

OCTOBER 25¢

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ANC

## ADVENTURES



WITCH OF THE ANDES

by RICHARD S. SHAVER



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**AURORA, LOVELY AND RADIANT GIANTESS,  
LOOSED THE MONSTROUS LIFE-FORCES UPON THE  
UNSUSPECTING WORLD. BUT STEVE HAWLEY KNEW  
THEY COULD BE DESTROYED BY A NEW CULTURE!**



*Where the slumbering earthquake  
Lies pillowed on fire,  
And the lakes of bitumen  
Rise boilingly higher;  
Where the roots of the Andes  
Strike deep in the earth . . .*

*(Byron's, Manfred)*

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## CHAPTER I

PUG RANSCOM looked at her dad reproachfully. So did I. Her dad's face went from red to ruby and back again. He was about as near embarrassed as possible for him. The cigar smoke made the usual gray ribbons in front of his face, and his big teeth champed the butt. I had a pretty good idea Pug was not going to get her way this time.

"It's up in the headwaters of the Rio Chigauri, Steve. I haven't got another man to send, or I wouldn't even think of asking you. But something is wrong up there, and somebody has to at least make an appearance. All I want is an idea, a kind of advance report, something for us to go on. Drop in, talk it over with anyone you can find who seems to know anything, show yourself around and tell who you are. The main idea is to satisfy those people that something is being done for them. We'll get around to the real work later. Just a preliminary report; come right back and the marriage will go through as scheduled . . ."

Pug let out an anguished snort. "Dad, you can't do this to your only child! Steve and I have postponed that wedding twice already, and we're just not going to do it again! If you don't want us to get married, say so, and we'll start out looking for jobs where people act like human beings. A job where we can depend on having

the same address for two weeks in succession."

"Honest, Steve," the chief wasn't paying any attention to Pug, so I knew she was overruled already, "it just can't be helped. You've got a week, and you can do it in four days. Just drop in by plane, talk it over, and come right back. You're the only available man."

"Tell me about it." I didn't look at Pug, I didn't have the heart. I knew I had to go, I couldn't risk losing my job right now, of all times. Maybe the old man *did* have to ask me.

"The natives are fleeing the whole valley of the Chigauri, and there are a lot of Americans living there, ranches, oil wells, mining companies. A lot of American money tied up in investments, and they are raising hell because the native labor is running away. The letters sound scared. I won't show 'em to you, I want to get your first impressions on the spot. These people might be lying to get someone to come. I've got an address of one Professor Nebski who is said to be at the bottom of the trouble, or else knows what it's about. You look him up, find out what the trouble really is, and come back here. I'll do the rest. I'll have some men by that time."

"By next year you *ought* to have some men! Dad, you can't get away with this! Sending my man off every time we get a wedding date set. I'll fix you, Dad! You'll be sorry."

"Honest, Pug, I can't help it. He's the only man I've got left. I've been doing my best to keep him here, but someone just has to be sent, it's an order. I have to obey orders too, you know."

HECK of a name for a girl, "Pug." But she did have a nose, and it did look like that, and the name had



stuck. And I loved her, and we would be married next week if her Dad, Chief of the FBI, the South American part of it anyway, wasn't trying to get me killed off so she would have a chance to land someone with more future than a Government leg-man.

I hugged Pug close and kissed a few of the tears away, standing there with the motors of the Clipper warming up behind me.

"Listen, tomboy, you keep your nose clean and everything will come off according to schedule. We're not going to let a little thing like a mass-migration, or whatever this is, get in our way. I get off the plane, see, ask two questions and get on the next one back. This is one job that's going to get very slight attention."

"Yes, I know. That's what you say. But just remember this, Steve Hawley. If you don't get back here on time, someone is liable to lead me to that altar before you do! And that's final. You don't have to let Dad push you around the way he does. He's taking an unfair advantage . . ."

"Sure. Sure, carrot-top. And it's going to be too bad if someone does 'lead you to the altar,' because I'll work him over till you won't be able to use him for anything but hamburger steak! So don't get that idea . . ."

I got into the Clipper. Pug waved, turned away very droopily. I didn't blame her. It looked very much to me as though her father did oppose our marriage, and I couldn't much blame him. There are better men than me, at that. And he loved her, a lot more than was good for her. But it wasn't going to do him any good.

\* \* \*

The pilot of the plane I had chartered in Rio set her down easily on the little

flying field. I said—"So that's Professor Nebski's place. Can you tell me anything about him?"

"Nobody knows too much about him. He's a mystery man, if you ask me. Has lots of money, had that flying field built just to get supplies for his laboratory flown in. I don't believe he has any other visitors. I wouldn't have known where it was, except the company made several deliveries here, and he's on our books. I never even saw him . . ."

"O.K. Wait for me. This isn't going to take long."

But the Professor was *very* talkative. He had started off when I asked him what was wrong up here . . . and was still going!

"There are two paths for the mind to follow. One leads to ecstasy, to wish-fulfillment, to happiness. But it is the happiness of illusion, a morass of madness obscured by pretty flowers."

"Now, listen to me, Professor. I didn't come here to find out whether the world was crazy or not. Just to find out what's going on around here that makes all the trouble."

The Prof. went right on as if I hadn't said a word. "The other path, much spoken of but little understood, is perhaps rocky, but it is firm."

I said, "Huh?"

"The first steps," his voice went on, "down each of these paths are different, but only subtly so. It is very easy to make the first mistake, and to choose the path to madness."

"What's madness got to do with . . ."

"To my mind, Mr. Hawley, the whole world of man, our so-called 'modern' world of erudition, of pragmatic engineering, of mechanical virtuosity, of productive muchness . . . is on the first, the easy path! Is so far along the path that to one on the



true path, the world of man is mad."

"So far as I'm concerned it can *be* crazy!" I muttered.

"What did you come here into this wilderness for, then?"

"I came here to learn what was going on that shouldn't and to tell it to stop! You know darn well that when all the workmen leave their jobs and run off, the people who own things start yelling their heads off. And somebody like me has to run half around the world to tend to whatever they should have tended to and didn't."

THE little, stocky Prof. waggled his grey head at me a little doubtfully.

"I can tell you what is going on well enough. But I don't think you will be able to do much about it. Nor anyone else . . ."

"Well, I don't intend to, either. I just have to learn something to give the head office an idea what is wrong here."

The old Prof. looked mournful. "Such a good-looking young man, it seems a shame . . ." He waggled his fuzzy grey head some more. I looked about at the neat white walls of his big laboratory, at the purring dynamos, bubbling vats of strange fluids, at the endless intricacies of coiled glass tubes and all the mystery of modern necromancy . . .

"What's a shame?" I asked.

"A shame they should send you here. For what you may learn if I am honest with you may be too much for your modern intelligence to bear. I have told you the world is mad. You are a part of that world. Now, all mad people are set on a queer kind of hair-trigger, mentally. The least genuine shock to their equilibrium sets them off into downright lunacy. That's why I say it's a shame. If I am honest with you, you will probably go insane. If

I am dishonest with you, you have wasted your trip . . ."

"I won't go loony. If that was possible it would have happened long ago. But I may think you're not all there if you don't give me some idea what you are talking about."

"Perhaps you had better let me see the notes on the reports that brought you here. It may be that what I am thinking of has nothing to do with this case."

"The Chief wouldn't tell me a thing, back home. But here is the letter they gave me in the Rio de Janeiro office, from the ranchers here on the Rio Chigauri."

The old man took the letter, read it aloud.

"SAFBI

Dear sirs:

All natives are fleeing the valley of the Chigauri. Planters, mines, oil wells, everything is shut down for lack of labor. Queries to fleeing people bring only wild answers, the usual stories mixed with some new ones. They see giant footprints, which is an old tale about here, but now they see a gigantic female who warns them in a giant voice to flee before death comes upon them. They also say they see nightmare creatures, winged men, crawling monsters with men's legs . . . a host of fearful things. These tales are not all false or they would not cause complete evacuation of the whole area.

It could well be an attempt to hide a new gold strike, or some similar hoax.

Something very strange is undoubtedly going on, and it is expensive. Please do something, or all our work to make this area profitable will revert to the jungle.

Sincerely

Ramon Nolanoras

Henry Jennings

John Frank Neilsen"



The Prof. handed the letter back to me with a twinkle in his eye. "That's all you know of this?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Well, Mr. Hawley, I can show you what it is that has frightened the superstitious natives. But what you expect to do about it, I can't imagine."

He pulled back the drapes from the long square-paneled windows which formed one whole wall of the laboratory. It was a marvellous stretch of scenery—only the Andes can furnish that kind of natural grandeur. A bit of cliff, a long plume of falls, a stream cascading from the heights, the great flowered trees of the tropics, mangoes, camphor-wood . . . and under that plume of wind-blown water a gigantic female figure! A moving figure! From here, distant as it was, it seemed a maiden, almost a child, taking a bath. A gigantic child, a child of some race three times the size of man! I gasped, rubbed my eyes. Either they didn't focus or she was the biggest human on earth . . . or the Prof. was playing tricks on me.

"I never saw it! It is not true!"

"Which is what I meant by saying your world is mad. They can never face a truth if it is a big, important truth. Consequently their whole mental set-up is composed of truths half-seen, half-accepted. A kind of mad illogic is the sad result."

"You mean there really is a giantess out there using the river as a shower-bath?"

"Yes, and I am responsible for her being there. She is my daughter, in a manner of speaking. Or rather, I created her as an experiment. One that was a bit more successful than I ever expected, it is true."

"How am I supposed to explain that to the office. They'd fire me for drinking, or worse . . ."

"However that may be, I had better explain it to you, so that the perilous equilibrium so falsely fostered within your fragile sanity by your poverty stricken educational system may be preserved."

"YES, you had better. It's fragile, I will admit, after that sight. And it is precious to me, such as it is!"

"Listen closely then. The body of man can be considered as a series of cells of separate natures whose symbiotic relations are a result of long ages of interaction between their many once divergent life-forms . . ."

"Just a minute, Professor Nebski. If you can put me up tonight, I'll tell that plane to drop back tomorrow to pick me up."

"Of course. It will take some time to explain things thoroughly . . ."

"You said a mouthful, fuzztop," I muttered, as I went out to release the plane. It was going to take time for me to understand how that giant female came to be here, all right. It was going to take plenty of time to figure out what the Prof. was talking about. If my ears and eyes were working, I had stumbled into the biggest thing of my career.

When I returned, the Professor asked mildly, "Shall I proceed?"

I nodded. I wanted to hear it all before I decided what was what . . .

"I have made a study of life and the cells that co-operate to make what we call life forms. Long ago I worked out a perfusion solution which took the place of all nutrients manufactured by the normal body of the natural animal. I immersed flesh cells in this perfusion solution much after the Alexis Carrel methods, though my own are different in detail. After a time my cells began to become, as it were, symbiotic with the nutrient. They lost their



methods of working together to manufacture nutrients, started out in a new way of life."

The old Prof. sat down, made himself comfy, and lit a pipe. He looked at me cannily to see if I was following. I registered intelligent interest, and he went on:

"The result was a way of separating flesh into individual cells, very different in nature from each other. The components of the organisms of flesh, the cells which make up the various organs of the body, separated into races of cells, new forms of life, in truth. What I had, after coaxing them to live apart from each other by a magnetic separator I invented—was a mass of jelly containing many diverse forms of life entirely new on this old earth. Or was it the beginning again, the start of life's cycle?"

"Don't ask me, Dr. Nebski, tell me!"

"There is a substance called 'aspartic acid' which speeds up the specialization during growth—of cells. I began to experiment with putting aspartic acid into this mass of living jelly. I learned a great deal. After a time, I had several such substances, amino acids, nucleic acids, enzymes, a host of compounds which affected the growth and nature and organization of cells. And I went even farther . . ."

"Yes, I begin to see a glimmer!" I did too, but was it possible I was right?

"*I learned the ancient original method by which life evolved into what it is. Into my mass of jelly I learned to put just those substances needed to develop the specialized groupings we called 'life' for want of a better name. I learned to cause to develop exactly any form of life I pleased!*"

"Impossible!"

"Of course it is impossible! It is quite a mad undertaking, according to

orthodox science and accepted beliefs. But it is nevertheless *true* that *I can take a mass of disorganized protoplasm, and it will retain enough of its original organizational instincts to develop again into a living creature. And the nature of that creature I can predetermine* by the mixture of determining compounds I put into it!"

"Does all this you are telling me have some relation to that 'illusion' on your window pane?"

"That 'illusion on my window pane' is the result of an experiment of mine which took on unexpected powers of growth. Since I could hardly kill her, once I created her . . . I turned her loose! Loose with a number of other creatures I created. They have made themselves an interesting little world of their own! Would you like to enter that world?"

"**I** DON'T know. First I would like to see visible proof that what you say is true. I would like to see this experiment in producing life itself . . . I can hardly accept what you, without evidence . . ."

"Very well. Though I can't see what earthly good it can do you. Which is another reason I say your world is mad. The most wonderful things are possible to a sane mind—and to men of your 'civilized' world they are impossible dreams."

"Here," we had walked across the big lab to a series of vats set in the concrete floor, "here is some of my disorganized protoplasm in the process of becoming what I call prime cells. You can see there the parts of the carcass not yet wholly disorganized."

