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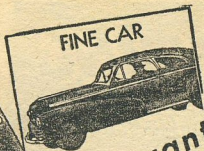
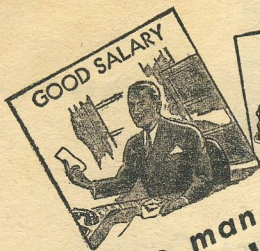
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She had arms that ended in tiger's claws — certainly not the sort of woman you'd like to meet!

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What was the strange music that came from the mysterious peaks of the lost mountain?

Cover painting by H. W. McCauley illustrating a scene from "Tiger Woman Of Shadow Valley"

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The

OBSERVATORY

..... *by the Editor*

THE SEVENTH World Science Fiction

Convention, which is going to convene at Cincinnati on September the 3rd, 4th and 5th is apparently going to be the most successful convention for some time. Dozens of fans will be there, lots of authors and publishers, and an editor is coming all the way from England. But this isn't written to brag—it is written to put the readers right about something that they seem to be, if not wrong about, at least mixed up about.

THIS convention is not a gathering of

members of some secret organization. It's a get-together of guys like you and your editor, and the guy or gal who is reading this right now. You don't have to know any secret grips or mysterious passwords; you don't have to have any esoteric knowledge or lore of science fiction history. All you have to do to be welcome is to be in Cincinnati over Labor Day weekend. You can walk into the Hotel Metropole; it's absolutely free; and you can walk into the convention hall. Immediately you'll be one of the bunch, with authors and editors and illustrators your buddies for the next three days. And, in after days, when you read stories by this author or that, you can recall what you said to him and what he said to you—believe me it makes the stories ten times as interesting.

SEVERAL of our readers have written us and demanded that we retract what we said about rockets melting in space, and space travel seeming to be impossible because of heat. Say they: "what about meteors?" They come from space, and they aren't melted?" Well, let's get down to cases and ask that question: What about meteors?

HOW DO you know meteors come from space? If you'd heard the recent astronomers' meeting, you'd have heard about the new theory of the creation of the solar system, of all systems, including island universes, in the cosmos. You'd have discovered that they are all caused by vortexes forming in the ether, which is now said to be matter, only extremely divided. The refraction of light from distant stars is now said to be caused by infinitesimal particles (more rarefied than the rarest gas) in the

form of tiny needles which are lined up by magnetic fields. There are other elements also present in the same form. It may be that all known elements (and some unknown) are present in the same way, making space as much material as our earth, except that more of it is bunched in one place on our world and in the stars. All this business is caused by circular motions of the mass of ether which drive a concentration toward the center, forming a body of matter.

O KAY, IF this is true, then we might (almost certainly would) find minor whirlpools in great number all around the surface of a large body, maybe only 50 to 100 miles up, in the atmosphere, true, but in so rarefied strata that it really amounts only to "empty" space. This phenomenon might go on continually, in millions of little instances, and each one might concentrate a bit of "ether" into a tiny "planet" the size of a grain of sand, or of a huge boulder, depending on the size of the whirlpool, or eddy. These bits, then, would drop, and accelerating through gravity, would hit the thick atmosphere lower down at great speed and burn up. So, actually, our meteors need not come from space at all, where it is so hot only these "needles" of matter science has now discovered exist, can exist. They form right next to our own planet and then fall. Meteor study shows that they do possess characteristics, such as layers, almost exactly like the layers of our larger Earth. The stony type, particularly, often display this characteristic.

SO, SINCE science has so recently given us these entirely new concepts, it must be that they can be accepted as explanations for what your editor has been asked to retract on the basis that they conflict with previous concepts. Then let's repeat the new ideas, which are based on definite scientific evidence: space is very hot, and space travel may be impossible. Meteors do not come from space, but from our own upper atmosphere. They, like space ships, would become "gaseous needles floating in a magnetic field" in space. These are new ideas, true, but they are backed by new astronomical discoveries and by reputable scientists. Which ought to explain our stand. RAP

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TIGER WOMAN OF SHADOW VALLEY

By BERKELEY LIVINGSTON

They were unbelievable, these tiger people!
And she was lovely, but so terribly deadly!

"AND NO blasted Hayes is going to beat me!" Hardin Sayres yelled, pounding the desk as he did so.

'Bull' Gorman hid a grin behind a wide paw and tried to look impressed. But it was hard, seeing the caricature behind the desk. Sayres was about

five-feet-two, must have weighed about a hundred and twenty pounds and wore clothes too tight for him. His face was as narrow as his chest with a long pointed chin and nose and small beady eyes. Yet, ridiculous as first impressions were of the man, a second look gave one the feeling that

The whole world recoiled before the violence of the wind. We clung to each other in terror.





there was an immense store of latent and terrible power in that tiny frame. The second glance would have been the more correct, Hardin Sayres had killed more men than some of the Central American revolutions did, and all by the pressing of a button, summoning his secretary, or the dictating of a letter. He owned Sayres and Co., *Engineers*, the largest building organization in the country, particularly of roads. And in the building of some of those roads, Sayres had counted the cost of lives a small thing.

Gorman reached into a pocket and pulled a pack of smokes into the light. He lighted one and from behind the curtain of smoke, said:

"So what's the fuss? It's going to be a race, isn't it? An' you got the best crew in the whole damned world, meaning me and 'Shorty' Sims. Hell! There ain't an hour in twenty-four I can't beat Larry Gaines to the punch...."

"Shut up!" Sayres growled as best he could in his high tenor. Gorman flushed at the command. His eyes became bleak, but he held his tongue. He knew better than to say anything while Sayres was in this mood. "This isn't the kind of race I can afford to lose, understand?" Sayres went on. "This is for the greatest prize ever. Because it was an American who discovered the field and an American who made the first journey to Venus, the *Inter-Nations Council* has awarded the United States the right to exploration and exploitation of mineral rights to the light side of Venus—"

He stopped and glared malevolently at Gorman, wishing that he didn't have to tell this hulk of meat all this, but finding it necessary. "—Now get this. Hayes and I, in conjunction with a government agency sent the first flight to Venus. As you know they never came back though they could have. We know they landed

there, and that they found an atmosphere approximating ours, that they did some exploring and found there were two sides to Venus, a light and dark, and that it was on the light side life existed. They spent two weeks there. There Interstellar-space communications system worked. Jackson was my minerals man on the trip. It was he who found the deposits of Holium...."

This time Gorman showed life. His eyes widened and the cigarette was forgotten. Holium! Wow! There was maybe a pound of it in the whole world. Lighter than aluminum, stronger than the strongest steel alloy, impervious to heat, impregnable to wear, it was the perfect metal. The man who controlled the mines could control the world....

"—But damn it to hell!" Sayres exploded, "the government said I had no right to claim since it was a joint expedition. And since the act of 'Seventy two' gave private enterprise the rights to all discoveries they could not claim it either. However, they could act as judges. So they said a race could be run between Hayes and my outfit. That's why I called you.

"There are going to be five of you in the crew. I am sure you're going to win, but just in case, I planted someone in Gaines' crew who will make sure he's going to lose."

"Aah!" Gorman grunted. "I tell you, boss, I can lick him at any game he wants to play, including space travel."

"That's fine," Sayres said sourly. "Only this isn't a game. So get out of here and get started. You've got twenty-four hours...."

THE GREAT fog banks of Venus surrounded the tear-shaped ship. Larry Gaines, himself, was at the controls. This was the touchiest part, the most difficult, of the whole trip.

He knew they were a hundred miles thick. But sometimes those grey streamers of fog extended to within a hundred feet of the earth. It took a master at the throttle to manipulate those last few miles.

The four members of his crew sat silent and tense, watching him. Even Laura Jenks. . . . The tightly-fitting space suit showed her figure to perfection. Her helmet hid the wealth of blue-black hair, but her features could be seen through the small window of unbreakable plastic. They were even, soft and lovely. All but her eyes. Those seemed to have a life of their own, so concentrated was their light, so bright with hidden power.

She kept watching the strong hands of Gaines' at the throttle, her eyes never leaving the sure fingers, so like an artist's. She could see the mileage gauge from her position and saw the needle hovering at the thousand foot level. Her breath came and went in gentle sighs. Then she turned and looked at the rest of the crew with speculative glance.

There was Gil Jones, the engineer; Hardy Johnson, Gaines' buddy and co-pilot; and last, Fred Frick, plain mucker, a man supposed to have been taken from one of Hayes' properties in Arizona. She wondered about Frick. . . .

Then the grey murk broke, strong sunlight showed the gentle contours of wooded, rolling country below them, and Larry Gaines' voice came to their ears:

"We're in. It's on automatic now. Off with the suits and prepare to land."

A few minutes later the ship landed gently as a feather in the bowl of a shallow valley and seconds afterward five figures stepped to the earth. And as they stepped from their ship, another, fifty miles to the east of them, landed with the same ease on a

level stretch of grassland bordering a wide forest.

The three men pounded the back of Larry Gaines' in their exuberance. Laura only smiled but there was as much gladness in her smile as there was in the other's rougher manifestations.

"Guess we did it, all right," Larry said. "Well. Might just as well get started. Frick, break out some ammo and the guns. Gil, get the maps and we'll get right into it. First off, we've got to get oriented. So-ooo. . ."

And while the four gathered about the figure of Gil Jones, a dozen figures studied the strangers from the shelter of an overhang looking down into the shallow valley. And after a moment the figures rose after backing off a few yards, turned and trotted off in the direction of a boat-like affair nearby. They were dressed alike in knee-length breeches, sandals and breastplates, but it took a single glance to show that half the group were men, the other half, women. . . .

BULL GORMAN marshalled his crew before him. Each man was armed with a snub-nosed auto-pistol, the deadliest small arm ever invented, with the hitting power of an 80 mm. shell. Crossed over their chests were four rows of webbed belting holding bandoliers of ammunition, enough for any emergency.

"Okay, guys," Bull said, his close-set eyes shifting rapidly from one to another. "It'll be a cinch. 'Cording to the map old man Sayres gave us we're only a couple of miles from this outcropping. Burns, Heddon and Smitty will handle the pick and shovel work. Mulley and me'll stand watch. Got it?"

"There was silent acknowledgment. "So let's get cuttin'," Gorman commanded.

They skirted the forest for a half

mile and came onto a narrow road. So far, so good, Gorman thought. Jackson had sent out okay info. Now this road was supposed to lead straight back through the forest for some two miles, and they could come to a fork. The right hand road was the one for them. It would lead straight to the pit.

They were panting by the time they reached the fork in the road. This part of Venus was semi-tropic and the forest held heat close to its green bosom. They stopped for a rest while Gorman moved onto the new road. His eyes narrowed in speculation. Wide enough for only two to walk abreast, it led straight as a die between twin borders of jungle giants. Fifty feet ahead of Gorman darkness made a mystery of what lay beyond.

Gorman waited some fifty seconds, then waved his arm as a signal to start again.

And as the five moved into the darkness of the road, an odd vehicle followed close on their heels, silent as the wind in the trees. There were ten men in the vehicle. One of the men, a short squat man, whose broad shoulders and heavy arms indicated one of immense strength, spoke aloud....

SO MORE have come. Just as the tiger-woman said they would. Well. This time we are prepared. Barta and her warriors are in the trees. The nets will fall before these five can draw breath to stop them. Not too swiftly after them, Hannes—"

The darkness was not quite complete, but rather like the gloom of a church at twilight, with the same effect of light seeping through the lacy leaf patterns, as in the windows of the church. The five men walked one behind the other, close enough so that the length of an arm separated them.

The auto-pistols were held by the stocks, ready for instant use. Gorman had recruited the toughest men he could find, men who would stop at nothing including murder.

They were prepared for anything, from front and rear. But certainly they never thought the attack would come from above. The nets fell about the men silently, involving them in the silken folds, closing over them so that their arms were not free and their legs became entangled.

And after the nets leaped the warriors, beings in knee-length breeches, whose chests were covered by breastplates. There were some twenty of them and they set about their work swiftly and with a silence which brought almost as much terror to the breasts of those in whose prisoners they were. For the Earthmen saw the taloned claws at the ends of the fingers, talons like those of a tiger, razor-sharp, curved to cut a throat or tear the flesh to ribbons.

Gorman grunted in savage fury as he tried to free himself of the entangling cords. He could hear the mouthed fury of his friends. But it was all in vain. They were caught. And by women. For as the taloned beings came close they could see that the whole troop of them were women.

"....They are taken, Harta," one of them called to a tall woman of extraordinary thinness.

"Good!" said Harta. "Baio will soon be here with the car. See to it that their arms are bound. I do not like the looks of these strange weapons they bear."

And after a few seconds the boat-like carriage glided silently up to the group. The five men, each wrapped in his cocoon of cord, were thrown to the bottom of the boat. The women clambered aboard and Baio turned it about and set the lever full-speed forward.

"The Tiger Woman will be pleased to see these," said Harta.

"SHUCKS!" Hardy Johnson observed as they looked closely at the map. "I could of done better with my eyes closed. 'We're a good ten miles from this place.'"

There was good-natured laughter as Larry Gaines folded the map and placed it within its oilskin bag. He shouldered his semi-machine gun, grinned at the others and said, "Let's go. Laura...."

The girl stepped to his side and looked at him with questioning eyes.

"....Stay close," he said in a low voice. "Frick and I are the only ones with weapons. They should be enough. Still, we've got to remember that the exploratory ship never returned."

She shook her head in understanding, her strange eyes holding his in thrall. He thought: You're the damned most beautiful woman I've ever met, the one woman I've ever thought of calling Mrs. Gaines. But you scare me. You make me feel inferior.... Laura Jenks, explorer, aviatrix of space, first woman to fly to the moon and return, first woman to hold a Ph. D. from M. I. T. If you were as feminine as you look....

"Yes," she said in a low voice. "Frick has the other semi. I don't quite trust Mr. Frick. Where did you pick him up?"

He jerked his head at the words. He knew better than to ask what brought that to her mind. She never spoke without reason. "Why—oddly enough he came to me. Had a letter from Mr. Hayes, himself. Hayes suggested I use Frick. That he had the best reputation in his line in the whole country. And we're going to need a mucker who knows his business. For sure none of us do...."

"Still," Laura said, her eyes intent on the heavy figure of the man under

discussion, "I would watch him closely. You know, I wouldn't put it past Sayres to hire a man like that."

Larry's lips became a thin, bloodless line. Sayres! And Bull Gorman! Gorman was out there somewhere. Maybe he had even landed. There was about the same speed in the two ships. They had started at exactly the same instant. There was no reason why Gorman could not have landed. Surely he had enough space travel experience.... Yes! Laura was right. Better watch Frick. Yet not make it too apparent.

"Fred," Larry called in noncommittal tones.

The mucker walked over.

"Better take the van. I'll bring up the rear with Laura. That way we'll get front and back should the need arise."

"Right, boss," Frick said. His eyes, pale-blue and almost without expression, held Larry's for an instant, then turned away. He stepped forward dutifully, and Larry waved them on the march. Gil Jones and Hardy carried the tools which Frick would use when the time came.

The way led over the gently sloping hills, fresh and bright with greenery and flowers. Past the last of these hills was a barren bit of ground, like a scabrous sore in the flesh of the earth. The barrenness was enclosed completely in a sort of ellipse, some of which was the hills, but for the greater part, the tangled forest. The Holium lay within the barren pit of ground.

They came after an hours walk to a road. There was no question of it. And the same thought occurred to all. If there was a road, then someone built it. Which meant people of some culture and intelligence lived on this planet. Yet Jackson and the government men had not mentioned seeing human life. Perhaps, Larry thought, it *once* existed but no more.

The road wound between and over the hills. The sky was blue as the Earth's own, cloudless and bright. The wind was soft and warm, that rustled their hair. It was like walking through fairyland. Then they topped the rise of a hill and the delusion was gone.

Facing them and stretched across the width of the road, was a thin line of warriors. They held lances in their fingers, the tips of which were directed against the Earth people. And as Larry turned for some reason, he saw coming up on either side, as if they had risen from the earth itself, a half dozen boat-like cars.

"Surrender!" shouted a feminine voice.

Larry thrust aside the girl's arm and leaped forward. He had seen Frick halflift the semi-machine gun. "Wait, Frick!" he called. "Don't shoot!"

Frick whirled at Larry's words, the gun pointing straight at Larry. Then, before any could stop him, Frick bent low and ran swiftly for the protection of the underbrush close to the side of the road. And as he ran a half dozen fingers of blue flame sought him. But he had acted with a speed swifter than the other thought. He was gone before the flames caught him.

"Drop your weapon!" the same voice commanded.

He looked up and saw that though all the other warriors were without, this one wore a mask. He saw too that it was a woman who faced him, though he half-guessed it by her voice. Then the cars came up and those in front moved in.

In a matter of seconds the four were bound hand and foot. Not a word was spoken while they were being made prisoner. And after, only the low-voiced command by the masked woman, "In the cars. We return."

"LARRY!" Laura whispered as she snuggled close to Gaines. "Look at their hands."

But he had already seen the taloned claws. Now he was busy in studying these people. The mixture was about even, men and women. Other than their complexions, which were slightly reddish, they looked exactly as Earth people. He wondered about their language. It was English. Yet he could guess at that. They had developed a sixth or seventh sense of speech to such a degree that they could make themselves understood. He realized, also, that such an accomplishment meant a high I.Q. Then his glance went to their strange weapons.

And, as if the masked woman had read his mind, came the answer to his silent question:

"A ray we have developed. It will not kill, but it will paralyze...."

He looked at her in surprise.

"You will learn more later...after you have talked to the others...."

Others, he asked himself. Could that mean Jackson and Hyams and government men were alive? The answer would have to come later. The eyes of the woman hidden behind the mask were impossible to read. Several seconds went by before he became conscious of whispered words.

"...Larry! ...Larry!"

He turned his head and looked blankly at Laura. She was frowning in displeasure. "I'm sorry," he said lamely. "Didn't hear you."

"Well...." she shook her head and went on, "Did you notice that these vehicles are running on a magnetic line? The keel doesn't touch the ground."

He bent his head and saw she was right. The strange vessel was floating some ten inches above the road. He also noticed that they were riding the center of the road. And at a terrific speed.

".... What you have come seeking," said the masked woman suddenly, her hand sweeping in a majestic gesture toward the right.

They all looked then. It was like seeing a bit of an alakali flat in an American desert scene. Larry judged the area as being some ten miles long by about five wide. What was of even greater interest were the numbers of people seen working there.

"How did you know what we have come looking for?" Larry asked. His voice and glance were sharp.

"The others came seeking the same thing," was the reply. "Should your reason be any other?"

Now Larry was nonplussed. Did she mean the first expedition or Gorman and his crowd? But the questions were driven from his mind by the quickened activity of the forward group near the controls. Some were looking skyward. Larry and Laura followed the questing glances. They saw only a small group of nimbus clouds slightly above the horizon. Yet even as they watched the clouds deepened, grew larger, heavier, darker, and somehow threatening, as if they held an awesome power.

Larry's keen hearing heard the masked woman's whisper aside to the helmsman: "Think we can beat the storm?" He also saw the man's negative shake of his head. Once more the masked woman spoke, this time aloud: "We'd best take cover. Hang it! Of all the places to get caught. But we'll have to take a chance. As for you space-strangers, stay close to us and try to hug the ground as much as possible. Head for the west side of that hill, Magnes...."

The man named Magnes turned a switch and a low humming told of an engine's power being put to use. The boat turned in the direction of the nearest hill and after a moment they were in the shelter of its slope. They barely made it in time. The

clouds which seemed so far off had come up with electrifying speed and now filled the whole sky with dun color. A strong wind had come up. Sheets of lightning shot from the cloud centers and thunder sounded like an artillery barrage. But no rain. As the whole mob ran for the shelter of the slope they could feel the wind increase, in violence and sound. It became a steady roar, horrible to hear and frightening.

Larry threw his arm around Laura's shoulder. He felt the pressure of someone at his other side, turned his head and saw that in the rush of people falling to the ground, the masked woman lay next to him. The darkness which the clouds had brought made it impossible to distinguish features but he felt certain it was she. Then the full fury of the wind struck and thoughts, feelings everything was driven from him. It was like being buffeted by something that was malevolent in its fury.

The two women seemed to seek a path into him, so strongly did they snuggle to him for protection. And all he could do was hug the earth in futile pressure. Once he thought he heard a scream and felt horror, for he knew what the scream meant. Someone had been lifted by the wind. A twisted, mangled body would be found later.... Then even thinking became impossible....

THE STORM struck the vehicle carrying Gorman and his men, at the same time. But they were in the protection of the forest. Here, havoc was not as general, and after Baio stopped the boat they found shelter among the trees. Baio unloosed the bonds of the prisoners. But he forgot the auto-pistols they carried. Gorman knew only that they were free.

A grim smile played on his lips as he looked at his men. They took the signal for what it was meant. Before

Baio and the others could do more than think about the sudden actions of the five, it was all over. Their mangled bodies, ripped to shreds by the terrific fire power of the autopistols, were scattered on the ground. Not a single one was left alive.

Then the storm struck!

It did not last long, but its fury ripped the forest, thick as it was, to shreds. Miraculously, not a single Earthman was harmed. Instinct had made them fall, and they were so grouped that they fell close to the protection of the largest of the jungle giants.

"Whew!" Gorman blew his breath out in a long sigh, as the storm died at last. "Well, that's over. All right men. We've got a nice car to use. Damned good of these characters to leave it. I watched that jerk operate it and it's a snap. One lever for control and steering. Let's go...."

Destruction lay on all sides as Gorman reversed the boat and brought it back to the road. It seemed as if only the largest of the trees withstood the fury of the storm. But he thought only of what lay ahead. Then they were out of the forest and ahead was the scarred whiteness of the Holium pit.

"Hey! Look!" Smitty called. "They got guys working it."

He should have used the past tense. As they came close they saw that there had been men at work in the pits. But the storm had struck here also. Not a single recognizable human body was to be seen. The wind had torn and mangled them beyond recognition.

"So what's the difference," Gorman remarked callously. "They won't be in the way. Let's get going with the picks and shovels. Mulley and I'll stand guard."

IT TURNED quiet as a cemetery all in a second. One instant there had

been fury, the next, peace. Larry lifted his head with effort and stared about him. Already the clouds were passing and patches of sunlight made shadows and light all around. He counted heads and sighed with relief when he saw that not a single one of his party was missing.

Larry rose and flexed his muscles. All about him others were doing as he. He glanced down and saw Laura was smiling up at him. Then he heard someone groan and turning, saw it was Gil. He ran toward the man, some ten feet off. He left the semi-machine gun, which he had carried along without realizing, at Laura's side.

Gil's injury proved to be a twisted ankle. Larry breathed a sigh of relief and turned to go back to Laura. He was just in time to see her stand, the semi held in the crotch of her arm, the muzzle pointing directly at the masked woman.

"...Laura!" he shouted, his voice strident with alarm. "No!"

Perhaps it was his sudden shout, perhaps something else. But she turned her head for an instant. It was enough for the masked woman. She acted with the speed of a cat. Her right hand came up and slashed sideways, catching Laura at the side of the neck and knocking her off balance. Before she could regain it the other pounced on her. But Larry was at their side before the woman could do more than strike again. As it was the talons raked Laura's cheek cutting the flesh in a long bloody streak. Then Larry grabbed the masked woman from behind and whirled her off her feet.

He discovered then she was no longer masked.

AN ETERNITY seemed to go by as he looked into eyes hazel in color, whose depths seemed to form

depths beyond, until he seemed to be looking into limitless pools of beauty. Her hair, midnight in color was loosed from the small circlet of metal which held it firm, streamed shoulder length. The sheer beauty of her face was poignant in its effect. Then she smiled and spoke:

"It's all right. My anger is quick to dissipate."

He released her, became conscious that others of the Venusians had gathered in a silent threatening circle, and turned to Laura.

"What the devil kind of fool trick was that?" he asked bitterly. "These people have us at their mercy. We have to prove we are friendly and that we have come not to bring destruction.... Hang it, Laura!"

"I—I," the girl stammered, yet her eyes showed no embarrassment, "I thought I was helping—" She looked down at her empty hands. The gun lay to one side. She started forward to pick it up, but the other woman stepped in front of her.

"I'll take this," she said. "You might cause an *accident*. Besides, I cut your cheek. There is a first-aid kit in the boat-car. I'll have one of my women take care of it."

The woman counted noses and found that three of her group were missing. The beautiful face showed sorrow as she bade the rest go back to the car. When they had all assembled, and this time she made it apparent that they were no longer prisoner, she said:

"We will return to my city. The Earthmen who are there will be glad to see you."

BUT THAT was not to be. The boat-car had been wrecked beyond repair.

"We must walk," the woman said. It was evident from the way she was treated that she was more than just the leader of this group. A certain

deference, by men and women alike, showed it. Without a word or look, they started off.

Larry walked at her side. "How far?" he asked.

"Twenty miles," she said, smiling. "They will pass soon. And sooner if we meet a patrol car. Here take this weapon; it is far too heavy for me."

It was an open gesture of peace.

Larry smiled and for the first time, forgot Laura. He didn't see the look of hatred the Earth girl sent in the direction of the Venusian. Nor did the woman at Larry's side seem to see it. The two talked as they walked; her name proved to be Sania, and she was the queen of Coris, the last of the cities of Venus. Larry learned many things of the planet. Human beings could live only on the light side, the dark side was perpetually covered by clouds which came down almost to the ground. Animals roamed the sub-tropic lands, fearsome creatures, which through the centuries, could live only in their habitat. A natural phenomena had occurred a long time back and had caused the terrible upheaval. So of the four cities on Venus, but one remained.

"... Are all, are all the women on Venus," Larry asked in somewhat embarrassed tones, "equipped with talons?"

Sania looked down at her clawed finger tips. She smiled. And suddenly the talons were no longer there. Larry gulped. There was just no place for them to go. Her arms were bare....

"A figment of the imagination," she explained. "Just as the lances are, and the speech we use. We have the power to do some things, a power which is hereditary with us. I don't know why I tell you this. It's—it's as if I have found someone I have been searching for, a long long time. Maybe I shall tell you all, later...." She stopped and stared through nar-

rowed eyes at something in the near distance.

Larry followed her glance and saw they were skirting the wasteland which held the Holium deposit. There were people working in the pitted ground. Then Larry saw why she had stopped. Those people were dressed as he was dressed. They were not Venusians.

"Gorman!" Larry said a low, angry voice.

"Friends....?" she asked.

He shook his head. "No. Not friends. Neither mine nor yours. They mean trouble."

She looked for a long instant into his eyes then looked away. Her hand came up and once more the talons were at the ends of her fingers. Her right hand reached outward, the fingers curved out as if she were about to strike. And before Larry's very eyes the whole pit seemed filled with warriors, all bearing the lances he had seen before.

BULL GORMAN had spotted the approaching party at about the same time. He came on the run to the men working feverishly with pick and shovel.

"Need much more?" he asked anxiously. "I think a welcoming committee is at hand."

"I think we got it," one of the three replied. "Stuff comes out easy enough. Trouble is it weighs so little it takes a hell of a lot to make a hundred pounds. Aah!" One of the others came bearing the bread-like loaf of raw metal. Gorman dumped it into the sack, threw the sack on the hand scale they had brought and saw the sack now weighed exactly a hundred pounds.

"That's it, men. Let's go!"

They dropped their picks and shovels and started toward the rear on the run. But the sand-like ground made slow going. Gorman, in the lead

was urging them onward, when suddenly, as if they had risen from the earth, hundreds of warriors sprang to life. Each of them bore a lance and each lance leveled in their direction. Gorman mouthed an oath and started blazing away with the autopistol, as did the other four. The damage was terrific as the warriors were mowed down by the score. But for each who fell ten rose, and lifted their lances. And one by one those lances shot the blue flames from their tips. Gorman watched his friends fall until he was the last on his feet. He whirled this way and that, shooting the pistol like a madman. He seemed possessed, his mouth twisted in screams of empty rage. Then at last his pistol was empty. He looked at it and heaved it from him, and stood standing, feet spread, waiting the onslaught of the warriors.

Slowly the rage left his eyes and body and his shoulders sagged, as his brain became conscious of what his eyes saw. The entire area was empty of beings, other than for his four friends, lying on the ground as if they were dead. One of the hundreds of warriors he had seen not a single one remained. He heard the shouted command, but for an instant did not understand. When he did he turned slowly and faced the man who had called to him.

"So now it's you and me," Larry Gaines said as he advanced toward the huge figure standing, legs spread, and thick shoulders hunched.

THE INSTANT the miracle of the warriors took place Larry guessed at the strange power the woman possessed. She could project mental pictures, so real it was impossible to tell them from a mirage. Yet they were only imaginative.

"Save that giant of a man for me," he begged.

She nodded. And after a while

there was only Bull Gorman left. Larry started at a trot toward the pit. But he was not the only one who had guessed what had happened. Laura Jenks had surmised it before he did, even. And made her plans accordingly. Sayres had paid her well. And there would be even more on her return. What matter if Bull Gorman were left to die here? Or Larry. Sayres would pay her a fortune, now. She knew something not even Larry knew. That the only person alive on Venus, as far as she knew, was this woman with the tiger claws. She had seen how they disappeared, though Larry had not noticed she had been watching. All she had to do, Laura reasoned, was not to believe her senses. She tested her theory. Her fingers went to her cheek, where there should have been a gash, and found the skin as unbroken as ever.

Elation took her in its grip. The way was clear now. She followed the others, saw the sack of Holium on the ground nearby, and saw also that the semi-machine gun lay where Larry had dropped it. All eyes were on the drama in the pit. None saw her bend and retrieve the gun...

And there in the pit a terrific battle was raging.

For once Larry thought he had underestimated a man. He thought Bull had only power. Bull had more, science. With Bull's weight and strength, Larry was finding it tough going. The first few moments they fought and slugged toe to toe, and after a while their faces looked like raw red hamburger. Then Larry realized the only way he could beat this hulk of a man was by cunning.

But Bull was cunning also. With the first blows, Bull knew Larry carried as heavy a fire as his own fists had. More, Larry was the more agile, the swifter of the two. If Larry could stay away long enough, he would wear Bull out. So Bull played smart.

He pretended breathing heavy, even staggering a bit, as if he were tired out. And Larry fell for it. He danced in, led, and jabbed in feints. Then seemed to fall for the feints. Then Larry threw his Sunday punch. Only it didn't land. Bull ducked and hit Larry below the belt as hard as he could. It was a foul blow but it laid Larry low. Then Bull lifted his leg and started to drive it into Larry's face. Had it landed it would have killed Gaines.

