Marsha.

They all shuddered.

'What went wrong?' asked Ingrid.

'Nothing,' said Donner. 'They didn't know what would happen when they sent us out, so we can't say they were *wrong.*'

'Very comforting,' croaked Lazar. 'But can someone tell me why we can't control *them* any more?'

'Who knows?' said Brunei. 'At least we can keep them out of here. That's—'

There was a snuffling at the wall. The head of something like a Tyrannosaurus Rex peered over the wall at them.

'Ugh!' said Lin Pey. 'I think that's a new one.'

The dragon's head appeared alongside the Tyrannosaur's.

'Well, at least *there's* a familiar face,' tittered Linda.

'Very funny.'

Marsha screamed. The huge black snake thrust its head through a portal.

And the flap of leathery wings could be heard. And the smell of sulphur.

'Come on! Come on!' shouted Brunei. 'Let's get these things out of here!'

After five minutes of intense group concentration, the last of the horrors was banished.

'It was a lot harder this time,' said Daker.

'There were more of them,' said Donner.

'They're getting stronger, and bolder.'

'Maybe some day they'll break through, and . . .' Lin Pey let the sentence hang. Everyone supplied his own ending.

'Don't be ridiculous!' snapped Brunei. 'They're not real. *They can't kill us!*'

'Maybe we should stop taking the Omnidrene?' suggested Vera, without much conviction.

'At *this* point?' said Brunei. He shuddered. 'If the garden disappeared, and we had nothing but the bare ship

for the next fifteen and a half years, and we *knew* it, and at the same time knew that we had the Omnidrene to bring it back . . . How long do you think we'd hold off?'

'You're right,' said Vera.

'We just have to stick it out,' said Brunei. 'Just remember: *They can't kill us. They aren't real.*'

'Yes,' the crew whispered in a tiny, frail voice, 'they aren't real . . .'

Seven months out:

The garden was covered with a gloomy grey cloud layer. Even the 'weather' was getting harder and harder to control.

The crew of starship Number Thirteen huddled around the fountain, staring into the water, trying desperately to ignore the snufflings, flappings, wheezes and growls coming from outside the walls. But occasionally, a scaly head would raise itself above the wall, or a pterodactyl or bat would flap overhead, and there would be violent shudders.

'I still think we should stop taking the Omnidrene,' said Vera Galindez.

'If we stopped taking, it,' asked Brunei, 'which would disappear first, *them . . . or the garden?*'

Vera grimaced. 'But we've got to do something,' she said. 'We can't even make them disappear at all, any more. And it's becoming a full time job just to keep them outside the walls.'

'And sooner or later,' interjected Lazar, 'we're *not* going to be strong enough to keep them out . . .'

'Brr!'

'The snake! The snake!' screamed Marsha. 'It's coming in again!'

The huge black head was already through a portal.

'Stop the snake, everyone!' yelled Brunei. Eyes were riveted on the ugly serpent, in intense concentration.

After five minutes, it was obviously a stalemate. The snake had not been able to advance, nor could the humans force it to retreat.

Then smoke began to rise from behind the far wall.

'The dragon's burning down the wall!' shrieked Lazar. 'Stop him!'

They concentrated on the dragon. The smoke disappeared.

But the snake began to advance again.

'They're too strong!' moaned Brunei. 'We can't hold them back.'

They stopped the snake for a few moments, but the smoke began to billow again.

'They're gonna break through!' screamed Donner. 'We can't stop 'em!'

'What are we gonna do?'

'Help!'

Creakings, cracklings, groanings, as the walls began to crack and blister and shake.

Suddenly Bram Daker stood up, his dark eyes aflame.

'Only one thing's strong enough!' he bellowed. 'Earth! *Earth!* EARTH! Think of Earth! All of you! We're back on Earth. Visualize it, make it real, and the monsters'll have to disappear.'

'But *where* on Earth?' said Vera, bewildered.

'The Spaceport!' shouted Brunei. 'The Spaceport! We all remember the Spaceport.'

'We're back on Earth! The Spaceport!'

'Earth!'

'Earth!'

'EARTH! EARTH!'

The garden was beginning to flicker. It became red, orange, yellow, green, blue, violet, invisible; then back again through the spectrum the other way—violet, blue, green, yellow, orange, red, invisible.

Back and forth, like a pendulum through the spectrum . . .

Oliver Brunei's head hurt unbearably, he could see the pain on the other faces, but he allowed only one thought to fill his being—

Earth! The Spaceport! Earth!

More and more, faster and faster, the garden flickered, and now it was the old common room again, and *that* was flickering.

Light was flickering, mind was flickering, time, too, seemed to flicker . . .

Only Earth! thought Brunei. Earth doesn't flicker, the Spaceport doesn't flicker.

Earth! EARTH!

Now all the flickerings, of colour, time, mind and dimensions, were coalescing into one gigantic vortex, that was a thing neither of time, nor space, nor mind, but all three somehow fused into one . . .

They're screaming! Brunei thought. Listen to the horrible screams! Suddenly he noticed that he, too, was screaming.

The vortex was growing, swirling, undulating and it, too, began to flicker . . .

There was an unbearable, impossible pain, and . . .

The sight of starship Number Thirteen suddenly appearing out of nowhere and sitting itself calmly down in the middle of the Spaceport was somewhat disconcerting to the Spaceport officials. Especially since at the very moment it appeared, and even afterward, they continued to have visual and laser contact with its image, over three light-months from Earth.

However, the Solar Government itself was much more pragmatic. One instant, starship Thirteen had been light months from Earth, the next it was sitting in the

Spaceport. Therefore, starship Thirteen had exceeded the speed of light somehow. Therefore, it was possible to exceed the speed of light, and a thorough examination of the ship and its contents would show *how*.

Therefore ... You idiots, throw a security cordon around that ship!

In such matters, the long-conditioned reflexes of the Solar Government worked marvellously. Before the airwaves had cooled, two hundred heavily armed soldiers had surrounded the ship.

Two hours later, the Solar Co-ordinator was on the scene, with ten Orders of Sol to present to the returning heroes, and a large well-armoured vehicle to convey them to laboratories, where they would be gone over with the proverbial fine-tooth comb.

An honour guard of two hundred men standing at attention made a pathway from the ship's main hatch to the armoured carrier, in front of which stood the Solar Co-ordinator, with his ten medals.

They opened the hatch.

One, two, five, seven, ten dazed and bewildered 'heroes' staggered past the honour guard, to face the Co-ordinator.

He opened his mouth to begin its welcoming speech, and start the five years of questioning and experiments which would eventually kill five of the crew and give Man the secret of faster-than-light drive.

But instead of speaking, he screamed.

So did two hundred heavily armed soldiers.

Because, out of starship Thirteen's main hatch sauntered a twelve-foot green dragon, followed by a Tyrannosaurus Rex, a pterodactyl, a vampire bat with a five-foot wingspan, an old-fashioned red, spade-tailed demon, and finally, big as a horse's, the pop-eyed head of an enormous black serpent ...

What to do Until the Analyst Comes

FREDRIK POHL

I JUST SENT MY secretary out for a container of coffee and she brought me back a lemon Coke.