Within the vat were portions of the carcass of a pig; the snout and eyes, the ears, were very plain. Most of the rest was formless pink jelly. About it bubbled a greenish liquid, which was



pumped in and out of the vat by a series of glass tubes and pumps, connected with a complicated set-up of aerators, of coolers and heaters, of wires and little throbbing pumps that sounded like several hearts beating loudly.

In the next vat was the carcass of a deer, still half alive, feebly kicking its legs. In another a small alligator lay and looked at me unblinkingly, reptilian snout thrust above the surface and very much alive, although most of its legs and tail had been absorbed by the dissociating powers of the fluid.

"You can see here," the Professor said, "how I have placed the alligator in there alive, turned on the magnetic dis-sociator, started the perfusing pump, sealed off the air and turned on the oxygen. He will soon be absorbed into the fluid wholly. Every cell in his body, still alive and healthy, will have lost all necessity of co-operating with the other cells and quietly cut itself loose from a partnership it no longer needs!"

"I see some animals dissolving in what could well be an acid bath."

"Very well. I will now drain off the fluid from this half-dissolved saurian. You can see that he is only half present. There is nothing else in this fluid but nutrients I synthesized and placed there. I drain off the fluid with this syphon into my 'life' tank, here. Now I pour in these three determining mixtures, one is di-methionine, one aspartic acid, one a mixture of enzymes and chemicals known only to myself, they are nameless. Watch! Watch closely!"

Within the tank the green fluid began to move in strange little purposeful patterns as if possessed suddenly of a will or wills of its own. Now the professor wheeled out a weird device. It was a complicated, large projector, and threw a beam of light into the green

fluid. The projector made the picture of a little man in the tank. A little man about two feet long, and on his back were wings!

"The projector is not an ordinary one. It throws a beam which has magnetic properties. The cells assemble along the force lines of the pattern. By this means my creations have form. . ."

I WATCHED closely, all right. He wasn't going to pull a fast one on me. I was here to discover a faker who was frightening the whole population of a valuable section of land away. If it was the Prof. I meant to find out!

"So we see, that *by using means and formulas and methods well known to modern science*, but assembled together under a mind and with a purpose *different* from those which gave rise to these methods and formulas, we have something unbelievable to your sane modern world. We have the *means of creating life itself*, and by that means, the path to a Utopia which your educated people only dream of—never think to work toward with their two hands. I am a God, and *I can create life anew* . . . !

The green and pink streaks of the fluid in the tank were acting very strangely. They were collecting around the lines of the projected picture. In the little pictured breast a heart began to beat, a little red pumping organ that grew swiftly. Veins and arteries appeared, branched out along the grey-green limbs, and the pink blood began to flow along the vessels. • An hour crept by as I watched the intense activity within the bath of nutrient and coruscating magnetic flows from the little projector. I watched, believe me! I wanted to catch this trickster. It would make everything simple if I could make sure he was fooling me for a purpose. . . To send me away with a lot of nonsense in my head!



But if this was nonsense or bamboozlement he had me hypnotized!

For within the tank a little pixie of a man was almost fully formed! The Doc shut off the pumps. For a time the little fellow just lay, looking up dreamily. Then, as if he wanted to see what was going on, he stood up, put one leg to the side of the tank, and jumped out.

"He won't learn to talk for several days. But he is already smart, like an adult in some ways. Or a puppy. The stimulated, speeded-up growth makes their learning period extremely short. As the cells adapt to the necessity of manufacturing their own fluids in the blood stream, to assimilating the food eaten, to doing all the required work of living and maintaining life in the other organs, the other collections of symbiotic cells. . . His learning and his adaptation slows down, he becomes more nearly what we call adult. What you have seen is *really a speeded-up birth process*, slightly different in detail, but in the main *quite the same as normal birth in the mother's womb!*"

I only looked, with my mouth open. "You went nature one better, and did it faster. You're just a mother. . ."

He looked at me to see if I was mocking. I wasn't, not at all. That little pixie he had created was looking us over with all too knowing an eye. Sharp as a Fifth Avenue shyster, that eye, but somehow amused at us.

"I'm ready. Now show me the place where you keep the rest of your productions, and I'll be ready to wire in my resignation!"

"Would you do that?" he asked eagerly. "Would you stay here and help me with my brave little new world? We need understanding people like yourself, for our contacts with the civilized world, and even with the primitive world just beyond these mountains, have not been happy. It is that misun-

derstanding that brought you here."

"Yes, yes, I know. Show me the rest, you've gone this far. I don't believe it, but since it's in front of my eyes I can't deny it, can I?"

"Perhaps my best can persuade you. We will go and see her."

"The big girl I saw in the waterfall?"

"Yes. I cannot explain all the details of her creation. *These* are sort of mass-production articles. But *she*, she was my work of art, my best and most successful synthetization!"

I thought of Pug, and my promise to return at once. Ruthlessly I thrust the thought away. This thing, whatever it was, demanded everything I had to give it. But my heart was heavy as I followed the old man, for I knew I did not intend to return until I knew everything my brain could learn of the place, the man and his work.

## CHAPTER II

### "Aurore"

*"The blush of earth embracing with  
her heaven,—*

*Tinge thy celestial aspect, and make  
tame*

*The beauties of the sunbow which bends  
o'er thee.*

*Beautiful Spirit! in thy calm clear  
brow, . . .*

*(Manfred to Witch of the Alps)*

*Byron, "Manfred"*

"IN YEARS she is but a child. But the tremendous growth my then inspired work imparted to her has given her a power of mind such as exists in no other on earth. She is a superior being! In no other creature of my creation have I been able to produce the same mental activity. It was an extremely fortunate accident . . . Some



ingredient very needed but which I did not know about and have not yet learned. I may never know why she is so superior mentally."

I had followed him through the laboratory and along a path toward the distant waterfall. The gigantic maiden I had seen bathing was no longer in evidence. But other unbelievable living things were. . .

Like the little man whom he had created before my eyes, for instance. He followed us now, playfully skipping, childlike, about our feet. Upon his back the tiny prismatic wings fluttered. At times he would wave them furiously and leave the ground. They seemed to be growing steadily larger. But he spoke no words, only gurgling like a very young baby.

It was his innocent skipping that brought the sudden tragedy!

As we passed along the trail, the little dancing homunculi saw something in the brush that fascinated him, flitted into the air, and landed with both feet on a crawling thing that hissed loudly and angrily. I dashed forward, pulling my gun from the holster, for I wished to protect the child-like new-born innocent from what I guessed was a dangerous reptile. The old Professor followed me, and as I poked about looking for the snake, he suddenly gave a cry, clapped a hand to his leg at the knee, and after a moment of facial contortion, collapsed on the ground. I turned back to him, and through the grass saw the huge body of a ten-foot reptile gliding swiftly away. I blasted at it with the pistol, and was rewarded in seeing it die. Bending over the reptilian's writhing body, I was aware at once that the Professor was doomed! For it was an enormous *Trigonocephalus Atrox*, a relative of the well known *fer de lance*, and very deadly. In such a size its bite was sure death. I lifted the now uncon-

scious old man to carry him back to the laboratory. The little winged imp he had created skipped blithely ahead, all unconscious of the tragedy he had caused.

Back in the lab I searched frantically through the old man's belongings for the snake serum kit I knew every dweller in these jungles must possess. Finding it, I administered the anti-venom injection. But the old man never came out of his swoon. It was too late!

Night was falling when I finally left his body, and took that trail along which we had started. It seemed to me I must acquaint his "daughter" with what had happened.

Certainly I could not leave with the mystery only half solved, with only a dead man's word to tell of what had been going on here in the isolation.

The little "man" was a sober child now, walking gravely ahead of me, and glancing back as if he half understood what had happened now.

The worn pathway came out of the shadow of the great trees on the brink of a swirling pool, that pool into which tumbled the tall cascade from the face of the cliff.

In the soft gravelly mud of the pool's bank, before me, was the gigantic foot-print! The same foot-print I had been told was described again and again in letters from this area. A foot-print that only a titan could leave on earth! Pressed deep by the great weight, it was all of two feet long!

Fearfully, unbelievably, I looked about for the author of the depression. Yes, I believed that what I had seen in the Professor's window this afternoon had been a true sight, and no trick. No one had faked that foot-print. And no one had faked the gigantic, lovely form that now came swimming across the pool toward me!

Her long wet hair clothing her in a



glory which the setting sun illuminated glowingly, she stood half out of the water, watching me gravely for a moment.

Then she asked in a voice not unpleasant but huge in volume: "Where is my father?"

I DID not know how to tell her. I feared she would suspect me of collusion in his death, yet she must be told. Impossible as the thing was in retrospect, there she stood imposed upon reality with a greater, more intense energy-of-being than the dull, staid fragments of life, trees, myself, the rocks about her!

I blurted it out at last—"He was killed by a snake as he led me to you. I have come to tell you. I will help all I can. I am ignorant of much that would be useful in this your trouble, but I am willing and anxious to help you if I can."

Tears sprang into her eyes, she stood for a moment, then with a strange bird-like cry, shrill and penetrating, she plunged back into the water and swam away. On the farther shore there gathered to her call a company of little men exactly like the newly created one standing beside me, and as she strode, dripping, from the water these followed her in a troop into the forest gloom. Night was nearly upon me, I could not wait here. I turned back to the shelter of the old man's retreat, his laboratory built here away from the prying eyes of all men, that had proved to be his chamber of creation, the *cradle of a new race of beings!*

I spent a pretty poor night, with a dead man in the next room, and God knows what was going on around in the jungle outside. "A brave new world" the Prof. had called it. I hoped sincerely he was right! If he was wrong and those "people" of his were thinking

I killed the old man, I was going to be in for it. I was completely at their mercy.

But morning came, and nothing had happened to disturb the silence within the big laboratory. Or lessen the feeling of gloom and the presence of death.

With the sun came a little man, half walking, half flying. He opened the door and walked in familiarly, but his face was sad. He said in very good English:

"I have come to prepare the Father for the burial. You will help me?"

I answered as well as I could, "Of course I will help you. Will it be a cremation at once, or must we embalm the body?"

"It will be neither. You are to help me transform the body into life of another kind. His mind cells are not to be lost."

"Mind cells die in twelve minutes! You can't save a dead man. . . ."

"You are incorrect. But there is no need for us to argue. There is a need for you to obey, for the Superior One has ordered this."

THAT little fellow knew what he was doing and he was going to do it. I realized he was conscious of having a power over me, that I must obey or something would happen to me. I wondered what the something was—but I obeyed him. I lifted the dead man's body into the vats, helped him turn the big valves, helped him do all the strange things with that body which seemed to be required. And when we got through, there was rising out of the vat a creature neither man nor animal, neither alive nor dead—but an infant of a new kind! I only hoped that the big body of baby-pink flesh would soon acquire again the old Professor's wits. Certainly it was weird to see him without any more sense than a puling new-



born child. . . .

"The lack of wit is due to the fact that he was dead too long. The mental power returns after growth has set in." The little man was very serious. He seemed to know my thoughts.

"Will he be Professor Nebski then?" I asked anxiously, for I knew very well there was no genius of his skill in this field of flesh-perfusion with an iota of his success.

"No, he will be one of us, the New Race. It is too bad. The character of the person we knew as the Father has gone forever. But his flesh lives on, and something of his experience will arise again by hereditary determination within the cells. . . .

"Now come with me. The Superior One has decided that this place must be abandoned. We will take what we need, the building is to burn."

The big new creature that had been Professor Nebski stumbled after us out of his laboratory, like a baby learning to walk. As we left, I saw a file of the little men entering the laboratory, and presently they began to pass us on the trail, loaded down with apparatus. We were forced to travel slowly for need of caring for the uncertain steps of the child-like man who walked between us.

"Why are they going to burn the laboratory?" I asked the little fellow.

"The outer world would investigate the Professor's death. The fire will explain it. We do not want our new world discovered by any people from your world."

I could understand. It was beautiful here, and these creatures, after all, were just not acceptable to modern men. But I was accepting them. . .

And my ears were burning, as I thought of the burning phrases with which Pug Ranscom must be describing me to her bosom friends. Today was to have been our wedding day.

And when that aviator came for me, found the place burned, he would report me dead. . .

Pug *would* marry another man, then!

The stream which caused the falls where I had seen the unbelievable figure of the giant girl was the boundary of "The New World." We crossed it where it shoaled into rapids below the big pool of the falls, and when I stepped out of the shallow water I realized I had entered a place on earth unlike any other. Something here had changed the normal order of life. I looked back to see the long low building of the "Father" burning. I wished they hadn't been in such a hurry. I could have gotten immensely valuable data from the old Professor's notes. Especially I would like to know just what he had done to the soil and the trees here on the far side of the stream. What made this difference. . . ?

How strange the sudden park-like peace and order! The quiet, the lack of insect stridulence, the muted harmonizing songs of birds, birds singing together as if trained to do so by some spirit! The strange, alien *new* forms of plants, the flowers on trees I had never seen bear flowers before. The well-kept paths that angled and intersected the shaded distance. Along these paths ran two streams of little winged people, one toward the stream and one going into the darker depths of the forest. The latter bore loads of things I recognized as the lab. equipment and furnishings. Perhaps the old wizard's notes were still available if I was lucky. That caravan didn't appear to have left a thing, there was so much of it.