The roar of the semi-machine gun seemed to freeze Bull in mid-air. Then, like a tree falling, his body tumbled forward over Larry's.

"Larry!" Laura's voice called. "Here!"

He looked up and saw the girl, a wide grin on her perfect lips, beckoning to him, the semi, cradled in her arms.

He raced to her and started to reach for the gun. But the muzzle suddenly was facing him. Her lips were still a grin, but it was something vicious now.

"Hey!" he said. "What's wrong?"

It was Sania who answered. "She is evil," the girl from Venus said. "See it in her eyes."

"Yeah," Laura said. "Now make up your mind. Now. They'll all die, your friends and the girl, if you don't... You are carrying the sack of Holium back to the space ship for me."

"I—I," Larry said miserably as he stepped forward a few cautious feet. "What's this Laura?"

"Stay put!" she said commandingly, the muzzle lifting an inch or so and covering his breast. "Yes or no?"

"I thought you were on my side!" he said, facing her squarely this time.

"I'm on no one side but little Laura's. And Sayres' of course. He pays best. So let's get going. All of you..."

"What about the gang?" Larry

asked.

"They stay here on Venus. It isn't a bad place. Then some day Sayres'll send a couple of crews over...."

"And they'll be hunted like animals," Larry said.

Laura's shoulders lifted in a shrug. "Don't make me shoot," she said. "That sack might be heavy, but I think I can manage it."

Larry knew he had no choice. She would murder now. Perhaps there would be a chance later. He looked to Sania and he looked off. He followed her glance and saw that they were in a small circle boxed in by an immense forest of thorns. And Laura laughed.

"Stop playing games!" she derided Sania. "I saw through you a while ago. I don't believe it so it isn't there."

Larry needed but one glance to see Laura had scored. Sania's face bore a bleak and bitter look.

"Let's go, Laura," Larry said. "You win."

SHE MARSHALLED the five people before her. Larry had the sack of Holium over his shoulders. The sun's heat made rivulets of sweat stream from him. But it was the anger of his heart which really ate at him. Then the tear-shaped space ship loomed before them and after a moment they were in its shadow.

They paused while she stepped around them. She moved backward and opened the side hatch. Her weapon never left covering them for an instant. The door gaped wide and dark behind her.

Only Larry saw the sudden purpose in her eyes. It was as if he could read her mind. She had evidently been thinking it over and come to a decision. Larry would only be trouble. She knew enough about space travel to fly the ship alone. She was going to kill them all! He saw

the weapon lift, and with a shout of warning, Larry leaped forward in a football dive and knocked Sania to the ground. There was the booming sound of the semi being fired, and Larry held his breath waiting for the slugs to hit.

He looked past his shoulder and saw Laura lying on the ground. And standing in the hatchway was Fred Frick....

* * *

They buried Laura on Venus. And beside her lay the body of Bull Gorman. The four in his crew were brought to life by Sania, who merely waved her hands over them. The men of the first ship were alive and well, living in the very shadows of their space craft, hypnotized also by Sania. They lived in a state which made food unnecessary to them. And when they were brought to life again, they told Larry and the others they thought they had been brought to Sania's city by her warriors.

How Fred Frick got to be in the space ship was simply explained.

"Shucks. When all those Indians-like jumped up. I figured some of you might escape. First place you'd go for would be back here. So here I stayed...."

"And lucky for us," Larry said. "Well. Might as well start back for Earth...."

He waited until the others got into the space ships. Then he turned to the girl waiting for him. He took her in his arms, looked into her eyes and said:

"Tiger woman of Venus, eh? More like a kitten tone. Would you like to come back with me?"

"It does get lonely here," she said. "But perhaps I'm only a figment of your imagination?"

"If you are I'm willing to take a chance," he said.

It was strange but he never did discover if she was that.

WOBBLY X-RAYS



By LESTER FLETCHER



X-RAY TUBES and machines are so common nowadays that few give them a second thought. But the technicians who build and design them are constantly thinking of improvements. The Coolidge x-ray tube consists of a glass tube in one end of which is a filament for emitting electrons. The other end contains a massive copper rod in which is embedded a chunk of tungsten. When a high voltage is created between these two electrodes, a stream of electrons comes smashing against the tungsten "target" thus producing the x-rays.

Since the voltage is high, the minute electrons possess enormous amounts of kinetic energy only a portion of which appears as x-rays—the rest enters the picture as heat. Therefore the tube is generally cooled by air blasts or is immersed in circulating oil. This carries away the heat and prevents the tube from melting.

Stiletto-like, the beam of electrons blasts against one tiny spot on the anode and eventually chews it away; this limits the current and hence the intensity of the x-rays. You cannot put too much energy into one tiny spot on the tungsten target. To get around this x-ray tubes have been built whose anodes are continually rotating at high speeds. With the electron beam coming to the target off-center, no target-spot remains under the intense pencil of electrons save for a very short time. While

this system works well, there are limitations—for one thing the construction of a high vacuum tube with a rotating element involves mechanical difficulties.

Some genius has thought up a new scheme. Why rotate the anode? Instead, use a magnetic field to rotate the stream of electrons! And that is what is done. An external rotating magnetic field is so oriented as to cause the electron beam to shift continually its position against the target area thus subjecting no one spot to the concentrated kinetic energy of the electron stream. Since this means that the x-ray beam would shift continually too, a compensation must be made. This is accomplished by mounting the whole x-ray tube in a mechanical fixture which wobbles just enough to off-set the electron stream rotation. The result is that the x-ray beam remains in a fixed position.

It is amusing to consider how many thousands of people have been familiar with this problem—yet the answer occurred to only one! The solution was before our very eyes—it was easy to see; but only one man saw it. It is generally advances like these which come from the thinking discerning technician. Just because a man used his head, x-ray applications will be that much easier!

THE END

BUG-EYES



By JOHN HALBERT



IF YOU WANT to get a surprise, look at some modern aircraft and notice things you may not have noticed before—antennas. Modern planes, jet fighters, rockets and so forth are beginning to take on an insect-like appearance. And there is a good reason for this.

Since so much of the plane is reliant upon radio and radar aids for seeking position, for landing, for ordinary communication work, it is only natural that antennas would stud it. Technically speaking, an antenna is a feeler—just as in the insect world—but for radio waves. When radio or radar waves, which are the same thing except for different frequencies, impinge on an antenna which is a conductor stuck up in space, a voltage is induced in that

conductor, a voltage which varies in magnitude in accordance with the inducing wave and which generates a current also in accordance with the wave. This voltage is amplified in the receiver and put to work doing whatever job it was intended for.

It can be seen that since the antenna is the first portion of a radio receiver to come into contact with an incident radio wave, it is highly critical and important. Few people except engineers realize this. Therefore no matter what anyone says about indoor antennas for radio or TV sets, take a tip from two authorities, insects and engineers! You can't go wrong with their advice.

THE END



MATRIX

By ROG PHILLIPS

There was mystery in the polar ice, but it was a mystery none could solve — unless one admitted the impossible was . . . possible!

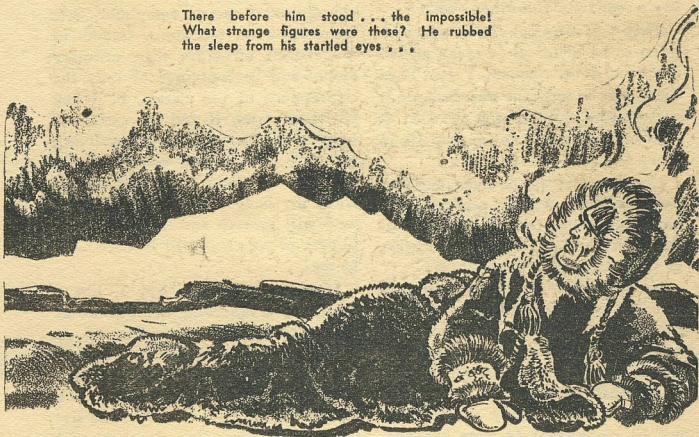
THE ESQUIMOUX, impeccably dressed in brown with a grey shirt and twenty-five dollar tie, dipped his expressionless face slightly and closed the door behind him. I stared at its blank surface for a moment after he left, sucking thoughtfully on my pipe. Then I took the letter out of my breast pocket.

It was well worn now. I had read and re-read it so much since Charlie had handed it to me in my office in Evanston that it was beginning to

fall apart. The writing, in pencil, was still legible, however.

It was from my old friend, Ned Brooke, written just before he died—if he was dead. He was dead. There was no question about that. The esquimoux, Charlie, had seen him die. But—well, the letter I held in my hand cast some doubt on how dead Ned was. That doubt was what had brought me to Fairbanks, and was to take me first by plane and then by sled even farther into the Artic wastelands than the natives ever

There before him stood . . . the impossible!
What strange figures were these? He rubbed
the sleep from his startled eyes . . .



ventured.

With a final glance at the expressionless face of the door—as expressionless as Charlie's face—I turned into the room and sat down in the large upholstered chair and spread out the pages of the letter carefully. It read:

Craig Brown
1718 Sherman
Evanston, Ill.

Dear Craig,

Whether I am alive or dead when you read this will be a matter of opinion—perhaps unresolvable, since the answer lies in the dim, obscured realms of metaphysics. The answer may revolve around a theory of continuity of identity. If the answer you accept is that I am dead, then, as I write this, you must assert that I am two entities, identical, though distinct and separate; one a man, and the other—what?

They are identical. They will continue to be identical in every mental detail until the moment I die. Then there will be only the one, because it will survive. And if it is not I, it at least believes itself to be—and IS, in every real sense of the word.

I believe they are both me, and that they are ONE, and not separate. The only thing that can be used against this belief is that they are co-existent in time. They both exist NOW.

If they were even less alike, and one had existed yesterday while the other did not come into existence until the first one was destroyed, it would be more easy to accept the postulate that they were a continuous identity—myself. They would then not be co-existent in time but succeed each other—as the man succeeds the boy though still the same person.

And yet, perhaps the man does not

succeed the boy. Perhaps it is just a popular illusion. Perhaps there is no such thing as continuity of identity, and "I" am just an illusion of identity relating a temporal succession of complexities that are at best very loosely bunched together in one body.

If that is so, then all arguments as to whether "I" will continue to exist are meaningless, for "I" of this moment will have ceased to exist anyway, in another instant, and a new "I", believing itself to be the same one, will come into existence for a brief instant, as one picture succeeds another, pausing to flash onto the screen in a movie.

If that is so, then I'm even more secure in my belief that what is to happen will not destroy me any more vitally than I am destroyed each instant of my life.

My only doubt revolves around one thing—and yet that doubt can't be based in truth. You see, I can in full consciousness retreat completely into the stone—for it is stone, though of a different structure than ordinary stone—and be conscious of only the impressions of the matrix, or I can withdraw from it and be conscious only of the impressions of my living body. If I can exist completely in either at will, and am in the matrix when my body dies, it **MUST** be I who will *survive* and not just a duplicate of me. But will it **REALLY** be me?

If what survives is not I, but a duplicate—a recording in a manner of speaking, like the recording of an orchestra—it will at least be a recording that thinks and feels and reasons, and believes that it was once a living man. It will be a dynamic living reproduction that develops and expands throughout future unguessable centuries. If it is not I, it at least needs that "something" which

is my consciousness that I AM I, that can flow at present without hindrance from it to my living body and be in either or both at will; for when that "spark" remains solely in my organic body, the matrix in the stone does not change one iota.

It will be for you to judge whether I, and those others, exist. For if I cease to exist at the moment of Ritual Death, if what I KNOW to be true is merely illusion, then it is a diabolical snare that has entrapped a whole civilization in the past and will do so again and again in the future. If it can be proven to be that, it should be destroyed.

And as I wrote that, a voice as of a million men shook the Sacred Mountain and said, "DESTROY ME IF YOU CAN!" Charlie, who will bring this letter to you, will have heard that voice, and be able to assure you of the reality of that which I have written. I hope, Craig, that you will see fit to follow him to this place and attempt to determine if what I believe is true. If it is, then I offer you immortality for as long as the Earth shall last. Immortality—and a life that is grand beyond the most majestic dreams of mankind as it is today.

I hope that I "see" you in a few months, Craig.

Your old friend,
Ned Brooke

Once more I carefully folded the letter and replaced it in the envelope, my mind revolving its contents in an attempt to understand what it all meant.

There was no way to settle anything except to follow Charlie to the Sacred Mountain and find out. Certainly, whatever the nature of the mystery that confronted me, it was no superstitious "mountain worship" of a tribe of savages. There was a

science here—a science far beyond anything known to mankind. And that was why I intended to follow Charlie to that mountain.

Turning out the light I sat in the dark and pondered the imponderable. Later, when the night noises of Fairbanks died down, I undressed and went to bed.

THREE DAYS were spent in securing supplies and equipment, and in lining up a pilot and plane. We were to be set down a hundred airline miles north-north-east of Fort Yukon, in the foothills of the Endicott Range. A more desolate, unreachable spot could not possibly be found on the entire planet!

The most important piece of equipment was the four hundred pound crank operated transmitter that was to send out the signal when I was ready to return to Fairbanks.

Charlie insisted we would not need to take food with us; but I insisted on two hundred pounds of food supplies, saying they could be left where we landed as an ace in the hole. To this Charlie grudgingly gave his consent. In some way, I felt, my insistence on taking food had been an insult to him.

The more I become acquainted with Charlie the more of an enigma he became. In Evanston he had seemed just a dressed-up Esquimoux; but in Fairbanks where I had a chance to compare him with other Esquimoux I began to realize that he was as little like them as I was. He was more like a cross between a Chinese and a Philipino. Tall—five feet ten, at least—narrow hipped and broad shouldered, with oriental eyes and high cheekbones, but with an Occidental chin and mouth. Jet black hair topped a high, brownish yellow forehead. The color of his

skin was smooth and wide apart, with jet black irises that remained impassive even when his lips smiled.

In spite of his complete lack of expression in every way, I had felt an instinctive and complete trust in him, and a kinship that seemed more than mere friendship. I had not dared to ask him questions about himself. I couldn't help thinking, however, that he must be very closely linked with the mysterious Sacred Mountain, and the Ritual Death that Ned Brooke had said was to be his fate. More than once I had looked at Charlie and believed that he would be quite capable of killing a human being with the same impassive calm that he displayed toward any other task.

Our leavetaking of Fairbanks was as casual as a trip back to the United States. The equipment had been loaded the day before. The pilot, George Andrews, had the plane warmed up when Charlie and I reached the airport. There was a cold wind out of the north, but the sky was clear and a deep blue, with here and there a bleached whiteness of clouds, high up.

Two hours after takeoff Charlie signalled the pilot to land. It seemed we had hardly begun! And yet I knew that the distance we had come would have taken a month by sled, and been beset by dangers every step of the way. That realization made me hesitate. When the plane departed my last contact with civilization would be gone—a civilization that so casually overcame the obstacles of nature.

The three of us unloaded our equipment. The radio and the food supplies were crated. We left them that way, piled up out in the open. They would serve as a marker.

Fifteen minutes after the plane had

come to a stop on the field of frozen snow it took off again, disappearing to the south while I watched.

NOW I experienced the incredible silence of the North. Charlie and I were two insignificant dots in a universe of white that blanketed sound. The crust under my feet was hard packed and old, and it was early September!

To the north, and in fact on every side except to the south, were cold, snow streaked monuments of black obsidian. Their outlines were sharp and jagged. In some way they gave the impression of being small and sharp in a gigantic scale. From the map I knew we were in a sort of indentation in the Endicott Range—a tongue of relatively flat high country extending all the way down to Fort Yukon, and that a couple of hundred miles to the north across the jagged mountain peaks was the shore of the Arctic Ocean.

I looked at each well defined peak intently, trying to sense in some way which was the Sacred Mountain. Perhaps they all were! Or none. But the doubts that had been with me all the way from Evanston had completely vanished. Perhaps it was the effect of the strange, almost alien panorama; but I was now convinced that Ned Brooke had not been a victim of madness when he wrote the much worn letter hidden away inside the heavy jacket I now wore!

When the plane had left, Charlie had sat down on one of the packing cases, seeming to be waiting for something. Now the thin tinkle of bells drifted across the snow, and almost immediately a sleigh pulled by two reindeer rounded a hill a mile away to the east.

It drew near rapidly. As it came to a stop before us I saw an incredibly wrinkled face peering out

from a small mountain of blankets and furs.

Charlie's face lost a great deal of its expressionlessness now. It was wreathed in smiles that shone in his eyes, too.

"Grandmama," he said, and there was love, respect, and obeisance in the way he said it. "This is Ned Brooke's friend, Craig Brown."

Grandmama's small black eyes twinkled their welcome, and the leathery, wrinkled face smiled, showing a perfect set of strong white teeth.

With her, as with Charlie, there seemed to be a certain "something" that was Esquimoux and yet not Esquimoux. A thought occurred to me that perhaps these people descended from a band of Indians that had wandered north and intermarried with the Esquimoux natives. Charlie and I climbed into the sleigh, and, as the reindeer pulled it swiftly across the snow, I thought more about the possibility of this Indian-Esquimoux origin, and decided that unless some explanation was forthcoming that contradicted that, it must be correct. The vague doubt that remained, I put down as arising from the association of these people with the mysterious Sacred Mountain. I would have **LIKED** to have thought Charlie and his grandmama descendants of some ancient race that had remained aloof from the rest of mankind for thousands of years!

The sleigh we rode in was constructed of bone and wood, and seemed very solid. The Harness on the team of reindeer was of leather, and so expertly made that it might have been a factory product. The team pulled the sleigh at express train speed across the snow, and so hard was the surface that there were no tracks left by the bone runners.

IN FIFTEEN minutes we were suddenly in a small village that had seemed to materialize out of the smooth expanse of snow. It covered perhaps an acre of land. Most of the area was covered by large domes of ice. But there was one large log house that seemed almost like those found nestled in Pine woods all over the United States.

The reindeer trotted down a lane between igloos and came to a stop before the lodge. Charlie and I hopped down. Grandmama emerged from the mountain of furs and blankets and also jumped, proving herself as agile as I.

Two teen age youths now emerged from the lodge and led the reindeer toward the rear of the lodge where I had seen a fenced-in area with several other reindeer standing idly.

Grandmama led the way as we went to the heavy door that sealed the lodge from the frigid outside air. Just before entering I turned and looked back the way we had come. The sun was a huge red orb poised on the southern horizon. A fiery red trail of reflection reached from the edge of the village to the low hills across the crystalline snow. Then I turned and went in.

I was met by a breath of stifling, heavy air; heavy with the stench of burning fat, and with countless odors. On the verge of instinctively backing out again into the freshness of the outside, my eyes were arrested by a white face among those watching me. I squinted and blinked, trying to rid my eyes of the snowblindness and adjust them to the dim light of the interior.

A half dozen brown faces smiled at me in welcome. And Charlie was making the rounds, greeting each individually and pulling each one forward to introduce to me. I was acknowledging each introduction au-

tomatically, my eyes on the face of the white girl most of the time, my mind alive with amazement and curiosity. What was a white girl doing here? Had she come here with Ned? Was she—Ned's wife, or widow?

Incongruously, of all those in the large room, she alone was introduced to me by any other than an American name. I sensed that Charlie was waiting to introduce her until I had been introduced to all the others.

I heard him say, "This is Nanapocheck," accenting the first syllable and letting the rest trail, so that it was a musical, almost poetic sound.

I impulsively stuck out my hand. Hers, as she slipped it into mine, was warm and smooth. Her voice as she said, "Hello, Craig," was rich and low.

My own "Hello," sounded rasping and clumsy. My thoughts were a mixture of pleasure and of fear that Nanapocheck was already married to one of these natives, or was Ned's wife.

"This IS a surprise!" I managed to stammer, determined to find out at once. "Are you Ned's wife?"

"Nanapocheck is the daughter of the missionary that built this lodge," grandmama spoke up.

"Oh," I said weakly, feeling that I had been somehow thwarted in my attempt to find out what I wanted to know.

"My father died when I was fourteen," Nanapocheck said. "I was sent back to the States, but in less than a year I decided to come back." She flashed me a smile. "Here I am at home."

IN THE ten days that followed, before Charlie and I again took up our journey to the Sacred Mountain, I learned many things about this strange tribe of people—and absolutely nothing about them that answered the mystery of their origin and accounted for their difference in ap-

pearance from other natives I had seen.

During the first three days, although I was treated cordially, there was always present a certain reserve toward me. Nanapocheck for the most part ignored me, though I often caught her large blue eyes watching me when she thought I wasn't aware of it.

I pieced things together and arrived at a rather complete picture of what had gone on. Nanapocheck's father had come here before she was born, to teach the natives. Her mother, I learned the second day, had died during childbirth, leaving the baby to be raised by grandmama—and it seemed the matriarch of the group had no other name than grandmama, for everyone called her that.

The missionary society that backed Nanapocheck's father had provided enough funds to bring up the logs for the lodge from a place almost two hundred miles farther south. The whole tribe had pitched in on building the lodge, and when it was done it became the central gathering place for all activity.

Perhaps the most valuable work Nanapocheck's father had done had been to teach the natives to speak, and read and write, English. His role as a Christian missionary had been less successful than he had hoped for.

Gradually, during the first week, I gained a perspective of the tribal life and customs of these people. Questions that hovered in the back of my mind, not daring to be formed, became insistent.

It seemed that during the sixteen years the missionary had lived here he had never suspected the existence of the Sacred Mountain. He had never been told about it. Why?

It also appeared that Nanapachek had grown up with the knowledge of

it, but had never told her father. Why?

I also learned that Ned had appeared one day, alone, and had been conducted by Charlie and his father to the Sacred Mountain without question or delay. Why?

It had been five years since I had seen Ned. I remembered him as a rather introverted, pale complexioned, scholar, versed in philosophy and allied subjects. His library had contained odd looking books, some modern and some centuries old.

We had never been what I would consider real friends; but it now became apparent that the few evenings we had spent together occasionally in his library, discussing occult subjects and the one subject that seemed to obsess him—the possibility of strange science possessed by ancient scholars and lost to the modern world—had been treasured by him, and that he had regarded me as his best friend.

Undoubtedly, in some rare book, he had stumbled across some mention of the Sacred Mountain of Alaska—perhaps with a map of its location. At any rate, he had come to this spot knowing what to look for, the year before Charlie appeared at my office with his letter, and had gone on north along the trail I was shortly to take—never to return.

And what was the Ritual Death he had mentioned? Was it to be sacrificed on some stone altar in some ancient temple hidden away in the mountains north? Somehow that didn't seem possible. Charlie, voluble and completely human, now that he was better acquainted with me, was typical of his fellows; and they did not seem the type to perform such murders.

Was there another tribe further north that acted as Keepers of the Sacred Tradition, so to speak? And

were they the ones that held human sacrifices?

Each time I decided to broach these subjects and demand answers I weakened at the last moment and let them go unasked.

And all the time Nanapochek stayed away from me, her eyes studying me, the desire to be with me growing in her—or so I seemed to feel—until the evening of the last day before Charlie and I were to leave.

WE WERE to travel by dogsled, and the sled had been loaded with provisions to last for several months. It was to be a two week's trip before we reached our destination. Once there, we would be trapped for the winter, and not be able to return until spring.

There had been a banquet of caribou meat, bear meat, and other types of meat I didn't bother to ask about. There was a pleasant tasting tea brewed from lichens, and heavy bread made from whole wheat flower. The entire tribe must have turned out for the feast. The large main room of the lodge building had been filled with squatting figures of men, women, and well behaved children.

During the meal grandmama sat in the middle along one side of a long table next to the wall. Nanapochek sat at her right. I sat at her left, with Charlie next to me.

When the meal was over and I had left the table, I was about to go upstairs to my room when suddenly I became aware of Nanapochek standing beside me.

My hand of its own volition reached for and found hers. We mounted the stairs together, saying nothing, and though I felt all eyes boring into my back, when I glanced down into the room we had left, at the turn in the stairs, no one seemed

to have noticed our leavetaking.

Upstairs was a wide hall that ran the full length of the building, with windows that looked out over the white domes of the igloos.

With my heart pounding painfully against my ribs, I led her to the south window, where a giant moon was shining brightly, low on the southern horizon.

When we reached the window I released her hand put my arm around her waist. Her arm slipped about mine. We stood there for what seemed an eternity, without saying a word. It didn't seem necessary to say anything.

I realized that what I had thought I had seen in her eyes when she watched me had been true. And I knew that my own glance had told her all she wanted to know.

I wanted to hold her in my arms. I wanted to kiss her. I wanted to tell her I loved her as I had loved no one before. Yet I was afraid to utter a sound. Perhaps she didn't know what kissing was. (I had heard somewhere that Esquimoux kissed by rubbing noses.) And I didn't want to spoil this moment by trying to force customs on her that she hadn't learned.

But finally I broke the silence.

"Did you," I said, my voice sounding strangely harsh. "Did you know Ned very well?"

She caught her breath, then laughed delightedly.

Again words seemed superfluous. I knew that she was laughing at my thought that perhaps Ned had fallen in love with her when he had been here. I knew she hadn't felt love toward him, nor toward any man—except me. That knowledge seemed to flow into me as she laughed.

Then abruptly she was in my arms, her lips crushed against mine, her arms about my neck. And I knew that I would never leave this northland

waste without her.

She yielded for a brief, ecstatic moment, then pushed gently away from me, and put her two hands against my face.

"I—I hope you love me, Craig," she murmured softly. "Because I love you."

"I do," I said, and I had never meant it before.

THE FIRST two days of the journey northward were the two hardest days I had ever experienced. The upward climb began immediately after we left the village. Charlie seemed to know exactly where to find the gentlest slopes, but on several stretches it was necessary for us to help pull the heavily loaded sled, and seldom was there a level stretch where I could ride.

Toward the end of the second day we reached a glacier that formed a mile wide ribbon of ice leading upward into the mountains between two towering walls of granite. The general direction of this highway of ice was to the northwest, and the sun was left behind permanently, hidden behind the high wall of the cliff.

The weather was mild. There was no wind, and the snows higher up caught the sunlight and reflected it down to us so that the canyon was far from dark, even at night.

The third day the stiffness left my overworked legs. Charlie, always solicitous of me, now increased our pace. The glacier narrowed until it was less than a quarter of a mile wide. At the same time the sides of the cliffs rose higher and higher until the sky became a narrow slit far above.

There was no telling to what depths the glacier went. At one place where there was a widening of the cliffs there were longitudinal cracks in the ice that went straight down.

I turned a flashlight down one of these cracks and saw it come together in perspective a hundred feet below, but seem to go much deeper.

We spent the third night far up in the mountains. The air was thin and sharp, but still there was no wind. Ahead there came occasional thunderous noises varying from sharp, pistol-like reports to deep, rumbling reverberations. Once during the eight hours I slept, I was awakened by a violent shaking of the ice flow we were on.

The fourth day before we had been travelling two hours we came to a fork in the glacier. Here it continued upward to be lost in the heights of distant granite cliffs; and here it split, part of it forming the glacier we had traveled upward on, and part descending to the east-northeast.

Charlie now rigged two poles to the sled in such a way that they could be used to brake its speed. We had an early lunch and began our descent along the other branch, Charlie riding the tail of the sled and using the pole brakes to keep it from overtaking the rapidly trotting dogs.

I sat in the front covered with furs, and dozed part of the time. We were covering more distance this fourth day than the first three combined!

There was a different feel to the air as we advanced. Overhead beyond the tops of the cliffs could be seen scuttling clouds with dark grey density—snow clouds. Occasionally a gust of wind swept up the natural channel formed by the walls of the cliffs and brought quick freezing temperatures with it, so that I was more than grateful for the furs.

It was long after the hour we should have stopped for the night before we reached a break in the cliffs that opened onto land such as that where the village lay. There

was several feet of fresh, loose snow.

Charlie grunted his satisfaction at the sight of this. He unharnessed the dogs and tossed them their supper of frozen caribou meet, and before the fire I had built had melted the snow for coffee the dogs were disappearing, one after another, under the snow.

After supper we did the same, Charlie showing me how to wall up my burrow so that only a small hole at the top let in fresh air. I realized now why he had pushed forward to this spot. On the ice the dogs might have frozen in the cold wind. Here we all found comfort and protection under the snow.

IN THE morning I had a chance to see the immense valley we had entered. I estimated it at forty miles across to the mountains on the other side. We were high enough so that there was a clear view of the entire landscape. The jagged mountain peaks and the spotless whiteness of the vegetationless valley seemed alien—a scene from some strange planet untouched by the life giving rays of the sun.

But suddenly my eyes settled on a spot that seemed out of place in this raw, sharp scene. Rising just beyond, and framed in between two sharp peaks on the other side of the valley, higher than either, but totally devoid of snow, was a jet black dome of a mountain. It seemed a slightly oval area in which there was a total absence of light, rather than simple blackness. There seemed no contour or topographical feature about it, but just a bare outline within which was—nothing.

"That's it," Charlie said, noticing the direction of my fixed stare. He stood up and looked across the valley toward the Sacred Mountain, and his fingers made a swift, strange

pattern before him in some ritual sign.

For a moment I had a brief feeling of *something* reaching across the distance and touching us with mental fingers that went into my mind. Then it was gone.

But now I was filled with eagerness to cross the valley and reach that obsidian mound. I seemed drawn to it by some strange, compelling force.

Instead of entering the valley at once, however, Charlie retraced our steps to the glacier. He explained as we went along that we would save time by staying on the hard surface as long as we could. Before the day was over I realized that he was right. The glacier curved out into the valley and we were better than half way across before we stopped for the night.

IT WAS that fifth night that I had the first dream. At least, at the time, I believed it to be a dream. Later, when the very foundations of my concept of reality were to be shaken, I was to wonder if it were not the reality, while my waking hours on the trip were the dream!

In the dream, at first, I seemed to awaken but not move from my curled up position in the snow pocket in which I was lying. I wondered what had awakened me, and finally stood up to take a look. In standing up, my body rose above the surface of the snow without disturbing it.

I had expected the roof of my snow cubbyhole to break up when I stood, and, surprised that it hadn't, I looked down. I saw myself still asleep. I saw the snow through my standing body, and saw it as a vague shadowy form. For some reason I accepted this state of affairs as being natural, and accounting for the fact that I hadn't disturbed the snow.