I can't even really blame her. Who in all the world do I have to blame, except myself? Hazel was a good secretary to me for fifteen years, fine at typing, terriffic at brushing off people I didn't want to see, and the queen of them all at pumping office gossip out of the ladies' lounge. She's a little fuzzy-brained most of the time now, sure. But after all!

I can say this for myself, I didn't exactly know what I was getting into. No doubt you remember the— Well, let me start that sentence over again, because naturally there is a certain doubt. Perhaps, let's say, *perhaps* you remember the two doctors and their headline report about cigarettes and lung cancer. It hit us pretty hard at Vanden-Blumer & Silk, because we've been eating off the Mason-Dixon Tobacco account for twenty years. Just figure what our fifteen per cent amounted to on better than ten million dollars net billing a year, and you'll see that for yourself. What happened first was all to the good, because naturally the first thing that the client did was scream and reach for his checkbook and pour another couple million dollars into special promotions to counteract the bad press, but that couldn't last. And we knew it. V.B. & S. is noted in the trade as an advertising agency that takes the long

view; we saw at once that if the client was in danger, no temporary spurt of advertising was going to pull him out of it, and it was time for us to climb up on top of the old mountain and take a good long look at the countryside ahead.

The Chief called a special Plans meeting that morning and laid it on the line for us. 'There goes the old fire bell, boys,' he said, 'and it's up to us to put the fire out. I'm listening, so start talking.'

Baggot cleared his throat and said glumly, 'It may only be the paper, Chief. Maybe if they make them without paper . . .' He's the a.e. for Mason-Dixon, so you couldn't really blame him for taking the client's view.

The Chief twinkled: 'If they make them without paper they aren't cigarettes any more, are they? Let's not wander off into the side issues, boys. I'm still listening.'

None of us wanted to wander off into side issues, so we all looked patronizingly at Baggott for a minute. Finally Ellen Silk held up her hand. 'I don't want you to think,' she said, 'that just because Daddy left me a little stock I'm going to push my way into things, Mr. Vanden-Blumer, but—well, did you have in mind finding some, uh, angle to play on that would take the public's mind off the report?'

You have to admire the Chief. 'Is that your recommendation, my dear?' he inquired fondly, bouncing the ball right back to her.

She said weakly, '*I* don't know. I'm confused.'

'Naturally, my dear,' he beamed. 'So are we all. Let's see if Charley here can straighten us out a little. Eh, Charley?'

He was looking at me. I said at once, 'I'm glad you asked me for an opinion, Chief. I've been doing a little thinking, and here's what I've come up with.' I ticked off the points on my fingers. 'One, tobacco makes you cough.

Two, liquor gives you a hangover. Three, reefers and the other stuff—well, let's just say they're against the law.' I slapped the three fingers against the palm of my other hand. 'So what's left for us, Chief? That's my question. Can we come up with something new, something different, something that, one, is not injurious to the health, two, does not give you a hangover, three, is not habit-forming and therefore against the law?'

Mr. Vanden-Blumer said approvingly, 'That's good thinking, Charley. When you hear that fire bell, you really jump, boy.'

Baggott's hand was up. He said, 'Let me get this straight, Chief. Is it Charley's idea that we recommend to Mason-Dixon that they go out of the tobacco business and start making something else?'

The old man looked at him blandly for a moment. 'Why should it be Mason-Dixon?' he asked softly, and left it at that while we all thought of the very good reasons why it *shouldn't* be Mason-Dixon. After all, loyalty to a client is one thing, but you've got an obligation to your own people too.

The old man let it sink in, then he turned back to me. 'Well, Charley?' he asked. 'We've heard you pinpoint what we need. Got any specific suggestions?'

They were all looking at me to see if I had anything concrete to offer.

Unfortunately, I had.

I just asked Hazel to get me the folder on Leslie Clary Cloud, and she came in with a copy of my memo putting him on the payroll two years back. 'That's all there was in the file,' she said dreamily, her jaw muscles moving rhythmically. There wasn't any use arguing with her, so I handed her the container of lemon Coke and told her to ditch it and bring me back some *coffee,* C-O-F-F-E-E, coffee. I

tried going through the files myself when she was gone, but *that* was a waste of time.

So I'll have to tell you about Leslie Clary Cloud from memory. He came in to the office without an appointment and why Hazel ever let him in to see me I'll never know. But she did. He told me right away, 'I've been fired, Mr. McGory. Canned. After eleven years with the Wyoming Bureau of Standards as a senior chemist.'

'That's too bad, Dr. Cloud,' I said, shuffling the papers on my desk. 'I'm afraid, though, that our organization doesn't—'

'No, no,' he said hastily. 'I don't know anything about advertizing. Organic chemistry's my field. I have a, well, a suggestion for a process that might interest you. You have the Mason-Dixon Tobacco account, don't you? Well, in my work for my doctorate I—' He drifted off into a fog of long-chain molecules and short-chain molecules and pentose sugars and common garden herbs. It took me a little while, but I listened patiently and I began to see what he was driving at. There was, he was saying, a substance in a common plant which, by cauliflamming the whingdrop and di-tricolating the residual glom, or words something like that, you could convert into another substance which appeared to have many features in common with what is sometimes called hop, snow or joy-dust. In other words, dope.

I stared at him aghast. 'Dr. Cloud,' I demanded, 'do you know what you're suggesting? If we added this stuff to our client's cigarettes we'd be flagrantly violating the law. That's the most unheard of thing I ever heard of! Besides, we've already looked into this matter, and the cost estimates are—'

'No, no!' he said again. 'You don't understand, Mr. McGory. This isn't any of the drugs currently available, it's something new and different.'

'Different?'

'Non-habit-forming, for instance.'

'Non-habit-forming?'

'Totally. Chemically it is entirely unrelated to any narcotic in the pharmacopeia. Legally—well, I'm no lawyer, but I swear, Mr. McGory, this isn't covered by any regulation. No reason it should be. It doesn't hurt the user, it doesn't form a habit, it's cheap to manufacture, it—'

'Hold it,' I said, getting to my feet. 'Don't go away—I want to catch the boss before he goes to lunch.'

So I caught the boss, and he twinkled thoughtfully at me. No, he didn't want me to discuss it with Mason-Dixon just yet, and yes, it did seem to have some possibilities, and certainly, put this man on the payroll and see if he turns up with something.

So we did; and he did.

Auditing raised the roof when the vouchers began to come through, but I bucked them up to the Chief and he calmed them down. It took a lot of money, though, and it took nearly six months. But then Leslie Clary Cloud called up one morning and said, 'Come on down, Mr. McGory. We're in.'

The place we'd fixed up for him was on the lower East Side and it reeked of rotten vegetables. I made a mental note to double-check all our added-chlorophyll copy and climbed up the two flights of stairs to Cloud's private room. He was sitting at a lab bench, beaming at a row of test tubes in front of him.

'This is it?' I asked, glancing at the test tubes.

'This is it.' He smiled dreamily at me and yawned. 'Excuse me,' he blinked amiably. 'I've been sampling the little old product.'