She lay on a flower strewn rock in a grotto, a kind of natural amphitheatre, with the open side of the grotto a big grassy hollow. It was hot in the hollow, but among the small shrubs and pools of the little valley hundreds of the small



winged men and women played or worked or just sat, looking at her.

SHE was sad, and with her eyes half closed, lay relaxed, stretched out in her unearthly beauty like a dreaming goddess. We stood with that big pink naked body of the reborn professor between us, waiting for a look, a word from her. After a long moment it came. Hers was a big voice, but very musical and controlled, a voice that told of a world of mental activity within her.

"So the old place is gone, and my father is gone, and all things begin anew! I am sad to lose him. Stranger, I do not like you! You bring ill luck, and sad events follow in your wake. Why have you not run away, now that you have allowed my father to die?"

I was taken aback. It had occurred to me she would hold the old man's death against me, but it was only natural. I said:

"A big fer-de-lance bit him. I killed the snake. When I gave him the serum it was too late. He wanted me to see your new world. He showed me his method of making new life from old. I was interested, wanted to see the results of his work here in their own environment. The old man offered tentatively to keep me here as a helper—he said he had a need for people like myself. Why should you dislike me?"

"Do you understand his work, stranger?"

"Vaguely. There are scientists in the outside world who do similar work. But it has not progressed so far; they have not had your father's success."

"I am carrying on his plans. I will teach his new self, here, all that the old self knew. I will make him like himself again. If he wanted you to help here, you will stay. I will see to that."

Her voice was peremptory, there was a spoiled child's petulance to it, but I

realized the old man's death must have hurt her.

"Do you think it was wise to burn his laboratory, then?"

"Yes, it was wise. It will mislead inquiring people like yourself. We have driven the people away from the whole valley of the Chigauri. We will make it our own. We are growing, and we will grow more and more."

"I think your attitude of antagonism toward people like myself is wrong. Why should you want to drive people away?"

The big, sea-blue eyes fixed me a little scornfully. "Once you see what our plans tend toward, you will understand that."

"You say *we*. Who do you mean by 'we.' Are there others here besides you?"

"The little people you see around you are 'we'. I am their leader. My creation accidentally gave me better brains. But they have fine minds, too. Better than *people* like you!" Her voice was definitely disparaging of "people" like myself. I could not fathom why she considered herself so apart from the world, an enemy of normal life. I wish I had understood sooner . . . before. . .

I LIVED there for some days before the truth began to penetrate. The little winged people brought food, fruit, iguana meat, the milk-like sap of a tree, water from the springs. I wandered through the well-kept little valley. The beautiful days passed easily. A week went by, and I was frantic.

Up to now the girl had not taken me into her confidence. She had not shown me where the tools and effects from the burned laboratory had been taken. I knew there must be a big home or hidden work-shop somewhere, because she was out of sight so much of the time.

She would come striding back, top-



ping the lower trees with her size, looking as beautiful as a dream. But her eyes were preoccupied, and up to now I had not even heard her name. The little people called her "The Superior One," but they avoided me and I had little chance to learn anything. But I knew I was on probation. Sooner or later this would change. Then I could at least go back with some report that would tell whether the trouble was over or would get worse, and just what the trouble was. I couldn't figure why she wanted to drive people away?

I found out. One morning when she strode away from the grotto where she slept sometimes, away from the little park-like hollow where I had been patiently waiting to be noticed and informed, I decided to follow her. The little people went about their work and paid no attention, anyway. That work was growing things, cultivating many series of what I realized must be experimental plants, building their houses in their tiny city on the side of the hill . . . and being very quiet when I was around. I followed her big footprints in the earth, into the deeper forest, over the low hill, across a brook and a valley, over another, higher hill; miles I trudged through the increasingly wild landscape. The signs of cultivation had long ceased, and the sun was nearing zenith when I looked down and saw what all the scenery was about.

What I saw was the head of a long, long valley, stretching down and down as far as eye could reach. It must have been the headwaters of the Chigauri river. The stream came out of a cavern mouth, and that mountain over the cavern mouth was the head of the valley. Alongside the stream, right at the opening in the cliffy side of the mountain, had been built a very long low structure. It was built higgledy piggledy of the native stone about, and

many plants had been planted in the rocks. A few weeks' more growth and it would be invisible except as a long mound of earth.

Up to one end of this mound structure a stream of supplies was being brought. The little people had beasts of burden and carts here, and they were not the same little people. You know how the work of two artists differs? Such was the difference. These I saw plainly were the work of another person. I figured that those who lived by the side of the other stream were the creation of old Professor Nebski. These, these were Aurore's, the big girl's work. I wondered just what creature's flesh the Prof had used to make the basic cell-plasmic fluid from which he had "reorganized" her "symploids."

The supplies they were carting up consisted of plants, living and dried, and of cages in which were growing and squealing animals. I surmised there was a pretty busy party of little trappers and hunters back in the forests of those mountains.

FROM the other end of the low structure, at intervals, would stumble out one of the pink, hairless, baby things. I crept closer. I wanted to know just *what* she was making, what sort of mind Aurore had that the Professor had created. I knew that what she was making would tell me what she was inside her mind. Was she human, or a monstrous thing which must automatically be opposed to humanity? Was the Professor wrong in his estimate of his creation, had he created an intelligent, beautiful Frankenstein? Were those creations which stumbled so frequently from that long house of mystery designed to make a greater future for man—or provide a rival which would displace man?

I lay all that afternoon in the hiding of the low growing shrubs about the



concealed door, watching the creatures. Still I did not know! They were of many kinds, startling variants from the norm of growth sometimes, and each one that came out was different—a new Adam or a new Eve whose baby-blind eyes stared up at the sun and blinked shut in pain.

The sun was an hour above the horizon when I began to make a stealthy retreat from my hiding place. I was just slipping over the brow of the low hill above the house of creation when I heard a great voice calling my name:

“Steve Hawley! Come back here!”

I scrambled on, too startled to stop at first. Then I heard the giant girl’s feet thudding on the earth behind and knew that flight was not only silly but hopeless. She had seen me against the sky. I turned back. She loomed above me, a titaness, her face flushed and angry.

“You have taken to spying on me. I knew such as you were not to be trusted!”

I managed a silly kind of grin, said, “Well, you ignored me, and my curiosity got the better of me. I followed your footprints.”

“Now that you are here, you may as well see it all, and know what my plans are. Then you must decide whether to join us or go back to your way of life. But that is exactly the trouble! If people knew, there are those who would stop this work. How can I trust you if I let you go?”

“That is why you have ignored me?”

“Of course. I am a woman, and I fear to trust my own judgment in your case. Emotion should have nothing to do with it.”

It was my first intimation that she had a human heart beating within that great woman-breast of her. I smiled. She was facing a problem that was as old as time.

“Thanks. I didn’t know you had any emotions.”

“My emotions do not rule my thought. Take care you remember that.”

“What does rule your thought, oh beautiful giantess?”

“Not flattery, either. The wishes, the plans, the dreams of my father, that old man you permitted to be killed, the inner heart of him as he told it to me in the years I have been his lone friend and confidant. For all the years of my life there has been no one but he and I and his creations. He taught me his greatest art, the secret of life itself. I mean to see that something worthwhile comes of his discoveries.”

THE light of idealism was in her eye but, doubting, I wondered if it were not a fanaticism, a blundering kind of untutored mimicry of the old man’s fine mind. . . I asked, “Listen, I do not know you well, and in years you may be a child, in growth a giantess, and in mind a super-woman. But I am not sure of anything about you. But you can be sure of one thing, I am not an enemy to you, unless you mean evil to mankind.”

There was an eerie sensation I experienced always when talking to her, like talking to some spirit summoned from the unknown, something inhuman and grim about her mind that I sensed, but could not put a finger on. I resolved to be as canny as I knew how, to learn all I could, to try to direct this tremendous force of life that was in her as nearly in a benevolent direction as I might. But could I?

Talking, we had returned to the long mound-like building. We went in the great door, she stooping low. I wanted to ask her just what the creatures I had seen released to wander away down that tumbling stream’s banks meant to her,



what they would become, but I did not want to press her. In good time she would reveal more to me if I did not show too eager an interest.

The building was a repetition of the strange laboratory of the old man upon a vastly greater scale. Vat after vat bubbled and seethed with the living green and yellow and red fluids; alligators of huge size lay side by side with jaguars and deer in the absorbing, cell-separating liquids. Pipes and tubing and pumps breathed and hissed and gurgled with activity, and here and there stood the little winged men watching the vats, turning the valves on or off, dropping in various ingredients from big vials of many strange labels. I could not follow all of it as we went through, my knowledge of what was possible was yet too elementary to grasp what she might be doing.

"I have decided to enlarge the first experimental program of the father just as greatly as I am able, so as quickly to get results that a smaller scale of work would take many years to produce." She was talking almost absently, as though her inner mind were reluctant, while her ruling mind had decided that I might as well be told all, since there was no help for it now.

"What was Professor Nebski's experimental plan?"

"He was trying to produce the perfect man. It was his theory that man had been harmed by the centuries of accidental environment, and that much of that harm could be overcome by his method of creation. He produced these small winged creatures rather slowly, trying each time to make a better, more intelligent being than man, natural man like you, could ever hope to be. I was an accidental success in his first experiments. He has often told me that he was trying to make a little race of men that did not take up much room, who

were superior in mentality to ordinary men, who were, as he often put it, 'like me in every way'."

For some reason a blush spread rosily over her wide cheek and up her ivory temple, and lost itself in the rich profusion of fair curls.

"I can understand that. And you plan to reproduce his line of experiment in a richer profusion, to do so many trial-and-error creations of life-forms that you cannot help but hit upon the favorable accident of your own birth? Is that it?"

"That is partly what I expect to do, yes."

"But, then, what were the creatures I saw come out of here today? They were not little winged men like these!"

"I have an idea that part of the accident that produced me was due to the projection he used. Here it is . . ." She handed me an ordinary postal card, on which was a painting of Michelangelo's, a single gigantic nude female. I looked at it wonderingly.

"He projected this picture into the fluid and the stimulated cells grouped themselves around it to produce . . . you!"

"YES. Since then he has made many drawings of his own, from which he made the slides for the little men. But I myself am beautiful because the artist was a great one."

"Does that explain your great growth? I don't understand?"

"No, of course not. He spilled the flask of growth hormones, mixed with the di-methionine and the asparatic acid into the fluid, and that caused my great growth. Or perhaps he was influenced by the dream of the picture, which pictures a titaness, a goddess, and so spilled the growth acids on purpose. Who knows what was in his mind?"

"I can't get over what a great ad-



vance of the techniques of Alexis Carrel and Stanley Reimann has here been accomplished. If Reimann but knew what the old man has accomplished."

"I correspond with him. He does know!"

"Oh, good girl! You must be sure to keep world science informed." I thought she was lying then, but I played along, accepted it.

"I have told him everything except that we produced so many of the little beings. Or that I myself am one. He says he fears to repeat these experiments, for if he were successful, he would be accused of a crime!"

"Yes, he lives in Philadelphia. That is too staid a city in which to create people from liquids."

"He is afraid to make his own work public, for fear of what evil people might do with it. He turns animals into plants, and back again, and similar weird and unbelievable things. He makes the cells of a simple plant become more specialized, almost intelligent. If he but had resources, capital, there is no telling what he might not do."

Here in her own laboratory, the giant maiden did not seem like an impossible thing. She was at home, she knew what she was doing, and was making me understand that she was not an inhuman creature out of a test tube at all.

"If you correspond with the outer world, why then do you fear it?"

"Because Reimann, as well as others, have warned me. They themselves fear interference from backward groups."

"There is a question in it. What attitude *can* people take toward a synthetic form of mankind but that science has replaced them altogether? Industrialists could use these formulas to create slaves, mindless robotic forms . . ."

"Exactly. It is so many-sided a problem that I fear you may be sent here by

some group to steal these formulas. There is so much potential harm, or so great possible good in these formulas and processes, simple and inexact as they yet are, that my father made me swear to keep all in my own hands. So, I will do as I will here in this hidden valley of the Andes, and if my work goes awry, why, let God take the blame."

"I give you my oath, I will do nothing against your wishes in this matter. I can not grasp the complex possibilities well enough to decide what should be done, anyway."

"I hope that I can trust you. Time will tell. You intend to remain here, then?"

"As long as I can be of help to you. But, I asked you what kind of creatures were those I saw come out of here to-day, and you failed to answer. Is it you don't want me to know?"

"Not yet. Not till I am sure of you. If people learned what I planned, an army might come. . . ."

I slept on that. Just what sort of thing was it? It looked like a fat baby, a little bigger, and it walked. But it was not human, for the hands were not human. And I had seen several of them plunge at once into the water and disappear. A human child cannot do that.

### CHAPTER III

#### Aurore's Work

*. . . They have only taught him what we know—*

*That knowledge is not happiness, and science*

*But an exchange of ignorance for that Which is another kind of ignorance.*

*Byron . . . "Manfred"*

DAYS, weeks went by, and gradually, little by little, my mind grasped



the tremendous goal of this girl. It was no wonder she did not want the world to know her plans. For every day a series of strange new creatures left that laboratory, to lose themselves in the air, in the water, or to burrow in the earth.