Now, for the first time, I noticed what had apparently disturbed my sleep. Two giant figures stood a few feet away looking down at me. They were human in shape, at least twelve feet tall, and also shadowy in substance.

They did not speak or move, but just stood there, their enormous eyes regarding me calmly.

"What do you want," I asked bluntly.

"We come to welcome you," the words formed in my mind without seeming to originate in sound.

"What are you?" I asked. "Spirits, or figments of my imagination?"

"Neither," the answer formed in my mind. "And yet, both. And we are here, and yet not here—just as you are."

"What do you mean by that?" I asked, puzzled.

"We are in the Sacred Mountain," came the reply. "We are 'attuned' to a thought-form identical with this locality, and it in turn is 'attuned' to the locality where you are."

"I don't understand what you mean," I said.

"I think you do," the reply came, confidently. "In your mind, when you look at something, you do not build up a physical shape in your mind identical with the physical shape of the object looked at. You build up a thought-form, which is nothing but an association of ideas—spaceless."

"I understand that," I said. "Do you mean to say, then, that in the Sacred Mountain is something that actually sees where I am, and sees me, and that this shadowy form that seems to be me is merely that image in that something's mind? And that in some way I can be aware *through* that thought-form of me?"

"Roughly, that is the idea," the reply came. "It's a sort of telepathic attunement of your own mind, also,

or you couldn't be aware of us. That is what we wanted to learn, and we have found that you have rare talents in that direction."

"Thank you," I said, flattered.

"Ned Brooke has told us about you," came the comment. "We'll tell him you're here."

"Why can't he come and see me as you have?" I asked.

"Right now he's on the Moon assisting at the observatory," the reply formed in my mind.

"Not in the Mountain?" I asked vaguely.

"Of course in the Sacred Mountain—and yet on the Moon," came the reply.

"But—" I began—and with the abruptness of a change of scene in a movie it was morning and Charlie was calling to me. In the bustle of getting breakfast and getting on the way the dream slipped from my mind.

LATER IN the day, when the going was easy and I could ride on the sled it came back to me, and I mulled over the strangeness of it.

I decided it was simply a dream, but it had several intriguing elements, I was, of course, somewhat familiar with the old philosophico-religious theory that everything is just thoughts in the mind of God, and no doubt, (I thought), that knowledge had been the basis of the setup in my dream.

In the dream, however, external reality had been accepted, but with it a mental construct in the Sacred Mountain master-matrix, in which the individual entity-matrices moved and existed.

In the world of reality people moved about by traveling in space. In this mental world entities traveled, apparently, by some system of association of ideas, locational in character.

Was there any basic difference in the mode of travel? Perhaps not. After all, if the ancients were right and physical reality were really thoughts, in the mind of God rather than an actual reality, then physical law as determined by science would really be the psychological laws governing the mind of God!

If that old theory found realization in the Sacred Mountain, it didn't necessarily mean that the laws of physics and science could be set aside. The very process of changing one "location idea association" to another might involve psychological processes that duplicated physical reality exactly!

The idea kept growing on me as the day wore on. The Sacred Mountain was always in sight, expressionless in its complete lack of reflecting power, out of place in its surroundings. Was it possible that in its energy patterns and the entities that inhabited it as thought matrices, there was a master matrix that corresponded to the whole universe? Were there suns and planets and alien races? Were there atom bombs exploding with devastating force that destroyed worlds—but whose only effect in the actual reality of the mountain itself was to alter, slightly, semi-static electrical patterns?

Were there books which seemed to the entities in the Mountain to be solid and made of pages with printing on them, but which were nothing but varying static patterns in stone?

My mind was aflame with the potentialities of the ideas that had developed from my dream.

Before, I had thought possibly the Sacred Mountain might be what Ned's letter had claimed it to be—a collection of matrices of thought, duplicating previously actual minds, and able to function as minds.

Now I could see how they might

be matrices within a master matrix and to all intents and purposes be solid and dense to one another, apparently moving about with ease, perhaps having cities in which they lived, factories in which they manufactured things, all of which, to the physical man would be nothing but undetectable, minute electrical charges in dielectric material impregnated with microscopic particles of metal.

But in this grand conception I considered my dream as being nothing but a dream that had arisen from factors already present in my mind, and that there had been no actual connection between my dream and anything that might exist in the Mountain.

I did not know that already there had formed in that mass of stone an elementary matrix that was to become, in every respect, me. I did not see what had been missed not only by Ned Brooke, but also by those ancient philosophers with their idea of reality being thoughts in the mind of God.

If I had seen then what I was to realize years later, I might have turned around and retraced my steps rather than eagerly pushing forward.

THE SIXTH night was filled with wild dreams that kept me tossing restlessly, but which I couldn't remember the next morning when I awakened. I had no time to try to recall them, as we were approaching higher ground, and the going was getting tougher.

The seventh night found me completely exhausted. Charlie himself seemed tired. His face was drawn and he spoke very little during our meal of roasted caribou meat.

I fell asleep almost immediately, and it seemed that my dream had been going on even before I went to sleep,

for I landed right in the middle of it, with full memory of what had been going on.

I was standing before a huge mirror that extended to either side and upward as far as the eye could reach. In this mirror I saw Charlie battling with a huge white creature that seemed half polar bear and half human.

I tried to rush to help him, but seemed unable to move. Then I saw my reflection in the mirror, and my reflection was asleep. Something seemed to tell me that I couldn't move *unless I could awaken my image and get it to move with me.*

I tried by sheer force of thought to waken my image, without success. I saw Charlie tossed by the strange animal, and lay in a huddled heap. A slowly widening red stain crept out onto the snow.

Then suddenly the bonds that held me *seemed to break.* My image in the mirror was still asleep, but I bounded across the snow to Charlie's side and turned him over. He was still alive, but his leg was terribly mangled, the flesh hanging in bloody shreds, the bones showing white in places where they had been completely stripped.

Using a handkerchief and my pocket knife to make a tourniquet, I stopped the flow of blood. Charlie was still unconscious, and as I watched, the leg, mauled and without any flow of blood, began to freeze.

Without hesitating I went to work, amputating the leg just above the knee. From a kit on the sled I obtained a heavy needle and waxed twine to sew the skin tightly together. Only then did I understand why I had been in such a hurry. As I released the tourniquet and watched the skin left below the circle of cloth begin to turn red with the flow of blood I realized that if I had

waited the leg would have been frozen solidly up to the tourniquet, and more of it would have had to be cut off.

My head spinning from the ordeal I had been through, I looked up for the first time to see what had become of the creature that had attacked Charlie. It was nowhere in sight, but I saw its huge tracks in the snow near the fire. And here and there nearby I saw plumes of steam rising from small holes in the snow, where the dogs were sleeping.

Charlie was still unconscious. I carried him to the sled and made him comfortable, covering him with furs so he would keep warm.

There was nothing else I could do, so I crawled back in the snow and fell asleep. My last thought was that it was all a dream anyway. But with that thought was a vague feeling of unrest and doubt.

I WAS AWAKENED by Charlie's cheerful call. The dream was still vivid, and the doubt was still alive. Frantically, I pushed my way out of the snow.

Charlie was stooped before the fire, a pile of golden brown hotcakes stacked near the flames to keep them warm. There was no gorry stub, but two healthy, well covered legs!

My sigh of relief was audible as I stepped out of my hole and stacked several hotcakes on a tin plate and filled a tin cup with steaming coffee. The dogs were wolfing down their breakfast of frozen fish. As I ate I noticed they seemed restless.

It wasn't until I finished my breakfast, however, and stood up, that I saw the tracks in the snow. They were identical with those I had seen in the dream, and in exactly the same places, as nearly as I could remember.

"A bear visited us last night," Char-

lie said with a dry smile. "Good thing we weren't awake or he would have made trouble."

I looked at him closely. His face seemed hiding some deep pain. His eyes were slightly bloodshot. And when he stood up and walked to the sled he was limping slightly—trying to keep from limping.

My nose was dripping. Absently I pulled my handkerchief from my pocket. It was pulled into the shape of a rope with the ends tied into a tight knot!

There was a crawling sensation at the back of my neck as I walked to where, in the dream, I had amputated Charlie's leg. The snow was undisturbed. There was no stain of blood.

There was only the handkerchief, the bear tracks, and Charlie's limp. I turned and looked at the sled. For a brief instant I thought I saw Charlie's white face staring at me from the pile of loose furs in the front of the sled. But it was only a white spot of fur.

My hands were shaking almost too much to fill and light my pipe for my first smoke of the day. While I fumbled at doing this, I watched Charlie call the dogs and snap them together to pull the sled. They seemed quieter, more obedient than usual. Charlie gave them the usual small talk in his native tongue as he went to each. But instead of grinning as they usually did, they whined and tried to lick his hands through their thick gloves.

When everything was ready to start I spoke to Charlie, gruffly, to hide my feelings.

"You'd better ride as much as possible today, Charlie," I said. "You seem to have a sore leg. What's the matter with it?"

Charlie's eyes turned toward the fur filled front seat of the sled, and I saw him shudder and turn pale. He

shook his head violently.

"No!" he said emphatically. "I walk."

We had gone less than a mile before it became apparent that he could walk no further. He stumbled and fell too often. His leg seemed to get worse each minute.

"What's the matter with your leg, Charlie?" I asked again and again, determined to get at the root of things, and determined not to accept the madness of my dream as having any connection with it.

"I dunno," he finally answered. "I must have hurt it. I know I hurt it a little before we started north, but it was only a scratch and didn't amount to anything. Now it seems like it isn't there! I walk, and it seems like no leg!"

"Isn't there any feeling in it at all?" I asked.

"No. No feeling—from here." He placed a finger part way down his leg, at the exact place where I had amputated!

I OPENED my mouth to tell him of my dream, and then closed it. It was too fantastic! It was too mad to have any connection. Cutting a man's leg off in a dream could not possibly affect the actual leg in waking life.

And yet, as I watched that mound of black, total absence of color that was the Sacred Mountain, seeming so close ahead, and yet so far away, uneasy doubts disturbed me. Those tracks in the snow, my handkerchief, Charlie's leg going dead in the part I had amputated in my dream, and the vivid reality of the dream—if those tracks had not been in the exact spots where I had seen them while dreaming I could have rationalized it all easily, but I HAD ACTUALLY SEEN THOSE TRACKS.

Of had I? Somewhere I had read

of a little trick the mind plays of forming hindsight memories. I could have dreamed of seeing tracks, and when I was awake and saw actual tracks my mind could have quickly interpolated to make them seem exactly the same.

Finally Charlie gave up and climbed into the sled to ride. We made better time. Even the dogs seemed to feel more cheerful after Charlie stopped trying to walk.

"Charlie," I began after a long silence. "Could you answer a few questions for me about the Sacred Mountain?"

"What do you want to know?" he answered after a long moment of hesitation.

"What is this Ritual Death Ned mentioned in his letter?" I asked.

"You just die," Charlie said briefly. "Your spirit leaves and the body can't live without the spirit."

"You mean you don't get killed, but just die for no apparent reason?" I asked.

"Something like that," he answered. Then he turned his head and grinned at me.

"But why does it happen?" I persisted. "Why die?"

"If you live you grow old," he answered. "Spirit in mountain also grow old. If you live you get sick. Spirit in mountain get sick."

"Oh," I said lamely. And I thought, "If spirit in mountain get sick, body get sick."

Suddenly I wished with every atom of my being that I had never started on this trip. I felt that I was being drawn into something from which there was no escape back to the world of comfortable reality as I had known it all my life. Such things as the Sacred Mountain were better left to intellectual speculation while sitting comfortably by a warm fire in the winter evenings, with nothing better

to do.

Then a vision of Nanapochek floated before my eyes and I knew that, whatever came, I had no regrets.

SLOWLY WE left the valley. It was behind us, lower and lower. Here and there naked rock rose above the hard packed snow. We stopped for the eighth night in the shelter of a rock cave, within sight of the broad glacier we would be travelling on for the next two days.

The cave showed evidences of occupancy, but was empty. Charlie climbed painfully from his seat in the sled. His leg was nearly useless now, dragging, with no muscular control.

I built a fire at the mouth of the cave, using our precious store of fuel fat and dried moss in reckless quantities to warm up the cave. Then I carried furs in and made a comfortable bed on the ground.

After that I ordered Charlie to strip so I could examine his leg. I stared at it bleakly when it was exposed. In the dream I had amputated about six inches above the knee. Down to that point his leg was a healthy brown. From there on down it was now shrunken and bloodless. The skin was a sickly yellow.

On the calf of the leg was a scratch showing evidence of having partly healed, but now a greenish color around the edges. I covered Charlie up and put a can of ice on the fire to melt, then fed the dogs. While I did this, Charlie laid back, his eyes closed.

When the water got hot I took our two towels and dipped them in it, and wrapped them around the leg, then dropped more ice in the can to heat.

The dogs, after exploring around, came into the cave and went to sleep. Great, furry brutes, I felt better for having them so close at hand. Any one of them might have been an al-

most even match for a full grown bear in my estimation.

Charlie's face began to relax as the heat from the wet towels began to soak in. I filled a can with ice, frozen caribou meat, and dried onions, and placed it over the fire. Then I dropped the towels in the can of hot water again and wrung them out, wrapping them over Charlie's leg and covering it up once more.

I had decided to tell Charlie of my dream of the night before. But first I wanted to ask him one question.

"Charlie," I began slowly, sitting down with my back to the wall of the cave. "You said that the reason for the Ritual Death was to leave the spirit in the mountain free of possible harm that might come from sickness or old age of the person."

"That's right," he said.

"Suppose the spirit in the mountain got hurt?" I asked. "Would that effect the body of the person?"

He looked at me, puzzled. Then his face cleared as he understood the question.

"Yes," he said, and in his intense excitement it was a loud hiss.

Swiftly I told him of my dream. Then I told him about my handkerchief being twisted and tied into a knot, and how the tracks of the bear in the snow were exactly where I had seen them in the dream. He nodded his head seriously as I talked.

"But," I finished up. "How is it that you, having been here before, aren't aware of your spirit in the mountain?"

Once more he looked puzzled.

"I don't know," he answered. "How does bear know of spirit in mountain? How do rocks know of spirit in mountain?"

It was my turn to look puzzled.

"How do rocks know?" I echoed.

Then suddenly the whole picture fell into place. I stood up, stunned.

Suddenly I was back at the camp of the night before! Snow fell off my shoulders. I blinked my eyes in the light of the glaring snow that stretched all around me.

And Charlie, his eyes dulled and bloodshot, stared at me from his place under the furs on the sled. I looked over at the campfire. There were tracks near it. Ten feet the other side of the burned out fire was a large red stain on the snow.

My stomach turned as I saw the frozen, bright red stump I had cut from Charlie's body. As I looked, one of the dogs sniffed at it, whined uncomfortably, and turned away.

I TOOK ANOTHER look at Charlie and forced speculation to the back of my mind. There were things to do! Hastily I built a fire. While it was gaining momentum I fed the dogs and wrapped the amputated portion of the leg in a fur piece and stowed it in the sled.

My motive for that was vague. I wasn't sure which place was physically real, nor which Charlie was the real one. I didn't know how to find out. So I was just playing all angles as they came.

"How do you feel, Charlie?" I asked.

He didn't reply. His eyes were full of suffering, both physical and mental. It occurred to me then how much of a shock it must have been for him to recover consciousness sitting in the sled, and see that mangled leg laying in the snow, and feel the terrific body agony of the stump.

"Of course," I thought. "If this is just the Charlie that is a pattern of charges in the mountain it isn't quite the same as—" Then I stopped.

All along I had unconsciously discounted the reality or importance of it all. Now I was beginning to see a glimmering of the truth. A truth so

staggering that my mind seemed incapable of fully grasping it.

And what was that truth? It was simply this: that no one really knows the primal structure of reality. No one knows what it *really* is. We have a body and we live in a world that is hard and inflexible. If we stick our hands in fire we get them burned. I had just *left* a world where there was ice that I could melt, and towels dipped in scalding hot water that burned my hands.

I was in a different world where I had just built a fire that was burning brightly now. I went over to it and ran my hand slowly through the flames. They were hot, and they left a deposit of soot on my skin.

If this present world or the other was merely a pattern of condenser charges in a homogenous mixture of dielectric and finely divided metal, that did not make it any less real **WITHIN ITSELF. AND THERE SEEMED NO WAY OF DETERMINING WHICH WAS ACTUAL REALITY.**

It was mad—insane. I turned and looked at the smooth, immense mound of blackness that was the Sacred Mountain, in the north across miles of snow and desolation. I recalled that in the other world I had marched a whole day closer to it, and it was the same in that world.

In BOTH worlds there was a Sacred Mountain, and to each the reality of the other was merely a semi-static electrical pattern! But was it? Ned Brooke had SAID it was. And I had unconsciously assumed that he knew what he was talking about!

I had read his letter so often I knew it by heart. It had pictured everything so pat and smooth. I had gained the impression that all I would have to do was travel to the Sacred Mountain and squat in front of it

while it "recorded" my psyche, and then transfer my ego to it. I had assumed it would be a simple, unmis-takeable process, and that I would be aware I was nothing but an electrical pattern when in the stone.

NOW I BEGAN to wonder how Ned had been so sure of himself. How had he known on "which side" to write the letter? How had he known WHICH IDENTITY to kill in Ritual Death?

One particular passage from his letter now seemed to have new significance"...then it is a diabolical snare that has entrapped a whole civilization in the past and will do so again and again in the future."

"Snare" was right! And I was in it! In it up to my well known neck! I had two invalids to take care of in two different realities.

That thought made me recall the Charlie in the cave, and that I had to keep the towels on his leg hot. How was I to "get back" there? I chuckled dryly to myself. How does one get back into a dream? By going to sleep, of course!

Now another thought occurred to me. In the other world I had marched for at least fourteen hours before getting to that cave I was in. How did the time element fit in? How long had I been asleep in this world, while Charlie sat there, suffering? I asked Charlie. His lips trembled as if he were going to answer, but he didn't. His mind seemed too full of suffering for words to come out. I laid my hand on his shoulder gently, to give him courage, and turned away. I had decided to stay "here".

The other Charlie could at least get up and heat his own towels. Or perhaps while we were "here" the other identities remained static and timeless, so that if I never went back to the cave it wouldn't make any dif-

ference to that other Charlie.

THAT AFTERNOON I began construction of an igloo. It would be months before Charlie could be moved, and winter would be coming almost any day.

The dogs, seeing that they weren't going to be harnessed to the sled, wandered off. Charlie, in the sled, spent most of the time with his eyes closed. I didn't know whether he was asleep or awake, and I didn't dare disturb him.

I knew nothing about building an igloo, but I soon became intensely interested in it. With the shovel I marked a circle ten feet across and dug a trench down to solid packed snow. The loose snow packed easily, and before long I had a circular wall a foot thick and two feet high, with an opening three feet wide, with parallel walls extending out. I planned to make the opening large enough so that I could push the sled inside without disturbing Charlie.

Toward evening I saw rapidly moving figures streaking across the snow toward me. It was a caribou with the dogs in hot pursuit. I got out the rifle, and as the caribou came near I shot it. I gathered from the manner of the dogs that I had done exactly what they wanted me to. They hovered around while I skinned and cleaned it, and for the first time I began to feel that I was not alone with my responsibility toward Charlie. I began to feel a comradeship with Charlie's giant, intelligent sled dogs, and felt an inner pride that they had "accepted" me, and that I had measured up to them.

As though sensing my thoughts, the lead dog, a vicious looking brute, placed his neck against my leg and whined as if he were trying to speak. For the first time on the trip I dared to touch one of the dogs. I leaned

over and ran my fingers through the thick fur of his head. He turned his head up, and his eyes looked into mind. I felt suddenly that he knew my problems far better than I suspected, and would stand by me, whatever happened.

His name, and that of all the other dogs, was some unpronounceable Esquimoux name. I couldn't recall it.

"I'll call you King," I said.

After this interlude I went back to work on the caribou, cleaning even the entrails and laying them out to freeze, for I knew that the dogs would eat them as quickly as they would the meat.

I put a thick chunk of the meat in a can and boiled it over the fire while I worked. When it was done there was a rich broth. I poured some of this into a tin cup and fed it to Charlie with a spoon. Although he accepted it and ate all of it, he didn't speak. Soon after, his head drooped and his eyes closed. I knew that the warm broth had relaxed him, and he had fallen asleep.

Humorously, I wondered what kind of an electrical pattern the hot broth made in the stone of the Sacred Mountain, if it was there. My mind seemed to dwell on that idea of an electrical matrix, and try to relate everything to it.

There would be a certain tendency for any static pattern to slowly disipate, and perhaps food, such as the hot broth, would provide additional charge—new electrical energy—that would build up the pattern again.

I looked across the white wasteland of the valley and wondered if, assuming this wasteland were nothing but an electrical pattern, and I were to try a little surveying, would the laws of trigonometry hold up? If it were an electrical pattern it of course was spaceless, in that it had no relation to the actual space occupied by

the electrical field. The matrix that seemed to be the square miles of the valley would probably occupy a cubic foot of the Sacred Mountain, or maybe a cubic inch. Certainly, if the Earth and the Moon and a whole past civilization were in it, the valley couldn't occupy very much actual space in the bulk of the mountain!

With this in mind I got the pad of paper out of the sled where it had been stored. With the foot rule and the pencil I drew a triangle on a sheet of paper. I had no way of measuring the angles, but there was a law of proportion I could use. I drew a smaller triangle with the sides parallel to the first one, and carefully measured the proportional sides. So far as I could determine, trigonometry seemed to hold up. I made a mental resolve to try the same experiment in the other "world" if and when I returned to it.

It was now quite late. I put the paper pad away and crawled into the snow for the night. Almost immediately I was asleep.

WHEN I opened my eyes and saw the gloom of the small cave I wasn't surprised. The dogs were asleep against the back wall. Charlie was awake. He grinned at me thinly as I looked his way.

"How's your leg, Charlie?" I asked, getting up. My back was sore. I felt stiff and cramped from long hours sleeping in an unnatural position.

In answer he threw back the fur robes covering it. His legs lay close together, the healthy one keeping the other warm. The bad one was still the same—shrunken and bloodless. The green area around the old wound was a trifle larger. I frowned at it, wondering if I was going to have to go through the ordeal of amputating it all over again.

The dogs awakened as I went to

the cave opening to replenish the fire. The lead dog, King, came up to me and sniffed, then whined questioningly, almost uneasily.

I reached down and twisted at the thick mat on his neck. It seemed to reassure him. He wagged his tail and moved away. It gave me a queer feeling to realize that a friendship formed with this dog in one "world" held over into another!

If all this double living was puzzling to me, how much more so it must be to the dogs, I thought. But maybe it wasn't puzzling to them at all. Maybe they just accepted things as they came without thinking too much about the inconsistencies. King had remembered our friendship pact and wanted to be reassured. I had reassured him, and he was satisfied.

I filled the can with ice again to heat, and placed the can of boiled meat and onions on the fire to heat again, then got out the paper pad. Curiously, it was unused. I had half expected my triangles that I had drawn to be still there, since I had left them in the pad.

As I carefully drew the triangles I had a queer feeling that my movements were slipping into a groove, and that the lines were "congealing" at exactly the same places they were on the "other" pad. To offset that, I deliberately made the triangles different. And when I had finished my measuring it was as I had expected—the laws of trigonometry held here, too.

In one of these two worlds space was purely an illusion. It was a self-consistent illusion, though; and I felt that no amount of testing would show up any flaw in the spatial "extension" of either.

The water was hot by the time I finished my experiment in trigonometry. I dipped the towels in it and wrung them out, then wrapped them

about Charlie's bad leg.

I fed the dogs then, and went outside. A few yards from the cave mouth I was able to turn and look northward. The Sacred Mountain loomed there, a mound of night blackness that reflected nothing.

A short, humorless chuckle escaped my lips. To each "world" the other was just a semi-static electrical pattern! If there was any way of determining which was real it would have to come from future events. No way I had thought of could resolve the problem.

A CRY OF PAIN sounded from the cave. I rushed back, slipping and falling in my haste. I found Charlie with the furs thrown back and the towels off, waving his hands in futile passes over his leg, crying and moaning.

I looked at the leg. It was growing larger. There were streaks of color in it. Blood was beginning to flow in it again! I dipped my hands in the hot water and massaged his leg, helping the flow of blood. Fifteen minutes later Charlie's crying subsided. Circulation was restored and the leg was going to be all right, unless—I glanced worriedly at the greenish color—the gangrene got worse.

Charlie's crying had changed to laughing and crying now. He seemed overjoyed at the change. He climbed to his feet and tried to walk. I caught him as he stumbled.

Undiscouraged, he persisted until he was walking about the cave unassisted. After a while I looked through the sled for the medical supplies. I painted the greenish spot with iodine heavily, and told him I intended to paint it that way twice a day until it healed up or got worse.

The food was hot now. We ate a hurried breakfast and were soon on our way. I wondered vaguely what

the object in going any further was, since I was now living in both worlds without any apparent imperfections in the reality of either, but decided that since we were going to spend the winter up here we might as well travel as stay cooped up in a small cave only part way. And I was growing curious for a close look at that strange mountain.

In the other "world" with that Charlie I would be forced to stay where I was and finish the igloo, so in this one I might as well complete the trip.

The day was uneventful, except that Charlie seemed more cheerful than I had ever seen him. All day long his spirits seemed to bubble over. He sang, ran ahead and played with King, the lead dog, and seemed to have boundless energy.

Late in the afternoon I grew more and more worried about the Charlie in the other "world", and anxious for night to fall. At last, after so long a time that it seemed morning was months in the past, supper was over, the dogs were asleep, and Charlie and I wrapped ourselves in furs in the protection of a niche in the rocky bank of the glacier we had been on all day.

I closed my eyes with a deep sigh.

ALMOST immediately I opened them. I lay quietly, knowing "where" I was. I wondered facetiously how long I could live a double life, twenty-four hours a day. My small world under the snow was warm and comfortable. I would have liked to have gone back to sleep, but the memory of Charlie, asleep in the sled, brought me wide awake. I pushed up through the roof of my snow pocket.

It seemed to be a signal to the dogs. One after another they appeared from the depths of the snow. King

looked my way and wagged his tail, then sniffed the cold air.

The other dogs sniffed, and grew uneasy. Suddenly one of them lifted his black nose skyward and emitted a long, soulless howl. It seemed to spread over the valley and return more lonesome than it had gone. Other dogs took it up. I felt the hair on the nape of my neck rise, and a chill course down my back.

Shrugging off the dismal feeling I went to the sled to awaken Charlie, who sat there, his eyes closed, his body lost in the mountain of furs. Some instinct told me he was dead the moment my eyes came to rest on his white, rigid face.

I approached him slowly. I saw my hand reach over and touch his face, moving of its own volition. His face was cold and frozen. He had been dead for hours.

As I stood there, looking down at his still face, the immensity of the valley wasteland of whiteness, the frigid, giant, mountain wall that surrounded it, and the blue sky, infinitely far above, pressed in on me, isolating me from the rest of the universe. So long as Charlie had been there, even though he was completely helpless, he had been an anchor—a strength. Now he was gone.

I felt something icy touch my hand, and a hot breath blow on my palm. I looked down. It was King, comforting me and gaining comfort from me.

I sank down on the snow and wrapped my arms around his huge neck, holding him close. We stayed that way for several minutes. When I arose there was a strength in me to go on.

I dug down in the circle of the igloo wall and made a grave for Charlie. When it was deep enough I lifted him from the sled. Standing by the open grave with his rigid form in

my arms, I looked across the miles of barrenness toward the mound of blackness that was the Sacred Mountain. That look was a prayer and a request. Then I lowered him gently into the grave.

I spread three heavy furs over his body before filling the grave with snow and packing it down. When it was filled I made a cross of two sticks cut from one of the brake poles we had brought along with us.

Turning away, I went over and started up the fire. I wasn't hungry, but I knew that I had to eat to have a source of energy to keep me warm. When the fire was going I fed the dogs. They ate reluctantly, as if they too weren't hungry but knew they had to eat to keep warm. Only King refused to eat. He sniffed at his chunk of meat and turned away, going over to the grave where he laid down with his nose on his paws.

AFTER BREAKFAST I sat back to think. Since the Sacred Mountain seemed to be the same in both "worlds", there was no use in both of me going to it. One was enough, and the other "me" already had two days head start. Still, there was little use in staying where I was. I decided I should either go ahead so that both of me could spend the winter at the base of that strange mountain, or I should turn back to the village and let the other "me" make the journey with the other Charlie alone.

The big question mark, of course, was, which was the "dream world"? That seemed easy to decide, now that Charlie was dead. The world in which he was dead must be the real one. But was it? Events had left me confused, but if continuity meant anything, then the world in which Charlie was dead was the dream world. In the succession of days and nights since I had left the village it had been during

a dream that Charlie had been hurt and I had amputated his leg. At least, in memory, it seemed that way.

I thought of another thing now. It had probably been at the moment Charlie had died here that his leg had revived in the other world. Through some peculiar relationship between the two worlds, amputating his leg in one world had affected it in the other by cutting off the flow of blood. He had been conscious in that other world when he had died in this, so he had continued in the other and had recovered quickly from the inhibiting influence of the amputated leg.

I wondered if a "spirit in the mountain" could die and leave the real person completely free of the mountain's influence. It was an intriguing point. If the Charlie that was still alive was the real Charlie, perhaps shortly another matrix would build up, and I might find Charlie walking into camp even though his body was buried under the snow. It was worth thinking about!

I found my eyes wandering over the valley, looking for a small black dot moving over the snow. I laughed harshly and felt hot tears well up in my eyes.

The question rose in my mind—were those tears real or just electrical charges in a condenser matrix. I cursed the mountain quietly and eloquently, and felt better. But I had decided to make camp here and wait a few days.

To keep busy I went ahead with the construction of the igloo. There was no telling when winter might descend with its heavy snows and make travelling impossible. It would be well to have a place of protection.

Toward evening the clouds began to gather overhead. There was no wind where I was, but the clouds moved at a good speed, and here and

there across the valley I saw snowy clouds rise up from the ground, indicating a strong but sporadic ground wind.

I worked harder to get the igloo finished, and at last it was done. It was amateurish and far from uniform in its roundness, but it would do as well as a more perfect one.