I looked him over very carefully. He had been sampling something or other, that was clear enough. But no

whisky breath; no dilated pupils, no shakes, no nothing. He was relaxed and cheerful, and that was all you could say.

'Try a little old bit,' he invited, gesturing at the test tubes.

Well, there are times when you have to pay your dues in the club. V.B. & S. had been mighty good to me, and if I had to swallow something unfamiliar to justify the confidence the Chief had in me, why I just had to go ahead and do it. Still, I hesitated for a moment.

'Aw,' said Leslie Clary Cloud, 'don't be scared. Look, I just had a shot but I'll take another one.' He fumbled one of the test tubes out of the rack and, humming to himself, slopped a little of the colourless stuff into a beaker of some other colourless stuff—water, I suppose. He drank it down and smacked his lips. 'Tastes awful,' he observed cheerfully, 'but we'll fix that. Whee!'

I looked him over again, and he looked back at me, giggling. 'Too strong,' he said happily. 'Got it too strong. We'll fix that too.' He rattled beakers and test tubes aimlessly while I took a deep breath and nerved myself up to it.

'All right,' I said, and took the fresh beaker out of his hand. I swallowed it down almost in one gulp. It tasted terrible, just as he said, tasted like the lower floors had smelled, but that was all I noticed right away. Nothing happened for a moment except that Cloud looked at me thoughtfully and frowned.

'Say,' he said, 'I guess I should have diluted that.'

I guess he should have. *Wham.*

But a couple of hours later I was all right again.

Cloud was plenty apologetic. 'Still,' he said consolingly standing over me as I lay on the lab bench, 'it proves one thing. You had a dose about the equivalent of ten thou-

sand normal shots, and you have to admit it hasn't hurt you.'

'I do?' I asked, and looked at the doctor. *He* swung his stethoscope by the earpieces and shrugged.

'Nothing organically wrong with you, Mr. McGory—not that I can find, anyway. Euphoria, yes. Temporarily high pulse, yes. Delirium there for a little while, yes—though it was pretty mild. But I don't think you even have a headache now.'

'I don't,' I admitted. I swung my feet down and sat up, apprehensively. But no hammers started in my head. I had to confess it: I felt wonderful.

Well, between us we tinkered it into what Cloud decided would be a 'normal' dosage—just enough to make you feel good—and he saturated some sort of powder and rolled it into pellets and clamped them in a press and came out with what looked as much like aspirins as anything else. 'They'd probably work that way too,' he said. 'A psychogenic headache would melt away in five minutes with one of those.'

'We'll bear that in mind,' I said.

What with one thing and another, I couldn't get to the old man that day before he left, and the next day was the weekend and you *don't* disturb the Chief's weekends, and it was Monday evening before I could get him alone for long enough to give him the whole pitch. He was delighted.

'Dear, dear,' he twinkled. 'So much out of so little. Why, they hardly look like anything at all.'

'Try one, Chief,' I suggested.

'Perhaps I will. You checked the legal angle?'

'On the quiet. It's absolutely clean.'

He nodded and poked at the little pills with his finger. I scratched the back of my neck, trying to be politely incon-

spicuous, but the Chief doesn't miss much. He looked at me inquiringly.

'Hives,' I explained, embarrassed. 'I, uh, got an overdose the first time, but what they told me at the clinic was I set up an allergy.'

'Allergy?' Mr. Vander-Blumer looked at me thoughtfully. 'We don't want to spread allergies with this stuff, do we?'

'Oh, no danger of that, Chief. It's Cloud's fault, in a way; he handed me an undiluted dose of the stuff, and I drank it down. The clinic was very positive about that: Even twenty or thirty times the normal dose won't do you any harm.'

'Um.' He rolled one of the pills in his finger and thumb and sniffed it thoughtfully. 'How long are you going to have your hives?'

'They'll go away. I just have to keep away from the stuff. I wouldn't have them now, but—well, I liked it so much I tried another shot yesterday.' I coughed, and added, 'It works out pretty well, though. You see the advantages, of course, Chief. I have to give it up, and I can swear that there's no craving, no shakes, no kick-off symptoms, no nothing. I, well, I wish I could enjoy it like anyone else, sure. But I'm here to testify that Cloud told the simple truth: It isn't habit-forming.'

'Um,' he said again; and that was the end of the discussion.

Oh, the Chief is a cagey man. He gave me my orders: Keep my mouth shut about it. I have an idea that he was waiting to see what happened to my hives, and whether any craving would develop, and what the test series on animals and Cloud's Bowery-derelict volunteers would show. But even more, I think he was waiting until the time was exactly, climatically right.

Like at the Plans meeting, the day after the doctors' report and the panic at Mason-Dixon.

And that's how Cheery-Gum was born.

Hazel just came in with the cardboard container from the drug store, and I could tell by looking at it—no steam coming out from under the lid, beads of moisture clinging to the sides—that it wasn't the coffee I ordered. 'Hey!' I yelled after her as she was dreamily waltzing through the door. 'Come back here!'

'Sure 'nough, Massa,' she said cheerfully, and two-stepped back. 'S'matter?'

I took a grip on my temper. 'Open that up,' I ordered. 'Take a look at what's in it.'

She smiled at me and plopped the lid off the container. Half the contents spilled across my desk. 'Oh, dear,' said Hazel, 'excuse me while I get a cloth.'

'Never mind the cloth,' I said, mopping at the mess with my handkerchief. 'What's in there?'

She gazed wonderingly into the container for a moment; then she said, 'Oh, *honestly*, boss! I see what you mean. Those idiots in the drug store, they're gummed up higher than a kite, morning, noon and night. I always say, if you can't handle it, you shouldn't touch it during working hours. I'm sorry about this, boss. No lemon! How can they call it a lemon Coke when they forgot the—'

'Hazel,' I said, 'what I wanted was coffee. Coffee.'

She looked at me. 'You mean *I* got it wrong? Oh, I'm sorry, Mr. McGory. I'll go right down and get it now.' She smiled repentantly and hummed her way towards the door. With her hand on the knob, she stopped and turned to look at me. 'All the same, boss,' she said, 'that's a funny combination. Coffee *and* Coke. But I'll see what I can do.'

And she was gone, to bring me heaven knows what incredible concoction. But what are you going to do?

No, that's no answer. I know it's what *you* would do. But it makes me break out in hives.

The first week we were delighted, the second week we were triumphant, the third week we were millionaires.

The sixth week I skulked along the sidewalks all the way across town and down, to see Leslie Clary Cloud. Even so I almost got it when a truckdriver dreamily piled into the glass front of a saloon a yard or two behind me.

When I saw Cloud sitting at his workbench, feet propped up, hands clasped behind his head, eyes half-closed, I could almost have kissed him. For his jaws were not moving. Alone in New York, except for me, he wasn't chewing Cheery-Gum.

'Thank heaven!' I said sincerely.

He blinked and smiled at me. 'Mr. McGory,' he said in a pleasant drawl. 'Nice of you.'

His manner disturbed me, and I looked more closely. 'You're not—you're not gummed up, are you?'

He said gently, 'Do I look gummed up? I never chew the stuff.'