These last, that burrowed instantly into the earth upon being ushered from the door of creation . . . Rock itself went, powdered into their formula. Round chubby little granite creations, looking like animated stones, round little limbs sturdily moving in unison, round mouths gaping foolishly.

The things she loosed into the air! Made from birds, from condors, from parrots, toucans, all the myriads of bird life in the surrounding jungle were culled over and brought living to be dissolved into that basic life fluid from which Aurore seemed able to reassemble any design for life she wished. And her wish was coming clear to me now. It was to repeople the whole earth with intelligence! I finally put it up to her.

"I think I know what you are planning. You intend the earth, the air and the water itself to contain intelligent life, life which will aid man in the future!"

She smiled. "Superb! Yes, in time there will be voices in the water, thoughts piercing the clouds, the very stones will speak to the feet of men passing by. I have isolated the peculiarity which puzzled my father. I know now why I turned out to have a better mind than his later experiments in life synthesis. And I am turning loose upon all earth a fecund flood of reproductive creatures with minds superior to any. Man will think well, or be ruled by intelligence! It does not matter in what form the intelligence exists. Swimming in the water, burrowing ever farther and more numerous through the earth, breeding ever great-

er flocks on the mountain-hidden reaches, are little minds of surpassing capacity. And they will remake the earth."

"But . . . how do you know these minds will be friendly to man?"

"Why shouldn't they be? Thought is like mathematics. The same in all minds when it is correct. It is only different, opposed in content, when it is in error. Why should they oppose men's purposes? Men think!"

There was a grim fanatic glitter in her eye when she said this last. Slowly the supreme summation of her intent, of her anger, of her judgment upon men, came to me. Somehow, somewhere, she had absorbed a pretty dark view of the nature of mankind. Perhaps the old Professor had painted a black picture of man's mind and his warring, stupid, cruel nature. She had set herself to bring upon man justice of a kind that would be indisputable, overwhelming. I could not but agree with her analysis and her judgment upon man. He would think well and in agreement with superior minds now, or he would be overwhelmed by their fecund, ever-growing will.

"But man cannot change into a logical, cooperative creature overnight! It will take centuries, ages! And he will ignorantly oppose these strange life-forms when he becomes aware of them—and he will be wiped out by their anger when he sets himself against them."

"Your prophecy may be true, but I think not. He will not be harmed. He will be gently, unknowingly led into the paths of peace, his logic will be strangely straightened by the appearance of logic about him—and wars and diseases, ignorance and cruelty, will disappear before the flood of thinking, corrective lives I loose upon him. You will see . . ."



"I hope you are right. Else you have destroyed man."

"And if I did? Is he so terribly important? Should he not make way for a more beautiful, a better life-form. He will, unknowing, soon."

"You mean you have already destroyed man with those creatures?"

"Not in the way you think of it. Just in the way that he has existed too long!"

WHAT made the girl, Aurore, think that here, on the edge of the unknown, things wouldn't start happening without control; what she figured those fecund active little animated minds she was creating would do, I don't know! How she expected to control them without teaching, without contact . . . What abstract idea of natural logic she may have had that made her think that the only thing the world needed was more thinking . . . Somewhere in her basic thought, her plans for remaking the natural world around man, was an error, and a big one. I think that she lacked proper training, that somewhere the Professor had failed. I suspect that she, like the little minds, was a wild, untamed primitive spirit; not a product of an age of civilized living, and that error in the old Professor's view of her nature caused the little error that led to the big error. My mind wasn't big enough to grasp the whole interworking of those little fecund creatures impact upon nature about us.

We found the first of the little winged bodies in the cold morning light, down by the edge of that beautiful pool where I had first seen Aurore bathing.

Stiff and cold and dead, he seemed when we bent over him! And over me swept a sudden chilling sensing of menace. Curious, knowing, clever and menacing eyes were watching! I knew

it, knew it deep within me with a cold sense of futility, of deep failure—a failure that I realized must engulf all mankind!

The wilderness was watching us! And it did not know us, it was not friendly!

"Here Aurore is definite evidence of the thing I have been trying to warn you of since I realized the scope of your work. These little minds cannot be released immediately after birth. They do not even know you, their creator! Do you sense the menace?"

Under that dead body the ground suddenly heaved, and rippled like a living thing. I stumbled, nearly fell. Through the trees went a retreating, eerie, *meaningful* whistle! A whistle, a sound with words in it like a whisper, gigantic in spread through all the forest, and the words were—"Our creator, hah! These insensitives think they created us!"

The big heroic figure beside me stiffened, stood motionless, head thrown back, listening, drinking in all the myriad sounds of strange life, mixed with the familiar jungle sounds. And slowly, drop by drop, great tears coursed down that noble face. Her eyes turned to mine, and for the first time since I knew her I wished she were small enough to embrace, to comfort, I wanted to take away that intense despair I saw growing within her. Then her words came, titan's voice chanting great moaning meanings in the basic sounds of life-meaning everywhere. The deep roots this woman possessed, sent deep into the heart of the jungle by her upbringing, by her birth from a living mass of cells assembled from a dozen different jungle creatures, came to the surface, broke out in a great chant that was like the voice of Mother Earth herself addressing her many children, her animals, her fishes, her birds . . .



## CHAPTER IV

## The Growth of the Mind-Mass

*“ . . . There are shades which will not  
vanish,  
There are thoughts thou canst not  
banish;  
By a power to thee unknown,  
Thou canst never be alone.”*  
Byron “Manfred”

“Oh my children, this evil that I sense in you. Have you done this thing? Have you failed me, your mother, so soon? Have you failed to learn that all life is mutually helpful, or it is miserable, unhealthy and evil? Have you all failed me, your mother, and turned so soon to war and death? Oh, no! I cannot stand what you have done. I go, I go, I leave you here to war among yourselves!

“Steve,” her voice was a sob, all the woman alive now within her. “Steve, take me home.” Incongruous request! I took her hand.

I led the way back across the hills to the long low laboratory where she had committed, she thought, the greatest series of blunders ever known to science. But I was not so sure. It was but one death, and our ears might have fooled us, our senses been misled. There was yet a chance that her life-designs would work out as she had intended them to.

Now that tragedy had wakened a sense of danger, a caution within me, that valley where the Chigauri began looked odd! A different sort of place from what it had been. Silent, the many birds that had been there did not now chatter and warble and fight among the great trees. The earth did not look green and bright in the sun, but lay with a grey shadow upon it, a shadow that told me the grass and leaves themselves were affected by something I did not understand at all as I wished to.

Something I did not understand . . . Yes! There was no breeze, yet the grey green leaves, the grass, the great flowers drooping — moved! Lifted, turned, seemed to peer eyelessly, turn back!

I said nothing to Aurore. She had trouble enough, with the little winged man in her arms.

IT WAS not a pleasant night. I lay on my cot, listening to the great footsteps of Aurore, pacing, pacing. Stopping and listening to the oddly quiet jungle where no cat screamed, no night bird screeched, no animal scuttled through the brush. Menace was in the night, and fear, and a mighty sentence that was not a friend.

Something had happened to the little birthing fecund lives to turn them against ourselves. And if against us, then against all men . . .

The little winged men I could hear, fluttering to stand near Aurore, hastening off again. Could hear their voices long discussing with her; her questioning, plaintive tones; their quick, high-pitched answering.

A few words in her big resonant voice I remembered—“You too have failed me! You have not kept in touch with the new ones, you have not taught them love, you have not done your duty! Something more you must do, and quickly. I left too much to chance, and blindly my own work turns against me. They *cannot* be so *stupid*.”

The little men’s birdlike voices, I listened carefully to catch their words. “It is not what you think. Yours, your works are all right. It is strange sports, strange tiny things have come from births irregular; the normal reproduction is not the failure. The new ones have had strange children whom



we could not reach, whose minds were different. Something did not breed true, in the rock people, in the air people, in the plant minds, there has been mutation beyond our power to keep track of. We have tried to tell you, but we were not sure that it was anything numerous. Now we learn, it may be too late!"

So she was right, but she was wrong! Heredity was the factor, these new creatures lacked a determining heredity, and there were mutations, recessions, strange enemies growing with wild, ferocious fecundity—what would she do? What could she do?

Somehow I fell asleep. In the morning when I turned back the blanket, it crumbled in my hands! The pieces were stiff, like bark, or thin stone. Something had invaded the very substance of my bedding. I leaped out to feel of my limbs fearfully. Fear grew in me. I knew it was time to leave this place, Aurore or no Aurore!

I went out into the long low laboratory of life to find it empty of activity. Nowhere were the cheerful little winged men I had come to accept as one accepts perfect machinery, without noticing them much. Their absence brought home to me the seriousness of the trouble that had come upon us. I caught myself thinking of the new lives and their purpose, the whole plan and of Aurore, as "us." It startled me to realize how greatly these different life conditions had changed me in such a short time.

I went out into the half-tamed jungle, not nearly so park-like as the forest was near the fall and the pool where the New Race had lived much longer. I followed the first path my feet struck, seeking for Aurore.

I found her, and I found a new threat to my sanity!

She was communing with some great

life force new-come to these jungles, a great natural life-form sprung from a variant mother, some strange fecund sport of the lives she had been creating. I could hear her chanting voice, with the overtones of wild nature, of the savage heritage of the children of nature that was in her. I knew . . . AWE!

"O Stranger of the green forest paths, come to me and love me and explain—why have you chosen the way of struggle when We of the New Race offer you peace and help for your plans, protection for your strangeness, understanding of your newness? Reveal yourself to me, green Titan, explain yourself to me, that I may make peace between my people and those lives which follow your way. Tell me of the reasons for your evil deeds, give me understanding that these deaths may stop . . ."

I CAME up to her, found her kneeling beneath a giant camphor-wood, her eyes directed toward the green depths of the jungle. And there was a stirring and an answer to her voice, a moving of the tree limbs that was unnatural, a sentient something lying there upon the whole dark forest and looking at her with fascinated eyes. . . . Eyes that were invisible but felt.

I stood silent and waiting for the answer to her prayer. I knew she had been chanting to the strange life that had developed here beyond her plans, for a long time before I arose. I knew that it had listened, waited for the eerie, strongly felt life to reveal itself to her exhortation.

And down from the far-reaching forested hills, across the limbs of mighty forest, something swept nearer and nearer, a multitude of somethings, unseen but terribly alive.

No voice made answer, but I could



feel an energy sweeping down on us from the trees, an earthy pulsing of strange meaningful strength from the earth under our feet, a beating in the air itself as of invisible wings. But I could not understand . . . but she could understand, and her voice repeated the message. I could feel the answering, corroborating sweep toward us.

She said: "You are a small intelligent being which has no self, but a communal self, and you grow as numerous as the atoms of matter itself. Is that what you are telling me? You fear the discovery our work will bring to you, you fear me and what I may do to you—for you know of my creating of the forms of life, and you know that they are planned creations for a purpose. Yourselves are unplanned, and you fear I will destroy you. Is that what the conflict in your minds consists of?"

"How could I hurt you if I wished to?" Her voice answered the rustling of the leaves, the throbbing of the earth. "How could I reach you, who are everywhere? How do you know you are unplanned by me? How do you know I do not approve of your existence? Why do you refuse to be part of the great plan?"

"What is it?" I heard myself asking, unable to keep my curiosity bridled.

"I think it is a mind-cell sport, which has become so adaptive from the stimulation of the fluid that it reproduces itself, which is unlike the normal mind cell, you know. It has become reproductive, has assumed a parasitic or symbiotic adaptiveness, learned to live within the fibers of the plants and trees, learned to live in the bodies of the little plants and microscopic animals everywhere. In doing this, it has managed to retain the faculty of communication hereditary in all mind cells. Whether these particular cell types are communi-

cating by means of nerve fibres they have grown between themselves, or by some mutual exchange of telepathic response inherent in them, I do not know. But what we have here is a brain, a mighty growth of mind matter symbiotic with both plants and animals, making the trees as well as the earth all servants of one communal ego, just as mind cells are in our brain!"

"Is that bad?" I asked, stupidly.

"IT MAY be. Several of the little men are dead, because of uncontrolled and unconsidered reactions from this mighty growth. They stepped upon a root or a plant filled with these new type cells, and caused pain. The wild, natural reaction took place, they removed the injury source by killing the unknowing little creatures that caused the pain. The same accident can happen at any time to ourselves, so be extremely careful where you walk, and make no sudden violent motions. Anything can set off this reaction. The mind must develop a block for this particular reaction of revenge."

"How does it kill?" I asked, looking at the superficially normal appearing and empty scene of trees, rocks, foliage and occasional small darting animals. There was apparently nothing there to cause the sense of extreme menace that was present.

"It kills by sending strong thought currents into the body which disorganize the functions of the organs. Whether telepathically, or by means of some fibre of nerve conductive, I don't know. The mind-mass must develop control, consciousness centers able to sense and evaluate and order things aright. Else we are doomed, and probably all life as we know it."

"Can't you isolate some of the wild cells, and develop a counter life-form, as they do with insect pests?"



Aurore looked at me scornfully. "Don't even think such thoughts. It is because it sensed the possibility of such activity against it that the great mind-mass has killed. Unless it understands we will not harm it, there is no hope!"

"It can become a killer, and it will kill and kill, and no one will understand in time to stop it!" The terrible possibilities in this run-away growth of thinking life cells dismayed me. It was too big a thing for me to think about intelligently.