The wind seemed to have waited for me to get done, for it now began to blow. I felt its freezing force as I broke loose the runners of the sled and dragged it into the igloo. The dogs crowded about me as they came in.

I WENT OUT once more to drag in the large tin on which we always built the fire. I placed it in the center of the igloo under the small hole in the roof, and soon a natural circulation had been set up that carried the fumes upward and out through that hole.

Charlie's grave was over against one wall. The cross of wood was the only adornment in the room. While I had been finishing the igloo I had regretted having buried Charlie here, but now I was glad. He was there, only a few feet away, protected from the storm that was coming up.

The smell of the burning tallow hung heavy in the small space. The walls glistened brightly, catching the feeble glow of the slow fire and casting it back, lighting up everything clearly. I appreciated how nicely nature had made things for man's convenience, so that even the snow could be of use for comfort and protection.

I was glad now that I had decided to not go on, because I would never have made it to the cave, and would have been caught in the storm which now began to blow with full fury outside.

Without opening my eyes I knew I was on the glacier, and that Charlie

was asleep beside me. I was fully aware of the day I had just completed, building the igloo and burying the other Charlie.

I felt a confidence in my knowledge that I hadn't felt before. I even felt that I was almost at the point where I could change from one world to the other by willing it.

Instead of opening my eyes I tried to recapture the feeling of sitting in the igloo with the smell of close atmosphere and—before I could call up all the sensations of being there I felt a momentary "shift"—indescribleable—and I was there, in the igloo!

I opened my eyes and looked around, at the glistening roof of the snow house, at the sleeping dogs, at the fire, and at the mound of snow with the wooden cross on it.

Without moving, I closed my eyes again and "reached" for the feeling of being on the glacier, with the consciousness of Charlie being near—and suddenly I was "there!" I opened my eyes again and it was so.

Charlie glanced up from the fire on which he was frying some hotcakes and grinned happily at me. I grinned back, acutely conscious of the fact that in the "other world" a *few feet* underneath where I sat, was his frozen corpse. I was still not certain which world was the real one, but for the first time I began to feel confident that everything would straighten itself out.

I had two bodies, one in each world. I didn't know which world the living Charlie was in, but once I found Ned Brooke I would know that world, whichever it was, was the one in the mountain, an electrical matrix rather than solid atoms and molecules.

The answer to everything would come, I felt, when I reached the base of the Sacred Mountain and was

able to touch its surface. In some way then, if not through actual events, I would be able to tell beyond doubt which was reality.

I rose, shuffling off the mound of furs and blankets that covered me. The glacier stretched backward and upward between dark walls of granite. The sky was overcast, and as much of it as I could see was a leaden gray. Evidently the weather in the two worlds was the same, even if objects such as sleds, and living creatures such as dogs and men, could move with independence from each other.

Idly I wondered if the igloo I had built was in both worlds, and if, supposing I could travel back to it right this minute in this world, I would find it empty, or with a third Craig Brown in it. It would be quite complicated to have two of me in the same world!

Or maybe the igloo would just be forming in this world and if I went there I would find it forming without any visible agency to build it! That would be interesting to watch.

Unfortunately it was a good two days travel to the spot where the igloo should be, and it would be foolhardy to turn back to it now.

WE MADE quick work of breakfast and started upward on the easy slope of the glacier. Shortly it began to widen out. By noon we were finding the going slowed down by roughness and large cracks and chasms in the ice. There were occasional rumblings, and once, near at hand, there sounded a sharp explosion like a rifle shot amplified a thousand times.

When we stopped for lunch we were on the high table land of the glacier. On either side of us the two mountains rose into the gray cloud bank, and ahead of us was a

sea of ice.

This flat expanse seemed to extend northward a mile or two and bring up abruptly against the side of the Sacred Mountain, which now loomed close.

I felt that we would reach it by nightfall, and voiced this opinion to Charlie. He laughed loudly.

"It's five days journey yet!" he said. "Fifty, seventy miles!"

I looked at it again and just couldn't believe him, so close it seemed. Then I noticed the clouds. The gray overhead extended for miles to the north, and yet it didn't reach to the Sacred Mountain. There was a broad strip of clear blue sky. So I knew Charlie was right.

I sighed dejectedly and resigned myself to more of the grind of travel. And after lunch we crossed the glacier slowly, more than once having to retrace our steps and scout around for a place to cross some wide chasm that had opened up across our path, dropping down hundreds of feet into icy depths.

When we made camp for the night the northern edge of the glacier field seemed as far away as it had at noon! But there was one difference now. The Sacred Mountain was beginning to show contour, so that it didn't appear to be just a hole in space. There were shadings in its surface, barely distinguishable, that made it seem solid.

After supper I wrapped myself in furs and closed my eyes. I transferred to my body in the igloo. The storm was still raging outside. Finally I slept. I was asleep in both worlds, for the first time in three days. And my sleep was dreamless.

WHEN I awakened it was to a feeling of strangeness. At first I couldn't pin down what was different. Everything seemed the way

it had been the night before. On the glacier I was wrapped in furs and felt very comfortable in their depths. In the igloo the fire had died down, but it was still warm even though the storm still raged outside.

Then suddenly it dawned on me what was so different. I was completely aware in both bodies at the same time. This "expanded consciousness" had slipped on me like a well fitting cloak!

Now, as I lay quietly in both places, letting full realization of the new state of affairs sink in, a problem that had been at the back of my mind crystalized into consciousness.

It was the problem of how night and day alternated in the two worlds. I had been spending a day in one, then a day in the other, and the sun had peeked above the horizon in one and then in the other. Now it was morning simultaneously in both worlds! If the world in the mountain were geared to the real world it would not be subject to the convenience of my own life.

What was the explanation? I dwelt on the problem while fixing my own breakfast in the igloo, and while Charlie fixed breakfast on the glacier. I "sat back" in my mind and watched my consciousness attend to the different actions in each world without getting them mixed up. "I" seemed to be in, and yet slightly separate from both bodies. A sort of superficial animal consciousness seemed to guide each, with only the slightest touch from me.

The explanation came to me slowly. My awareness in both had been simultaneous all along, but I had played a trick on myself to rationalize things. The conscious activities of each body had remained unmixed, and so I had kept them separate in consciousness, and made one as a *whole* alternate with the other as a

whole. But now one more step had occurred in my development. I had penetrated one more step in my progress.

Ned Brooke had passed this stage in his development, for he had said, "I can exist completely in either at will." Only, when I had read the letter in my office in Evanston it had been so cut and dried—a matrix in stone and a living, breathing body. I hadn't realized then that the matrix in stone would also be a living breathing body! I realized it now, as I took a mouthful of hotcakes on the glacier and waited for the meat to boil in the igloo! But I didn't know how to tell which was the matrix in stone!

I WATCHED the dogs at both places and soon saw that though their movements were independent, their emotions weren't. Two of them started to growl at each other over a chunk of frozen fish on the glacier, and though they had already eaten in the igloo, the same two suddenly glared at each other and growled for no apparent reason. On the glacier they were about to develop their argument into a fight. Charlie laughingly cuffed them and made them separate. They subsided, and in the igloo they looked at each other shamefacedly and turned their backs on each other.

I was thoroughly enjoying my dual existence! In the cave I grinned at the two dogs and winked at King. On the glacier I laughed with Charlie over the incident as he sat down again. It was exhilarating.

On the glacier, after breakfast, we forged ahead toward the northern lip. We reached it before noon, and stood spellbound while our eyes drank in a scene unmatched anywhere in the world.

A new glacier highway wound down the slope of the two mountains

and came out into an immense valley. For a long way the valley was covered with snow, but was dotted with rising spirals of steam from geysers. About the base of each column of steam was a small lake of mirror-clear water.

Beyond this part of the valley the snow vanished altogether, to be replaced by green vegetation, tall, gracefully drooping trees, and small knolls on which could be seen herds of grazing caribou.

Rising out of this almost tropical scene in deep ebony contours was the Sacred Mountain, majestic, breath-taking in its splendor. If it was forty to sixty miles away yet, it was at least four or five thousand feet high from its broad base to its smoothly rounded top.

I suddenly found that I had stopped breathing, and inhaled deeply, letting my breath out with a deep sigh of appreciation. This—this alone, was worth all the trip from Evanston.

And in the igloo, with the storm raging outside, I lit my pipe leisurely and said to myself, "You lucky stiff!" I thought of all those miles across the glacier and wondered if I would be content for only one of my two bodies to have the luxury of a tropical climate for the winter months! I doubted it.

NOW, AS we coasted down the smooth slope of the glacier, our pole brakes dragging in the ice, the dogs prancing along with their bushy tails waving gracefully, my thoughts turned to another problem. How had Ned Brookes known that this "other world" was a matrix of electricity in the stone of that majestic Sacred Mountain?

Surely, there was nothing to indicate the *nature* of the duality of existence! The Sacred Mountain was so "out of this world" that no one,

seeing it and going through the experiences I had had, could possibly miss connecting it with everything.

But was the explanation Ned had advanced the right one? By the same token, the world of reality I had always known could also be considered nothing but a matrix in a stone mountain by some traveller from the "other side". Any "proof" seemed likely to be reciprocal!

Suddenly I recalled the words of the letter that said, "Then it is a diabolical snare that has entrapped a whole civilization in the past." I remembered also the words of those shadowy twelve foot beings I had seen in that first dream, who had said that Ned was at present at the observatory on the Moon.

In the daily events of both worlds I had almost forgotten those two beings. They would be the clue to which of my bodies was in the old reality! When I reached the base of the mountain I would meet them—or some other strange being—if the body now going down the glacier was merely a matrix in stone.

If the body going down the glacier was real, then the one in the igloo would sooner or later be visited again.

This line of thought made me think of something else.

"Charlie," I spoke up. "Now that I see what a wonderful country lies around the Sacred Mountain, why is it that your people didn't come over here to live rather than building a village out in the wastelands?"

"Ha!" he said. "Spirit in mountain say, 'Go 'way! Go 'way!' So—" he shrugged resignedly. "We go 'way.'"

"But why go so far?" I persisted. "Couldn't you have gone, say, two day's march? Then you could return and hunt."

He shook his head violently, but would not elaborate. I let the subject

drop, but I began to see a possible reason for the "spirit in mountain" to give that order. Mentally Charlie and his people, though alert, were not too intelligent. If they went over into the matrix, generation after generation, and were immortal in it, someday there would be an awful lot of them.

But what about the caribou? And other wild animals? Words from Ned's letter came into my mind. At the moment of death the ego had to be completely in the matrix. With animals, not understanding this, not able to accomplish this, death would be in both places.

Perhaps ordinarily Charlie would have died in both places, but at the moment of his death he was unconscious or asleep in one—the one he died in.

MORE AND more it seemed that the Charlie of the world I had grown up in was the one that had died. But the continuity of the days and nights proved it was the world of the matrix. The real Charlie was still alive.

Unless—something clicked home almost audibly in my mind. Those alternate days had already been proven to be simultaneous, and their appearance of alternating only a trick of my mind in "bunching" the events of the two bodies separately. So the sequence of days was meaningless.

It didn't prove anything conclusively, but now it seemed that perhaps the "me" on the glacier, approaching the mountain, was in reality a matrix, while the real "me" was in the igloo.

In the igloo I relaxed with a sigh. I would just camp there until the whole thing got straightened out. There was no use making the difficult journey over the mountains to the Sacred Mountain alone if it wasn't necessary!

And on the glacier I chuckled at myself and felt somehow better at the knowledge that perhaps in the final analysis I was a lot closer to home than I had thought.

Once again we stopped in a protected niche in the wall of the glacier for the night. There were three days of travel left: one more on the glacier, then two across the valley of geysers.

As Charlie stopped the dogs and turned the sled so it wouldn't coast away in the night, I looked back the way we had come and found it hard to realize we had left the village only eleven days before. So much had happened in that eleven days!

Then I turned and looked toward the Sacred Mountain and thought of the three days yet remaining of the journey, and thought, "Three days is an eternity!"

Another thing now occurred to me as I looked at the mountain. From Ned's letter I had assumed that the Sacred Mountain was something man made, or at least made by some race of intelligent beings that had lived long ago. Now I could see that it was a natural formation. In some way nature had formed it, lifting it above the surface at this point. Some freak amalgam of metal and electrolyte had formed in the days when the Earth was still soft, and had been here since then.

No doubt some race in the early history of the Earth had chanced on it and discovered its peculiar properties. There were legends of whole people simply vanishing. Maybe one of those peoples had been the one that had discovered this mountain and had come here to enter the matrix and leave their bodies in crypts at its base.

Three days! It seemed longer than ever. I couldn't take my eyes off the mountain, even while I ate supper. Its

contours seemed shallow and flat, or infinitely deep, depending on how I looked. Sometimes I thought the almost indistinguishable markings on it were ridges and gulleys, as in ordinary mountains. Then they would look like veinings under the ebony surface which itself was perfectly smooth and polished.

I'M DREAMING." That thought crystalized in my mind as an unquestionable fact. I stood in the igloo, looking down at my sleeping form. That form had evidently dozed off, because it was sitting up, elbows on bent knees, and my pipe was dangling from its lax lips. I smiled at my unconscious body, then squared my shoulders and looked up.

The roof of the igloo came down to meet me, to pass through my head, growing smaller rapidly, shrinking until it was too small to hold even my feet.

I stood in the storm, yet I didn't feel its icy blasts nor hear its sounds. I could see the swirlings of the snowflakes as they fell, but not feel them light on my body.

I looked down. The snowflakes were swirling through me unhindered. And my body was shadowy. I looked down through it and saw the snow-softened outline of my igloo no larger than one toe of my two feet that were planted on either side of it.

A strange elixir of power seemed to be flowing in me. A strange knowledge and certainty seemed to have settled on me. Knowing, and yet not knowing what I was to do, I strode northward into the blinding snow.

My feet took giant strides through the miniature valley. I reached the glacier, now a narrow ribbon of ice, and my pace quickened. When I passed the cave its opening was a pinprick in the rock, not large enough to admit one finger.

The storm was behind me. I was on a small tableland of ice that seemed barely a quarter of a mile across. I went across it in easy strides, my feet bridging chasms which the two days before, when I crossed, had been unbridgeable gulfs.

Now I was on another ribbon of ice, and I slowed down, carefully watching to find where Charlie and I were camped. At last I found the place. I got down on hands and knees and made sure. A peculiar scar on the granite wall. A thousand and one small details of shape.

Yet there was no sled, nor any sign of anyone having ever been here. When I stood up I felt tears come to my eyes. Charlie was no more. I was alone.

I WENT on down the incline of ice into the valley. With giant strides I hastened toward the Sacred Mountain. But now it seemed different. It coruscated with lines of light that seemed tangible—strings attached to infinite space. And there were large ships gliding in for landings, or speeding away over my head to the south.

The trees and the green landscape were as I had seen them before, but there were buildings and landing fields, flooded with light, and a bustle of movement.

I hastened my steps. Here was what I had come to see. Here was that ancient civilization that had entered the matrix, and by the same token I was myself in the matrix rather than the real world.

I came to a broad street paved with a black tar substance. There were people. I rushed forward to greet them.

Then I stopped, puzzled. They didn't seem to be aware of my presence. They were small and dense like my sleeping form back in the igloo,

and they didn't see me.

"What is this?" I asked, exasperated. I walked on, angrily kicking my feet through the oblivious people without seeming to so much as disturb the air they breathed.

Walking up one street and down another my temper gradually cooled and I began to puzzle seriously over the mystery; for though I had started out by believing it a dream, I was now convinced it wasn't. I had remembered those two twelve foot shadowy beings that had welcomed me in that first dream, and I was like them, only perhaps twenty feet tall.

"I am now a matrix in stone—an electrical pattern in a condenser whose individual plates are widely spaced atoms of some metal congealed in an insulating dielectric," I said aloud. "All these people and buildings and streets are similar matrices. I didn't walk through space to get here, though it seemed like I did. What I did was follow a train of topographical memory until I reached the idea of this place, which, in the matrix, is this place, so I am here. But something is lacking somewhere."

I continued walking about, exploring what I knew to be, not dream stuff, but the actual reality of the matrix, and while I explored I desperately tried to solve the nature of things as they were in relation to my ghostly body.

I felt that I was on the verge of something, and if I could only understand a little more than I did, things would be much different.

I recalled the "dream" in which Charlie was attacked by the bear—or whatever it was. In that dream there had been a mirror in which my reflection was laying down asleep while I was standing, but unable to move. That memory seemed fruitless as a source of inspiration for a solution to the present difficulty.

I went back to what I could remember of those two shadowy giants that had visited me. There, if anyplace, lay the key. They had said Ned Brooke was on the Moon, but they would tell him I was here.

How was it that they had been able to make their presence known to me, when I couldn't make my presence known to these people around me?

Suddenly I remembered that in that dream I had been able to look down and see the snow passing through me undisturbed, and see my body laying there, asleep.

That, then, was the answer. In this shadowy existence I could be aware of other existences, but only other shadowy beings could be aware of me.

Did this mean that there was yet a third mode of existence? Ned had said, "I can retreat completely into the stone, or withdraw from it."

What was the actual relationship existing between the details of the matrix and reality? It wasn't coincidence! It wasn't like Leibnitz's Monad, whose ideas of external reality agreed with external reality only by coincidence, and had no functional tie.

With the thinking mind, unknown and perhaps unknowable in its basic nature, it was easy to attribute mysterious powers and relationships to the unknown complexities. But how explain the perfect reproduction in the matrix of a real snowflake, falling from the clouds? How explain the two following the same course, subject to the whims of identical winds? And how explain a sled in two different places in the matrix and in reality?

It was easy to say that the matrix was simply an electrical pattern in non-conducting stone, but how could a snowflake miles away "reach" into a mountain and alter one electron? Or

did it alter more than one?

After all, to "explain" the reality of the matrix by saying what the matrix seemed to be was as much of an explanation of the principle of how it worked as it was to say that the mind is the functioning of the brain. It was just words!

I HAD EXPLORED every part of the city at the base of the mountain. I had worked myself into a frenzy trying to get at the root of things. Now a new mood possessed me. I turned my back on the mountain and the city and went back across the valley. My walk turned into a fast trot, and then into swift running.

In a few moments I had crossed the saddle of the two stone mountains that cradled the glacier and was in the lower valley. I caught a glimpse of the igloo as I passed it, but did not pause.

I ran on, back over the path we had come, up the other glacier to the point where it forked, and down the other fork into the outer valley where the village was.

At last I could see the dark outline of the lodge against the snow. My heart beat faster.

"Nanapochek!" I called. "Nanapochek!"

But suddenly it seemed as if I was trying to run in the bottom of a sea of water. My movements slowed. Against my will I was brought to a stop, still trying to run.

I leaned forward against an invisible, intangible barrier and tried to force my way through it. But it held me fast.

"Nanapochek!" I called hoarsely.

And suddenly a light winked on in the blackness of the lodge. It shone across the snow, lighting it up so that there was a path of crystalline jewels leading from my feet across the space that separated me from my goal.

Other lights came on, one by one, until the whole lodge was lit up. But now the lodge was retreating. The syrupy forces that bound me seemed to flow around me, washing me back the way I had come. Swifter and swifter, until they were a rushing torrent that carried me against my will.

Abruptly I opened my eyes. The igloo was full of the heavy smell of burning oil. It smarted my eyes. I felt around in darkness until my hands found one of the braking poles for the sled. I poked through the opening in the ceiling, and soon the air began to clear.

Then I heard Charlie's voice on the glacier, calling for me to wake up. I opened my eyes there, and the huge bulk of the Sacred Mountain loomed, expressionless, to the north.

On the glacier and in the igloo the dogs awakened and began to stir about.

On the glacier I stood up and stretched, and in my mind which seemed to be in both of my bodies, yet in some intangible way separate from them, the events of the night slowly, receded into the background.

A NEW MOOD possessed me as we started out for our twelfth day of the journey. I was determined to not think of any of the many problems on my mind. I was just going to enjoy being alive, and enjoy the scenery as scenery. I felt light hearted and full of energy. And when the question of why I should feel so care-free rose in my mind I stamped on it with both feet, mentally.

Before we had gone far I discovered moss growing in a crack in the granite wall of the glacier canyon. It was the first bit of actual living substance I had encountered, and I ran the palm of my hand over it, feeling its softness; but I was careful not

to injure it. I felt a comradeship toward it. It was alive, and so was I.

Charlie knew a few tunes that I knew, and we coasted down the glacier, braking the sled so it wouldn't overtake and run over the dogs, singing so loudly that the echoes bounced back to accompany us in belated harmony.

The sled slewed around and tipped over once. This struck both of us as being so funny that we doubled over in paroxysms of laughter.

The dogs laid on their bellies and laughed at us with lolling, steaming tongues while we unloaded the sled enough to be able to right it again.

Finally we left the glacier and were out on the plain, winding our way around geyser lakes, staying far away from them where the snow was solid and safe.

Behind us the cold, aloof mountain range formed a barrier that, in memory, it seemed hard to believe we had crossed. Dull, snow-heavy clouds nestled around the granite peaks.

Ahead the green trees beckoned beyond the white desert we were on. Singing and grinning at each other, we kept going. We were like two drunks, delirious with joy—or like sailors within sight of their homeland.

A frost had settled on the sled so that it was becoming white. Drops of condensing moisture glistened on the thick fur of the dogs. The air against my face seemed almost hot, but I knew it was still quite a way below freezing, in spite of the heat of the geysers.

When Charlie decided to stop for the night the mountains to the south seemed a long way behind us, but the Sacred Mountain and the oasis at its base seemed still no closer. By now, though, I was used to the contradictory appearance of the north country.

Back at the igloo the storm had stopped, though the heavy clouds still hung in the sky. I had spend part of the day digging out. I had a trench dug from the entrance to the igloo, sloping upward to the surface of the snow.

The dogs had fought their way past me as I worked and worn themselves out trying to race around in snow that was too soft to hold them up. Altogether it had snowed three and a half feet, and I was beginning to realize that unless the soft, fluffy stuff packed down by itself shortly, or in some way froze to solidity, I and the dogs were stuck for the winter.

I could have travelled on snowshoes, which were on the sled. But I couldn't have taken much supplies along with me and would probably starve before long if I became so foolhardy as to try it.

But I was content to say there in the igloo, and let my other self do the travelling. I had reached the philosophical point of view where it didn't matter in the least which body was physical and which was a matrix. They both seemed equally real. It would have been like trying to decide between taking six eggs or half a dozen, to choose which body was the one that had come from Evanston.

IN THE VALLEY of the geysers Charlie and I sat crosslegged in the snow and ate our dinner. The dogs had finished theirs, but seemed reluctant to dig under and go to sleep. They laid around, watching us lazily.

"Tomorrow we leave the sled and travel on foot," Charlie said. "Twenty, thirty miles on foot."

"What about the dogs?" I asked.

Charlie shrugged. "They come along," he answered. "Chase plenty

elves out. and they seemed I looked at them

to laugh over what he had said. A gust of wind brought a shower of condensing steam on us from a nearby geyser. The dogs seemed to laugh about that too.

I laid back on the snow and looked up at the sky, clear blue overhead, and peaceful. After awhile Charlie began to sing a native song in a queer, lilting tune that seemed just to miss every civilized note in the scale and capture a wild, lonely spirit that western music had overlooked. Finally King broke the spell by laying his ears back and howling. Charlie broke off his song and the two of us laughed at King. He glanced at us out of the corner of his eyes, and, seeming to appreciate our reaction, continued to howl.

Charlie slid across the snow and landed on him with flailing arms and legs, and the two of them wrestled with good natured roughness until finally they both fell back exhausted.

Back in the igloo King was asleep, and I watched him as his body jerked sporadically in what he probably thought was a dream. A dream of play with his master who lay dead a few feet away, under the snow.

ONCE AGAIN I found myself standing, looking down at my sleeping form in the warm interior of the igloo. I hesitated, wondering why I couldn't do the same with my other body, so close to the Sacred Mountain.

I decided to try it. I seemed to "flow" back into the sleeping body. A moment later I opened my eyes and knew I was under the snow at the camp out in the valley of the geysers; but I was unable to step out and stand up. I closed my eyes and sighed. Instantly, it seemed, I was again standing in the igloo. I looked up at its glistening dome a few inches above my head. I started to expand. Again the igloo shrunk

under me, but this time I seemed to be able consciously to will myself to expand and expand.

Soon the valley was far below, and the gray blanket of clouds in the sky was a dense ceiling that came down dangerously close to my head. I looked down, and it was like being in a plane so far up that I seemed apart from the ground. My body, if I still had one, was so tenuous that it couldn't be seen. To all intents and purposes I was a disembodied point of observation.

I wondered how I would move. Experimentally I tried to take a step, and far below the scenery glided swiftly past. I had been facing south, and my single step had taken me close to the mountains there.

I took another and another, and instead of rising with the mountains or stumbling over them, my feet seemed to be walking on a smooth tableland so that my eyes remained at a constant altitude. I forgot about any hypothetical, shadowy body I might have, and speed over the mountain. In less than a minute I was on the other side, rushing along the path of the glacier.

Suddenly I saw black dots moving toward me ahead. I slowed down. They were men, from the village, tired and exhausted from a day's travel, but still forging on through the night. I wondered why they were coming. Was it a hunting trip? Then why didn't they rest for the night?

They were oblivious of me. Finally I left them and went on toward the village. Again, when it was in sight, I found myself brought to a halt by some invisible barrier. Now, however, I didn't try to break through. Instead, I studied it. I moved to the right and the left, pushing forward gently against it.

I remembered what Charlie had said about "spirit in the mountain say

go "way." I had wondered why they had gone so far south, and now it seemed that they had had to move outside this invisible wall, whatever it was.

The light came on in the lodge again. It was a lonely spark. I turned from it and went back through the mountains, and as I passed the weary men on the glacier at express train speed I saw them look up fearfully and draw closer together.

I went on with a glad feeling. They had been aware of me this time. I went on, "flowing" along the gorge of the glacier like an invisible wind, speeding down the other side and across the valley.

I FELT power surging within me. Ahead was one of the naked, glacier streaked peaks. In reckless abandon I rushed toward it and threw myself against it. I felt it tremble under me as I rose above it. I was in the leaden clouds, and they were churning and boiling with the force of my passage.

Power! Power! It flowed into my being. I was drunk with it. It exploded in blinding flashes that darted silently across the sky. It lashed fire at the sides of mountains and left smoking ruin.

Then I was over the travellers from the village, and they were huddled in terror against the cliff.

Suddenly I was ashamed. They were afraid, and I was the cause. I slowed down. I felt the power within me retreat. The shame in me grew.

I was lonely. I was alone. How could I talk to anyone when they weren't aware of me? Of what use was it to go to the Sacred Mountain when the very matrices in it ignored me? Of what use was it to go to the village when I was turned back by invisible barriers? I shrunk until I was no more than fifty feet tall, a shad-

owy form standing over the mound of snow under which the igloo nested. I stood there, my shadowy feet implanted in the snow, yet not disturbing or depressing it. Around me was the silence of the North, the solitude of vast reaches of soft, white snow, the desolation of the Endicott Range, lifeless and aloof.

Something caused me to turn my head and look toward the ribbon of glacier that wound northward toward the Sacred Mountain. I saw vague movement. Then, slowly, I began to make out three forms, huge shadowy, striding toward me across the valley. My heart leaped within me. At last I was going to meet someone with whom I could talk!

Two of those figures were the ones that had welcomed me long eons ago when I had first arrived at the spot where the igloo now was. There was no familiar detail of shape to a form that was no more than shadow, but I knew with utter conviction that it was they.

The other—seemed vaguely familiar, walking with giant strides between his two companions. It was Ned Brooke!

I started to rush forward. Before I could move an imperious voice halted me saying, "Back! Back!" So I stood there, astride the igloo, and waited.

"YOU CERTAINLY raise a rum-pus when you cut loose, Craig!" Those words were vivid in my mind as I opened my eyes and recognized the interior of the igloo. Disappointment rushed over me. I had been about to talk to Ned Brooke, and instead I found myself awake in the igloo.

It was still night, and in the valley of geysers I was still asleep. I lit my pipe, and got the fire going with some coffee water heating, in the

igloo, and sat back to puzzle things out.

I had the impression that in some way I had been *forced* back into my body in the igloo. Ned Brooke hadn't come with those two to greet me, but to put me in my place, more or less.

I thought of the cavorting I had done, and had to admit if what I remembered of my movements had any basis in my kind of reality I had certainly been bouncing around an awful lot!

"But," I thought, in my own defense. "I didn't do half the cavorting about that this mystery has done in my mind."

So many little, unexplainable things! Why hadn't I been able to see myself, Charlie, and the dogs at the other place on the glacier to the north? I could see those men from the village, and they were seemingly aware of me when I passed the second time? Why couldn't I "separate" from my other body like I could from this one?

The answer to that question, I knew, had something to do with which was real and which was a matrix in the mountain; but I still had no way of knowing which was which. I THOUGHT the one in the igloo was real. But if that were so, then the third so-called body I had at times—the shadowy one, rose from the physical reality instead of the matrix. If that were so it added to the complexity of things, for then there entered an element of supernatural entirely divorced from the mountain.

"No," I shook my head and said aloud. "This igloo and me in it, and Charlie's body buried under it, are just a matrix in stone, and the real me in the flesh is just two days' journey from the mountain now."

Another bit of evidence that pointed to that was the fact that in the body up north I had not seen any

city or airships around the base of the mountain, but when I had gone there in my shadow body I had seen them and they hadn't seen me.

I counted off the items contained in that thought one by one. First, I could see this body and those people around the mountain because they were matrices. I couldn't see Charlie and myself on the glacier because they weren't matrices there in that geographical matrix. Second, as myself in the body nearing the mountain I couldn't see the city and airships because they were in the matrix. There was no corresponding structure in physical reality. Coming up from the south now were some of the villagers, and I could see them in my shadow body because their location in the matrix of the mountain was the same as their physical location.

The only strong point that indicated the "me" in the igloo was the real one was that I didn't see how the matrix Charlie could have died. And I didn't see how, if it were the matrix Charlie that had lost his leg, it could affect the leg of the physical Charlie like it had.

THAT was the point I hung onto in spite of the logic of the three items I had built up to prove the contrary. If the real Charlie lost his leg, that would understandingly affect the matrix of his leg; and it might wither, seemingly, or even find some way to become amputated. But how could the matrix stop circulation and wither a real leg? It just couldn't!