'Good!' I unfolded the newspaper I had carried all the way from Madison Avenue and showed him the inside pages—the ones that were not a mere smear of ink. 'See here, Cloud. Planes crashing into Radio City. Buses driving off the George Washington Bridge. Ships going aground at the Battery. We did it, Cloud, you and I!'

'Oh, I wouldn't get upset about it, old man,' he said comfortably. 'All local, isn't it?'

'Isn't that bad enough? And it isn't local—it can't be. It's just that there isn't any communication outside the city any more—outside of any city, I guess. The shipments of Cheery-Gum, that's all that ever gets delivered

anywhere. Because that's all anybody cares about any more, and we did it, you and I!'

He said sympathetically, 'That's too bad, McGory.'

'Curse you!' I shrieked at him. 'You said it wasn't a drug! You said it wasn't habit-forming! You said—'

'Now, now,' he said with gentle firmness. 'Why not chew a stick yourself?'

'Because I can't! It gives me hives!'

'Oh, that's right.' He looked self-reproachful. 'Well,' he said dreamily at last, 'I guess that's about the size of it, McGory.' He was staring at the ceiling again.

'*What* is?'

'What is what?'

'What's about the— Oh, the devil with it. Cloud, you got us into this, you have to get us out of it. There must be some way of curing this habit.'

'But there isn't any habit to cure, McGory,' he pointed out.

'But there is!'

'Tem-per,' he said waggishly, and took a corked test tube out of his workbench. He drank it down, every drop, and tossed the tube in a wastebasket. 'You see?' he demanded severely. '*I* don't chew Cheery-Gum.'

So I appealed to a Higher Authority.

In the eighteenth century I would have gone to the Church, in the nineteenth, to the State. I went to an office fronting on Central Park where the name on the bronze plaque was *Theodor Yust, Analyst.*

It wasn't easy. I almost walked out on him when I saw that his jaws were chewing as rhythmically as his secretary's. But Cloud's concoction is not, as he kept saying, a drug, and though it makes you relax and makes you happy and, if you take enough of it, makes you drunk, it doesn't make you unfit to talk to. So I took a grip on my

temper, the only bad temper left, and told him what I wanted.

He laughed at me—in the friendliest way. 'Put a stop to Cheery-Gum? Mr. McGory!'

'But the plane crashes—'

'No more suicides, Mr. McGory!'

'The train wrecks—'

'Not a murder or a mugging in the whole city in a month.'

I said hopelessly, 'But it's *wrong!*'

'Ah,' he said in the tone of a discoverer, 'now we come down to it. Why is it wrong, Mr. McGory?'

That was the second time I almost walked out. But I said, 'Let's get one thing straight: I don't want you digging into my problems. That's not why I'm here. Cheery-Gum *is* wrong, and I am *not* biased against it. You can take a detached view of collisions and sudden death if you want to, but what about slow death? All over the city, all over the country, people are lousing up their jobs. Nobody cares. Nobody does anything but go through the motions. They're happy. What happens when they get hungry because the farmers are feeling too good to put in their crops?'

He sighed patiently. He took the wad of gum out of his mouth, rolled it neatly into a Kleenex and dropped it in the wastebasket. He took a fresh stick out of a drawer and unwrapped it, but stopped when he saw me looking at him. He chuckled. 'Rather I didn't, Mr. McGory? Well, why not oblige you? It's not habit-forming, after all.' He dropped the gum back into the drawer and said: 'Answering your questions, they won't starve. The farmers are farming, the workers are working, the policemen are policing, and I'm analyzing. And you're worrying. Why? Work's getting done.'

'But my secretary—'

'Forget about your secretary, Mr. McGory. Sure, she's a little fuzzy-brained, a little absent-minded. Who isn't? But she comes to work, because why shouldn't she?'

'Sure she does, but—'

'But she's happy. Let her be happy, Mr. McGory!'

I looked scandalized at him. 'You, a doctor! How can you say that? Suppose *you* were fuzzy-brained and so on when a patient desperately needed—'

He stopped me. 'In the past three weeks,' he said gently, 'you're the first to come in that door.'

I changed tack: 'All right, you're an analyst. What about a G.P. or surgeon?'

He shrugged. 'Perhaps,' he conceded, 'perhaps in one case out of a thousand—somebody hurt in an accident, say—he'd get to the hospital too late, or the surgeon would make some little mistake. Perhaps. Not even one in a thousand—one in a million, maybe. But Cheery-Gum isn't a drug. A quarter-grain of sodium amytol, and your surgeon's as good as new.' Absent-mindedly he reached into the drawer for the stick of gum.

'And you say,' I said accusingly, 'that it's not habit-forming!'

He stopped with his hand halfway to his mouth. 'Well,' he said wryly, 'it *is* a habit. Don't confuse semantics, Mr. McGory. It is not a narcotic addiction. If my supply were cut off this minute, I would feel bad—as bad as if I couldn't play bridge any more for some reason, and no worse.' He put the stick of gum away again and rummaged through the bottom drawers of his desk until he found a dusty pack of cigarettes. 'Used to smoke three packs a day,' he wheezed, choking on the first drag.

He wiped his streaming eyes. 'You know, Mr. McGory,' he said sharply, 'you're a bit of a prig. You don't want people to be happy.'

'I—'

He stopped me before I could work up a full explosion, 'Wait! Don't think that you're the only person who thinks about what's good for the world. When I first heard of Cheery-Gum, I worried.' He stubbed the cigarette out distastefully, still talking, 'Euphoria is well and good, I said, but what about emergencies? And I looked around, and there weren't any. Things were getting done, maybe slowly and erratically, but they were getting done. And then I said, on a high moral plane, that's well and good, but what about the ultimate destiny of man? Should the world be populated by cheerful near-morons? And that worried me, until I began looking at my patients.' He smiled reflectively. 'I had 'em all, Mr. McGory. You name it. I had it coming in to see me twice a week. The worst wrecks of psyches you ever heard of, twisted and warped and destroying themselves; and they stopped. They stopped eating themselves up with worry and fear and tension, and then they weren't my patients any more. And what's more, they weren't morons. Give them a stimulus, they respond. Interest them, they react. I played bridge the other night with a woman who was catatonic last month; we had to put the first stick of gum in her mouth. She beat the hell out of me, Mr. McGory. I had a mathematician coming here who—well, never mind. It was bad. He's happy as a clam, and the last time I saw him he had finished a paper he began two years ago, and couldn't touch. Stimulate them—they respond. When things are dull—Cheery-Gum. What could be better?'

I looked at him dully, and said, 'So you can't help me.'

'I didn't say that. Do you want me to help you?'

'Certainly!'

'Then answer my question: Why don't you chew a stick yourself?'

'Because I can't!' It all tumbled out, the Plans meeting and Leslie Clary Cloud and the little beaker that hadn't

been diluted and the hives. 'A terrific allergy,' I emphasized. 'Even antihistamines didn't help. They said at the clinic that the antibiotics formed after a massive initial—'

He said comfortably, 'Soma over psyche, eh? Well, what would you expect? But believe me, Mr. McGory, allergies are psychogenic. Now if you'll just—'

Well, if you can't lick 'em, join 'em, that's what the old man used to say.