"It can, but it won't unless now, in its formative period, it adopts the nature of the killer—the nature of the warring ants and the pattern of survival that animates all the struggling beasts of earth. That is why we must now educate and civilize this new titanic force, make it useful and benevolent. It is yet a wild, young form of life."

"Yes, I know," I said dully. I couldn't see how we with our limited resources could do much about teaching many square miles of animated trees, of thinking earth, of whispering grass and leaves and air—that it had better be a good citizen or get pinched. I couldn't see it!

**B**UT Aurore could see how to do what was needed. Her young mind was uninhibited by the ages of failure hereditary in modern man's thinking. Undismayed, she spent the day talking to . . . an invisible sentience, apparently. I spent the day listening, and feeling very much like a heathen propitiating some savage god with futile prayers. I sat by her side, watching, and waiting for the tragedy I felt to be inevitable. I had seen the bodies of the little winged men!

Once, I mused, when life first began on earth, when conditions were more favorable to the development of life from its small beginnings—the whole

earth may have been one sentient thing, as this jungle now was! Perhaps then every living thing had been permeated with intercommunicating life, such as this runaway growth of mind cells. Then rocks would truly have had tongues, trees listening ears, and the mountains spoke each to the other with voices of thunder. Then magic could have been, and those who understood the universal mind-mass able to get obedience from inanimate things. Trees would have bent to such a sorcerer's voice, and the winds would have answered his will! Birds would have willingly flown on his errands, and the little races of animals done his bidding. Perhaps once such magic existed!

"And perhaps it now exists again," a voice spoke inside my head, and I knew it was an echo of the consciousness of the great mind-mass.

For whether it was my own mind, or the new great one, I heard many little voices saying—"and we bow to no masters such as you, or do any man's bidding."

I could hear Aurore's voice cajoling, and it seemed she answered the same little voices as well as the big one—"Then it was, now it will be again."

". . . and if that once living great mind saw fit to help and to obey the better kinds of men, why should you refuse? Why should you hate or fear us?"

The great thought voice, the murmuring trees and the hillside's menacing will made answer: "We do not hate or fear you. But we intend to live within you, to make you our servants and our limbs, a part of us. Then we cannot hurt or fear each other."

". . . or think, either. The individuals must remain free. Your hosts must be only those life-forms who have not already a brain. You must give to them a brain, not take any away.



The trouble on earth is that same lack of many individual brains with fresh new views. You can be a great mass-mind for the lives which have not had a mind—but you must not trespass on the minds of man or any minds that have developed their way of life so long toward that goal of life. . . . You must not do this thing!”

“We will think about it, and we will decide. We are many, yet one. Yet we will take time, and make our decision, though how it can be otherwise than what it now is, I do not see. I am young, and I am many diverse things in one. I am a we, or I am a unit, one thing. I know not. Our ways are different, yours is an old way—you have taken from your teacher ways of thought not new.”

The menace subsided and a peace came again upon the forest, the limbs ceased to pulsate with a strange movement, the grass ceased to lean toward us and to peer, the far mountains ceased to seem like great beasts about to spring. The illusion given all the scene by the mighty thought presence of the mind-mass interpermeating all of it vanished, and it became again what one expected. Aurore and I returned again to her long workshop. I was surprised to see the sun setting, it had not seemed so long.

AURORE and I sat that night in the big lab, staring at the shadows and worrying. Would the big, young mind-mass obey and co-operate, could it coordinate its growth and activity to the uses and needs of all life? Or must all life flee before its absorption, flee and flee until the growing web of thought-cells had embraced the whole earth?

I couldn't think. I only looked at Aurore's big worried face, and paced up and down, listening to the subtle muted far sounds of the night, and try-

ing to pick out the difference that had come over the New World, itself different again from the normal jungle life. The difference was an animate threatening sentience which had not been present—like a great cat pressing against one's leg, not to smooth the fur or rub its head, but smelling out the food value. The difference was that we had become now aliens in our own land, Aurore's work and plans had become no longer paramount, but subservient to a greater, more savage will. The little men came in the night and gathered around Aurore in fear, chattering to her in unintelligible syllables. There had been another death, they were afraid of the earth itself, to step upon it was too apt to be a violation of the mind-mass. The night dragged on and on. More and more of the little winged men and women gathered within the seeming safety of the big building, it was filled with them. Aurore talked to them with the long bird trills I had first heard her use in calling them to her. Sang or talked or just made sounds which they liked, how did I know? I could not understand.

In the morning the big woman came to a decision, and we made ready to leave. I could see it was a terrible decision, but when we left the laboratory and stood outside in the morning's light, a great circle of grey earth and green-grey trees had changed from their normal colors. All around the building the mind-mass growth had approached in the night. Wherever its source of growth had begun, wherever it had been tending before, it was evident that its purpose had now become to devour, to absorb and sweep over the home of ourselves.

Walking close to the edge of the grey circle of menace, I peered closely to see just what sort of thing it was. From every limb hung long grey threads, like



spider webs endlessly repeating, and along the earth the grey web of threads ran thickly. I pointed out the threads of communication to Aurore, who stared at them for a moment, then went to the lab for apparatus.

Returning with delicate copper wires, she made fast to two separate groups of threads, delicately with her finger tips, and led the uncoiling wires back into the lab. Here she attached the wires to the knobs of an encephalograph, started the machine. I asked her: "What do you expect to learn of the stuff?"

"I can at least find out if it is sane or if its vibrations are insane in nature."

I watched the tape unroll, the little pens dance and jiggle their lines of tell-tale marks. I watched her compare the tape with others in her stock of records. I myself made a few summations, too. That tape was a different kind of thought wave, several different types of waves intermingled, than on any other tape!

"If you compare it with a normal human's waves, one like myself, you can tell better what it will be like in character."

"Yes, I know. It is very different, but the hectic jiggling abrupt waves of the manic depressive are not there. The mind-mass is potentially sane—it is just untrained; like a young child, it has savage cruel impulses which must be curbed and taught the proper expression. It must learn to play, to relax, and not to take things so seriously. It angers so easily, and kills . . . hmmm."

"**A**ND it's trying to surround us! If that isn't deliberate murder what is? It is sending long wings of growth across the valley below to cut off our escape. Once we are fully surrounded by the grey growth, it will absorb us

into its mind, our selves will become a part of the mind-mass!"

"How do you know you are not already surrounded?"

"Did you say that, Aurore?"

"I said nothing!"

"I heard a voice that said we are already part of the thing! Is that true?"

"In order for you to hear it, it would seem to have planted the first growing cells within you."

"It must talk with such unattached cells by telepathy, eh?"

"I suppose so. I am busy."

She had attached the two wires from the mind-mass fibres now to a big radio, was fiddling with the dials. She made various adjustments from time to time, and from the speaker came a hum, broken now and then by sharp sounds of static. To this she paid no attention, kept adding tuning units, variometers and tuning coils, spider-webs and honeycombs, to the intake circuit. Each time she hooked up she listened, twisting the dials. I realized she was trying to tune in upon the thoughts of the mass of growth. And she succeeded—just as simply as that! She created a thought-augmentative device from simple radio parts that morning!

From the speaker began to pour a flood of sound; not words, mind, but unrelated echos of sound; the distant roar of a jaguar, the thrash of the giant alligator's tail as it surged toward its prey, the calls of birds, the endless rustle of leaves . . . all the sounds of the life of the forest for miles around began to pour from the speaker! "It is what the mind is hearing and sensing . . ." explained Aurore to my wondering gaze at the speaker.

Underneath the sounds that I recognized was a vast layer of sounds and subtler things than sounds, little augmented meanings of life. "Those



are all the lives the fibres have contacted," said Aurore.

You could hear the hungry roots pushing the soil through to search for water, you could hear the bark of the trees closing its pores against too much heat—you could hear the moss-layer of the forest bed speaking of the dryness, speaking of the dimness, enjoying the day. The whole world of nature had a voice there from that speaker, from the coils of the device came electric meaning, and I sat entranced by the x-ray nature of the view of life that it was giving.

And over and above all the many sounds of the many single lives in that mass of meaning—was a great roar of hunger, a reaching ferocious need, a menacing and frightening meaning of huge absorption—I knew that this was the mind of the mass of interpenetrating growth. The longer I listened to it the more frightened I became. It was like the roar of a mob upon its way to loot food-stores, to kill the aristos . . . it was like the first great waves from a tidal wave's rise, the first water to race down some valley at the bursting of a dam. It was like the sound made by army ants as they march, stripping all life from their path and leaving only a bleached desert behind. And that fear that man has before the army ant was present here in greater measure. There was nothing one could do unless it turned aside.

"We must flee that thing at once, Aurore! It will devour us and forget us all in one instant."

"For now, we must flee, yes, friend."

**T**HAT was a weird migration! Down along the banks of the Rio Chigauri we went, the giant figure of Aurore leading the way, pack animals in a string behind llamas, burros, all heavily laden, a string of a hundred animals

driven along by the chittering little men. As she went, now and again Aurore gave a call; not the eerie bird cry with which she summoned the winged men, but a gurgling kind of watery roar; and from the racing water of the Chigauri would pop a head, human at first glance, but one would see in a second, not human at all! The mouth was made to catch and eat fish, the gills along the jaw-line to breathe water. The eyes were more opaque and less active than a human's—swimming, the head would approach the shore, and after it swiftly would come ripples, more heads breaking the surface. Out upon the shore would climb the water-men she had created and loosed, merman and merwomen, long and clean-limbed, though not as large as humans. They seemed to average not more than four or four and a half feet in height. These intelligent creatures would stand in a line along the shore, their leader approach Aurore with an obeisance, walking quite gracefully on wide-webbed feet. For a few moments she would speak with them, telling them of the menace of the new wild growth, of her temporary retreat before its threat.

Back into the boiling rapids of the Chigauri they would plunge, swim off, disappear in the waves. Water-people, intelligent, living in the water as we live on land! Serving the command of the giant girl—truly it was a new world she was making!

"Does the mind-mass invade the water, too?" I asked Aurore.

"Not yet, but it may when it learns it can. Until then, these water-people will keep us informed of its doings. They will serve as an inner post of spies upon its progress. That is what I am telling them. To watch and wait and tell me always of its doings and of its thoughts."



"Aurore, why can't you furnish the radio-telaugmentative apparatus you invented with an aerial and stronger audio equipment? You could listen in on the mind-mass as we do to a radio!"

"I will try it. You have made a good suggestion. But I suspect that the natural thought-waves do not have such a great range . . ."

"Telepathic minds sense thought at great range without any equipment. With such a mass of mind and with augmentative equipment, you should be able to hear its thought. That would be better than anything these water people could tell you."

## CHAPTER V

### "Man Against the Mind-Web"

*"On a throne of rocks, in a robe of clouds,*

*With a diadem of snow.*

*Around his waist are forests braced,*

*The avalanche in his hand."*

*Byron's "Manfred"*

WE RETREATED steadily but slowly before swiftly growing grey webs of mind cells—a great grey edge of growth masking all the clean beauty of the earth, hanging from the limbs of the trees, spreading in a line along the grass. The front of a battle, a war on a major scale, that line where the grey met the green!

Aurore perfected her augmentative device for listening to the mind, and we could listen now without needing to approach it and make a connection with the fibres. We feared it more now, it was better that we did not have to get near it.

"Aurore, you've got to call in the forces of civilization. You can't let this thing grow until it's too big for them to fight. Its thought is becoming

a greater menace by the hour."

She did not answer, only sat listening to an ever-growing volume of intermingled, yet co-ordinated thoughts that streamed from the speaker of the radio-like device.

That mind was young, mighty, absorptive, learning, and with a will to dominate a consciousness of self-ruling other selves. A thing permeating every other life with the fibrous nerve connections and cells of its being, ruling those lives, absorbing nerve energy from those lives, and growing, terribly growing. We could not know how deep the grey filamentous blanket of life was, but the edge of that battle for all earth stretched in a line on either hand as far as we could learn about.

The threat of that growth and the menace of that mind, listening to it, trying to conceive how to stop it, to bring its self into cooperation with our aims, brought Aurore and myself closer, knit the little men, the ground people burrowing beneath, the water people, all the many lives that were fleeing with us away from the center of their birth—into a close unity with each other. I felt and understood now what it was we had to give the world, and what a great gift it would be to give them the mind-mass as a friend, instead of a devouring enemy. To teach it how to use without absorbing and how to grow without dominating all the life it touched. To use the mighty powers of thought that must lie dormant in its mass.

But the beginnings of the growth of that mind mass had been too savage, too alone, too utterly dog-eat-dog in the jungle.

The savage battle for survival which had been its lot in its lost, unwatched beginnings had formed its character, determined its hereditary slant, it



meant to win and to dominate, it could not think of mutual effort toward a common goal with any other life. Day after day we retreated before the rapidly marching rim of growth, listening with the telaug to its thought, a symphony of triumph, of fecund joy in power, of plans for being all, everywhere, of being in time the world mass—one mind—me! Over and over that simultaneous ego vibrant in the center of each of those thinking, multiplying cells said—“*Me, Me, Me—I rule, and I grow, and all things must and will do as I wish.*”

AS THE days passed and Aurore pondered and planned and listened and despaired, it grew upon me that the ultimate disaster to man's dominance on earth was here occurring. This thing would not stop growing, this great grey fibrous absorptive life would not meet a master, would in time embrace the whole world! Within the mass we could see even now great jaguars, leopards, men, native Indians, other forms of life, caught, held motionless by the greater will of the mind-mass, held while the mind matter grew mycelium all through their limbs. Held there to become focal points, mounds of vaguely life-shaped growth, grey and pink and startling masses of fibrous interpenetrated mind cells. Over the telaug we could hear the strangely transformed thought of their minds, taking on the character and vaunting power-hungry ego of the mind-mass, these once animal selves becoming not themselves but a part of the great growing thing.