I dropped that and swung my thoughts back to Ned. Why hadn't he stuck around? Why hadn't he welcomed me as he decently should have? I resented that. After all I had been through I should have received a royal welcome instead of a brush-

off and an imperious, "Back! "Back!" followed by a superior, "You certainly raise a rumpus when you cut loose, Craig!"

I grinned at myself. I was put out, and no question about it. If and when I met Ned face to face I would certainly have a few things to say that he wouldn't want to hear.

I looked sourly around at the smoke laden, stuffy air, the amateurish construction of the igloo, the sleeping dogs, and wished I hadn't been such a sucker as to come on this wild trip. How nice it would have been to have stayed at home!

WHEN I woke up to the sound of Charlie's voice in the valley of the geysers and pushed my way out of the snow, to stand breathless at the sight of the Sacred Mountain, a jet colossus wreathed near the top with wisps of fragile white, I knew that I hadn't really meant it when I wished I had never come on this journey.

Like the negro soldier said to the doctor when he was told he was going to lose his sight, "That's all right, doc. I've seen everything." I felt much the same way. Even if I never got back, it was worth coming.

Today we were to leave the snow! Unless we fell through the crust—we had been fortunate so far—we would reach warm soil and the edge of the snow before lunch time.

Charlie and I were both eager to start, and the dogs caught our spirit and as soon as they were hitched to the sled they broke into a trot.

Back in the igloo I ate a desultory breakfast and then laid back on my carpet of furs and closed my eyes. The dogs spent their time dozing, too, so I felt that even they were more interested in devoting their attention to their other bodies farther north.

We had gone farther the day be-

fore than Charlie had figured. In less than two hours we were at the edge of the snow. But now we were in a fix.

Between us and dry land stretched about three hundred feet of water. We didn't dare get too close to it for fear that the snow would be soft and we would fall through. If we did that we would have to unload the sled and lift in onto the solid crust, and then carry everything out and load it again—a task which would take a couple of hours at the least.

"What did you do when you were here the other time?" I asked.

"It was ice," Charlie replied. "Two, three weeks later in year."

"Oh," I said. "How about leaving the sled here in the snow and scouting around for a crossing?"

He squinted to the east and to the west along the shore line, then shook his head. He turned the sled east and we travelled along carefully, Charlie running ahead most of the time to make sure the crust was solid.

We had gone less than a mile when I saw the wisdom of his decision. A rise in the ground provided a dry bridge from the snow to the land. It was covered with thickly growing grass.

Charlie and I both joined the dogs in pulling the sled over the grass. It was slow work, but finally we had it far enough from the snow so that Charlie seemed satisfied.

The dogs were scenting the air eagerly, looking at Charlie with a pleading light in their eyes. As he released them, one by one, they went into an ecstasy of abandon, rolling in the grass, running through it, and coming up to us with tails wagging their gratitude.

We decided to eat lunch before going farther. Charlie gave me the job while he carried frozen caribou meat

and fish back to the snow and buried it so it wouldn't thaw out.

BY THE time we had eaten and cleaned our rifles and filled the two packsacks with what we would need with us, it was noon anyway. Charlie had stored our parkas in the bottom of the sled, covered by everything else.

We started out through the rolling grass country with the dogs scouting all around us and returning often to let us know they were still with us. Soon the field of snow was out of sight. The air was warm and filled with smells of grass and wild flowers which grew on every hand. The trees were still far ahead, away from the cold air that came in over the snow.

Hour after hour we trudged along. Eventually the dogs grew tired and stayed with us, until finally we formed a single file of figures with Charlie in the lead, me in the back of him, King at my heels, and the other dogs strung out behind.

When we reached the first trees we halted for the night—our last night before reaching the base of the mountain! There were Firs, Pines, Maples, and Oaks growing side by side.

I knew very little about such trees, except to be able to recognize them by their general appearance. Yet they seemed to be exactly the same varieties that grow in the States.

There were a half dozen small Firs close around. While I was cooking supper—over a wood fire now—Charlie collected green boughs from these trees for a mattress to sleep on.

While we were eating, a caribou buck followed by three does and two fawns wandered up. The dogs pricked up their ears, but otherwise made no motion to attack. Charlie and I grinned at each other. The lack of fear of these animals had fooled the dogs into thinking they were domes-

ticated—and therefore not legitimate prey.

The buck came right up to us, stubbornly curious. The does, more fearful, hung back. One of the fawns went near King who had been laying with his head between his paws. The spindly fawn walked clumsily right up to King before it noticed him. Then, unafraid, it nuzzled him exploratively. Aside from violent movements of the whites of his eyes he didn't move a hair.

A few moments later when the fawn moved away, one of the other dogs decided to jump it. In a flash King had leaped and intercepted the dog, snarling his leadership. The buck, now alarmed, trotted off through the trees. His retinue followed, hugging his heels. The fawns, clumsy in their walking, seemed far more graceful and skilled at running than their elders.

Shortly after this visit of the caribou family we spread our blankets over the fir boughs and laid down. I lay there, looking up at the blue sky with its faintly twinkling stars and semi-daylight brightness.

The Sacred Mountain was hidden by the trees. But in the sky, as I watched, it seemed I could see faint lines of fire that radiated from where the mountain was. Northern Lights? I couldn't tell.

I closed my eyes and wondered if I would have another difficult night. The smell of the Fir branches was as relaxing as an alcohol rubdown. I tried to keep awake. Finally I gave up, and concentrated my attention on my existence in the igloo where I had been more or less dozing all day.

THE DOGS in the igloo also seemed to come to life. I talked to them as I would have to a human companion.

"We're all here but Charlie," I said.

"Too bad he can't join us. But maybe he's better off than we are. He can enjoy the peace of undivided sleep."

I stood up and, after replenishing the fire, went outside. The overcast was gone and an immense blue dome arched high over the valley. From the north, sharp, fiery lines radiated from a central point just beyond the mountains, streaking across the sky.

King had followed me out, and the other dogs trailed after him. An indefinite weight seemed to be pressing down on my spirits, and the dogs seemed to reflect my mood.

The night before I had been eager to explore—to solve the mysteries that surrounded me. Tonight I wanted none of them. I wanted nothing more than to be left alone.

Mysteries? "Hah!" I said aloud.

For example, I thought, I could puzzle over those northern light and speculate on their origin in the Sacred Mountain. Science had proven they were from ionized molecules of oxygen in the stratosphere—which would tie in with the electrical matrices in the mountain very nicely. But all it would lead to would be a suspicion that somewhere someone had missed the vital clue, and the world of the twentieth century—the world I had been born in—would come out in the final analysis as the one that was nothing more than a matrix of static electrical charges!

I turned and looked toward the south. The mountains there were even more uninviting—cold, barren monuments to the inhumanity of the north. The glacier we had come down on swooped from the mountains like a clumsy stroke of a panther's brush on an unrealistic canvas.

But wait! There were black dots on it—or were there? I squinted my eyes and watched, but my eyes blurred so they couldn't make anything out clearly.

Were there really moving figures on that glacier? The thought of someone coming—human beings—did something to me. I shook like a leaf. I rushed back into the igloo, refusing to torture myself by looking any more. It would be too awful to hope for someone coming if there were no one.

Hot tears were squeezing from my eyes and wetting my nose. I practiced a little cussing out loud to make myself feel better, and wondered why a little thing like black dots on the glacier, moving, would have such a deep effect on me. I hadn't thought particularly about being lonesome in the igloo. After all, I had also been travelling north with Charlie and was now in a wonderful land where everything was green.

"And anyway," I said aloud. "You are the matrix Craig Brown—remember? If those black dots are people from the village they'll probably pass right through your non-existent igloo without knowing you're here."

I settled down and closed my eyes, deciding that being a lonely shadow. Being bouncing against the sides of the mountains like a wind god was less torturing than being a lonely matrix in a stone mountain, tied to the confines of a home made igloo.

I thought of when I had swooshed up the mountain over the heads of those villagers and scared them. It struck me now as being very funny. I laughed loudly, then stopped abruptly. My laugh had sounded too loud, too strained, in the close confines of the room.

Restless, I got up and went outside again and looked to the south. I could see nothing of moving dots, though I waited a long time. Finally I went inside, and after awhile I slept.

IT WAS A strange looking creature. There was almost an owlish ex-

pression to its queer face, but the long antennae that rose from just back of the huge, honeycombed eyes were no part of an owl. Neither were the oily, glistening legs with which it was idly cleaning its thick whiskers as it watched me.

There were other legs behind those two expert ones, resting on the blanket. I opened my other eye, and immediately my nose got into the picture—a shadowy blob that hurt my eyes.

I shook my head and the strange insect darted away to hide in the folds of my blankets. I sat up and looked around. Memory flooded in, and with it, excitement. Today was *The Day*! Today I would stand at the base of the Sacred Mountain, and all the mysteries would be solved.

I would be able to reach out and touch that mysterious substance of the mountain and run my fingers over it. I would feel it—feel its solidity. Whatever else might come, that I would certainly do!

Charlie rolled over and opened his eyes. He lay there a moment, his black eyes blinking at the sky through the trees, then turned his head and smiled at me in greeting.

A moment later we were up. The dogs were gone, but by the time we had finished breakfast they had come back from all directions, one by one, their fur damp with dew.

When we started out, our boots kicking through the grass and weeds, I found it hard to believe that we weren't in some woodland meadow in Wisconsin or Illinois in the spring.

Occasionally we came across a pool of water thick with water plants, swarming with tadpoles. There were no streams but it was easy to see that the source of all the moisture that kept this country so lush was the vast desert of snow that surrounded it on all sides. The soil was loose

and full of humus, and from the way it shook when we walked on it it was probably the same consistency for a long way down.

Toward noon we came to a wide shallow ditch that seemed to go in a straight line toward the mountain. It seemed firmer, and we stayed in it, finding the going much easier. It was about twenty feet wide, with its sides sloping up to the level of the surrounding meadow land which was only two feet higher than the bottom.

Shortly we came to a spot where the grass was thin, and stopped to eat lunch. We had nearly finished when one of the dogs started to dig, following a smell. Something peculiar about his digging attracted me. I got up and went over to look.

The dirt and roots were pulling away some smooth surface. Curious, I took out my knife and dug into it. My knife cut away a small sliver and I held it up to see it better. It was asphalt—or something similar!

I looked up and down the ditch we had been following with dawning comprehension. This was a paved highway, long ago abandoned, and now covered with dirt and overgrown with vegetation.

I showed the sliver of tarry stuff to Charlie.

"Did you know there had been a paved road here?" I asked sharply.

"No!" he said, looking puzzled. His puzzled expression changed to one of worried bewilderment.

"What's the matter?" I demanded.

He hesitated, then shook his head vigorously. "Nothing," he said.

"Oh yes there is," I said dryly. "Out with it!"

"No road here," he said. "Never!"

I TOOK the shorthanded shovel tied to my packsack and started to dig, clearing the dirt off of several square

feet of this paved surface. There was no doubt about it. It was a highway.

Still Charlie denied that it was a road. His objections were vehement, as though he were trying to convince himself, rather than me. I dropped the subject when I saw that it was only making him more upset the more I persisted.

But when we took up our journey along this abandoned road toward the mountain I puzzled about it. In the dream or whatever it was, where I had come here, there had been a similar highway that led to a city. But it had been clean and well tended.

If I assumed that my visit here had been in the matrix instead of just a dream, the highway was in the matrix. Could the matrix highway be the counterpart of this one? Then why was Charlie so concerned about it?

There was no city ahead. Of that I was sure. In the dream I had seen ships arriving and departing in the air, lights that could be seen miles away, and a bustle of movement that could be seen from out on the snow. I had seen none of that as we approached in waking life. But now there was the abandoned highway.

The Sacred Mountain loomed high overhead. We were less than two miles from its base. Ahead, the ditch curved slowly, but through the trees we could see the obsidian wall of the mountainside.

I was eager now. My legs ached. My back ached from the weight of the packsack on it. But I kept on, leading the way now. Charlie had continued to worry. I could tell by the expression on his face and the absentminded way he walked.

Suddenly I heard his voice. I turned.

"No!" he said hoarsely. "No!"

His lips were working, his eyes wild.

"No!" he cried again, his voice an

agonized sob.

He turned and started to run back the way he had come.

"Charlie!" I called sharply. When he payed no attention to me I ran after him. He stumbled and sprawled full length. I caught up with him before he could get up.

"Charlie!" I said sharply, holding him down. "What the devil's got into you?"

"Dead!" he sobbed. "Dead!"

"Oh that!" I said. "Don't let it bother you. You're all right."

He stared at me queerly in a way that made me feel uncomfortable. Then he laughed. It was a short, hysterical laugh.

"Yes!" he said soberly, cutting the laugh off short. "All right." He laughed again, wildly. Standing up he pointed an arm at the mountain. "All right," he said. "That not mountain. Me *in* mountain!"

"You're wrong, Charlie," I said calmly. I had thrashed this all out and knew what I was saying. "The Charlie that died was in the mountain. You're the REAL Charlie."

"I'm afraid you're wrong, Craig," a calm voice spoke behind me. I turned. Ned Brooke stood there, a stranger on either side of him, a calm smile on his face.

I STARED at them blankly, the full meaning of what they had said—AND THEIR VERY PRESENCE—penetrating slowly.

Charlie, beside me, had gasped, and now he had dropped to his knees, prostrating himself. This, together with the memory of the rebuff Ned had given me in my dream, annoyed me.

"For God's sake get up," I said, pulling at the shoulder of his jacket. "These aren't gods. They're just three two bit wise guys that are too big for their britches."

Instead of answering, Charlie trembled under my touch and tried, if possible, to press himself into the ground. I let go of his jacket, feeling frustrated.

Ned and the two strangers were grinning broadly, but when I saw that underneath they were trying not to, I calmed down a bit. I looked Ned over. He seemed much younger and healthier than I remembered him.

His two companions were half a head taller than he, and though their eyes were definitely occidental, they didn't belong to any white race. I would have said they were Indian—South American—except that they seemed too intelligent.

"No, we aren't South American," one of them said, evidently reading my expression. "We're North American, from around the vicinity of the Grand Canyon—but long before there was a Grand Canyon."

I pulled back from the question I had been about to ask, and forced myself to take first things first.

"The 'me' back in the igloo," I said. "What about it? I suppose you are preparing it for Ritual Death?" The question was a sneer—more of a one than I had intended it to be.

"No, Craig," Ned said, sobering. "Right now there is a rescue party from the village within a few miles of you. Unless something happens they'll find you and take you back."

"Thanks," I said dryly. "Awfully kind of you."

"Not me." His lips flashed a smile. "YOU did it when you tried to get to the village. Nanapochek heard you call her and woke everybody up and made them go out after you."

I frowned. "Then the shadow body was real?" I asked.

Ned and the two strangers looked at one another and smiled.

"You have a lot to learn yet," Ned said. "Suppose we find a more com-

fortable place."

He stepped up and touched Charlie on the back of the head. Charlie raised his head and saw that it was Ned. He stood up slowly.

"How are you, Charlie?" Ned asked softly. In that instant I forgave him for everything.

"Mr. Brooke!" Charlie said. There was gladness, gratefulness, in his voice.

For the first time I noticed that there were two cars parked just off the road. They were super-modern streamlined jobs. Very beautiful.

The two strangers talked together in low voices for a minute. Then they went to one of the cars and opened the door. They looked at the dogs. The dogs, as if at some mental order, ran to the car and leaped inside.

ONE OF the strangers climbed in and slammed the door. Immediately the car rose straight up, smoothly, until it cleared the trees. Then it sped forward toward the south.

"Abwalah will drop them off near their physical counterparts so they can *join*," the remaining stranger explained. "Usually there isn't such a 'split' in animals, but the accident to Charlie produced a complete split of everything."

"What's your name?" I asked.

"I'm sorry, Craig," Ned spoke up. "This is Allicassi."

"Allicassi—and Abwalah," I said. "They sound like foreign names to me."

"Yes," Allicassi smiled. "Hongwee, to be exact. The Hongwees were very numerous in North America about twenty thousand years ago—until we discovered the Sacred Mountain. But let's get in the car."

Ned and Charlie seemed to be talking over old times, so I let them alone and cultivated Allicassi as we

rose from the ground.

"Tell me, Allicassi," I said, studying the interior of the car, and watching out the generous windows at the receding ground. "How do you know that we are now nothing but matrices of static electricity in the mountain? It seems to me that any logic to that effect would work equally for the real world."

"Long ago," Allicassi said. "A scientist took a piece of the mountain down to his laboratory, which was just fifty miles from what is now Kingman, Arizona, and could be found even today by excavating at the right place. He spent months of study on it."

"What'd he find out?" I asked.

"It was simple enough to find what it was made of," Allicassi went on. "It was almost pure quartz, chemically, intermixed with fine granules of pure iron. By weight the iron content was about a third of the quartz content. But that was only the beginning. By an outstanding bit of figuring he devised a method of separating the iron particles from the quartz without breaking them up. Then he found out how to weigh them individually in inconceivable numbers, and proved that each granule of iron contained twenty-eight atoms of iron! No more and no less.

"While he was doing this his assistants were carrying on routine work, such as getting thin sections of polished stone and studying their graining. Others were trying with a little success to obtain energy traces in the stuff. A machine similar to the encephalograph was getting all kinds of graphs, not only from pieces of the specimen, but also at the mountain itself.

"It was found from the microscopy that there was a definite pattern of pigmentation of the iron in the quartz that was remarkably like microscope

slides of the brain! Only, instead of there being a cortical layer separate from the rest, it was of uniform distribution. Instead of brain cells there were small local gatherings of iron granules. From these ran countless fine trains of other iron granules forming what appeared to be networks over which impulses could travel.

"All these findings were published as fast as they were made so that other scientists could put their brains to work. And plenty of theories were forthcoming on it. One scientist, experimenting with steel dust found that in the presence of ionized gases the steel dust tended to settle on sheets of paper in somewhat similar patterns to those in the stone. Another, taking off from what was known of electrical charge in crystals, found that by annealing a flat disk of quartz and used a fine but blunt needle backed by considerable pressure, varied by a strong magnet, stress patterns in quartz were set up that would roughly reproduce the sounds that had been used to vary the pressure. Experiments showed that these static electrical patterns in quartz were still unchanged years after, unless there was constant temperature change.

"So you see, Craig, it all added up to only one thing—that there was actually the basis of mind structure in that sample from the mountain. It was a giant brain. Not only that, its units, the small gatherings of iron granules, were thousands of times smaller than brain cells, and the fine networks of granules that corresponded to nerve ganglia were only a few atoms in diameter. There were as many 'cells' in a cubic inch of the stuff as there are in the whole human brain. More, in fact.

"There was only one other big problem remaining. That was to find out

how the mountain had come into existence. We failed in that. We did arrive at a fairly accurate picture of how it must have been done, though. Somewhere, maybe out in space, the mountain was formed by a process of condensation of ionized vapors in a dust cloud of crystalline iron. Or maybe the iron in gaseous form crystallized out like snowflakes crystallize into the atmosphere, and then later the quartz vapor congealed, until the whole mass was finished."

"Then it's a meteor?" I asked.

"Probably," Allicassi answered. "But don't ask me why it didn't explode into a million fragments when it landed. No one knows the answer to that. It's alien to this planet—and it's here. That's all we know."

OUR CONVERSATION was broken off now by our arrival at the base of the mountain. We had not gone in a direct line, but had followed the side of the mountain several miles before turning toward it.

We landed beside one of many buildings. I had been watching what passed below while listening to Allicassi. From appearances there had at one time been quite a large settlement here, but now it was practically abandoned.

I remembered the teeming population I had seen when I had come here in that shadow body, and now asked about it.

"Long ago it was that way," Allicassi said. "Strangely, or maybe not so strangely, the part of the actual mountain in which this area is located as a matrix is the outer part of the mountain, so here at what seems to be the very center of our 'universe' we are actually at its outer barrier—the skin of the Sacred Mountain. The Moon, Mars, the Sun, and so on, are deep in the heart of the mountain.

"About five hundred years ago a

small meteor struck the mountain and destroyed nearly a million of us. Actually it only damaged a few cubic feet of the matrix, but it taught us a lesson. Now very few of us venture this close to the surface."

"You mean that you, as a matrix, actually move about in the master matrix?" I questioned.

Allicassi grinned at me admiringly.

"You're pretty keen," he said. "No, we don't do that. What I mean is that we are all subject to the psychological behavior of the master matrix, and we can be killed without our actual physical matrix being damaged. At least I think that is so. But it may be that such destruction sends strong currents over the neural channels of the master matrix that burn out the entity matrices. Actually, very little is known about the actual physical position of any mental element of the matrix. You, for example, may occupy one cubic inch of it, or be distributed through a cubic mile of it along with millions of other entities and elements of the master matrix."

Allicassi had his hand on the door handle as he answered me, so I reluctantly held back further questions until later. He waited politely a moment, then opened the door.

The door of the building was open now. I glanced toward it curiously as a figure stepped into view.

Immediately I forgot everything else. It was Nanapochek! I hastened toward her, saying her name. She smiled and came to meet me.

"HOW DID you get here?" I asked, taking her hands in mine.

"I've lived in this world since I was a little girl," she answered laughingly.

Her eyes went past me to Charlie.

"Charlie!" she exclaimed, releasing my hands and rushing past me. She put her arms around him and held

his head against hers. I felt a twinge of jealousy, then felt very small as I realized she was comforting him for the loss of his physical self.

Ned joined me and Allicassi while we watched Charlie and Nanapochek. It was then that a streak in the sky settled down beside our car. It was Abwalah, back from taking the dogs to the igloo.

We all went into the building which turned out to be very luxuriously furnished inside. Nanapochek took my arm as we went in, and I thrilled at the possessive way she did it.

"Why didn't you tell me all about this when I was with you at the village?" I chided.

"You wouldn't have believed me," she answered. Looking all around, and back at her, I had to admit that she was correct. I wouldn't have. I might have thought she was a trifle—just a wee trifle—I told her that and she and the others laughed.

My curiosity about the many puzzles that had taunted me during the past few days wouldn't let me rest. I held back until after we had had a dinner that would have done the finest restaurant in Chicago credit.

The cook, I learned, was a Chinese who had been born two hundred years before in Hongkong. There were other servants, who were yet not servants. It was all mixed up.

Over coffee, when I had filled my pipe with an aromatic tobacco that was "out of this world", I brought up the subject of my shadow body.

"Was that all just dreaming?" I asked.

"Not exactly," Ned said, taking over for Allicassi. "If you recall, when Allicassi and Abwalah first visited you you saw them as shadow beings."

"Yes," I admitted.

"Your matrix perception was then very imperfect," Ned went on.

"Shortly after it became more settled. The accident to Charlie did that. It was still far from crystalized, and it wasn't a day or two later that it had developed far enough to be self sustaining. But by then, since it was 'separated' from the locality where you were, a new condition came into existence. A secondary entity matrix began to form about the geographical matrix idea of you in your igloo. That has happened before, and always leads to trouble. It corresponds in the master matrix to what the doctors call schizophrenia. It was you, but at the same time the master matrix was working at rationalizing it. It drew on your impressions of the Northland to alter you, and nearly succeeded into transforming you into a thunderstorm!"

"I remember that," I nodded, understanding.

WE HAD TO take a hand in that and force your secondary matrix back—frustrate it," Ned went on. "You were trapped in the middle of the valley. You couldn't go forward or go back to the village."

"Then it was you that stopped me at the edge of the village when I tried to go there?" I asked.

"No," Ned said. "We hadn't realized what was happening until Nanapochek heard you calling her that night. You were held back by the edge of the 'field' as we call it for lack of understanding of what it really is. It's the limit of the surrounding area that is in more or less one-to-one relationship with the matrix. In this area matrices are formed. Outside this area they aren't. That's why you had to come here in order to 'enter' the matrix, rather than being able to do it in Evanston."

"I had that much figured out right then," I said. "That's why Charlie's people had to move their village that

far away, too."

"That's right," Ned agreed quietly.

"One more thing," I said. "Why, when my shadow body looked for this one, wasn't it able to see it?"

"I didn't know about that," Ned said. "What do you think was the reason, Allicassi?"

"Hard to say," Allicassi said slowly. "Maybe it was a sort of schizo attempt at rationalization. There couldn't be two Craigs, and there was, so when one looked for the other—" He shrugged instead of completing the thought.

One more thing—and this is the last," I said. "When I came up here it was well populated, and now you tell me it hasn't been that way for a long time. How do you account for that?"

"That's the simplest question to answer of all," Ned said, laughing. "Your shadow body was in a memory in the master matrix, rather than in the present mental front. It could be that you were already in that past memory front when you looked for this body you have here, and that was the reason it wasn't there. Maybe you've read of people under hypnosis believing they are young again, and convinced it's some previous year when they were ten, or six, or whatever the hypnotist tells them it is."

I sat back satisfied. I had been wrong in so many of my ideas, but now that they were explained I saw how simple it all was.

ABRUPTLY my attention was jerked back to my real body in the igloo. There were shouts from outside. I had been dozing. The dogs answered the shouts with excited yaps, bounding out through the doorway tunnel.

In the house at the mountain I sat up excitedly, too.

"They've come!" I said.

"Fine!" Ned exclaimed. "I'm glad they found you. We were afraid they might miss you and you might die before winter was over."

"But," I said bewildered. "I thought you wanted me to die. What about this Ritual Death stuff?"

Ned shook his head and glanced at Abwalah.

"You see," Abwalah began, while I listened somewhat uneasily, with pictures of being rejected for this 'world' floating in my mind. "We want you to go back home—and take Nana-pochek with you," he added slyly. "You will be with us and also back in your own world."

"What about the edge of the 'field'?" I asked.

"The connection between your two selves won't be affected by that," he said. "We need contacts in the physical world. We have to know what goes on, and without those contacts we can't be aware of actuality beyond the edge of the 'field'. That's why we need you there. There are others—thousands of them. You and Nana-pochek will eventually meet a few of them. But for the most part you will just go on living as you did before."

He leaned forward anxiously.

"Of course," he added. "You will also be living a life in the matrix, and I can promise you it will be full of interesting things. And someday when you feel you really want to, you can 'withdraw' completely from the world of mortals and be here permanently. Will you do it?"

THE DOT in the sky enlarged until it became a plane. I shot off the Very signal to guide it, and returned to Nanapochek's side. We stood there, arm in arm, waiting for it to land and take us to Fairbanks.

Grandmama, buried in furs on the sleigh, was struggling to keep back the tears.

"You'll be good to Nanapochek," she said threateningly. "She's like a daughter to me."

"I will, grandmama," I said. "And you've got to live to be another year old, because we're coming back to visit you next year."

"You bet your life I will," she answered vehemently.

I looked down into Nanapochek's deep blue eyes. The plane was coming in now. It would be only a few moments until we were in it and it would be taking off.

The hand powered radio was back in its case. It would stay here, ready for use when we came back. For we **WOULD** be back.

But also we were never going to leave. As I looked down into Nanapochek's blue eyes there on the snow, with the plane's propellers whipping up the loose surface snow as it glided toward us on its runners, fourteen days' journey to the north we were looking into each other's eyes also.

The plane pivoted around. Its door opened and the head of the pilot appeared as he dropped a rope ladder.

Nanapochek broke away from me

and ran back to the sleigh, climbing into it and embracing the matriarch of the village that had been home to her all her life.

"Make it quick," the pilot called.

I hesitated, then ran to the sleigh myself. Nanapochek dropped down and I stepped up and kissed the tear stained, incredibly wrinkled face of grandmama.

Then, hand in hand, we ran to the plane. I helped Nana up the ladder and climbed up myself. The pilot pulled me in and drew up the ladder, then shut the door with a bang.

I looked out. Grandmama had turned the sleigh about. Nanapochek and I, our heads together, watched as the reindeer broke into a run. We watched the sleigh disappear around the hill.

A roaring vibration shook the plane, and the hill began to recede. We were moving.

I sat back and closed my eyes. Without looking I knew that Nana had done the same, for, in the house in the shadow of the Sacred Mountain, she had her head on my shoulder, crying.

THE END

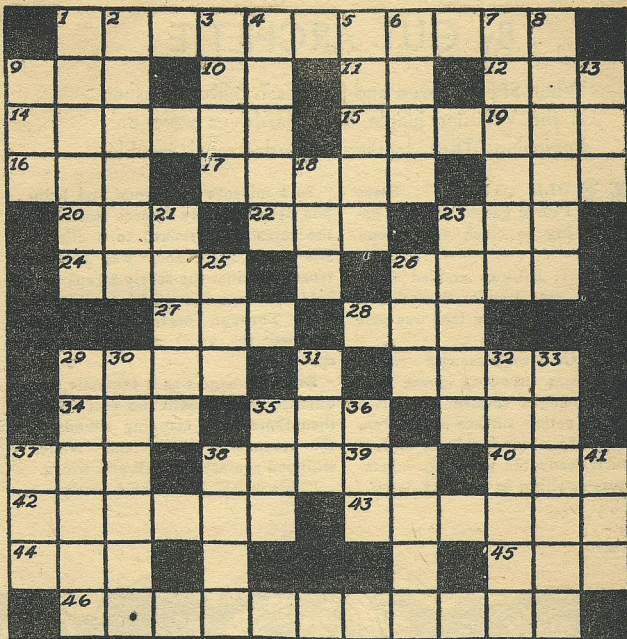
AMAZING STORIES'

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

By ROBERT N. PRESTON

HORIZONTAL

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Attraction; drawing toward | 19. Revolver |
| 9. Exclamation of disgust | 20. Woman devoted to religious life by vows |
| 10. Animal horror (Shaver symbols) | 22. Large leafy tree |
| 11. To exist | 23. Excavated |
| 12. Covering of certain seeds | 24. Animal-sun-(and) you detrimental (Shaver symbols) |
| 14. Elder word for electric | 26. Vital self energy, (double) (Shaver symbols) |
| 15. Wandering | |
| 16. Affirmative reply | |
| 17. An ancient giant race | |



- | | |
|--|---|
| 27. Human being | 40. Shed tears |
| 28. Sun (Shaver symbol word) | 42. Cool |
| 34. Energy see horror (Shaver symbols) | 43. Energy-you generate kinetic integrate animal (Shaver symbols) |
| 35. Period | 45. Editor of Amazing Stories |
| 37. Suitable | 46. Beneficial; good |
| 38. Inhabited terraqueous globe | |

VERTICAL

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Sulphide of lead | 25. Water barrier |
| 2. A monkey | 26. Roman highway |
| 3. Spanish unit of measure | 29. Group of people who "die" and are "renewed" |
| 4. Enraged | 30. Effective motion |
| 5. At right angles (to a ship) | 31. Mistake |
| 6. Aquatic bird | 32. Human chess, played by Dero |
| 7. Not transparent | 33. Giant race (live in space) |
| 8. Minority | 35. Energy animal you (are) (Shaver symbols) |
| 9. Purchase | 36. Consumed |
| 13. Insecticide | 37. Process of doing |
| 18. Life (double) energy (Shaver symbols) | 38. Otherwise |
| 21. The Green Man | 39. Pursue |
| 23. Flying Saucers | 41. Bark |

(Answer on page 89)

By GUY ARCHETTE

When Steve Pearce and Phineas T. Billings crashed in the Venusian jungle, their hardships were only beginning. Their landing exploded real trouble!