But I can't join them. Theodor Yust offered me an invitation, but I guess I was pretty rude to him. And when, at last, I went back, to crawl and apologize, there was a scrawled piece of cardboard over the bronze nameplate; it said: *Gone fishing.*

I tried to lay it on the line with the Chief. I opened the door of the Plans room, and there he was with Baggott and Wayber, from Mason-Dixon. They were sitting there whittling out model ships, and so intent on what they were doing that they hardly noticed me. After a while the Chief said idly, 'Bankrupt yet?' And moments passed, and Wayber finally replied, in an absent-minded tone:

'Guess so. Have to file some papers or something.' And they went on with their whittling.

So I spoke sharply to them, and the minute they looked up and saw me, it was like the Rockettes: The hands into the pockets, the paper being unwrapped, the gum into the mouth. And naturally I couldn't make any sense with them after that. So what are you going to do?

No! I can't!

Hazel hardly comes in to see me any more, even. I bawled her out for it—what would happen, I demanded, if I suddenly had to answer a letter. But she only smiled dreamily at me. 'There hasn't been a letter in a month,' she pointed out amiably. 'Don't worry, though. If any-

thing comes up, I'll be with you in a flash. This stuff isn't a habit with me, I can stop it any time, you just say the word and ol' Hazel'll be there. . . .'

And she's right because, when you get right down to it, there's the trouble. It isn't a habit.

So how can you break it?

You can stop Cheery-Gum any time. You can stop it this second, or five minutes from now, or tomorrow.

So why worry about it?

It's completely voluntary, entirely under your control; it won't hurt you, it won't make you sick.

I wish Theodor Yust would come back. Or maybe I'll just cut my throat.

Pipe Dream

CHRIS MILLER

'GRASS? ACID? REDS?' The voice belonged to a gaunt, stringy-haired character crouched in the doorway of a head shop that had closed for the night. I needed grass, all right, so I gave him a second look, but it confirmed my initial impression—a creep. Sixth Avenue is full of creeps these days.

'Which did you want?' I said, starting to dig through my pockets. The guy gave me a confused look and walked away muttering.

I continued on up the street to visit my friend Bobby. If I told you Bobby's real name, you'd recognize it immediately, since today he's a famous and revolutionary sculptor. Then, however, on that final day before the green pellets, he was what he'd always been, a starving craftsman who eked out a living selling his copper jewellery to tourists. He had recently announced the invention of a perfect roach clip, also made from copper, and it was this that I was going to see him about. With Christmas a week away, I planned to buy a bunch of them to give as presents. Under the depressed conditions of my personal finances, they were about all I could afford.

In the time it took to walk another two blocks, I was hassled by a second dealer, a salesman of radical newspapers, a phony fund solicitor 'for Phoenix House,' and at least seventeen panhandlers of all ages and colours. The

Village used to be a hell of a lot of fun, but these days it's like walking through an old 'Terry and the Pirates' strip. Longtime residents don't like it much, but what can you do? I usually keep my mouth shut, ignore the ubiquitous pleas for bread, and walk where I'm going.

That's why I was a little surprised at myself when a longhair approached me at Thirteenth Street and I stopped to listen to his story.

'I'm from Colorado, man. Me and my old lady, Sunshine, are on our way home from a rock festival up in Boston and we ran out of bread. All we need is fuel for our van. Any spare change you got would sure help.'

There was a special tone in his voice that seemed to say, *Hey, man, I'm not like all these hustlers; this is straight ahead.* I figured him to be about my age, which is twenty-five. He had shoulder-length blond hair and wore a dark, shapeless cloak. His eyes got me. They were deep, blue, and friendly, and, unlike New York eyes, they looked right at you. His being from Colorado didn't hurt either, since I had travelled there during the previous summer and the mountain freaks had treated me well.

'How was the festival?' I asked, still checking him out.

'Out of sight, man. My group got to go on right before Van Morrison, which is like really good exposure for us.'

'Group?'

'Yeah, that's right. I play lead guitar and sing. My name's Norman.' He stuck out his hand and gave me the Movement handshake.

He was definitely getting to me now. I was a musician myself, also a guitarist and, I hoped, a songwriter ... though I'd been doing little enough of the former and none of the latter in recent days. Anyway, broke or not, I decided to give the dude a hand.

'Well, lookit, Norman,' I said, 'I'd like to lay some bread on you, but I don't have any change.' I pointed to

the Goin' Chicken Crazy stand across the street. 'Why don't we go in there and eat something. Then I can hit you up with some funds. You must be starved anyway if you're saving all your money for gas.'

'Well, yeah, you know . . .' He smiled and shrugged his shoulders. Soon we were sitting at a much-carved table and an Oriental chick wearing an Afro (if you can dig that) was setting two tubs of fried drumsticks in front of us. I handed her the twenty I was carrying for the roach clips and turned to Norman just in time to see him bite off half a drumstick, bone and all, and sit there chewing it happily with loud crunching sounds. I watched, mouth hanging open, waiting for him to begin picking splinters from his gums, but instead he swallowed the entire mouthful and began on the other half of the leg. Did he know something I didn't? I tried a tentative crunch on one of my own drumsticks and almost chipped an incisor.

'Uh, how you do that, man?'

Norman looked first uncomprehending, then rueful. He went into a long story about how his digestive system was very unusual and he'd still be in a hospital hassled with curious doctors and radioactive cobalt solutions if he hadn't split a few years ago. I told him I could understand such physical peculiarities, having once had a friend who could pour a sixteen-ounce can of beer directly down his throat without swallowing, and that he could count on me not to mention his strange digestive trip to any doctors I might meet. We finished our meal in great friendliness, and when the waitress returned with my change, I handed Norman a five-dollar bill.

'Wow.' He looked at it like he couldn't believe it was real, then took it reverently and slipped it under his cloak. 'Hey, you're really beautiful, man. Maybe there's something I can do for you.' His eyes locked with mine, then

he bent forward confidentially. 'How'd you like to score some dynamite shit?'

Suddenly I was on my guard. Sure I could use grass. In fact, I was desperate for it: dealing grass was how I was paying rent while waiting for my songs to come together and I hadn't been able to score in over a month. But what Norman had just done was initiate a street deal, and it is axiomatic that 99 percent of street deals are burns. This was especially true during the long, miserable dope drought that prevailed in the city at that time. Kids over in Washington Square were asking twenty-five and thirty dollars for bags of catnip—and getting it. My last buy, arranged by a supposedly trusted associate, had been negotiated on a grungy stairwell with two twitching spades. I wound up with a pound of stuff that looked like spinach, tasted like Newark, and could maybe have stoned an anemic parakeet.

'Is it good shit?' I asked cautiously.

'Yeah, man. It's great shit. We grow it ourselves.' He smiled.

Well, naturally he'd say that. Next he'd probably ask me to front the money.

'Look, you don't have to front us nothing, man,' said Norman pleasantly. 'I can lay a taste on you now and call tomorrow to find out if you want to do any.'