Desperate, Aurore turned her mind to ways of fighting the great grey beast.

She built broadcast apparatus from the slim resources of electrical supplies left by the Professor. The still child-like body and youthful, playful mind

of the big pink man that had once been Professor Nebski helped with this work, his nature was adopted to intricate mechanical work, and under her guidance and desperately planning mind he became another pair of hands for her. The three of us, working furiously under continual necessity of moving on down the river banks—built a big portable radio-wave broadcaster. This Aurore used to rebroadcast a scrambled version of the very thought she received from the mind-mass. Confused at the mad, meaningless jumble of reversed and noisily jumbled thought-waves broadcast; the line of growth, which had heretofore steadily advanced, wavered, stopped! A thousand yards from the bellowing thought broadcast the line of growth went on, but from us it slowly retreated now, leaving us on an island of security. All day and all night Aurore experimented with the new weapon, trying everything, even sending Jazz phonograph records out on the waves the mind could not help receiving.

Finally she made a recording of her own voice. This record she sent out over the big thought-wave augmentive device. The voice was a command—“Recede, cease your everlasting cancerous will to dominate. Become a friend, work for all, not for one. Think of us, of all life—as a friend, and how you may make our life better. Cease to destroy the minds about you, become instead a helpful part of them . . .”

I suggested taking a cable bearing this augmented voice record in the thought-waves frequency and attaching the ends by means of many splayed out small wires to the fibres of the nerve ganglia of the mind-mass. Some of these had grown quite thick and visible—were big enough to work with easily. Still I feared to touch it, feared it would begin its growth within me, handled it



with rubber gloves as I made the connections.

All day that record, and similar ones she made to experiment with—pumped its electrical orders into the growth through the cable. The impact of that commanding energy of thought could not help but have results, it was so vast in voltage by comparison with the energy in the small nerve fibers of the mind-mass. Beyond the ends of the cable a great cone of difference began to be visible in the grey, shrouding mind growth over the jungle. There the steadily rustling, slight motion of the tree limbs, which had been so noticeable and so inimical—ceased, and a quiet, a peace came to the grey mass. But the line of change was very marked, we had tamed a part of the mass of mind-cells, only to have the rest, the greater part go on as before. We spread out our cables, attached them all around us in a great circle to the nerve fibres of the mind—and the island of our security broadened, spread visibly hour by hour. We had learned much!

**B**UT it was too late! Listening as we sometimes did to the radio-broadcasts from the coast cities of South America and to the radio programs from the United States, one night a disheartening news-message brought us again to despair.

“Strange growth in jungle frightens South Americans! Yesterday, a plane arrived from Rio De Janeiro bearing the news that vast areas of the jungles, as well as some settled areas, have been overrun with a strange new type of growth which apparently attacks all forms of life. Within the masses, grey in color and covering already the whole head of the valley of the Amazon itself—no life at all can be discerned. In the words of the aviator who brought

in the report—which has been whispered of and disbelieved for some months — ‘Nothing more frightening than this growth can be imagined! It looks like the end of the world unless something is done at once to stop it!’ ”

Aurore looked at me, great tears forming in her eyes, a sob choking in her lips. Isolated from the world as we were, and fighting our lone battle over an area of but a score of miles or so, we had not realized that our efforts had fought back the growth from around us only to have it race on and on elsewhere. Many many thousands of square miles it had covered in its mad race against all other life-growth—and we had foolishly fought a tiny segment of the circle, thinking it all.

Aurore flung herself down upon the grass by the big-wheeled truck of electrical supplies, bearing the throbbing, humming transmitter of nervous impulses, and sobbed bitterly. The radio news item told us we had failed. The mind-mass was out in the world of man, and would continue to grow no matter what our puny efforts accomplished! We had lost!

I sat watching the giant girl, realizing all over that she was but a child, a great and noble child—whose failure was foreordained because of the lack of proper training and development. Softly I explained:

“Aurore, do not feel too badly. You dared greatly, you took a chance for the hope of men, and you lost. Men did not have much worth worrying about, yet you worried. You loved mankind, though you are so different. The very cells of your body are made from other life-forms—your heredity is different, incalculable factors have entered into your mind’s formation, your growth and being. Do not weep. Be a Goddess as you seem to be, fight on and on—think and plan and try—



soon or late we will win. We must plan something that is as great, as far reaching, as mighty in power as is this mind mass. We must create a counter growth—try something from the hair of the dog that bit us!”

She sat up swiftly, her tear streaked face beautiful in its sudden change to interest and hope again.

“‘THE hair of the dog that bit us.’ That is a strange phrase, and it makes me think. Explain it to me!”

I explained the old superstition of making a potion from the hair of the dog that bit one, and drinking it as a protection. And how the principle was sound, as proved by anti-toxins and vaccines which were made from disease germs and used against themselves.

“Exactly,” Aurore cried, her great voice with its contradictory youthful tones echoing dully from the grey festoons of forest, from the grey-mossed rocks, from the whole valley. And the mind-mass murmured back, “There is nothing you can do, you foolish human. Concede defeat, and become a part of me, the great me of all me’s, the mighty world mind. Let me embrace you and find peace, peace, peace . . .”

“Oh, shut up! You are a foolish runaway cell, and no being of thought at all. You will one day sent for me to help you, and I will say—you refused me, and I refuse you.”

AURORE’S voice was triumphant, joyful for the first time in many hectic weeks. The little people, their wings dropping and themselves despondently accompanying us for many weeks when no use was found for them, leaped to attention at the new sound in her voice. I knew she had conceived a new plan of action.

“Look, Aurore, before you start anything new, send over your broadcast

the details of your work so far, the cause of this growth, what it is. Put this on a record, send it continuously on full power on a beam toward the United States. It will be heard, there will be an understanding there of what it is man must fight. It is our duty, even if we die, to send this information to the centers of life in the cities, so that science has an inkling of the nature of the threat. It will save them all the trial and error work of learning what the nature of the mind-mass . . .”

This we did, and as we shut off the transmitter and turned the great beam aerial toward the north, began to send again on a radio-beam, the peace that had been caused within the grey mass of growth about our island of natural brown and green and quiet shore—became again a tormented tossing, a vicious, squirming activity came again upon the surrounding forest. The vast mind-mass was sending in commands over the cell-fibers. Over the neural cables running from clump to clump—was coming again the central ego orders of the great mind-mass, and the cells were obeying, were again active; spreading, absorbing, growing and dominating the whole. Again that slow grey march began, and our little island of immunity began to shrink rapidly. For an hour we repeated the record of information toward the north, hoping for reception, but unknowing. Eagerly I spun the dials of our receiver, hoping some answer would come from the great centers of civilization — but nothing came! Jazz, speeches, commercials, not an acknowledgement.

Aurore shut off the transmitter, switched back to the record of command to the mind-mass, and again along the cables the power began to pump peace and silence and order back into the grey threat of the blanket of life. The menace retreated, the line



of growth stopped its steady advance. I nodded.

"We have done our duty by the race of man. Now we will turn again to your new plan."

Aurore turned again to her vats and chemicals and solutions of nutrient and enzymes, amino acids and gland secretions. On the burro-loads of our caravan most of her supplies had accompanied us—and the little men turned eagerly again to their work of capturing a supply of wild animals for the supply of prime fluid, the first form of life, as I thought of it.

Into the dissociating fields of magnetic and the gurgling green vats of fluid the netted creatures were tumbled. All about us the wild creatures had gathered, retreating before the grey threat even as ourselves; there was an easy supply of small creatures, agoutis, water rats, armadillos, iguanas, small forest deer. There was a number of great cats skulking on the far rims of our island of safety, an area of perhaps fifty acres on the shores of the Chigauri. These the little hunters left severely alone.

AURORE stopped the dissociation process for each large body, as the skull became thin. We pulled out the indicated body, she opened the skull, removed the pulsing, living brain, cast it into a separate vat. I did not know what was in her mind. But I saw that she had a plan, was working furiously and without regard for the pain she caused the living subjects. Soon she had a large vat, perhaps a ton, of living grey matter, which she resolved into dissociated cells.

A fluid; living, growing cells unattached; and each and every cell a thinking cell from an active living brain.

On a card she made a swift little

sketch of a thing that resembled an octopus. A big bulbous center, surrounded by at least a hundred tentacular arms, and each arm divided at the end into innumerable tiny fibers. At the end of each fiber was a little clutching hand-like appendage. This drawing she projected into the seething fluid of mind cells, watched them form around the force lines of the magnetic field projector.

When she finished, a horrible appearing creature pulsed within the tank. Great, grey body; surrounded by a mass of writhing tentacles; eyeless, mouthless, intensely alive.

I realized now what she intended. She had created a master-cell, a gigantic repetition of the mind-cell itself! Swiftly she detached two cables from the far grey edge of the enemy mind-mass, fastened the copper ends to two of the tentacles of the master-cell. Orally she talked into the microphone of the mind-wave transmitter.

"I have created you, newborn one, for the purpose of bringing under control the wild, unthinking growth of a mass of mind-cells that threatens the death of all other life on earth. You are to advance into that mass of mind-cells and take your place as one more cell in its network. You are to think and control the thought of all the rest, you are to co-ordinate the growth and the aims and the un-organized thought of all those mind-cells, you are to be the ego, the conscious well-intended soul of that mind. Answer me, is your will and your memory, your intent what I have provided you shall be?"

The abstract thought of the great ugly animal welled back through the augmentative hook-up of the transmitter-receiver . . .

"Yes, creator, I understand and will do as you command. I am able to think very well and I understand more



than you think . . ."

Even as I marveled at her work in thus building from scratch a thinking mind of that vast size and getting intelligent response from it—the sound of an aeroplane overhead brought us both to attention. The cables remained attached to the great grey beast in the tank, and we ran to the river bank to watch the swoop and spiral and bank of a landing plane. It settled to the water, an amphibious job with a closed cabin, and rode its bow-wave close to the steep shore line.

I shouted with sudden joy at the bright-haired figure with the red cheeks who climbed out on the wing.

"Pug, Pug . . . what's the news? Is this official or are you playing hooky again? Come ashore, girl, and explain yourself!"

"What do you think I'm trying to do, you ape? Throw me a line before the current takes me back to the coast!"

I threw her a rope, waded out to help her ashore dry-shod. She began to upbraid me, and from her it sounded swell . . .

"FOUR days! You swore you'd be back! The next thing I hear, you're dead. I didn't believe it. I knew you had got into something. Then there came this news broadcast about the horrible grey web, and I knew. So I took a chance, came to look for you. Naturally you're right in the middle of the grey web! What is it, excess grey matter you had no use for? Somebody splatter your brains over the landscape, and you're trying to pick them up again, so you can come home? Do you think anybody'd notice they were missing? You needn't have worried. It would never be noticed!"

As I set her down she got her first good look at the gigantic, near nude

form of Aurore. This stopped her flow of impromptu oratory, but only for a second.

"Well, introduce me! Naturally when you philander, you do it in a big way, don't you? Try and tell *me* you haven't been out with a woman. I'm supposed not to notice her, am I? Can you explain her satisfactorily? Just what is it all about anyway?"

"Aurore, this is my fiancée, Pug Ranscom. Her right name is Jean, but everyone calls her Pug, because of her nose. Her bark is worse than her bite, as you can see."

The giant girl bent and placed her hand on Pug's cheek, turning her face up to the light to get a good look at her. They looked at each other for a moment, then for some unknown reason, they both laughed. The ice was broken, as far as I could see, right away.

"You know, I should hate you!" Pug's voice was bitter. "This renegade man of mine had a wedding date with me some months ago! Has he been much of a nuisance?"

"He has been very useful. You see, this grey web, as you call it, is my fault, and he has been helping me fight it. He could hardly run away, even to get married. You must not blame him. It would have been cowardly to leave."

"Don't stick up for him. I'll only be suspicious. But that web of yours has the whole world in cold shivers. There are sane people suggesting bombing it with atom bombs!"

"They aren't through with it yet, Pug." I said, "Unless something checks it soon, it will overrun the whole world, and it means the end of mankind."

"What is it, anyway? It looks like that stuff we used to get on the trees back home, on the cedars . . . You know, Red Spider, they called it. Only this is grey, and it's more frightening. But it grows just as impossibly fast,



doesn't it!"

"It's an ordinary brain cell that has learned to reproduce at a terrific rate. And it thinks of itself as one thing, one big brain. But so far it hasn't spent much time thinking, just growing."

"Maybe it needs something to think about. Why don't you let it listen in to the U.N. debates. Then it'd go to sleep . . ."

The huge grey Master cell that Aurore had just synthesized chose this moment to crawl out of the vat. Pug, whom I had never known to show feminine weakness before in a time of stress, promptly fainted in my arms. I looked at Aurore, and saw almost the first smile on her face since I had known her. She seemed to understand Pug better than myself.