"HOLD TIGHT!" Steve Pearce gasped. "We're going to crash any second now!"

Phineas T. Billings nodded weakly in his seat beside Pearce. His round, normally ruddy face was pale and unhappy.

The little two-passenger rocket sportster was arrowing down at a flat, low angle toward the vivid green and yellow surface of the Venusian jungle, scant hundreds of feet below. Already the towering vegetation was swelling in size and detail.

In a mixture of disgust and helpless despair, Steve Pearce waited as the catastrophe rushed to a climax. His long, spare body was pressed tensely against the safety straps that held him into his thickly cushioned seat. Through narrowed eyes he watched the swift descent of the sportster.

Bright foliage was a fantastic, undulating sea beneath the craft. And then there were slapping sounds as the topmost leaves and fronds whipped against the hull and wings.

"This is it!" Pearce said tautly.





The little two-passenger rocket arrowed down toward the Venusian Jungle

Billings gulped and his features became a shade whiter. He closed his eyes and gripped the arms of his seat, his plump form quivering with dread.

The sportster was knifing into the lush vegetation amid a furious crackling, ripping, and pounding. One of the blunt wings locked with the upper boughs of a tree, and the craft whirled around in a dizzy half-circle. Despite their safety straps and the cushioning springs of their seats, Pearce and Billings were shaken violently.

The sportster had tilted crazily in its spin, and now the other wing plowed into the ground, raising a cloud of rich black earth before it crumpled like paper. Then the fuselage hit, rolling over and over until it was stopped by a brush-covered rise of ground.

Several seconds passed before Pearce accepted the realization that he and Billings had come through the crash in one piece. He shook his head to throw off the dizziness and nausea rising in him. From his nose ran a trickle of blood. Every muscle of his body ached with pain.

Movement was torture, but Pearce managed to summon the strength to unbuckle his safety straps. Billings was unconscious. An older man, he had been unable to completely withstand the force of the crash landing. Pearce freed him, then struggled erect.

The sportster was lying on one side, the rear end tilted up and resting upon the rise. Pearce had considerable difficulty in opening the cabin door, both because of the position of the craft and the distorting stresses to which it had been subjected. He crawled to the ground outside, then reached in to pull Billings after him. Finally he leaned against the dented hull in exhaustion.

After a while he recovered sufficiently to take stock of his surroundings. The rocket, he saw, rested against one of a number of rises which ascended toward a line of rounded hills in the near distance. He remembered having seen a broad, deep valley from the air when the craft had so mysteriously gone out of control and started downward. He and Billings apparently had crashed near the valley's upper end.

The scene was one of wild, primeval beauty. Great trees and plants grew everywhere, though they were less profuse here than deeper down in the valley. Their vivid, unearthly hues mingled in a riot of color. Overhead was the eternally cloudy sky of Venus—cloudy, yet containing a pearly brilliance not seen under similar conditions on Earth. The air was hot and humid, laden with exotic odors.

Pearce found no pleasure in what he saw. For all his and Billings' narrow escape from death, they were in a position equivalent to a jump from the frying pan into the fire. Between them and the city of New Chicago lay more than a hundred miles of dangerous jungle country—swamps, poisonous insects, and animals that might have been taken from the dawn age of Earth itself.

Some little hope, however, lay in the possibility that he and Billings might run across a tribe of Venusian natives. For a promise of sufficient reward, the natives would guide them to an Interplanetary Ranger outpost, where a rocket would take them back to civilization.

But, Pearce remembered with an abrupt chill, if the natives happened to be unfriendly, he and Billings would very likely become a pair of painted skeletons decorating some grass-hut temple.

Pearce glanced at the wreckage beside him and frowned in bewilder-

ment. It seemed impossible to explain how the disaster had come about. The demonstration flight he had been giving Billings in the sportster had gone well up to the point where he had started on the return trip to New Chicago. Then the propulsion mechanism had suddenly ceased functioning, and Pearce had been forced to land. He'd had time to study the instruments, though, and they had showed that the atomic drive unit had gone into an emergency condition—that is, had been dampened into uselessness. Only with a complete replacement of the pile ingredients would the unit function again.

PEARCE couldn't understand how it had happened. He knew the mechanism of the sportster as well as he knew his own face, and in addition he had checked over everything carefully before the flight. It seemed incredible that the sportster could have been faulty. He wouldn't have taken the job as salesman with Nova Rockets if he had suspected that the firm put out an inferior product.

Pearce shook his head bitterly. This would have to pop up—after he'd had a contract with Billings in the bag. Phineas T. Billings had come to Venus to open up a freighting business, and Pearce had interested him in the Nova line of freight rockets. Billings had come through with a large order, and Pearce told himself he should have been content with that. Instead he had gotten ambitious and had led Billings to consider buying the sportster, one of Nova Rockets' latest models. He wished now that he hadn't talked the other into the demonstration flight. It had ruined everything.

A large order from Billings would have been the turning point in his career, Pearce knew. But it was cer-

tain now that Billings would develop a terrific phobia toward rockets in general and Nova Rockets in particular. Billings was sure to cancel all the arrangements that had been made. And chances for future orders were as remote as Earth itself.

Glumly Pearce thought about his job. He was washed up, of course. He had been hoping to make a lot of money fast, so as to open up a business of his own. Venus was booming, and opportunities were everywhere—but they took capital. It had taken his entire savings to pay his passage to the planet. As a salesman, backing the right product, he could have earned enough from commissions to open up an outfit of his own within a short time.

Billings moaned and stirred, raising a hand feebly toward his head. Pearce bent down and helped the other to a sitting position.

"Where. . . where are we?" Billings muttered. "What happened?"

Still thinking of the damage to his personal plans, Pearce was edgy. "We're in a particularly unhealthy section of Venus, and the fact that we crashed is painfully obvious," he answered, his tone curt.

Billings glanced about him and stiffened: "Young man, do you realize that you came close to killing me?" he snapped.

Pearce shrugged dismally. "It wasn't my fault. If the blame lies anywhere, it's with Nova Rockets. You can sue the company for false pretenses, putting out a dangerously inferior product, or anything else you can think of. But leave me out of it."

Scowling, Billings glanced about him again. "How are we going to get back to New Chicago?" he demanded.

"Walk, of course."

"What! Why...why, it'll take days—weeks! My business will go to

ruin!"

Feeling decidedly unsympathetic, Pearce straightened. "Don't worry about it," he advised. "We might not get back anyway."

TURNING back to the sportster, Pearce climbed into the cabin. In the storage compartment he found the emergency pack which was included as standard equipment on demonstration flights. This contained concentrated rations for two, a supply of water, a first aid kit, cigarettes, waterproof blankets, a flashlight, signal flares, a machete, and a pneumatic pistol with a belt and holster. Pearce nodded grimly over this last article. It would decidedly come in handy—at least as long as the ammunition held out.

He returned to Billings. "Well, let's get going. If we expect to get anywhere, we might as well start now."

"But where can we go?" the other asked in disgust.

Pearce pointed in the general direction of New Chicago. "That way. It's as good as any."

Billings looked at the bright, bizarre jungle that lay ahead of them. He shivered, "Have you read *Into the Jungles of Venus* by Paul Torrance, the explorer?" he asked Pearce.

"Nope," Pearce said, lighting a cigarette. "Why?"

Billings shivered again. "It was highly...uhm...well, graphic. The animals, and the natives...." His voice trailed off into gloomy suggestion.

"If Torrance got out of the jungles in one piece, maybe we can do it, too," Pearce grunted. He buckled on the pneumatic and shouldered the pack. "Come on."

With Billings trotting fearfully beside him, Pearce started off into the jungle. His every sense was pitched

alertly, and his hand remained close to the butt of the pneumatic at his hip.

The going was difficult from the first. The ground was rough, rising and falling sharply, and covered everywhere with tenacious plant life of every description. Huge trees crowded one almost upon the other, and between them were great ferns and mushroom-like growths. Thick vines hung from every available support, like enormous spider webs, at points almost solidly interlaced.

Pearce and Billings fought their way through the jungle slowly, sometimes hacking a path through the growth with the machete, sometimes completely detouring dense walls of brush. Frequently they crouched in hiding while one or more of the huge and savage reptilian denizens of the jungle waddled ponderously by. Numerous smaller and more timid creatures scuttled from their path at every turn.

After several hours of almost continuous progress they reached a low hill, broad and covered with mossy rocks, which was situated near the point in the valley wall toward which they were moving. Billings seated himself wearily upon one of the rocks, while Pearce strode a short distance away, anxious to determine the distance and difficulties that lay ahead. He knew they had to keep moving. There could be no rest while the dangers of the jungle surrounded them. Only when they had reached the comparative safety of the hills forming the valley wall would they be able to make camp and rest awhile.

A yell brought Pearce whirling around Billings' voice, he realized in the next instant, laden with shock and fright. Gripping the pneumatic, he ran back to where he had left the other.

He found Billings struggling fran-

tically with a winged monstrosity that remotely resembled a prehistoric pterodactyl of Earth. The creature had its talons locked in Billings' jacket and was flailing at the man's face with its leathery wings.

PEARCE ran close, darted in, and triggered the pneumatic at point-blank range. The winged reptile screamed shrilly. It released Billings and flapped away drunkenly, a trail of blood dripping in its wake.

Billings had fallen. Pearce dropped down beside him in concern and pulled him to a sitting position.

"Are you hurt?" he asked.

"No—thank heavens!" Billings gasped breathlessly. "Just... just scared out of a couple of year's growth."

Pearce relaxed, staring up at the pearly sky. "What in the world was that thing anyway? It looked like a lizard with wings."

"Torrance described something like it in his book," Billings said. "He called it an aviansaur." He added wistfully, "I wish Torrance was with us right now."

"Most likely he wouldn't want to be," Pearce grunted.

They rested a short time longer, then resumed their trek, entering the short stretch of jungle which lay between the hill and the valley wall beyond.

As they strode over a rocky and relatively clear expanse of ground, Billings suddenly released a cry of delight and ran toward a group of tall flowers, which looked like Earthly lotus blossoms on tall, thick stalks.

"Say, what are you—" Pearce began startledly.

"Look!" Billings said in excitement. "Glycerine-plants! Lord, aren't they beauties?" He fluttered over them like an ecstatic bee.

Pearce snorted in disgust. "Here we

are, up to our necks in trouble, and you go daffy over a bunch of flowers!"

"I'm an amateur botanist," the other explained defensively. "Growing plants is my hobby. I've never seen glycerine-plants as large as these. Mine look sick by comparison. Must be the city air. On Earth, you know, glycerine is produced chemically, but these plants secrete it as a natural product." He pointed to a series of bright yellow ovoids which ringed the underside the flower. "The glycerine helps the seeds get a start in life, and—"

"Wait!" Pearce said sharply. "Listen!"

Billings listened. An expression of incredulous joy spread over his face.

"Shots!" he cried. "That means men. We're saved!"

"Come on!" Pearce said. Weariness now forgotten, he hurried toward the sounds ahead, Billings bringing up the rear.

THEY HAD been close to the valley wall, and shortly they reached the rocky slopes at its base. The ground here was free of larger jungle growths. Situated upon one of the slopes a short distance to the right was a group of prefabricated buildings, and from the presence of various types of machinery and equipment visible higher up on the hillside, Pearce decided that the place was a mining site.

No people were in evidence, but from the windows of the buildings protruded the muzzles of weapons. The sharp roars of explosive-pellet rifles mingled with the dull, coughing sounds of pneumatics.

And then a shrill scream rose on the humid air. Less than two-hundred feet away a gray, scaly and vaguely man-like form leaped from the concealment of a mass of tumbled rock.

It clutched at its muscular chest, then fell back out of sight.

Scanning the spot intently, Pearce could now make out other gray forms among the rocks, and abruptly he knew what was taking place. Venusian natives were attacking the occupants of the cabins.

He whirled to Billings. "Get down on the ground. Keep out of sight—and stay here!" Creeping through the undergrowth at the foot of the slope, Pearce reached the rocks behind which the natives were entrenched. He hesitated, then climbed to a higher point from which he could overlook the scene. He was discovered a moment later, but his preparations had been made. He opened up with his pneumatic, shooting slowly and carefully.

Subjected to a crossfire by Pearce and the defenders of the mine, the natives were being swiftly put out of action. The yells of the wounded and dying seemed to spread panic among those who remained. They left their positions in wild flight, scattering into the jungle.

Silence fell. Pearce waited a moment longer, then climbed down from his vantage point and called to Billings. The other joined him quickly, his round face apprehensive.

"Are... are they gone?"

"Looks like it." Pearce scanned the jungle, then gestured. "Now to see the people up there."

"I hope they have something decent to eat," Billings muttered. "I can't stand that concentrated stuff you have."

In a clearing among the buildings they found a group of men awaiting them. One came forward with outstretched hand, smiling. Pearce's grin faded, and he stared in astonishment. The other was a girl. A tall, chestnut-haired girl, with a smudge of oil across the bridge of her pert nose.

"Thanks for your help," she said. "Your flank attack put those ornery Aztols on the run." Her hazel eyes became aware of the stares of Pearce and Billings, and glinted in amusement.

"Uh... oh, yeah," Pearce said, trying to muster some semblance of formality. He introduced himself and his companion and briefly explained about the crash in the sportster.

"It's a miracle you got through safely," the girl said. "I'm Sandra Denham, and these are my men." She indicated three hard-bitten oldsters and a small, fur-covered Martian. "We're mining estrite crystals here, you see, and the Aztols made a sudden surprise attack. We never had any trouble with them before, and I don't know why—"

She broke off, smiling quickly. "But that can come later. Right now I'm sure you're tired and hungry."

"That's a mild understatement, young lady," Billings put in. "My stomach is a vacuum."

Sandra Denham's white teeth gleamed. "I'll try to fill it." She turned to the Martian. "Ong, rattle your pots."

"You betcha!" Ong squeaked. He hurried away.

SO AFTER father's disappearance, I quit college to take over the mine. I could have sold it, of course, but Randy, here"—she nodded at a short, wiry old man who was seated in the doorway with a rifle across his knees, chewing meditatively at a cud of tobacco—"advised me not to. He told me that I could mine many times the price I could get. And during the three months, Earth time, I've been here, we certainly have. But I'm afraid there are indications that the estrite vein is giving out." Sandra Denham's voice trailed off. She stared down at her hands.

It was later that day. Pearce and Billings had just eaten. They were seated at the table in the mess cabin. Sandra's men were on guard about the mine.

Pearce found a strange, absorbing interest in the story the girl had just told him. He asked slowly:

"Haven't you ever learned what became of your father?"

She shook her head mutely. Traces of tears glittered on her long lashes.

"He just seems to have disappeared," she said after a moment. "According to what the men told me, he went into the hills to do some prospecting and never came back. Perhaps animals or the Venusians accounted for him. But it's strange, just the same. The Venusians haven't been dangerous until a short time ago, and animals that would attack a man don't wander that far up among the hills."

Randy drawled from the doorway. "Maybe this don't have nothin' to do with John Denham's disappearing, but I remember just before he went rushin' off into the hills he was almighty excited about somethin'. He must've made some kind of a find. Wouldn't tell none of us what it was, but then he never jawed about anythin' unless he was sure of what he was sayin'."

Pearce shook his head reflectively, his eyes narrowed. There was something strange about conditions here at the mining camp... something hidden and vaguely sinister. He said:

"I understand that the tribe of Venusians you call Aztols haven't made any trouble until just a short time ago. Why is that?"

Randy moved his shoulders in a shrug. "I'd give a lot to know myself. Before they was always peaceable enough. We even did some tradin', giving them trinkets for fruits and things. And then they started actin'

up, howlin' around the mine like a bunch of maniacs. Can't figure it out."

"Fortunately, they've never done much harm," Sandra said. "All they have are spears and crude bows and arrows. Pete Horton—our nearest neighbor—helped us drive them off the last time. He's really been a tremendous help to me, and he was kind enough to offer to buy the mine when I first came. He... well, he says that this is no place for a woman, and is still trying to buy the mine. This region is fairly well populated with miners, you know."

Abruptly she stood up. "Enough of my troubles. You and Mr. Billings must be tired after what you've gone through today. I'll have beds made up for you in the bunk cabin. When you've rested, one of my men will show you the way to Pete Horton's camp. He has a rocket plane, and no doubt you can borrow that to get back to New Chicago."

Feeling reluctant to leave the girl despite his weariness, Pearce got to his feet. "You've been mighty kind, Miss Denham."

She smiled. "To use a time-worn phrase, don't mention it."

PEARCE and Billings followed Randy to the bunk cabin. Before turning in, Pearce asked the old man:

"Randy, do you know if Pete Horton tried to buy the mine from Sandra's father before he disappeared?"

Randy emitted a stream of tobacco juice through the open door before replying. "Well, I think John Denham mentioned it once or twice. Horton's got a pretty big mining outfit, you see, and I suppose he'd like to spread out."

"I see," Pearce said. He lay thinking for quite some time before he finally fell asleep.

When Pearce awoke he found that

a considerable amount of time had passed. The Venusian night had come and gone, and the new day was already well started. But his rest had done him good. He felt refreshed and even cheerful, considering the ruin of his plans in the wreck of the sportster.

Shaking Billings awake, Pearce dressed and went outside. Sandra Denham and her men were working over the mining machinery further up the hill. There was the deep hum of motors and the sound of falling gravel. Rifles were conspicuously in evidence.

When she became aware of Pearce's appearance, Sandra came forward, peeling gloves from her hands. She looked slim and boyish in the coveralls she was wearing. This time there were smudges of oil on her face—one across her nose, the other on her cheek. She looked fresh and vital.

"So you're awake," she said. "Have you slept well?"

"Never better," Pearce said. "Guess I made a hog out of myself."

"You can't be blamed." The girl looked around as Billings came up. He was stretching his arms and sniffing eagerly.

"Ah, I smell coffee," he announced.

"Right," Sandra said. "Ong has food waiting for you. Go and get it."

After they had eaten, Pearce and Billings rejoined Sandra at the mine. This was a long tunnel cut into the face of the hill. At the inner end, the loosened ore containing the estrite crystals was shoveled by the men onto a revolving belt conveyor, which emptied into cars outside, drawn by a small but powerful tractor.

"We sift the ore, then dissolve it in acid vats," Sandra explained. "We use nitric acid. Since the crystals are lighter than the residue in the vats, they float to the surface and are drawn off, washed and individually

packed." She held up a small glass tube for Pearce's inspection.

He nodded. "I've heard a lot about estrite crystals, though I've never seen one. I understand they're used in delicate scientific and navigation instruments, and are almost as valuable as diamonds once were."

"I'll show you one." Sandra disappeared behind a group of machines for a few seconds, then returned, handing Pearce a glittering, small object.

HE EXAMINED it in interest.

The estrite crystal was rhombic in shape, a clear, hard transparency, shot with vivid green flames. He was holding it up against the sky, when a call sounded behind him. He whirled, thinking that the mine was being attacked again. But it was only three men—strangers to Pearce—entering the camp.

"It's Pete Horton and a couple of his men," Sandra explained. Her voice was low, and her expression seemed queerly guarded.

Horton was tall and heavily built, handsome in a dark, saturnine way. He spoke a greeting to Sandra, then glanced inquiringly at Pearce and Billings. She introduced them, mentioning how they happened to be at the mine.

"Too bad," Horton said. "It's a lucky thing you came through with whole skins, though. As for my run-about, I'll be glad to let you borrow it."

"That's mighty kind of you," Pearce returned. He wondered if the words sounded as flat as were his feelings. Horton seemed friendly enough, but there was something aloof and cold about the man, a quality of hard, calculating purpose.

"We'll work out the arrangements later," Horton added. He turned back to Sandra. "I was worried about you

and your men, and thought I'd drop in to see if you were all right. Have the Aztols been around lately?"

The girl nodded. "The other day. Mr. Pearce helped drive them off."

Horton shook his head somberly. "They were at my place a short time ago, too. I wish I knew what has gotten into them."

Horton spoke a while longer, his talk touching upon mining and various bits of news from the outside world. To Pearce it seemed that the other's mind was not on his words. He wondered what had been Horton's real purpose in coming to Sandra Denham's mine. He learned a short time later.

Horton straightened. "Well, I'll have to be returning to my camp. But before I go, I'd like to have a little talk with you, Sandra. You mind if we step into your office?"

The girl hesitated, then moved her head in a nod. Pearce watched as she and Horton disappeared from view into one of the cabins. He felt a twinge of something that he realized was jealousy, and he felt a sharp amazement. He told himself that Sandra Denham couldn't possibly mean anything to him. She was pretty, yes, but not any more so than dozens of other girls he had known. Yet there was something about her, a quality of courage and warmth, a simplicity and directness, that appealed to him in a way he had never before experienced.

Frowning with his inner confusion, Pearce lighted a cigarette. He glanced at the two men who had accompanied Horton. They were lean, hard-featured individuals, twin pneumatics holstered at their hips. They returned his gaze woodenly, and he became certain they were not miners by profession. Gunmen—professional killers—seemed a more likely trade. Miners led a rough frontier life, and

weapons were often needed. But in Horton's case there seemed more offense than defense. The bodyguards indicated a facet of Horton's nature that Pearce didn't like.

Presently Sandra and Horton reappeared. Pearce looked sharply at the man. Horton's dark face was strangely flushed and his lips were set in a thin line. He was angry about something, Pearce decided—furiously angry.

Horton nodded curtly at Pearce and Billings. "Come along," he growled. Without a backward glance, he started off.

Pearce did not follow at once. He turned to Sandra and took her hand.

"I want to thank you for everything you've done for us. I wish I could have stayed a little longer, but—" Pearce gestured helplessly and forced a grin. "Well, good-bye."

"Good-bye," Sandra returned in a low voice. Her hazel eyes were troubled. She seemed about to speak, then looked away.

On a sudden impulse, Pearce squeezed her hand. He whispered, "I'll be back. I'm going to get to the bottom of this!"

Then he turned, gesturing to Billings, and hurried after Horton. At the edge of camp, he turned to wave at Sandra. She waved back quickly, as though she had been waiting for him to make some gesture, and there seemed to be a happiness in her face that he hadn't noticed before.

ALL DURING the trip to his camp, Horton said nothing. His eyes were fixed broodingly on the rocky path that wound through a pass among the hills and over to the slopes on the other side.

Pearce was wrapped in his own thoughts. What was the apparently important discovery Sandra's father had made? Was this discovery relat-

ed to his mysterious disappearance? What had become of him? And the Aztols—what was the answer behind their sudden hostile behavior? How did Horton enter into all of this?

Pearce could find no satisfactory answers to these questions. He fell to studying Horton. The other's face was set in sullen lines. He strode along with angry vigor, occasionally lashing out with a foot at small rocks in his path. Pearce wondered what had happened between him and Sandra.

At last the hum of motors and the clank of machinery announced their approach to Horton's mining camp. As they entered it, several men came forward, staring at Pearce and Billings. Pearce noted that the hands of the men slid down to their holstered weapons.

"It's all right," Horton growled quickly. "These two were wrecked back in the jungle. They want to borrow my runabout. Merk, you and Olsen get it ready."

The two designated, hard-eyed, unshaven men, with the curious yellow tint to their skins which came of drinking too much Venusian *kelek* wine, nodded and hurried away.

Horton turned to Pearce. "I suppose you want to leave at once?"

Pearce nodded. "Billings, here, has a business to attend to. As for me, I have a job—or did have one."

Inwardly Pearce was tense. There was something shifty and unfriendly about Horton and his men. Somehow he sensed that a wrong word or look would bring instant trouble.

Billings stepped forward. "I haven't mentioned this before, but the sooner I leave here, the better I'll like it. There's something strange going on."

Horton's dark eyes narrowed. "What do you mean by that?"

Pearce felt a chill strike through him. He drew closer to Billings and

tried to warn the man by nudging him with a foot. But Billings seemed not to notice. He was determined to speak his mind.

"Well, there's the natives attacking Miss Denham's mine," he said crisply. "And there's the disappearance of her father. I think this is a matter for the Interplanetary Rangers."

"You do, eh?" Horton murmured. He put his hands on his hips and regarded Billings thoughtfully. Then he leaned forward, his dark eyes hard and bright. His voice became sharp and cold.

"So you're going to have the Interplanetary Rangers sent here to look around? You think there's something funny going on?"

"Why, of course," Billings said. He opened his mouth to continue, then for the first time he became aware of the effect of his words. He moistened his lips and seemed to shrink into himself.

"I thought you two might turn out to be a couple of meddlers—and I was right," Horton said grimly. "You've seen and heard too much. And that means you can forget about borrowing my runabout. You two aren't going anywhere!"

HORTON MADE an abrupt movement. His pneumatic gleamed in his hand. His lips were pulled back from his teeth.

Behind Pearce and Billings the two men who had accompanied Horton to Sandra's mine came closing in, their own weapons gripped in their fists.

Pearce glanced about the camp in desperation. Less than a hundred feet away, the two men called Merk and Olsen were wheeling a stubby rocket runabout from its shed. He and Billings had to reach that plane! Horton intended to silence them—and he would do it in only one way.

Dead men told no tales!

"The runabout!" Pearce hissed at Billings. "Run!" Even as he said this, he was leaping at Horton. He hit the other below the waist, just as Horton fired his pneumatic. The shot went wild, and then Pearce and the miner went crashing to the ground.

Pearce rolled clear, fumbling at the pneumatic at his hip. He came up on one knee and triggered the weapon at one of Horton's two gunmen. The tough spun around and clutched at his shoulder. His companion triggered a hasty shot at Pearce, then whirled and ran for cover.

Darting erect, Pearce ran toward the runabout. He saw that Billings had already started toward the craft. The fight had been noticed, and Horton's men were running forward from all directions. Horton himself had struggled erect and was shouting angry commands.

In the next moment a rock turned under Pearce's foot. The scene whirled crazily as he plunged to the ground. He hit hard, lay dazedly an instant, then frantically began to climb back to his feet.

But the fall proved disastrous. Horton's men reached Pearce before he had time to regain his feet, and their clubbed weapons thudded into his head.

Blinding light, an instant of pain, and then he was hurtling into an infinite blackness.

THE SENSATION of being shaken brought Pearce back to consciousness. He opened his eyes, then winced and closed them again as pain began to throb in his battered head. He pressed his lips together tightly, steeling himself, then sat up. He glanced around him.

Billings, kneeling nearby, was wringing his hands in misery.

"Thank heavens you're alive!" he wailed. "I was beginning to think you were done for. Pearce, you've got to do something. Horton is out there talking to a bunch of natives. I...I think he's bargaining with them to kill us!"

Pearce struggled to his feet and walked unsteadily to the single window of the littered storage hut in which he and Billings had been imprisoned. He peered through the grimy pane.

In the middle of the mining camp was a chilling sight. Backed by his men, Horton was talking to the leader of a group of huge, fantastically decorated Venusian natives. Occasionally the other's voice penetrated into the hut. He was gesturing expressively and speaking in a combination of pidgin English and the simple, hissing Venusian tongue.

Billings' words seemed too horribly true.

But after watching and listening intently, Pearce revised his earlier opinion of the conference. Several times he caught the words "whiskey" and "pay". His forehead puckered.

The Venusians wanted whiskey, it seemed. And they wanted it as payment for something they had done for Horton. At first it appeared to Pearce that Horton was stalling them off, but later he realized that the man was refusing to consent to something the Venusians wanted.

And then Pearce learned what it was. The Venusians wanted a larger amount of whiskey than they had formerly received from Horton. This was in payment for some sort of service they had rendered him.

"Lord, I see it now!" Pearce breathed. "The whole thing is obvious enough. But why does Horton want to—" He broke off, whirling to Billings. "We've got to get out of here!"

Desperately he searched along the walls of the hut for some means of egress. But even as he did so he knew it was hopeless. Like all the dwellings on Venus, the hut was a prefabricated structure, built of sections of tremendously tough fibreboard. Only the door was vulnerable, and to try to break it open would warn Horton of their attempted escape.

Pearce's eyes fell upon the rubbish littered floor. He dropped to hands and knees and began searching through it for something he could use as a weapon or as a tool. Suddenly his hand encountered something incredible—an empty pneumatic holster from which a belt dangled. As he shifted it in his hands, a small object dropped from the interior of the holster. Pearce stared down at it for a moment, then picked it up.

"Why, that's a notebook!" Billings said.

Pearce nodded slowly. On the front cover, in faded gold letters, was the name *John Denham*.

Pearce had an eerie sensation. He felt as though he stood on the brink of something strange and tragic. The holster and belt, as well as the notebook, had clearly belonged to John Denham, Sandra's father. They were here—in Horton's mining camp. And John Denham had mysteriously disappeared.

With Billings peering curiously over his shoulder, Pearce began leafing through the notebook. Part of it had been used as a memorandum, part as a record. The most important pages were those John Denham had used as a sort of diary.

There was an awed quality about those minutes during which Pearce read the notebook that he was never to forget. It was as though he had been given a glimpse beyond the veil separating the living from the

dead. He was aware of Billings' breath rustling past his ear, the rising and lowering of Horton's voice outside, the hissing sounds made by the natives. He was aware of them, yet they came as if from a remote distance. For him at the moment there was only the scrawled writing in the notebook.

THE DATE at which he began reading was that of some eight months before, Earth time.

"May 22: So excited I can hardly restrain myself from blurting out the news to the boys. But later I might be proved wrong and would look like a fool. So the only one I'm going to tell of my find is this notebook.