That sounded okay. I said so, and he took an empty cigarette pack from the table and drew it under his cloak. Apparently he carried his stash in his pants, because he had to dig around some and even lift himself up slightly to get at it. Eventually he made the transference; the pack reappeared folded neatly at the top, bulging provocatively as a woman. I put aside my doubts for the time being, scribbled my phone number on a paper napkin and handed it to him. Outside, we wished each other peace and headed in separate directions. I hadn't gone ten steps

when I heard him calling after me. I turned and saw him holding up the five.

'How I get this changed into nickels?' he shouted. I was taking a breath to reply when he shouted again. 'Right! Got it! See ya!' He waved, turned and walked away. I scratched my head. Norman was a weird dude.

The roach clips turned out to be beautiful and only two bucks apiece. I purchased several, Bobby brought out a gallon of Chianti, and we sat down to rap. The jewellery business was going well enough, he supposed, but his old lady had split to a commune upstate and he was very down about that. After several more glasses I pointed out that at least he was working, which was something. That brought us to my woes: my continuing inability to get my song-writing together, the greased-pig aspect of recent dope deals, and the waning of my funds. Bobby told me that the road to Karma was paved with red-hot pokers. I asked him what the hell that meant. Bobby wasn't sure, so we put on a pile of records, including several fine sides into which we deeply went. Several hours later I opened my eyes to the sound of a slamming door. A crying girl was shrugging off her back-pack in the hall.

'Francine!' cried Bobby.

I staggered home.

I woke late in the morning to discover I had all my clothes on, a wine hangover, and an orange cat lying on my face, purring. In quick succession I threw Booger on the floor, my clothes on a chair, and up. In one of those over-the-toilet resolutions, I promised myself once again to stick to drugs and leave the hard stuff to people who could handle it.

After yoga, a shower, and breakfast, I felt half human again. I decided to see if the muse was with me that

morning. She wasn't. The only good thing I did with my guitar in an hour and a half was to flip its nylon cord over the wall screw in kind of a neat way as I was hanging it back up. I drank a soda and wondered what to do next. The mail, containing an exterminator bill for $10.66, arrived. Abruptly, I remembered Norman.

The cigarette pack was still in last night's pants. I emptied the contents onto a piece of clean, white paper, put it under my high intensity lamp and examined it.

Well, it was the damnedest-looking grass I'd ever seen. Instead of buds or leaves or even twigs, I had a pile of small, green pellets. Colorado green pellet grass? It exuded an elusive aroma, kind of sweet, that made me flash on farms and countryside. Maybe alfalfa or honeysuckle. Not that it mattered. Apparently, the entire deal was a practical joke; the little bastards were probably rigged to explode when lit . . . though I doubted it from the look of them: they suggested slightly decomposed marzipan peas. I dropped the entire mess in the garbage.

Thirty seconds later I remembered reading about certain new strains of cannabis, mutations of the female plant that looked totally different from all previous grasses and could send your brain to Oz for a vacation. Swearing loudly enough to scare Booger out of the room, I stalked back to the garbage pail and began to pick pellets. When I had a small pile, I reached for my pipe.

You'll find a great variety of pipes in use these days: water pipes, stone pipes, hookahs, clay pipes, metal-plumbing-fixture pipes, even clear glass pipes of coiled tubing like the fancy lemonade straws of ailing children. For my money, not one of them touches a plain, old corncob such as is purchasable at your corner tobacconist's. Forget head shops. Head shops will sell anything; they're worse than Harlem furniture stores. Head shops are becoming the downtown equivalent of those arcade novelty shops that

sell cocktail coasters shaped like breasts and bottletop pour-plugs topped by cute, peeing children. Myself, I use a beat-up wooden number that cost 59 cents at Woolworth's, where it was a real Indian Peace Pipe. It's painted yellow and has a deep bowl into which I periodically fit fresh faucet screens to keep the stem clear. I don't think it has much class, but I've never seen a pipe that could touch it for soul.

The pellets were sticky to the touch. Extra-thick resins, I told myself hopefully, and lit up. To my surprise, the pellets burned smoothly and emitted a smoke both cool and sweet, which was more than I could say for some grass I'd smoked. Usually I'm a cougher, but not with that stuff. It was *mellow*. So far, so good. Then, on the third toke, I began to feel effects.

Now, I'd smoked a pile of weed in my time, many kinds from many places. I'd smoked green weed, brown weed, black weed, red weed, and yellow weed from the United States, Mexico, Jamaica, Colombia, Morocco, Turkey, Lebanon, and Vietnam. I'd been stoned eating, playing guitar, sleeping, reading, and making love, in depression and in mania, and in conjunction with every other drug I'd ever been able to get my hands on. I'd rushed on mescaline, roller-coasted on acid, and rocketed on DMT. I'd zizzed on ups and nodded on downs. Psilocybin had put me in an endless Walt Disney cartoon. Peyote had showed me unparalleled religious visions the entire time I was throwing up. A concoction of parsley soaked in ether and bull tranquillizer, perversely called angel dust, had caused me to become trapped in a Che Guevara poster for three hours. On a beach, under a double tab of purple mescaline, I had attained oneness with the All and spoken to God. On cocaine, I had *become* God.

But, as I finished my third toke on the dope of the

bone-eating dude from Colorado, I realized I'd never been high before.

How can I tell you? All traces of hangover vanished. Certain aches and muscle strains so familiar as to be unnoticed disappeared suddenly and shockingly, and my body filled with a grace and power I had never before known. I was lithe panther and massive grizzly bear, Rudolf Nureyev and Big Daddy Lipscomb, quicksilver motorcycle and twenty-ton truck. My blood sang; rhythm surged through my vitals.

I rushed to my guitar and pulled it from the wall, inadvertently plucking the bass E. It hummed like a roomful of Hindus. My apartment casually shattered into a million tiny shards, which melted and slowly coalesced into a pregnant sac of jewelled fog. It pulsed, swelled, and finally exploded soundlessly, flinging gobs of color like comets in all directions. When the room reappeared, it was a place transformed, filled with sudden warmth and unsuspected brightnesses.

Wonderingly, I realized that my guitar was weightless. My light grasp was necessary only to keep it from floating away. I ran an experimental finger across the strings.

Imagine a tidal wave of iron balls breaking upon six great coastal rocks that have been tuned like chimes. Multiply by a few thousand and you're starting to get warm.

I played. Eyes closed, I saw plucked notes streak away from me in glowing trajectories as a tiny machine-gunner dug in behind my optic nerve fired burst after burst of tracers into the blackness of my eyelids. My senses concentrated in my ears and fingertips; I was alone in a world of pure sound. I walked through chords hanging in space like lattices, examining, questioning, synthesizing. An unheard of but thoroughly possible new chordal dynamic was slowly forming in my mind. I stopped, concentrated, began playing again.

The song started slowly, like rain. It grew, it built, it became a torrent and then a deluge. Sheets of notes swept the room and the air was drenched with splashing dissonances. I felt close to drowning. In a grand crescendo, the storm broke, subsided and vanished. Peace came.

And this was on three hits!

Either I'd just flipped out or I was in possession of the most super dope ever to hit New York. Confirmation was needed. I grabbed the pipe and flew down the stairs to Alan's studio.