"AURORE, before we release the Master cell, hadn't we better take its thought-wave record on the encephalograph, and if it is sane and well-intended, indoctrinate it with concepts it can use? Sort of hypnotize it into usefulness, or something?"

"I will do what I can. But it is my opinion that the character of a creation is inborn, determined by the nature of the mixture of determining agents in the genes and chromosomes, is a result of the admixture of the formula parts, their proportions. But we will try a little pep talk. You know many animals are born with their instincts already able to direct them in life. They do not learn to be good or bad, they have a character when they are born. So with these creatures. Their growth is too rapid for it to be otherwise."

I deposited Pug on a blanket, promptly forgot her in helping Aurore in her work with the big, grey, smooth animal. But our work, as she predicted, only told us what the creature's first

thoughts had told us. It had sprung from that solution fully endowed with mind, and its nature seemed as developed as if it had lived a thousand years. I thought of insects, of spiders, of the myriads of tiny creatures on earth who do all sorts of complicated operations in their life without ever seeming to need to learn anything. A spider knows how to spin a web as soon as it springs from the egg. So with this creature, its nature had to be determined by something in the synthesizing ingredients; there seemed little we could do about telling a mind as big as this one how to think.

"You see," Aurore said, "it is the offspring, the melting together of billions of separate mind cells, each of which inherited an age of hereditary predetermined patterns of thought. All of those possible patterns of thought are now being resolved, used, looked at and considered within the strange composite fabric of the mind within this grey shapeless mass we have created. What it is, what it will do, depends upon so many factors, inherited memory, race memory, the adaptive stimulation I produced by adding aspartic acid in large quantities—will result in making it able to overcome its problems with immediate adaptations of its nature. That is what we call thought. It has no eyes, no mouth. To see, it must use other minds; to eat, it must have other cells work for it, become part of it. It must splice itself onto that runaway mind-mass which is our problem, and it must rule those thought-cells to make them support it. That is why we must release it at once. Now, let it go. I have calculated all these factors nicely, and it needs the nourishment of that mass of mind-cells. You will see. Watch it work."

I helped her detach the two cable ends which were still fast to the ten-



tacles of the mind-beast, watched it ooze sluggishly toward the grey-green line of the island of immunity's edge. Into the tangled grey web of ominous growth it pulled its big body, on and on, settling at last over a great grey clump of the webs. Its tentacles reached out in a circle, began swiftly to weave the webs fast to its tentacle ends. Soon it was itself like a clump of mind-mass, from it in every direction went the grey threads of cells.

"Turn up the telaug, I want to hear its first contacts with the ego of the mind-mass. Now we will know who is to be the master, the mind-mass, or our new Master cell."

I SPUN the dial of the device till the multi-thoughts of the mind-mass rolled out in a vast volume. Not yet had the Master cell made any impression, not yet had the dominating ego of the endless mass of that mind noticed the advent of a new member of their tribe. Would there be any effect?

"We cannot expect an effect at once. The mind-mass is so huge. We must make more and more of these Master cells. What my plan is . . . to create here a number of powerful Master cells which will grow to be the central ego of the mind-mass by virtue of strength and ability. Such is the way the normal mind centers form, they grow that way because they inherit the ability so to grow. I have given these Master cells the ability to control the mind-mass. They will do it in time, I am pretty sure. But the growth changes have to take place. I am sure their creation gives them a greater ability than the haphazard growth of the mind mass."

I saw the light. "Then you plan to control the Master cells, and through them the whole of the mind-mass. It will become a servant . . ."

"Something of the kind may take

place. Do not think about it, or an oppositional effort may take place within the mind-mass . . ."

That voice I had come to recognize as the voice of the ego of the mind-mass bellowed at us from the loud-speaker.

"I hear your plans, and I will have to take steps to counteract your efforts. I will not be ruled. I alone will rule!"

Immediately following this, another lesser, but somehow more normal, thought voice made itself heard . . .

"The voice is disturbed, not itself. The true self will presently bring order, and life will become pleasant again. This fierce over-penetration must cease. We will lose all power to think if we burden ourselves with every life-form."

"Is that new voice the Master cell?"

Aurore's face was a glory of triumph. "Of course, what else. Get busy, and we will make more of the big cells. They are bound to win, by their nature. Thought is to them what hands are to monkeys, what claws are to moles, what teeth are to a crocodile: a way to get food. It will use every possible combination of thought impulses to get what it wants. And I know what it wants. It wants exactly what you and I want, an interesting life full of rich experience, mental experience, you see. Hence it must make the mind-mass-cells serve its will, or be frustrated. Its purposes are vastly different from the confused multi-ego of the mind-mass, and it is an individual, it knows what it is doing and why. Oh, I do not doubt. But whether the battle will be over in time to save the cities of the world from the growth of the grey mass, I cannot say. We can only hope, and work."

Pug had come around, was standing watching us with wondering eyes. The little winged men, Aurore and myself went to work, netting the unfortunate



animals who had refuged in the island of green safety, only to find themselves hunted even here. Some of them crashed away into the fearful grey web in fright. But we filled the vats, and the process of creating a synthesized mind-cell of gigantic size began again.

**WE WORKED** all night, and Pug tuned in the Northern broadcasts to listen to the frantic reports of the "Threat to the World," as the newscasters were calling it. "The grey menace from the jungle," the "Web of Death" was advancing across Central America. Flyers were bombing it without effect. Cities along its path had been evacuated, and every road away from the spreading circle of grey growth was crowded with terror-stricken humans. Poison gas was tried, with little effect. It lay across half of South America, the newsmen screamed, and nothing was stopping it. "Mankind was doomed!"

Then we found that someone had noticed us! "A little island of natural green in the very center of the grey circle of death has been discovered. Scientists are being dispatched to this tiny circle to discover what has kept the circle of green alive and healthy and free of the grey death. The hope of the world lies now in a tiny circle of green on the slopes of the Andes!"

Pug shouted at me above the blare of the telaug. "Company's coming! Put another leaf in the table!"

Toward morning, exhausted by our labor, Aurore and myself dropped beside Pug to listen to the news-broadcasts. Aurore was intensely interested when:

"Reports from refugees of the area which is now the center of the Web of Death say that the terror originates in a gigantic female whom they call the Witch of the Andes. They credit her

with supernatural powers and abnormal mental equipment. They say that it would never have happened if an operative from an American Intelligence Bureau had not been sent to stop her activities. Something made her angry, and she loosed the evil upon mankind in consequence. There is little to verify this wild report, however. But the Witch of the Andes tale is a very persistent legend, and not a new one."

Another voice took up where this one left off—"It is interesting to speculate that perhaps the scientific expedition sent to examine the island of immunity in the Web of Death may be on their way to the very home of the Witch of the Andes. If they find a gigantic female in that island of green, will she tell them how to stop the terror? Is it possible that island of immunity is her home, the only place in the world immune to the Grey Web? Interesting, but highly improbable. I predict that expedition will find there the cause and the remedy of the terror that sweeps upon us. I predict that man will survive this sudden threat long enough to wipe himself out with atom bombs."

I shut off the radio, turned back to listen to the quite intelligent and more pertinent sounds issuing from the telaug attuned to the thought of the monstrous growth itself. Now, mingled with the monotonous murmur of the mind-mass, was a new thread of thought-sound, an abstract meaning which seemed curiously to struggle with the repetitious urge of the other, greater sound. There were two spirits struggling now within that mind-mass: one, voracious senseless growth, and the other: intelligent, sane effort toward a goal of better living.

**I PONDERED** that, remembering the Hitler threat which almost swept over the whole earth. It, too, had been



growth at the expense of all other lives. Its opponent had been the co-operative lives of the world, who knew their only hope was in those forces which recognized their right to live in their own way in their own homes. Was anything different in this struggle but the outer shells? Was not the brain cell's growth but a repetition of World War II, minus the human bodies carrying the brain cells about?

Around us now a score of the great Master-cell beasts, vast synthesized mind cells of a single will and single individuality, had arranged themselves almost evenly. They formed great throbbing foci for the webs which seemed to accept their leadership, to attach to their tentacles ever more of the grey web fibers.

"How long will it take the Master cells to become the central ego of the mind-mass?" I asked Aurore, who sat brooding beside the telaug's weirdly abstract roar of meaning. She looked like a gigantic sibyl, a mountain of humanity, lovely and wise and inhuman in her aloof beauty.

"Who can say; they are so different from the wild mutated cells of the mind-mass. Perhaps hours, perhaps days, perhaps years. Perhaps never. No one could say certainly what such new types of organisms will do."

Pug was asleep in my arms, and over the grey webbed brow of the hill the sun shoved a blazing rim to peer at the scene of weird desolation, at the last despairing island of hope for man.

Shortly after the dawn brightened to day, the roar of a big plane's motors brought us to the river edge, to watch a big army bomber turn and bank and from its side plummeted down many small dark objects. Above the dark falling objects now blossomed great white flowers of fabric. Our visitors were parachuting into the "island of

immunity" to look for the "Witch of the Andes." Or to find why on this one spot of all the Amazon's green jungle, no grey web of devouring mystery grew.

Aurore was sleeping now, watched over by a score of little squatting winged men, and Pug and I watched the descending parachutes alone. The little winged men glanced at them incuriously. Perhaps they didn't know what they were, did not realize what their advent meant to them. But I knew that now civilization had reached out, and that never again would Aurore and her weird new-created little people ever experiment with the future of man.

## CHAPTER VI

### Science Against the Mind-Mass

*"Sorrow is knowledge: they who know  
the most*

*Must mourn the deepest o'er the fatal  
truth,*

*The Tree of Knowledge is not that of  
Life."*

*Byron "Manfred"*

I WOKE Aurore, pointed up to the descending white flowers bearing their burdens nearer. "Comes what men call science to help you—or to hinder you. I thought you should be warned . . ."

"Ahhh! Men of the cities. Come to condemn me, to arrest me, perhaps to kill me. I fear them, I hate them, I will not have their interference!" She sprang to her feet, her blue eyes flashing, looking every bit the Goddess of nature prepared to face the destroying nemesis called civilization.

I tried to calm her: "Aurore, do not confess the thing is any fault of yours. Explain your work, point out that the mind-mass is an unpredictable sport,



a mutation . . . They can help you. They are in no position to dictate to you, who understand the world's peril better than any other. Tell them what they need to know and nothing more if you can help it."

"Yes, yes, my friend indeed, you are. I need their help, as they need mine. There is not time for petty emotions. Yet I despise so much of their thought and their writings, as did my father. It is hard not to hate them for the progress they do not institute, they do not encourage. They are so many old dunderheads, my father always said, standing in the way of young new minds. But perhaps these are not that kind of scientists!"

We raced forward to help the first to land with his wind-blown billowing parachute. The big arms of Aurore swiftly folded up the great cloth. The man stood there, his mouth open with utter astonishment at sight of Aurore. We laughed, Pug and I and Aurore, and that laugh bound us in unity against the invasion of the minds of civilization. "They shall not dictate to us," was our mutual emotion, I felt.

"The Witch of the Andes!" exclaimed the astounded man. "Unbelievable! But, so is the Web of Death unbelievable."

I stuck out my hand, "Hawley of the SAFBI, and who are you?"

"Anders of Smithsonian. Could you brief me a bit on the nature of this island in the growth and what is going on here?"

He was a tall, gangling, middle-aged man; his hair silvered over the brown, and he was not particularly confident. While he shed his harness, the three of us were busy catching the other two, and chasing the dozen cases of supplies that followed them down. We returned from this work, breathless and excited, to find the three men drawn up in a

line, solemn faced and uniformed, looking entirely too much like a military tribunal to suit me. I decided to delay their questions until we had felt them out a little.

"This is Pug Ranscom, daughter of the Chief of SAFBI, and my fiancée. And this, er, large friend, is a scientist of great ability, if unknown in accepted scientific circles, the daughter of Professor Nebski. Her growth is due to experiments of her father with growth hormones, almost an accident, as I understand."

"Where is Nebski?" asked Anders, a little sharply.

"He is dead of a snake bite. Now, before you sound off and ask a lot of questions, I'd better tell you that Aurore is boss here and understands more than any other person exactly what the trouble is and what to do about it. She will explain in her own way and in her own good time."

"**T**IME! Man, there is no time, the very lives of the cities of the world are in peril! This little expedition is almost the only hope of mankind! There must be no delay! Tell us at once what can be done about this growth!"

I looked at Aurore. She was studying the faces of the two men with Anders. I saw the question in her eyes, turned to Anders, asked: "Who are the other two with you? Aurore has no intention of telling criminals or unauthorized people anything. This could be used in criminal ways, you know!"

Anders snorted . . . "My God, man, there's no time for formalities. Within hours the grey stuff will cross the border into California, and start across the whole United States. The rate of growth is tremendous, you cannot realize here . . ."



I turned to the telaug, switched on the sound. From the apparatus the weird sound meanings began to pour. From my experience with it I understood what it meant, and could visualize from it every mile of the extent of the mind-mass. It was like having eyes that could see a whole continent in one glance. But I saw that they did not understand the sound and abstract meaning impulses pouring from the speaker as well as from the coils of the device.

"That is the voice of the mind-mass, its individual summation of its all-sense. Can you understand what it means to listen to it? You had better humour Aurore. She created that device from necessity in a short time."