"Suffering sunspots, but I'm excited. If I'm right, I'm going to make mining history here on Venus. And a hell of a lot of money, too. Discovered an ore that gives every indication of bearing platinum!"

Eagerly Pearce turned a page.

"May 23: Yes, it's platinum, all right! Followed the analysis and assay tests for platinum—did them a half-dozen times over—and have no doubts left in me now. The assay tests show the percentage of the element to be surprisingly high. Struck a lode—or what? Guess I'd better do some investigating on the sly to see how much land the ore covers. The boys are getting curious. Will just tell them I'm taking soil samples.

"Will have to be careful for another reason, too. Pete Horton, who owns several mines on the other side of the hills from here, offered to buy me out a couple of times. Once caught him and three of his gunhands snooping around near the borders of my claim. Wonder if he has found out about the platinum, too?"

Then—

"May 25: It looks like I'm going

to cash in my chips soon. Poor little Sandra! Wish I could have seen her once more. Damn Horton—the smooth devil! He knew about the platinum, all right. And he found out I knew, too, when he caught me taking samples. His gunhands took me by surprise and jumped me. I'm at Horton's headquarters, now—locked up.

"I know what's going to happen. I heard Horton tell the rat he calls Merk about his plans. They're going to tie me up, fly me in Horton's rocket to a big swamp nearby, and then throw me out. The mud will finish me. But I might fool Horton yet. It's dark now, and he might not notice my holster and belt are missing. Will leave this notebook in it, so it will be easier to find. If the Rangers ever come around, maybe...."

That was all. The diary abruptly ended—and the reason was ominously evident to Pearce.

"It's clear now," he said slowly. "Horton had John Denham murdered."

"And he's going to do the same to us," Billings added in despair. "He...he'll have his men drop us in one of the swamps around here."

Pearce nodded heavily, his face grim. He looked down at the notebook again, and his mind began connecting the threads which circumstances had placed in his hands.

John Denham had discovered platinum on his claim. And Pete Horton obviously had made the same discovery. When his offers to buy John Denham out had been met with refusal, his evil nature had suggested murder as the only remaining course of action.

It appeared that Horton hadn't known of Sandra. Her appearance had evidently been a blow to his plans. At first he had tried to talk

her into selling the mine, pretending to be concerned over her welfare. When she refused, he had bribed the Aztols with whiskey to attack her mine, hoping to frighten her into selling. But even this had failed, as had been indicated by his anger after his talk with the girl in her office.

Now, Pearce knew with chill certainty, Horton was bargaining with the natives for the complete extermination of Sandra and her men. Whiskey affected the Venusians like a maddening drug. Under its influence they became vicious and uncontrollable.

THE CONFERENCE taking place outside seemed to indicate something else as well. The Aztols were demanding a larger amount of whiskey than they had received from Horton in the past. And Horton was refusing to consent, as though fearing that the natives might get out of hand.

Abruptly the wrangling voices outside rose higher. A pneumatic coughed, its sound followed by a shrill scream. Then other weapons opened up. Men began shouting. And over the din rose the blood-chilling war-cry of the natives.

Pearce leaped to the window, to find himself gazing at a furious battle. But hardly a battle, it became clear within moments. More precisely it was a massacre—a slaughtering of Horton and his men.

The fact that this had been planned and premeditated shortly dawned upon Pearce. Before there had been less than a dozen of the natives. Now there were scores. Apparently the rest had been hidden among the surrounding rocks and undergrowth until a signal from their chief had called them forth to carnage.

A coldness tightening around his heart, Pearce watched the struggle.

Wielding knives and spears and shrieking wildly, the Aztols swarmed in a wave of scaly flesh over Horton's men. The miners had a variety of modern weapons, and they triggered these in desperate haste. But there were too many of the natives, and they moved too rapidly. Despite the wide swathes cut in their ranks, they kept boiling forward. Everywhere the miners were going down.

The outcome of the fight was swiftly apparent. Those remaining of Horton's men fled in panic toward the jungle. Groups of the Aztols went after them, screaming victoriously.

There would be no escape, Pearce realized with a shudder. The natives would be thorough in hunting down their prey. And when they returned to their village and celebrated their triumph, their temple would be decorated by a large number of freshly painted human skeletons.

Pearce whirled to Billings as a sudden thought struck him. "We've got to get out of here! If the Aztols find us, they'll finish us off, too."

The other swallowed, his round face pale. "They might even save us for torture. I read about that in Torrance's book, but I never thought that I—" He made a sudden gesture. "Blast it, I wish I'd never read his blood-thirsty book!"

PEARCE turned back to the window, glancing about anxiously. His eyes settled upon the rocket runabout which the two toughs named Merk and Olsen had wheeled out of its shed. If he and Billings were somehow overlooked, Pearce thought, they could reach the rocket and fly to an Interplanetary Ranger outpost. They could warn the Rangers of what had happened and thus prevent the Aztols from further destruction where other miners in the vicinity

were concerned—especially Sandra and her men.

The natives at the moment were running gleefully about the camp, looting and destroying. A group had found the whiskey cases, and were dragging them triumphantly toward their chief. There was something revolting about the way in which they tore the cases open and snatched at the bottles within, gulping at them in a kind of starved eagerness.

The Aztols had been wild enough before, but they became even worse as soon as the whiskey took effect upon them. They literally went insane. Screaming and gesticulating, they resumed their task of wholesale destruction. The scene was nightmarish in its abandoned savagery.

Part of the Aztols began running from building to building, setting them afire with torches. Others fell upon the mining machinery and began wrecking it, using large rocks or picks and sledgehammers which they found in various places about the camp. Several of the group turned as if by some common agreement toward the rocket runabout.

Pearce slumped in despair against the window through which he was watching. One important avenue of hope had been cut off.

Brandishing wooden clubs, rocks and mining tools, the natives swarmed over the craft, cutting, hacking and pounding. They fought one another for the chance to strike a blow. The metal hull was dented, punctured, ripped. The plastic cabin was shattered. The wings were pierced with jagged holes and partially torn off.

At last, wearied of their sport, the Aztols climbed off. But the rocket runabout had been ruined. It would never fly again.

In the next moment Pearce felt

Billing's hand tighten convulsively on his arm. The other pointed. Pearce looked in the indicated direction to see a group of Aztols hurrying toward the hut. This was the torch-bearing party that had been setting the mine buildings afire, Pearce realized. Most of the structures were already in flames. The hut in which Pearce and Billings were imprisoned was one of the few which had not yet been attacked. But now the aroused natives were approaching.

Pearce whirled from the window, his eyes darting about the interior of the hut. He glimpsed a number of wooden crates at one end. They were empty, piled haphazardly one atop the other.

PEARCE turned a couple of the crates around to face the wall. He shoved Billings into the first and squeezed his own form into the second. He settled himself to wait the outcome of the strategy, his heart pounding. His and Billings' moment had come. If they were discovered, their fate was certain to be a highly unpleasant one.

The Aztols were attacking the door of the hut with clubs and mining tools. Reluctantly the barrier gave. There was the sound of wood being torn away from the lock and hinges. Then there was the sound of scaly bare feet moving over the floor. A rustling and swishing as the litter of rubbish was pawed through. A rattling and crashing as several of the empty crates were examined and thrown contemptuously against the walls. One of the missiles struck Pearce's hiding place at the further end of the hut. He flinched, beads of perspiration covering his forehead.

But the apparently innocuous nature of the hut seemed to discourage the natives from a more intensive search. They set fire to the rub-

bish on the floor with their torches, and amid rising flames and acrid smoke, went outside.

Pearce remained where he was until certain that the Aztols had gone. Finally, made anxious by the sound of spreading flames, he left his crate, and with a pale and shivering Billings following closely behind him, he worked his way around the fire in the middle of the hut and crept to one side of the now open doorway. Carefully he peered outside.

The Aztols were gathered together in the middle of the mining camp, arranging to depart. Presently they began filing out of sight, carrying the whiskey and other loot, together with the bodies of the slain miners, whose skeletons would become prized possessions.

Driven by the rising fire within the hut, Pearce and Billings hurried out into the deserted camp. It was lighted luridly by the burning buildings all around.

Billings wrung his hands in misery. "What...what are we going to do now?"

"We've got to get back to Sandra Denham's camp," Pearce said. "She and her men have to be warned. The natives aren't through by any means. They have the whiskey. It'll set them off again, and they'll go after more miners. Sandra's camp is the nearest, so I'd say she was in the greatest danger."

Pearce glanced around to locate the route by which he and Billings had earlier entered Horton's camp. Then he gestured. "Come on, let's get started. There isn't any time to lose."

The two men started away at a run toward Sandra Denham's mine. To Pearce the trip seemed to take years. Billings' strength quickly gave out, and he was forced practi-

cally to half push and half pull the older man along. Exhaustion dragged at his own body, but he knew there could be no rest, no delay. Every second was precious.

How he reached the Denham mine he never clearly understood. He seemed to stumble through a fog, alternately dragging and supporting his companion. Somehow he kept moving, though each step seemed agony.

And then there were soothing hands at his temples, a cool and delicious wetness tricking down his throat. When outlines cleared and steadied before his eyes, he found himself gazing into Sandra Denham's pale face. Her eyes became the center of his immediate world. He thought he had never seen eyes so deep and clear.

"Are you all right?" she asked in concern.

"I...I guess so," he muttered. "Except for one thing. It just came to me."

"What do you mean?"

"The fact that I'm in love with you."

She stared at him a moment, then laughed softly. "You *must* have been hurt!"

PEARCE'S eyelids seemed weighted. A darkness hovered at the edges of his mind, eager to close in and overwhelm him. He fought it back. Vivid in his memory was the massacre at Horton's camp. He couldn't forget that the same fate menaced Sandra and her miners. Gritting his teeth, he struggled to sit up on the ground where he had been lying.

"You mustn't," Sandra murmured. "You need rest."

Pearce shook his head doggedly. "Can't rest. The natives, Sandra. They'll be coming any time now."

"I know. Mr. Billings told us. There's nothing we can do. You see, we haven't enough ammunition to fight them off." The girl spoke in a tone of gentle resignation.

"Not enough ammunition!" Pearce stared at her in dismay. Strength came from somewhere within him, a horror-impelled strength. He pushed himself erect.

Sandra had been kneeling beside him. She stood up.

Features gray and drawn, Billings was leaning against a cast marked "Nitric Acid". Nearby were the three oldsters, bleak and unmoving.

Pearce rubbed at the stubble on his jaws, his mind questing frantically for some solution to this latest impasse. The Aztols would appear soon, he knew. They would come in full force. Inflamed by the whiskey, they would be little better than ravening beasts.

And there wouldn't be enough ammunition to check them. It was doubtful if they could be checked even if there had been enough ammunition. Nothing short of bombs would effect them in their aroused mood.

Abruptly the old miner called Randy spoke.

"Listen, young fellow, you and your friend take Sandra, here, and head for the jungle. There's other mining camps further along the hills. You could reach one easy enough. Me and the boys don't count. We got one foot in the grave anyhow. We'll hold the Aztols off while you get away."

Pearce gripped Randy's shoulder, shaking his head. "We'd never make it. The natives will start out for the other camps, too, and they'd overtake us on the way. They can travel faster."

Billings said eagerly, "Pearce—look! Nitric acid! Couldn't we throw

it at the natives or something like that?"

"You could throw glycerine-plants at them for all the good it would do," Pearce grunted. Then he stiffened. "Nitric acid... glycerine—" He smacked a fist into his palm, eyes glittering.

"Why, what is the matter?" Sandra asked in bewilderment.

Pearce whirled to her. "Get out all the guns and ammunition you have. Prepare for the attack. Hold the natives off as long as you can. But right now I want the tubes in which you pack the estrite crystals. I'll need several other things, too."

He swiftly outlined his requirements, and the girl nodded and hurried away. Then he turned to Billings.

"You're going to help me with something else. Come on!"

FOLLOWED by the other, Pearce trotted toward the jungle fringe at the foot of the slope. A short time later he and Billings were back at the camp, their arms laden with broad leaves in which they placed a load of bright yellow ovoids plucked from glycerine-plants.

Pearce and Billings carried their burdens into one of the cabins, where Sandra had already placed a variety of equipment. Then, while the girl and her men left to await the coming of the Aztols, Pearce set to work. Billings served as assistant, following Pearce's quick, low-voiced orders.

Pearce labored swiftly yet carefully, his entire mind concentrated on the task at hand. He lost all sense of passing time.

And then a series of shrill yells knifed into the tense silence. In the adjoining cabin Sandra and her men opened up with their rifles.

Bedlam broke loose. In a far corner of his mind, Pearce realized that the Aztols were attacking.

Urgency rose within him, a need for haste, but he forced himself to ignore the battle outside. What he was doing required the utmost caution. A slip would be fatal.

"If your hands shake now, you'll blow us all to hell," he warned Billings a moment later.

With great care, he began filling the estrite container tubes with a thick, colorless liquid. Hardly had he finished with this, when Sandra and her men burst into the room.

"Steve! Whatever you're going to do, do it! We can't stop the natives. They're mad—insane!"

Shrieking eagerly, the Aztols were pouring across the camp toward the cabins. Within moments they were so close that every repulsive detail of their scaly bodies was easily discernible.

Flashing a quick grin of reassurance at the girl, Pearce gathered up a handful of the tubes which he had filled. He nodded at Billings.

"Get the rest and come along. And be careful. Don't drop any."

He strode to the door. The Aztols began to converge in his direction as they became aware of his appearance. A spear thudded into the wall near his head, but he waited until the natives were close. Then he lifted one of the tubes and hurled it into the midst of the onrushing figures.

There was a flash of light, a roar of sound. A wind seemed to touch Pearce. He smiled thinly and threw another of the tubes. Another flash, another roar, and the Aztols fell back in dismay. Pearce stepped forward, and the tubes began leaving his hands as swiftly as he could throw them. Billings joined him in sudden enthusiasm. The camp rocked and shuddered to almost continuous explosions. Amid brilliant flashes of light, the Aztols were falling. They fell several at a time. A few struggled erect, then fell back again as more

light and sound overwhelmed them. The terrified survivors began running in frantic haste toward the jungle.

Moments later the camp had been cleared of moving figures. Through clouds of smoke and dust, a scene of havoc slowly took shape. The bodies of the Aztols were sprawled everywhere. Blood covered the ground in patches. Rocks and vegetation had been uprooted.

And there was silence, a bleak, desolate silence.

PEARCE turned heavily toward the cabin. Sandra was standing in the doorway, peering dazedly about her. Then her eyes settled on Pearce, and suddenly she was running toward him. She ran into his arms, and he held her tightly, feeling oddly quieted and at peace.

Randy and the two other oldsters appeared. They, too, stared about them, their leathery features bewildered.

"What in tarnation was that stuff you were throwing?" Randy asked Pearce. "It had a kick like tridentonite."

"It was an ancestor of tridentonite," Pearce explained, his arm around Sandra's waist. "It was one of the earliest liquid explosives, and its name is nitro-glycerine, or dynamite. It's produced by the action of nitric acid on glycerine. Billings, here, gets the credit for giving me the idea. He had showed me some glycerine-plants a while before, and then he called my attention to the nitric acid you use here. But maybe the real credit goes to the chemistry course I took back in college."

Pearce glanced at the girl beside him, his face clouding. "I have something else to explain, Sandra. Something not so pleasant. But to wait would only make it more difficult."

He released the girl and from one of his pockets produced the small notebook with the faded gold letters on the cover. He placed it gently in her hands.

Sandra gasped and her eyes widened. "Why, it's my father's notebook! Steve, where did you find it?"

Slowly, trying to soften the impact of his tale as much as possible, Pearce told her. She looked steadily down at the notebook in her fingers, tears visible on her cheeks.

Pearce placed an arm comfortingly about her shoulders. "I know it isn't a nice story, Sandra, but I think it ended the way your father would have wanted it to end. You still have the mine—and the platinum lode. And Horton got what was coming to him when the Aztols attacked his camp."

"You're wrong about that, Pearce!" a voice snapped.

Pearce whirled in shocked, unbelieving recognition of that voice. Dimly he was aware that the others about him were turning, too. He stared at the two figures who had appeared around the corner of the cabin.

Horton and Merk!

Horton held a pneumatic and was smiling grimly, his dark hair mussed, his clothing torn. Merk gripped a rifle, his heavy features cold and hostile.

"Drop your guns!" Horton told Sandra's men. "Careful. Make a wrong move and I start shooting."

The oldsters had been taken completely by surprise. They'd had no opportunity to use the weapons they held. Now they let their weapons drop to the ground.

Pearce felt a sickness spread through him. Horton was in complete control of the situation. He was prepared to kill ruthlessly, at an instant's notice. He knew his secret as

John Denham's murderer had been discovered. Those who knew would have to be silenced.

HORTON strode forward, his smile now mocking. "You thought the Aztols finished me off, eh, Pearce? Well, you were wrong about that, as you can see. Merk and I got away into the jungle as soon as we saw the fight was going against us. A couple of the natives followed us, but we were smart enough not to keep running like fools. We climbed a tree, and when the natives got close enough, we picked them off. Then we waited until things settled down and came here."

"What do you want?" Sandra demanded coldly, her face set and her small chin high. "Did you come here to get rid of us the way you got rid of my father?"

"You guessed it," Horton returned, his tone flat and determined. "I want the platinum on your claim—and I intend to get it. I gave you a chance to sell out, but you had to wait until this Pearce trouble-maker put his nose into things. Considering what you know now, I'd be foolish to take any risks. That means you and the others will have to be...well, put out of the way."

Sandra shook her head slowly. "You must be out of your mind. You can't hope to get away with wholesale murder. The authorities are certain to investigate what happened here and at your own camp."

"There won't be anything left for them to find," Horton said imperturbably. "Merk and I intend to take care of that. The authorities will assume that the Aztols attacked your camp and mine, and carried away the bodies of those killed, to keep the skeletons as is their custom. In fact, that's the story I'm going to tell. Merk and I were the only ones lucky

enough to escape. The Aztols will get the blame, and I'll be in the clear."

Horton gestured impatiently with his pneumatic. "Enough of this talk. I have a lot of work ahead of me, and I don't intend to waste any more time."

He glanced significantly at Merk. The tough's hard mouth tightened. He lifted his rifle. Horton readied his own weapon.

While Horton and Sandra had been talking, Pearce had become aware of the fact that he held a dynamite tube in his hand. In the shock of Horton's appearance he had almost forgotten it. Nor had Horton or Merk become aware of the tiny object.

Now Pearce held the tube between his thumb and middle finger, in a catapult and trigger arrangement whereby it could be flipped through the air with swiftness and distance. The finger tensed, uncoiled sharply. The tube glittered briefly in the air and hit the ground beside Merk. A burst of light, a crash of sound. Merk staggered back, the rifle dropping from his hands as he clutched at his face. In the next instant he tripped and fell.

Pearce was already in motion, leaping toward Horton. The other was standing dazedly, a hand half raised to his eyes. Pearce hit him in the legs, and they fell rolling to the ground.

The physical impact seemed to clear Horton's mind. His saturnine features twisted with an awareness of danger. In frantic haste he steadied himself and swung the muzzle of his pneumatic toward Pearce.

Pearce had been thrown to one side by the fall. On hands and knees, he turned to Horton just as the other raised his weapon. He heard Sandra scream a warning—and then he dove forward. The pneumatic coughed.

Something swift and deadly brushed gently against the hair at Pearce's temple. But in the next instant he had Horton's wrist in a hard grip. He bent the weapon back and to one side.

Lips writhing in a snarl of fury, Horton lashed out with a knee. Pearce grunted with pain, and his clutch loosened. Horton surged forward with his arm, once more bringing the muzzle of the pneumatic to bear on Pearce. His finger tightened on the trigger.

Pearce never knew by what miracle of timing he accomplished what he did next. He knew only the anger that came with the pain, anger that brought new strength to his arm. And in the scant instant before Horton's weapon coughed, he swung the other's wrist around, so that the stream of tungsten-steel pellets caught Horton full in the throat. Dead by his own hand, Horton shuddered briefly and slumped to the ground.

WITH a maternal air, Sandra adjusted the blankets covering Pearce and then straightened. "Now you go to sleep," she said. "You've had enough excitement for one day. Tomorrow you'll need your strength to reach one of the mining camps along the hills."

"I'll be back, of course," Pearce said. "As soon as I tell the authorities about what happened here and settle my affairs in New Chicago." He studied the girl. "Were you serious in what you said about making me your business manager?"

She nodded. "After all, once I start mining the platinum I'll need someone to help me take care of all the money. And I suppose I'll need protection, too. You've proved good at that."

Pearce looked distressed. "I'd been

hoping for a more...well, a more permanent arrangement."

The girl smiled. "I think that can be provided for later. For the present, here's something on account."

She bent swiftly, and her lips touched his. Then, with a smile and a more than usual amount of pinkness in her cheeks, she left the cabin.

In the adjoining bunk, Billings gazed after the girl and sighed. "You know, Pearce, she makes me wish I was young again."

"I'm glad you aren't," Pearce returned. "I'd hate to have to rough you up any more than you have been already."

"Considerate of you." Billings locked his hands behind his head and gazed thoughtfully at the ceiling. "You've reminded me of another matter. When I reach New Chicago I'm going to add a sportster to the freighters I ordered from you."

Pearce sat up startledly. "What! I thought after what happened you wouldn't want to have anything more to do with Nova Rockets."

"Uhm...well, I just happened to remember something. You know that little red gadget on the control panel of the sportster?"

"Yeah. You mean the emergency pile dampener switch. It's used to inert the pile in case the automatic relays don't function."

"Oh, is that what it was?" Billings said. He hesitated. "You see, when we were flying over the jungle, you were looking out of the window on your side, and I happened to notice the switch and started fiddling with it. I...I'm afraid I'm the one responsible for us being forced down. I'm sorry, Pearce."

"Sorry!" Pearce said. "If it hadn't happened, I wouldn't have met Sandra. Why, Billings, I could almost kiss you!"

"Don't!" the other said hastily.

OPERATION SAUCER

THE FLYING disc mystery to which this magazine devoted so much attention, is by no means a dead issue, and it has now come out that a special Air Force command has been created to investigate and examine the matter.

Ever since Kenneth Arnold and others spotted the mysterious aircraft known as "flying saucers", a host of reports have supported their reports. In a recent issue of the *Saturday Evening Post*, a writer by the name of Sidney Shallett presented a lavish study of the whole business. He revealed that the Air Force has been seriously concerned with the subject and has spent a great deal of time and effort to track down the origin of these strange vehicles. And so far without success.

The writer, believes, with the Air Force, that the discs can be explained in terms of run-away meteorological balloons and cosmic ray investigating balloons. Also it is the professional belief that the planet Venus when near the Earth has accounted for what has been thought a flying disc. These pat and glib explanations are certainly satisfying and flattering to the ingenuity of certain of the investigators, but they do not by far, explain the matter satisfactorily to anyone with an inquiring mind. This is demonstrated by numerous quotes by the author of the *Post* article from a magazine called *Fate*.

Everyone is entitled to draw his own conclusions. We think it may be ascertained beyond the shadow of a doubt that the discs actually exist. Or at least something similar to the discs. The question then resolves itself into where do these discs come from?

Personally the writer believes that the discs are connected with guided missile research undertaken either here or in some foreign country. While this cannot be proved and while there are many who will disagree with this explanation, it remains that it is reasonable and logical.

During the development of the German buzz-bomb and the V-2 rocket, over Peenemunde, Germany, many strange sights were seen. Weird, unnatural lights, colorful explosions and strangely shaped aerial vehicles were seen. We know what they resulted in. Now that the Russians have taken over Peenemunde and numerous German rocket scientists is it not possible that the flying discs are but extensions of their experiments? We think it entirely possible though the editors of this magazine think otherwise. But as we said, each is entitled to his opinion.

Whatever happens, we can rest assured that numerous researchers are investigating the matter and that eventually the truth about the unknown craft or whatever you may call them, will come out. Meanwhile it behooves each interested person to keep his eyes peeled and his mind alerted to the possibility of sighting them at any time and making notes of the matter. *C. Carns*

READY OR NOT

THE PHRASE "ready or not!" does not apply to mathematics. Mathematics is always ready. Whenever scientists have run into problems requiring the use of some branch of mathematics hitherto not used, they simply have to look back in the literature and they're bound to find it.

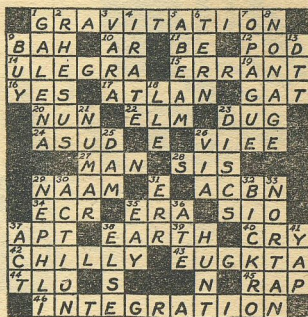
For example: electrical engineering of alternating currents back in the beginning of this century found the use of imaginary numbers exactly what it needed though these had been created by Gauss fifty years before. Einsteins theory of relativity needed abstruse tensor calculus—Livi-Civita had already prepared it some time before. Our modern calculating machines and artificial brains required a simpler number system than the base of ten which we use—the binary system awaited them. And so it goes; technology cries for new mathematics and the subject is at its finger-tips.

We don't know what course necessarily the sciences of the future will take, but we can be assured that there will be adequate mathematics ready for them. For example again, the subject of topology is dying to be of service. And sooner or later some physical or mechanical problem is going to need topology. Statistical and probability methods waited a long time for their application. Now industry and science couldn't do without them. But creative mathematicians will manage to stay ahead of the slip-stick boys no matter how hard they try... *Carter T. Wainwright*

THE END

ANSWER TO CROSSWORD PUZZLE

(See Page 66)



The FIRE GLOBE

By GUY ARCHETTE

**The Black God was but a wizard's trick,
but the Blue Men did not know that, and
as a result, Queen Nela faced a terrible
death!**



The hooded men closed in on Jaron with bared knives.

TAPPING a booted foot impatiently, Jaron stood at one end of the huge, octagonal stone fountain which occupied the center of Victory Plaza in the fortress-city of Dorn. A painted mask of stiffened cloth covered his face, this and his long cloak being his only concession to the holiday period reaching its climax on this particular evening.

Under the mask, Jaron muttered in growing displeasure. Where in all the seven hells of Zur was Nela? He had slipped away from important duties at the palace to keep this tryst. If she were playing a joke...well, queen of the fortress-city of Harn though she might be, he'd tell her a thing or two!

His amber eyes, peering through slits in the mask, roved restlessly about him. Victory Plaza was filled with swirling groups of torch-bearing celebrants, their masked costumes and unrestrained gaiety rendered weird by the flickering light. Laughter and singing mingled with the blare of horns, rising over the more distant sounds of drums and flutes, which drifted from the numerous inns and taverns beyond the plaza. This was the Carnival of Gods, a three-day period when even the deities were reputed to lay aside their heavenly burdens and indulge in carefree merry-making. And what could mere mortals do but follow suit?

Personally, Jaron did not care for the idea. There was a certain element of danger attached to it. For during the Carnival, Dorn opened its massive gates in hospitality to the rulers of the various other fortress-cities scattered over the surface of Gran. They were accompanied by their courts and by large contingents of armed guards and followed by streams of pilgrims. All came to do

homage at the temples of Dorn, since it was believed that Dorn was the birthplace of the gods and thus occupied sacred ground. Perhaps this was the reason why Dorn was the largest, most magnificent, and most powerful of the fortress-cities.

Jaron well knew that Dorn was strategic. He who held it almost literally held Gran—and with a king less benevolent than old Kalar this would certainly have been the case. The rulers of the other fortress-cities were rumored to have secret designs upon Dorn, and the Carnival of Gods offered an ideal opportunity for their fulfillment. During the Carnival, of course, all political quarrels and strife were to be suspended, but among the other rulers were undoubtedly more than one ambitious enough to dare the wrath of the gods by using the Carnival as a time of attack.

Thought of this made Jaron recall his duties at the palace which he had deserted. Unease was added to his mounting impatience. During the Carnival the famed and revered Fire Globe of Cyre was placed on public exhibition, and Jaron, as captain, was supposed to ride close herd upon the soldiers guarding it. The Fire Globe was the symbol and vessel of the goddess Cyre, one of the most important deities in the Gran pantheon. It was also a symbol of Dorn's power, and if it were stolen all manner of misfortunes might descend upon the fortress-city.

Jaron did not want that to happen, for oddly enough he had grown to like Dorn. His position in the palace guard of King Kalar was a comfortable one. And old Kalar, kindly and patient, was a nice person to work for. Jaron's other duties had made it necessary for him to remain close to the king, and in this manner he had become acquainted with Nela, queen of the fortress-city of Harn. She had

made him forget the other women, court ladies and servant wenches alike, with which the palace abounded.

Nela was flame and ice, a vision of golden skin and golden-red hair, with red-brown eyes that could be slumbrously inviting or coolly mocking, and wide, full red lips that had a trick of grinning in a curious, one-sided way. She was taller than the usual run of Gran women, broad of shoulder and deep of breast, her body strong and yet lithely curved. And she had a mind as bright and keen—and often as hard—as a new-forged blade.

Jaron had spoken with her at palace functions, danced with her, and then with increasing boldness had flirted with her. It had been like a duel with daggers in the dark, a duel made more interesting by the fact of his opponent being a girl. She had set his mind afire, and finally, when she had suggested that he meet her in this spot, he had quickly consented. He had put a subordinate in his place, obtained a mask, and hurried here.

Only Nela had not shown up. And there was no indication that she would.

Jaron dared not wait any longer. Despite his mask and cloak, his roving eyes informed him that his presence beside the fountain was attracting notice. He was considerably taller and heavier than the slim, golden people of Gran. Soon—if it had not already happened—he would be identified as the outland captain of Kalar's palace guard.

SCANNING the crowds once more, Jaron at last shrugged his big shoulders and started away from the fountain. Almost at once he found four men barring his path. They wore masks and cloaks, and held within

these latter, but opened so Jaron could see, they gripped glittering daggers.

"Stay a while longer, friend, and you won't be hurt," one of the men said.

Jaron's black brows lifted in mild inquiry, though the sudden light in his amber eyes would have warned a more astute observer. "Who are you?" he asked.

"We are men with orders," the spokesman of the group returned.

Jaron was politely interested. "Whose orders, may I ask?"

"The orders of one it is wise to obey."

"Those orders are to keep me here, is that it?" Beneath his quiet exterior Jaron was thinking swiftly. If efforts were being made to keep him away from the palace, something sinister must be afoot. It was imperative that he return at once.