Alan answered his door in towel and shaving lather. I guess I was a little excited because he stepped back in alarm as I charged in waving my pipe around my head and exclaiming inarticulately. Finally, I shut up and thrust the pipe towards him. He regarded it suspiciously.

'I assume you wish me to smoke this?'

I made an affirmative noise.

'What is it?'

I shrugged.

'What's it going to do to me?'

I rolled my eyes and broke into a carefree shuffle.

'I'm not so sure I'm ready for anything like that this morning.' He started back towards the bathroom, but I caught him by the arm.

'For this, you've been waiting a lifetime. Come on, man, three tokes.'

'Well, perhaps three tokes.' Alan took the pipe. I watched closely. I could see from his face that he was damned if he'd be impressed by *any* dope this early in the day. And he did stay pretty cool: it took four whole tokes before the pipe fell out of his hand.

'My God,' he cried, leaping to his feet, 'every cell of my body has a hard-on!'

'Yeah?' That was a good sign.

'My room! My room!' He strode rapidly about,

touching things. Then he grabbed me by my shoulders and shouted, 'I *love* me!'

'Alan,' I suggested casually, 'try some drawing.'

His eyes lit to the idea. Alan was a dropout lawyer whose consuming ambition was to be an artist. He had always dug drawing the grey old men who occupied the benches in Sheridan Square ... which was fine, except that all his drawings wound up being of grey old men and so depressing no one would buy them. I had a strange feeling that today's drawing would not be a downer.

Alan spread open his pad and began to draw. The rear end of a boat began to take form. The felt-tip pen flew over the paper. The boat became a flag and grew to encompass fifty pointed frogs. Behind them appeared sweeping ramps on which entire amphibious populations ascended into swollen, lightning-charged clouds.

'My God, man,' Alan shouted without looking up, 'I've never done this before. Do you see my hand? Look what I'm drawing!'

Rain from the clouds caused lush plants to grow. One of them sprouted a fat, red tomato that fell onto the head of a girl in a Little Lulu dress. I couldn't tell if it actually *was* Little Lulu because the tomato was large and had enveloped her head. From one upraised hand she emitted beams of textured light so that the picture became divided into individually characterized pie wedges. A sea formed, with waves of molten metal cresting in incandescent spume.

Four tokes.

'Alan, I gotta go.' It was almost noon and now for sure I didn't want to miss a certain phone call. I stood up.

'Hey, you got any more of that stuff?' Beneath Little Lulu's feet a carpet of wheeled peacocks was forming.

'Check me later,' I called over my shoulder. I made the stairs three at a time, slammed my door, and sat down at

my desk. As if it had been waiting politely for my return, the phone began to ring. It was Norman.

'What's the matter, man? You sound out of breath.'

'No . . . always sound that way on the phone . . . Norman, what the hell was that stuff you gave me?'

'Uh, better not talk about it on the phone, man. Did you want to buy any?'

'Well, how much do you have?'

'About a hundred.'

'My God! You've got a hundred lids of that stuff?'

'No, man. Keys.'

I had to put my head between my legs to keep from fainting. I was afraid to ask the next question.

'How much per key?'

'Twenty, man.'

'Twenty? Why, that's fantastic. I haven't heard of twenty-dollar keys since I was in—'

'No, man. Twenty nickels.'

'Twenty nickles? You mean one dollar? Per key?'

'That's right, man.'

'Norman . . . Norman, what are you doing? You can't sell dope for a dollar a key. Wretched Mexican farmers can't sell dope for a dollar a key.'

'I could knock it down a little. . . .'

'NORMAN! WILL YOU STOP FUCKING WITH MY HEAD?'

'Jeez, you New York guys sure are speedy.'

I closed my eyes and forced myself to calm down. 'Norman, what exactly do you want to do?'

'Okay. You tell me how many keys you want. I'll put 'em in a bag and we can meet somewhere tonight. You know Nathan's at Eighth Street? Well, we can meet there. You check the weed, hand me the bread, and we split, okay? So how much you want?'

'At a dollar a key?'

'Right. In nickels.'

Suddenly I felt that I was being drawn inexorably into some classic dealer trap, familiar and obvious to everyone but me. Nonetheless, the shit was too good to risk missing. I consulted my chequebook. I had—$129. And in my pockets $11.21. Well, at least when I got ripped off, I wouldn't lose much.

'Norman, I'll take ten keys.' Ten keys meant three hundred forty lids. God.

'Out of sight, man. Listen. I'll call you when it's time. Sunshine and me gotta, uh, get our shit together so we can leave for home right after we deal you the stuff.'

'Fine.' I'd sell it just in ounces to keep the price up. For dope like this I ought to be able to get a hundred bucks per. In fact, a hundred bucks was a steal. Two grams of cocaine cost that much and cocaine wasn't even in the same league.

'Well, okay man, I'll see you later.'

'Fine.' Probably ought to keep, oh, forty lids for myself. That left three hundred lids at one hundred bucks each. So I'd gross . . . thirty thousand bucks?

'Norman, I'll take the whole hundred!'

I was talking to the dial tone. Oh, well. Maybe I could borrow enough to buy the rest, but what the hell? With forty lids of musical inspiration and thirty thousand bucks to support me in the meantime, I couldn't complain. I ran across the street to the supermarket and came home with two hundred nickels. Then I fed Booger and sat down to wait.

The hours dragged by like cripples. Friends called several times but I shooed them off the line. By ten o'clock, I was worried. By twelve, I was beside myself. At two, I concluded I had been had. Then the phone rang.

'Hey, it's me, man. Meet me in five minutes, okay?'

I grabbed my coat and tore out the door.

You haven't lived until you've visited Nathan's at 2:15 in the morning. Garish white light washes every face into a mask. Music is supplied by a large transistor radio belonging to the hot-dog chef; it laces the room alternately with Latino fire and static. The countermen look like stilettos.

Norman was not in evidence. I purchased an order of stuffed derma and found a spot by the window next to a huge, totally bald guy with a scar like a zipper up his cheek. You stand at Nathan's, at elbow-high tables with formica tops. Mine was an artist's palette of ketchup blobs, mustard pools and spilled coffee. I waited.

The minutes passed. A hooker told a drunk sailor to kiss off. Three guys in motorcycle jackets and chains ordered hamburgers and defended the hamburger man against all other customers until he had cooked and handed them their food. People eyed one another.

I was starting on my third birch-beer when I spotted Norman coming down Eighth Street. The neon made his long hair look almost white against his dark cloak. He was carrying a shopping bag.

'What's happening, man?' We shook hands. 'Go ahead, man. Take a look.' I did. The bag was filled to the top with green pellets. They looked beautiful.

I handed Norman a small paper bag containing the nickels. He looked inside, smiled, told me to take it easy and split. I watched his retreating back in a kind of euphoria. I had made some good deals in my time, but this went beyond anything I had ever conceived of.

Then I smote my forehead angrily. Why hadn't I asked him for his address? After he got home to Colorado we could deal through the mail. I grabbed the bag of dope and set out after him.