Anders seemed get the idea all at once. He approached Aurore, sitting now, disinterestedly brooding over the flow of weird meaning from the telaug, said: "Miss Nebski, we are accredited emissaries from the United States War Research Service. My companion here is Major George Merrick, specialist on biological warfare, and the other gentleman is Dr. Harold P. Yourey of the Office of Strategic Services, FBI. Here are our credentials. Anything you can do to aid us will be appreciated by the Nation we represent."

Aurore did not smile, but she did look over the papers and cards he handed her. "Very well," she said at last, her huge voice easily dominating the whole scene, setting the tone, announcing to every sense just who was dominant here, "I will tell you what will be of use to you, and you can form your own opinion. But I warn you that the first sign of antagonism or accusation on your part may be fatal. I am not alone here."

I followed as Aurore showed them her vats and tubes of synthetic determinants, explained the whole process of

life-creation. It was an intense session of questions and unbelieving stares on their part until the overwhelming evidence of the truth covered their incredulity with conviction. I listened as she pointed out the great grey mounds of the Master cells she had created, as she explained the nature of the little winged men, even invited the winged little men to participate in the discussion. It was an amazing revelation of the poverty of organized science before the genius of the synthetic human. Aurore was supreme, and their minds stumbled along trying to understand and evaluate the information, the formulas and processes she threw at them with the ease of the super-expert, the specialist in electro-biology. They were galvanized by the revelation that the growth and movement of the mind-mass could be checked and held by a beam of neural-wave frequency thrown by an adapted radio-transmitter.

SOON after she had completed her explanation, the three men set up a cable pick-up with harness. The big plane, hovering still high overhead, swooped low, dropped a hook and cable which snatched aloft Anders in an ingenious seat harness. Back toward the United States went a method of fighting or at least checking the mind-mass. If it was feasible, there was hope now, I reasoned. But perhaps the mind-mass was so powerful now it could overcome the super-imposed neural-wave flows from the transmitter beams. Perhaps the method that had worked when the mind-mass was small would no longer prove of much use against it.

That night we sat around the radio, tuned to the United States broadcasts, listening to the newsmen ballyhoo the return of the scientist from the "Island of Immunity."

The rapid-fire, exciting voice of Jay



Court staccatoed: "The army came through today on the problem of what to do about the Grey Web of Death that threatens to wipe man off the earth. Dropping three scientists upon the lately discovered island of immunity at the center of the web, the army a few hours later responded to signals from the island and picked up one of the scientists with a chair hook, a technique used where landing is impossible.

"Prof. Anders of Smithsonian was the man plucked from the heart of the web, and he brought back with him the most startling news to strike the people of this country since the threat of the Grey Web was first fully realized and counter-action taken.

"In that island of immunity Anders found the Witch of the Andes, who was thought to be but a superstition! He says she is but a child in years, but of an amazing growth, fully twenty feet in height, and with a brain as astoundingly powerful as her body is huge! She had used a particular radio-wave to halt the spread of the plague across her island of green, and Anders has brought back her method with him. Which to me personally is some great relief! How about you, eh, folks? More about the people on this most amazing island of green in the center of the Web of Death, and the heroic trio found there, as soon as we get details from Prof. Anders. Right now the army is keeping him pretty busy planning the defense of your home and mine."

I turned to Pug, saw tears in her eyes. I put an arm around her shoulder. "Maybe soon you and I will have one of those homes they are protecting, Pug."

"I'll believe it when I see it," she muttered between her teeth, but she kissed me, nevertheless, and laughed a little with relief.

FOR several days we did little but listen to the radio reports and rest; we were worn out, and the two scientists took up a lot of Aurore's time with complicated questions.

The defense barrier erected clear across Mexico, a series of beam towers to hold back the growth, worked all right. The growth stopped, and remained quiescent within the range of the revolving beams. But everywhere else the tide went on and on; it crawled upon ships, invading the wood unseen, crossed the oceans, turned up in Europe, in China, in Russia . . . It was like holding back the sea with a broom. Everywhere man was retreating before the grey deadly tide.

The two men, Yourey and Merrick, began to entreat Aurore to accompany them to New York or Washington; anywhere where there were proper research facilities, to give her immense knowledge of bio-electrics to the battle for the life of man. Her own efforts, I realized now, were hampered by lack of equipment, and even more hampered by lack of stimulating mental contacts with minds equipped to talk over her problem. She turned from her tubes, her distillings of glandular extracts, her continual creation of new types and organizations of mental cells, finally, and gave her assent.

Yourey at once sent the message over the short wave for a plane to pick them up.

They sent an amphibious job, a huge one, for they had no idea of Aurore's true weight. It was many times a normal human's weight, and she did not know herself.

The ship landed perilously on the stream, dwarfing the banks with its huge size, and nearly being wrecked as it scraped a bar in the stream. But she made it back into the air, skimming the grey shrouded trees for miles as



the pilot fought for altitude.

In Washington, Pug and I bade the giant girl good-bye. She nearly refused to part with us, she considered us her only trustworthy friends, but we promised to see her every day. It was the first real show of genuine emotion I had ever seen in her.

Weeks passed, and the governments of the world were quietly giving up the ghost, the route of mankind everywhere before the steadily advancing grey webs was complete. The neural wave-length barriers had been only temporarily successful.

Every evening Pug and I went to the underground Army laboratories to talk to Aurore. We were practically ordered to, anyway, as it kept up her morale. She would recount to us all the many secret reports of the activities of the United States forces against the enveloping death, and their own efforts in the laboratories to find a remedy for the run-away growth.

The commerce of the world was at a standstill; ships could not move because of floating masses of the growth which could contaminate the ships, bring them into port, start the infection where had been none before.

Starvation, famine, disease began to rise higher, civilization tottered.

Many of the less settled portions of the globe were shorn clean of all life except the dread grey blanket. Each night Pug and I with Aurore listened to the telaug, which could pick up the thought of the mind-mass at great distances now that the augmentative steps had been strengthened.

Through the meaningless, unorganized mass-thought of the mass of cells cut the great voice of the Master cells, and they knew we were listening, spoke to us by name from their shapeless mounds of life on the slopes of the Andes!

Other researchers had found a corrosive gas which destroyed the growth, and were busily fitting out the army planes with gas sprays. With these, vast areas could be cleaned of the growth, but the thing could not be definitely defeated. It was like trying to spray the whole continent of Africa with DDT. The world was too big!

This night, Aurore said—"Come with me. I have developed a parasite which I think will conquer. There is but one drawback. It may be able to live in the body of man, and if so, it will prove an even bigger danger. Tonight I take the last step—to find out if it can live in a human body, in my body!"

Pug looked aghast. "Oh, no, Aurore. Not you!"

"Who else? The plague is my fault."

We followed her into the underground labyrinth where the great Army research laboratories are hidden. There in her own private rooms she showed us the culture, seething tubes of little, just visible animals.

"PUT the telaug on them, and you will see what I mean . . ." Aurore said to me.

I did as she asked, swung the receptive loops of her telaug receiver toward the tubes of living pink fluid, switched on the power. From the speaker, and from the brain impulse sender came the mentally audible sound of . . . Voices! Human voices, human-like thoughts!

Lovely, a symphony of reason, organized and highly active, that sound and that abstract meaning were like looking into an alien world of beautiful people.

"These will replace the grey menace, the webs will disappear, the pink and intelligent cells will devour them, find a way to exist unseen beneath soil, in the rocks, wherever the runaway cells have found a way to live, these will



follow to the death and replace them. I have succeeded. There remains yet to make sure whether they can be malignant, whether they will also devour the cells of the human and replace them . . ."

"Ask them first, Aurore. There must be a way to make such creatures understand what you are going to do. They must understand first, then I am sure that such minds as those we hear would co-operate." I was not anxious to see Aurore collapse and become a writhing pink mass of germ-like creatures, through another error.

"There is no other way. Do you think I do not know what I am doing? It must be ignorant of what is to happen. If it knew, it might withhold attack, and then when released and growing over the earth, it would later attack humans because it was ignorant of the necessity not to do so."

Aurore did not listen to our entreaties, but picked up a huge syringe full of the pink fluid, injected it into her great arm as we watched.

That was an agonizing waiting, to see what the effect would be. I kept the telaug on the spot on her arm where the pink, new life forms had entered, listened to the confused involuntary voice of the cells, which no man can wholly understand, and singled out the peculiar alien minute strains of the new pink cell life. They were at first a confused medley of anxiety, changing to a paean of effort as they struggled for life within her flesh. Gradually the voices grew weaker, and I read aright the cry that was their death cry—"Air, we must have air."

"Unlike the grey webs of the mutated mind-cells, they cannot live without oxygen in large amounts. They cannot get enough within the human body. That is what I had to prove." Aurore's face was covered with a fine dew of

sweat, I realized it had been an ordeal for her.

"It was the quickest way to know. I was pretty sure, but I had to know, of course." Aurore smiled at me, touched my shoulder with her great finger-tips. "The peril for mankind is over, and if this pink strange life-form develops as I know it will, the plans of my father to make the world a place of magic will come true."

THE army staff went to work culturing the new microbe, for which they had no name or classification, it being entirely a product of Aurore's use of Nebski's methods of synthesizing new life-forms from protoplasm. Then over the world went the fleets of war-planes, dropping not bombs, but a pink cloud of mist upon the grey deadly mass of mind-matter that did not think, but only grew greater.

The day that Pug and I were married, the radios were blaring the news of man's release from fear, and a victory celebration thronged every street of the capital.

The last time I saw Aurore, she was busy with sets of projection drawings for her great new vats in the Army's laboratories, now hers by right of conquest. There were no signs of her being displaced as first lady of research anyway.

I watched her for awhile, then I asked: "Now what could it be, I can't quite make out. Adonis, or Superman, or just a giant to do the handy work around here?"

Aurore gave me her best glittering smile, and shook the tawny flood of hair from a face that blushed a rich embarrassed hue of red.

"I am making myself a husband; you are married now to Pug. Besides you would not want to live with such a huge woman as myself, would you?"



I declined committing myself, for it might get back to Pug. And you know how wives are. Or do you?

There is one great thing I have learned from Aurore's work. Aurore was right when she decided that the world needed more and better thought.

I prophesy that when men learn at last of the surviving creations of that giant lone genius, of the winged men,

of the water race, of the winged minds of the air—they will learn that the logic of perfect thought is the tie that gives union to all life, and not nationalistic or race vauntings. They will learn that all thinking creatures are kin, if they think well and correctly. And as Aurore grimly prophesied, so do I: if they do not learn that, they will perish before a more benign form of life.

THE END

## REPORTS FROM THE IONOSPHERE



By **FRAN FERRIS**



**A**T White Sands, New Mexico, scientists are busy finding out more things about the air high above the earth. Rockets with thermometers and other instruments sealed inside them are sent whizzing up into space. When the rockets fall back to the earth their instruments show how fast they went and the temperatures of the layers of air through which the rocket passed. Some of these layers are hot and some are 80 degrees below zero. Seventy miles is as high as any of the rockets have gone so far, but scientists are working on a rocket that will go much higher.

At the earth's surface the atmosphere is much heavier because it is pressed down by the weight

of the air above it. At sea level, the air pressure will push up the mercury in a barometer 29.92 inches. At 20,000 feet above the earth, the air pressure will raise the mercury only 13.75 inches.

The atmosphere itself is divided into spheres. The troposphere starts at sea level. At about 40,000 feet above the earth is the tropopause. There, the troposphere meets the stratosphere. In the low pressure of the stratosphere, a person's blood would boil away unless he were sealed in a cabin with higher air pressure. Above the stratosphere is the ozonosphere and above that is the ionosphere, from which rockets are now bringing us reports.

## SHINTOISM, THE WAY OF THE GODS



By **CARTER T. WAINWRIGHT**



**T**HE history of this religion falls into three periods, the first ending in the sixth century A.D., and the second in the eighteenth century, and the third continuing at the present time. In the first period the religion was not named, and had no dogmas, moral precepts, or sacred writings. The objects of worship were called "kami" meaning superior. Some gods were good and some were bad, some were mortal, and some were wedded to women. From one of this later class descended the Emperor. But there were dieties of the cauldron, kettle and saucepan, gods of the kitchen and of the gate as well as gods of pestilence, storms and heavens. Everything was worshipped that excited fear or admiration. The rites were purification by water from crimes, and the offerings were of most anything of value such as swords and armor, and especially cloth which was cut in strips and hung before the shrines.

The second period began with the sixth century and the advent of Buddhism and Chinese civiliza-

tion. Shinotism stepped into the background and its gods were regarded as reincarnations of Buddha. Buddhists priests took over the shrines and introduced their own ornaments and rituals. Only in the palace of their emperors, who were themselves Buddhists, and at a few of the great shrines were attempts made to keep any of the ancient usages. The Shinto priests became fortune tellers and magicians.

In the eighteenth century a succession of scholars animated by the love of antiquity and hating any false or foreign beliefs, attacked Buddhism and Confusianism and fought to reestablish Shintoism. They taught that its basis was obedience to nature and to the Emperor. Although Shinto was shadowy and ill-defined, sentiment was aroused and after some revolutions about 1865, Buddhism was disestablished and Shinto was put in its place, but it could not maintain itself and became only a code of ceremonies for court and officials.

\* \* \*



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