It was three o'clock and the street traffic was thinning out. Norman was easy to spot with his blond hair flying in

the wind. I decided not to run right up to him but to follow and see where he went. At his van I could get the address and meet his old lady too.

Norman didn't go to a van. You know Cooper Square? There's a sculpture there, a large metal cube tilted up on one of its points, affixed to the concrete and allowed to spin. Norman walked into the cube.

If I'd been a cartoon character, little black lines would have emitted from my head at that point. Cooper Square was empty. Norman was gone. The cube turned slightly in a gust of wind, crying like a metal kitten.

I stood watching it stupidly for several minutes, but nothing changed. I started home. The cube creaked again behind me. I slowed and turned to look at it over my shoulder. So what could a little peek hurt? I walked over and reached out to touch the spot where he'd disappeared.

'What do you say, man?' said Norman. I must have jumped halfway up the cube. I'd heard his voice but there was nobody there.

'Don't let it hassle you, man. I'm talking inside your head. No, wait. Come on in and I'll explain.'

With no sense of transition, I was inside the cube. There was a candle burning and in its ample light I could see Norman and a healthy-looking blonde girl seated on a structural crosspiece.

'Hey, how you doin'? Meet my old lady, Sunshine.'

Sunshine smiled sunnily. I nodded to her in what I hoped was a friendly fashion, trying to collect my thoughts.

'Jesus, can't you cool out your mind a little?' asked Norman. 'I'm getting a headache trying to follow you. Here, have a hit on this.'

He handed me a joint, normal grass type, and I had quite a few hits. Norman smiled.

'That's better. Now I'll answer all your questions. Yes,

I can "read your mind." I've been reading it since I met you, except on the phone, of course. See, we're not actually from Colorado.'

I must have had an angry thought. He held up a hand.

'Oh, we're from a place *like* Colorado—at least the Colorado I see in your memories—only it's a few trillion light years, several thousand year years, away from here. Yeah, right, this isn't what we really look like. If we switched back to our normal forms, you'd throw up. I mean that literally, by the way. Having dug where your mind is at, I can guarantee you'd blow your lunch all over the place if we ever—'

'Never mind,' I said. 'I'd rather not know.'

'Okay. Now you're wondering who we are and where we're going. Well, it's like I told you before, man. We been to a festival and we're on our way home. No, not exactly a rock festival. More like a festival of fluids and temperatures. You'd get a better idea of what I'm talking about if you knew our true forms, but, like I said, you'd retch your guts out if we—'

'All right, all right. I get the idea.'

'Yeah. So anyway, we were at this festival. Like your Woodstock, you know, only a whole planet, if you can dig that. Sunshine and me were trying to split . . .'

'Along with about a trillion other entities,' laughed Sunshine.

'. . . and all the main teleport lanes were jammed, so we took a side lane. It was an out-of-the-way route, but it would've got us home just fine . . . if we hadn't run out of fuel, that is. So we materialized on this weird planet. We checked our *Whole Universe Catalogue* on what to do, and it told us to watch the natives and learn how they acquire bread. Hey, man, you were only the second human I panhandled. I did pretty good, huh?' He held up the bag

I had given him and shook it so it jingled. 'Nickel, man—our supershell!'

So that explained the nickels. 'But where's your van? It's not this cube, is it?'

'No, man, we're just crashing here. *This* is our van.' He held out a plain black slab the size of an abridged dictionary. It didn't look very impressive.

'I'll show you how it works,' said Norman. He let pour a stream of nickels from the bag onto the top of the slab, where they disappeared without sound or ripple.

I saw a strange waveriness begin at their feet and move slowly upwards, as if Norman and Sunshine were being gradually lowered into a pool of water. 'Norman,' I said, 'I can dig the planet festival, and I can dig that you can read my mind, but what I can't dig is how anyone can grow grass like this.'

Norman and Sunshine exchanged looks. Sunshine giggled.

'Uh, funny you should mention that, man. Yes, I could really see how that question could have you wondering. And it is a good question, too. Yes indeed, a very good question. . . .'

'Norman, when are you going to start saying something?' They had disappeared up to their knees by now; I wasn't sure how much longer they'd be with me.

'Uh, yeah. Well, I never exactly said it was grass, if you remember. And I told you about my digestive system, right? We're all like that; we can eat anything. Since we've been here we've eaten everything from cigar butts to light bulbs. But there's more. Uh, I'm sure this is going to be hard for you to dig man. Again, seeing my real body would help, but you'd definitely leave stuffed derma plastered all over. . . .'

'Never mind!' Their thighs, on the horizontal, had just

disappeared in a rush. The invisible pool crawled up their middles. 'Just tell me how you produce the dope!'

'Uh . . . biologically.'

'You mean . . . you make these pellets inside your bodies?'

'Uh, yeah, you could say that.'

'Norman, in what manner do these pellets emerge from your bodies?'

'Ah . . . through a small orifice . . . located at the lower end of the, uh . . . torso?'

'Norman, you mean the shit is shit?'

'You're fuckin' A it's shit,' laughed Sunshine. 'We must have eaten half the garbage on St. Mark's Place last night to produce it.'

'But . . .'

'You got to admit, it's dynamite shit,' said Norman.

He had me there.

'See, we can induce in our tastes any properties we want. In this case, we keyed it to your species, for mind expansion and euphoria. Naturally, it's nonaddictive. Which is a good thing, since we won't be around to produce any more.

'But don't worry about running out too soon, man,' said Sunshine. 'Tell him, Norman.'

'Oh yeah,' said Norman. They were now no more than heads hanging in the air. 'See, we had no idea how much you'd want. Remember I said we had a hundred keys? You took ten and, well, we had no use for ninety kilos of our own turds, so while you and me was at Nathan's, Sunshine was dropping them off at your pad. You're *flush,* man!'

The water topped their heads and their faces became all wavery. The last thing I saw before they blinked out was big grins and, I swear to God, a peace sign from each.

Then, somehow, I was out on the street in the grey, gathering dawn.

My subsequent sale was the grandest in the history of dealing. I kept five keys for myself, layed one each on Alan and Bobby, and sold the rest in a week. I'm not going to tell you how much I made, but I haven't spent it yet, not by a long shot.

As to my song-writing, I became even more brilliant and prolific than I had fantasized, but soon realized that I would never attain pre-eminent superstardom. You see, at least fifty other musicians, including seventeen guitarists, naturally purchased pieces of Norman's dope and moved into highly personalized explorations of their own, each as interesting and acclaimed as my own. Not to mention the shocking recent advancements in painting, sculpture, film, literature, photography and the rest. *The Village Voice* calls it the greatest explosion in the arts since the Renaissance, and for all I know, it just may be.

So I'm just one among many, merely a small part of the strange wave of creative genius that stunned the world in the early 1970s. In retrospect, this suits me fine. Superstars really have had their day, and anyway, I carry with me the satisfaction of having pulled off a deal that will never be equalled. It's rather like having run a three-minute mile.

Incidentally, one dealer from Brooklyn refused to buy from me. He looked at the stuff, poked it, sniffed it, wrinkled his nose, and told me that in his opinion I'd been burned.

I told him he didn't know shit.

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