He was not dismayed by the numbers of those confronting him, but he cursed his lack of foresight in having left his sword at the palace. Weapons were supposed to be laid aside during the Carnival—at least those easily seen. He had a poniard with him, true enough, but his sword would have made the task ahead of him swifter and more certain.

The spokesman was nodding grimly. "You guessed correctly, friend. If you remain here for as long as we will it, you will not come to harm."

Jaron shrugged, glanced leisurely to his rear—and then, with a movement tigerishly agile despite his size, he leaped back toward the fountain. At the same time his right hand slipped the poniard from its sheath and his left caught the folds of the cloak behind him, whipping them about his forearm. He laughed, then, a hard laugh that made his white teeth gleam against the bronze setting of his face.

"Keep me here—if you can! You will find your orders hard work!"

Only momentarily was the group taken aback by Jaron's action. In the next instant, bringing their daggers from beneath their cloaks, they surged after him, spreading out so as to surround him on all sides.

"Quick, now!" the leader of the four cried, his tone low and tense. "Subdue him. He must not be allowed to escape us."

Jaron braced himself against the fountain rim. As the first man came at him, he lashed out with a foot, sent the other flying into a companion. The remaining two closed in. He caught the dagger thrust of the nearest upon his cloak-covered arm and slashed with his own blade. The man gasped, staggered back, and fell. Then the second—the leader of the attackers—was upon Jaron, crashing into him in a charge from the side and throwing him back at an awkward angle against the fountain. Jaron felt his dagger hand splash into water, and as he hung for a moment, off balance, he saw the other two men hurrying to join the fray.

He flung a ragged sheet of water into their faces, then twisted sharply. The leader's blade grazed the side of his neck and shot into the empty air beyond. For the space of a heartbeat, the man was prone against Jaron, and in that instant Jaron struck, plunging his poniard into the other's chest at the side.

THE TWO survivors, still blinking water from their eyes, abruptly halted. Realizing that their leader was seriously injured, if not dying, they seemed to lose all enthusiasm for further battle. When Jaron pushed his victim aside and started at them, they turned and ran, disappearing into the milling groups in the plaza, only a few of which ap-

peared to have noticed the swift struggle.

Unimpeded, now, Jaron whirled away from the fountain, slipping into the gaps among the crowds of celebrants. He began working his way hurriedly back to the palace.

Thoughts bewildered and anxious raced through his mind. Short, fierce, and filled with peril though the fight had been, he had yet managed to discover that his opponents wore beneath their cloaks the uniforms of Harn warriors. Nela's men! Had she set them on him? Had her tryst with him been merely a ruse to take him from the palace—part of a plot?

Presently he was beyond the crowded plaza and running along the broad avenue, lined with trees and statues, which led to the palace. The great irons gates were open, as they always were during the Carnival of Gods. He hastened through them, throwing the edges of his cloak back over his shoulders so that his guard uniform would be in clear evidence and prevent him from being delayed.

Through the broad main entrance he ran. As he progressed along the wide hall beyond, he suddenly heard a tumult of sound, the mingled screams of women and the shouts of men. The noises came from the direction of the vast audience hall where the Fire Globe stood on exhibit.

That audience hall was the pride of the Kings of Dorn. Even above the mad crush of screaming men and women, the austere and timeworn majesty of the vaulted and interlaced arcades, the high windows through which the last red glow of sunset gave a sinister sensing as if the sky itself were pronouncing doom—the intricate pendentive leaping up and up above the springing of the arches, covered with intertwining scroll work in the form of the ancient and

potent formula for the banishment of evil.

That magical inscription was tonight not efficacious, reasoned Jaron, casting about confusedly for something on which to center some counteractivity—some way to bring order out of this seemingly meaningless crush.

The tall, spare form of the king, mounting step by step to the great dais! There on a tripod of black iron, inlaid with gold and emerald figures, the Fire Globe shimmered. That mysterious glory of orange and pale flickering blue and the vibrant thrilling green—that was the Fire Globe which gave off always this thrilling light more pleasant by far than music—that was music, but a music of light, infinitely varying, yet always the same.

Jaron began to stride toward the king, hurling men to right and left, lifting the women aside—making his way toward the quivering pointed beard of the old King Kalar, noting the dull and weary red that stained his usually pallid face—noting the fear and the sense of inevitable doom that overlaid his face with despair. This despair was suddenly explained to Jaron, for between himself and the King on the steps of the dais from among the press of people and guards about the base of the dais—rose a black menace of amorphous shapelessness.

And where it had been, unseen by Jaron behind the press of bodies, lay now a score of stiffened bodies, rigidly outspread, and all the people pressing madly back from this circle of sudden death. The thing, whatever it was, stretched slow fingers that grew into tentacles—toward the King himself. The King pressed closer to the Fire Globe, and Jaron saw now that it was the gentle, warm and thrilling beams of the Fire Globe

alone that held that deadly mystery of death motionless there, that kept back its fingers from about the King.

EVEN AS Jaron decided to mount the dais and stand there with him, facing that mysterious messenger of death as courageously as his King; the thin hesitant finger probed its way to the King's body—reaching clear around the Globe to touch him. Kalar tottered, stiffened with an effort, then tottered again and fell with a strangely loud sound to the floor.

The strange dark web of force vibrated quickly, up and down, in a weird kind of exultation—then the tentacles of it reached again into the glow of the Globe, wrapping one about each leg of the tall tripod—and in one slow instant of a sinking sense of irreparable loss—Jaron saw the Globe itself borne aloft with the black amorphous shape, lifting high above the heads of the crowd! Swiftly it moved, and with a sudden rush dashed against the colored panes of the high pointed window behind the dais—crashing out the panes and the framework together—then floated through the opening, drifting on and on, higher and higher. Jaron rushed to the window, peered after the weird monster of unexplainable strength—only to see it disappearing in the sky above the towers of the fortress walls of Dorn.

Within the dark web of its winged force went the Fire Globe, like a goldfish in an ebon net.

Even as Jaron turned back helplessly, a hand fell on his shoulder and the voice of Ron, his lieutenant, strangely cold and formal:

"The King commands your presence. He is dying, Captain Jaron."

Jaron followed the stiff back of Lieutenant Ron Fiert, and in his heart he knew that if the King lived, one Captain Jaron would serve him

no more.

* * *

THERE WAS a strange white frost over the livid face of King Kalar. His voice came to Jaron as from a great distance, weak, yet filled with a strength not physical, but from the last reserves of mental force.

"Captain Jaron, you have betrayed the trust I placed in you. In the time of my greatest need you were not at your post. I do not think you will attempt any denial?"

Jaron only stood dumbly, his heart aching in his chest. He must have unconsciously loved this man, for as he lay there dying, Jaron's hurt was very deep. Kalar was blaming his death was partly upon Jaron, it was evident. He had deserted his post of guard command over the great Fire Globe of Cyre for the lure of a pair of ripe lips. The King's voice cut him like a knife.

"You, Jaron of Korl, are deprived of all command over any soldier of Dorn. From this day forward my curse rests on you. Those who love me will respect my words after my death, as you will learn. Take him away, let him rot in our prison till he remembers who it is that has stolen our Goddess' fiery Globe of Power!"

Jaron winced as the man whom he had considered his best friend in the fortress, Ron of the bold fierce eyes, stripped off his shoulder ornaments, ripped the Gold Dragon of ancient Dorn from the tunic of his uniform. Between two of his own men, now his guards, Jaron wheeled and left the dying King.

But his head was buzzing with the whys and wherefores of the weird theft of the Fire Globe. There was wizardry in it, and Jaron made shift to excuse his own defection with the thought that no unskilled soldier could outwit the mind behind this

night's work.

* * *

THE DAYS dragged by in the cell they had given him. Jaron lost count; it did not matter.

Came a day when the feet of the single guard came, not singly, but tramping in time with several others. Jaron rose. He grasped the bars in his two hairy-backed hands, the strength in him suddenly exerted as if to pull them from their sockets. They came for him!

The faces of the men told him much, knowing them and the routine of the place as he did. From lean tanned face to face his eyes swept, and his swift mind added the divergent impressions unconsciously into conscious meaning. They had not come to kill. They had not come to question. Then they must have come to take him before some judge, someone in power—and not Kalar, for there was no fresh disapproval on their faces, no sign that they were carrying out Kalar's punishment still further.

Something told him that Kalar was now surely dead, though his taciturn guard had not mentioned it to him.

In silence, Jaron stepped out as the cell door swung open. He spaced himself between the four guards, swung off in time with their stride. Just as he had when he had been the proud Captain of the personal guard of the King. Yet how different now that he was a disgraced captive!

The four remained silent, and Jaron remembered Kalar's last utterance. "Those who love me will respect my words, even after my death"—The old ruler was right! Jaron would have sworn these men would have died for him, their Captain. But he knew now they had loved the old King more!

His four guards halted at the door

of the throne room. It appeared that the only way he was going to know who sat there now on the ancient seat of the winged beasts, was to walk in past the two ominous axe-heads waiting in the hands of the two burly warriors, just inside.

The long gold runner of heavy pile carpet curved across the dark pattern of the parquet floor. The ancient throne was just out of sight of the doorway.

Jaron shrugged, paced slowly on past the two soldiers so carefully ignoring him—then stopped in amazement.

For on the somewhat worn carved wood and metal of the throne sat the blazing red-gold beauty of Nela—the Queen of Harn! Puzzling, walking still in the same silence that had seemed to envelop his very life since the King had fallen, Jaron advanced to the foot of the throne. He stopped there, as the guards crossed axes before his chest.

There was a dull anger in Jaron, strangely mingled in his mind with the fire of her beauty. Graceful she was, there before him, the pearls in her dark red-gold hair were somehow far planets bathed in a dull glow of anger, for which he had no complete explanation, not believing somehow in the perfidy of which he suspected her. He stared at her sultry mocking eyes, could not help being thrilled as always with the deep and graceful bosom, the strongly built womanly body, the sensuous lips smiling her one-sided, secretive smile.

"You deceived me, Nela!" Jaron's voice was more bitter with emotion than he intended. For it was not good to feel that one whom he had placed in so high regard had used him as one uses a chessman—for ends which can only mean the loss of the piece.

NELA lifted one hand in a regal motion. The two axes crossed before his chest were withdrawn, and the six men about the throne withdrew. They were alone, but for the two at the far doorway.

Nela spoke now swiftly, her voice low and urgent.

"Kalar had great respect for me. How much I did not realize, Jaron, or what has happened would not have happened. I coveted his throne, for who holds Dorn holds all Gran in the hollow of his hand. This place is strategically more important than Harn itself. Long have I plotted to win it. But I did not know Kalar so well, really, until he died. Then I learned, too late, that he had planned to make me queen, to avoid future struggle between Harn and Dorn. This, for the sake of our people uniting the two strongholds under one ruler.

"I did not know, and plotted with Ennu. You must have heard of that dark Sorcerer? He was to steal the Fire Globe, which would give Harn power over the Blue men who are the greatest barrier between our forces and Dorn. We could not pass in force without it, the fierce Blue men would gather and battle to the death. But they have a reverence for all the Gods, and an especial respect for our Goddess Cyre. They know the Fire Globe for her symbol and her possession. But I lost the Fire Globe to Ennu's treachery, before I learned I would have had the Globe as well as the throne of Dorn as a gift from the old King. He had no sons, Jaron, and he loved his people. He wanted to make sure the greatest danger of future war was removed by our union."

Jaron snorted. "Tell the truth, sorceress! You murdered the King with some unknown magic, summoning that black destruction! You gave

out that he had made you Queen at his death. You got away with it. Is that not nearer the truth?"

Nela's eyes snapped sparks as Jaron's voice went coldly on accusing her: "How could I believe your story when four of your men almost succeeded in killing me at the trysting place which only you and I knew about beforehand? Who else could have ordered your own men to set upon me there?"

Nela flared: "You fool! They were not to kill you, only to delay your return. I was not afraid that you could stop my plans, or Ennu's dark sending. I was afraid his Black God would kill you if you were present, as it killed the King!"

"Tell me more about your friend Ennu, murderess."

Jaron kept her eyes fixed with his own, while reasoning did somersaults, trying to decide the truth of her tale.

"I did not call you out of your dungeon to cross-examine me, Jaron of Korl. Either be civil or back you go, and rot there, for all of me! Enough is enough."

"A fat lot of good your throne will do you with the Fire Globe in the hands of Ennu. What can you do against Ennu so long as he possesses it? What can you do against the Blue Men, who already follow the Black God? You admit that Ennu has some control or alliance with that evil force and has caused it to steal our Globe."

Above and behind the piled flame of Nela's hair a voice spoke out of nothingness: "My Fire Globe, Jaron! Mine!"

Jaron started, his eyes wary. This Queen Nela was famous for having some wizardry always on tap about her—why be amazed at anything? Yet if that were true, why did she have a need of such an alliance as

she had formed with the evil Ennu? And if it were not true, then the Gods were watching this scene and that should then be the voice of Cyre, for the globe was hers.

NELA STARED at Jaron's odd change of expression curiously; it seemed she had not heard the voice!

Then Nela spoke more softly, almost pleadingly. "Jaron, I need your courage, I want to go to the Temple of the Blue Men. The Globe is prisoned there, and only there can it be regained. I will tell you what I know. No large party could even pierce into the wilderness so far without being attacked by too great numbers of the Blue warriors. But together, we might repair this evil mischance..."

Jaron jeered: "Take me to death some otherwhere, now that your men have failed to kill me! Use me to lead you to your ally, Ennu, whom I have only your word is not still your man? I do not like the smell of the thoughts behind your words, Nela."

Even as Nela's face hardened with swift anger, above her head a slow flickering began. Quickly the very air dissolved into a doorway into somewhere not of this world. In the doorway was a loveliness made up of moon-motes, of ivory, of frozen music and solidified laughter—of all desires distilled into the one desire above man's reach. Jaron sighed softly as a man in a dream.

"Do as the Queen commands, Jaron. It is my will, also, working through her. I need the Fire Globe more than you can understand. It is a part of my power, a necessary limb of my immortal body. Go, and retrieve the Globe, and earn my gratitude. You will not go alone, Jaron."

"I will do your will," Jaron murmured, and the flickering swept into

faint far-off dying shimmerings. The vision became again the dull stones of the wall behind the throne.

"Must you fall asleep when I'm talking to you?" Nela's words came to him dimly. He shook his head. He realized suddenly she had been talking to him all the time. Evidently she had not even sensed the presence that had been to him far more vivid than natural life.

"I saw a strange vision, for an instant. There, above your head. It... well, it persuaded me. I will do as you wish."

"Oh, that's better, Jaron. You see, just you and I can better avoid the war-parties of the Blue Men. There is no other way but stealth left to me."

"You! To the Blue Temple? Nela, don't you realize the danger? What they will do to you if they catch you? Bad enough for a man, but for a woman..."

"Fah! You men think always that women fear dangers that men are not afraid to face. Why should my heart be any less sturdy than your own? Besides, I want to make sure you succeed. I will die if you don't get back the Globe. It is better to die trying than to sit here in the palace and wait for what I know Ennu will do to us all. It is a command, anyway! How dare you to argue?"

"There isn't much use arguing with a Queen, at that. Bad enough to try to make an ordinary woman mind reason. They will always have their way if they can get it."

So having the last word, Jaron turned. The Queen smiled slightly as he went out.

* * *

NELA JOINED Jaron at the stables. In the green leather riding kilt slashed in fringes to the thigh, the hooded green forest jacket draping her wide graceful shoulders—to

veil her bright hair when needed—with the sparkle of adventure brightening her eyes and redding her luscious cheeks, she quite took Jaron's breath away.

She had brought forest clothes and weapons for Jaron. Food in saddle bags aplenty, and even coats of light chain mail to wear beneath their surcoats. There was a laughing offer to help Jaron change from his smelly prison garb of grey woolen, but he declined, retiring into a stall out of sight of her mocking eyes.

Jaron emerged from his stall more formidable of appearance than he had gone in. A long sword of Harn's best steel strapped to his back, the hilt projecting above his left shoulder where the right hand could seize and strike downward in one motion. At his waist a longish poniard. The fringed deerskin jacket and tightish breeches quite failed to really fit Jaron's great limbs, and the steel of his shirt showed at waist and wrist in the dim light of the stable. As he bent to lace the thongs of his boots the jacket gave in the shoulder seam. Nela laughed:

"It was the very biggest size I could find!"

Jaron did not look at the smiling Queen. "Best to get out of the city before the moon rises, Nela. There are always watchers from the forest slopes, that would send word of our departure far ahead of us with signals. We must avoid that if we can."

Nela pulled the dark hood over her bright hair, and swung into the saddle easily as a man. Astride and settling herself, she turned to watch Jaron mount. The hostler threw the stable gate wide, and they trotted out into the night.

At the little used north gate of the city wall, Nela shoved a great ring beneath the startled eyes of the guard. Jaron recognized it as the

king's own. The guard unbarred the gate without question, while within the gate house the others hardly looked up from their cards.

"I hope you know what you're doing, Sir and Lady. There is danger beyond these walls for all who serve Cyre and the rulers of Dorn." The guard squinted up at them, obviously not recognizing them and knowing that he should. Neither of them made answer. Nela lashed her mount's flank once with her crop, and the mare leaped ten feet, then settled into a steady ground eating lope. Jaron, a bit too heavy for his big gelding, had continually to urge him on to keep up.

Northward and northward, on the left the great dim disk of the blue moon, with its satellite a bright orange medallion pinned upon the blue round breast of it. Jaron pulled into the shadows, halted, waited while the Queen turned and came back to his side.

"The moon has risen, Nela. We can't ride this trail openly. There are bound to be watchers set to warn the Blue warrior camps. 'Twere best to strike out northeast, directly over the hills, a longer route. But there is little chance of stumbling upon the hunting camps at night in the hills. They bed always along the streams. During the day we can lie up—and during the night we press on. It may take three nights to reach the temple, but it is the only safe way."

SOMETHING wide and grey silently swooped, sudden and stark from the shadows. Its target was Nela's bright head where she had thrown back the hood to talk with Jaron. His hand flashing as swiftly as the grey wings, Jaron tugged out the dagger at his waist and thrust even as the talons spread to seize the red-gold head that had attracted

his night-seeing eyes. The thing screamed, the great wings beat about their heads blindingly, blood gushed over Jaron's wrist.

Nela gave a little scream as the great hooked beaks clashed together within an inch of her nose and Jaron flung the weight aside. It lay and flopped in a circle on the ground at their horses' dancing feet.

"Best to leave that hood over your hair. Even the blood-owls cannot bear the sight of it, Nela." Jaron said. "It must remind them of foxes tails, perhaps. Or this particular great owl has a feud with a certain fox and sees in all red hair his mortal enemy. I am sorry you were dabbled with the blood..."

"Thank you, Captain Jaron." Nela murmured in a small and shaken voice, pulling the hood again over her hair and white forehead.

Jaron thrilled a little, not so much to hear her gratitude. It was to hear again the name of respect, Captain Jaron. It was the first time anyone had spoken the title since Kalar's death. The King's dying curse lifted a little of its weight from his mind.

"This is forest, now, Nela. I will pick a way through the thickets. Follow closely and don't fall behind. It is so easy to become lost. Once on the hill slopes, there will be hunting trails. Remember, our lives now depend wholly on our alertness and our stealth. Make no unnecessary noise."

But first Jaron dismounted and wrapped the horses' feet. Then they rode off the wide trail of forest mould and needles of pine and shredded bark and began to thread their way between the great thickets of tan-berry and hyrm and narg trees.

Underfoot little furry shapes streaked in fright. The winged lizards buzzed their wide mouths in hisses at being disturbed, the white curved shapes of the fungi pipes

crumpled silently beneath the horses' feet.

An eerie chill chased along Jaron's spine, the forest at night was mystery of weird imaginings, the shadows each might be some monstrous life of the wilds too great to conquer with any sword.

They rode on through the dappling dim shadows and light of the rising moon, cut into intricate lacery of witch'd beauty by the myriad leaves.

"HAVE YOU ever fought with the Blue warriors?" asked Nela, after a silent hour of shadows and dim sudden fears and great columnar trunks among the thickets. After an hour in which she had strained every nerve to keep from screaming. The forest at night was a very different place from the sunlit safety it was in the hunting parties among which she had before entered the wilds.

The thicker growths of the lowlands had ceased now, the forest was more open. The canopy of ancient forest giants overhead made all dim as Zur's pit of Nihil. But Jaron had a strong sense of direction, and as he reined back beside the Queen's mount, noted that the star Aldeb still hung straight ahead as it should.

"Small bands of them I have met in the wild. Not great enough numbers to make them formidable. On a hunting trip, I once ran onto a dozen, when I was alone. I killed one with my boar spear, another with a sword, and got an arrow in my leg before we parted company."

Nela nodded. "They are seven footers, when full grown. They can run faster than a horse, for short distances. I have had contact with them, my father had occasion to parley with the main horde several times. How did you come to leave your islands of Korl? And could you please keep

on omitting the Queen business while we are out here, two against the world? It does not seem that I am a Queen here."

"I will tell you how I came to leave my home, if you tell me why you selected me alone out of an army of men nigh as good—to accompany you? Why did you take me out of a cell and honor me with the sole custody of your safety? Why, I might take you away to Korl, for all you know."

The Queen gave a low laugh. Her eyes, huge and mysterious seeming in the dimness, contained each a dancing spot of witch-light as she leaned, looking closer at his face.

"You entertain me! How else could I have you to myself, to see what there is in you when no one is about? How else might a woman test her own heart than on such a perilous trip into the unknown—where a man's metal is tested against all nature? Think you I intend to mate any fancy popinjay my eyes are attracted toward?"

Jaron was silent for a long time, searching her face, neither bold nor mocking now. Wise with woman-wisdom, only faintly smiling, she was like an ivory bust silhouetted by darkness—shaped to hold and to express only the infinite mystery of woman.

"Thank you, Nela. When you have decided, will you be as frank in telling me?"

"I may, and I may not. How did you happen to leave your home? Not of your own will, I'll wager."

"I had two older brothers, in Korl. Younger sons of rulers have a traditionally hard time of it. Especially when they begin to get bigger and stronger than the older brothers. I left before my brothers' fear of my ambitions grew great enough to overcome their love. That was quite a

time ago, I was only a stripling in years—but large enough to pass for a full-grown man. I have served as a soldier in numerous lands since.”

Jaron stopped, but Nela shook her head at him. “Go on” she urged, touching her horse so that they sat now knee to knee.

A CERTAIN incident touching his mind, made Jaron laugh. “The last place, the King was a great connoisseur of women. One of his many concubines took a fancy to me, and we were come upon together in the gardens by the King himself.”

Nela did not laugh. “You escaped, before he could have you flayed, I see.”

“I made it over the wall of the garden just ahead of a crossbow bolt. I stole a horse, managed to keep ahead of pursuit more by luck than by cunning. I made my way to Dorn, I had heard of the generosity of Kalar. He took a liking to me. The rest you know, Nela.”

“What you have left out seems would make fancy reading, in some naughty romance. Soldier of fortune, ladies’ man, run-a-gate dodger—’Tis a picture might contain most villainies between the pages. Still, you have an honest face, if it is a little too hard of eye to belong to any good subject. ’Twill soon be morning light, my Captain.”

The mists were layering, rising from the ground, the night-black shadow pattern was all running together into uniform greyness. They rode again forward, the legs of their mounts disappearing as though they rode winged horses upon cloud surfaces. The shapes of the ancient trees about them became tree-spirits, draped in long streamers of slow-rising mist.

“Mist-land, where the grey Queen of the dead waits to seize men’s

souls” murmured Nela.

They topped the breast of a long hill, beyond which a valley swept in two long descending banks along a river of mist, flowing toward some cloud-sea beyond sight.

As they reined up to take in the miraculously lovely scene of half-trees, projecting as if floating upon a cloud surface, of the far-off pointed mounds afloat—cut off from earth, each an island of being to itself—Jaron suddenly reined his horse about and sent it back toward the hill top just now passed. After him cantered Nela, her face questioning.

“Smoke-columns!” grunted Jaron. “Dozens of them, see!” Jaron pointed to where the wavering blue-grey of fire smoke ascended in many spiraling turns from out the now pure-white mist.

“Must be a camp in the hollow beneath the mist. Lucky for us I noticed in time.”

THEY MADE camp for the day deep in a thicket of thorn-apple. Nela felt safe for the first time as she noted the jagged blue leaves and long brown thorns reached as far as eye could see. Nothing could come at them except by the narrow path they had picked their way along. There was a spring and tiny stream, and Jaron hobbled the horses, unrolled the blankets. Then he sat down, to watch Nela quizzically.

“Shouldn’t we eat, woman-who-wants-to-test-me?”

Nela flushed. Her hands, quick enough with a dagger or playing card or a harps strings, had never yet had to turn to the preparation of food for anyone.

She stood, eyeing Jaron’s head of tawny locks, noting for the first time the three fine lines of scar tissue along his neck where three times he had parried some enemy’s sword al-

most too late.

Jaron squinted one eye back at her. She put both hands on her hips, undecided whether to queen it out and order him to break open the food packs or to go ahead and behave as if she were an ordinary woman, serving her loved one. Finally she shrugged, sank to her knees on the leaf mould, began to unbuckle the food packs from the saddles where Jaron had thrown them.

Jaron leaned back, crossed his hands behind his head, idly watching a great blue-and-gold dragonfly hovering in the thorn leaves overhead. As it lifted and arrowed away, he murmured to himself, loud enough for her to hear.

"I might like to know if a woman was not too proud to get a meal for a man, too, you know."

"Is that all you require in a wife, Captain?" asked Nela.

Jaron watched her clumsily unwrapping the dried meats, haggling the bread into pieces with an apparently dull knife, cutting a melon into uneven halves.

"I always had a weakness for red hair, of course. But there are other things more important than that a woman's hair be on fire. There must also be a certain witch-fire in the heart, showing in the eyes. A certain steadfastness, too, so that one knows that when one's back is turned she's not making eyes at every mustache that goes by."

"Do go on, Captain, you sound so very stolid. Ordinary, one might say."

"But still interesting, you must admit. The woman I love must carry strange lightning in her hands, for me alone. The mere flash of the skin of her under-arm must strike into me with the power of Omnu's own light. There must be always a mystery in her one-sided smiling at me,

so that I may always wonder whether she is thinking good or ill of me, or only taking me for just another purblind ape her fancy chanced to light upon."

Nela flushed, soft pulsing rose mantling her smooth cheek. Jaron went on, dreamily regarding the sky.

"When she wears a man's hunting clothes, that kind with the fringe slashed to the thigh, so that her legs are quite evidently two in number and well shaped—why the sight of those legs must be to me as if a Goddess had opened her mysterious heart to me, so that I shiver with awe of the beauty that goes with her every motion."

"And are mine so, to you?" Nela's hands shook unaccountably, as she pointed to the food, taking up a piece of bread and meat and filling her mouth.

"She must also serve her Lord and Master with her own white hands," went on Jaron, unmoving, still gazing at the spot where the dragonfly had paused.

FLUSHING still more deeply, Nela picked up the bread and meat, laying her own down unthinkingly in the dirt of the forest floor. She put the food in his hands, and Jaron began to munch away.

His eyes fell to hers. She saw with her hands crossed in her lap. Her eyes went away from his own, centering on her own idle hands in her lap like an embarrassed child. Now and again she would dart a glance at his mane of bronze hair, curling in windswept waves about his wide brow—a brow strangely high and white above the tanned face.

Or two sets of eyes would meet, and hers falter, falling to his hands resting there on his knees, clasping the food. She noted the numerous scars on his knuckles criss-cross-

ing. How very many times swords and daggers had scraped past the hilt-guards and nearly maimed him, by the looks of those hands.

"Ever been to sea, Nela?" asked Jaron suddenly, breaking the pleasant silence that lay between them like something close and palpable as flesh.

"Yes, in my father's sailing ships. I have crossed the seas of Harpent, clear around the lands End of Scorman. Out into the unknown three days journey, in pursuit of a pirate raider, once! That was long ago. I hid aboard the ship; he did not know until too late to send me back. Since, only in oared ships, short turns along the coast of a holiday. They will not let a King's daughter risk her life agoing to sea, if they can stop her."

"Some day, Nela, when you are all-powerful and I am more so—when peace grows irksome, perhaps—we will fit out a fleet. Eight, ten, great sailing ships, high-prowed and strong. With oars, too, for emergencies, and beaks for ramming—something a man could fight with when needful. Then we will take off into the unknown oceans beyond Scorman, just to see what's there! Eh?"

Nela clasped her hands suddenly together, crying out with pleasure at his fancy. "It would be good, yes! Just sail on and on, to see what is there that causes all the wild tales men who sail are always telling of the unknown seas."

Jaron saw her eyes shine, the strange embarrassment had disappeared from between them.

"We would come back with some outlandish wizards, to work unknown magics for the entertainment of our court. We would bring the weird carved Gods of the Mingi home to plant in the dark rooms of the pal-

ace—so that their strange glow would light them of nights. The fighting plants of Onlaught, some of them for your rose-garden, to keep out thieves. Perhaps even a sea-demon, or some of the finny women of the Sea-people for our aquarium."

Nela laughed. "You would like that, I suppose. I have heard their finned men are not hard to look at, either. Can I have some of them, my Lord and Master?"

"Sauce for the goose—" mumbled Jaron, his mouth still full. "You may eat now, maid-of-all-work, the master's near finished."

Even as Jaron was thinking that the play-acting of being a humble maid became Nela mightily, she stamped her green booted foot, swore an unladylike oath.

"Don't carry your act too far, my fine bully!"

"Fails in first test," murmured Jaron. "Too proud to live with comfortably."

EVEN as she stood looking down angrily upon him, there came a sudden scream of pain from her mare, some twenty paces away. A dark, spotted shape had hurtled from under the thicket and sprang fully three lengths through the air, landing astride her back! She reared, the beast clung, claws raking great gashes across her shoulders.

The gelding, eyes rolling at this sudden attack on his companion, suddenly stampeded straight into the the thorn thicket, leaving a trail of blood and trampled, torn branches—and was gone. Jaron swept the sword from his shoulder leaped across the tiny crystal oval of the spring, slashed at the head of the big cat. It leaped, snarling, straight for his chest.

But he avoided the raking talons, got in a heavy slash as it passed, and

it landed running—streaked away beneath the thorn branches.

Jaron turned the mare. She had sunk upon her forelegs, the life-blood running out of her badly torn neck. Within short minutes she rolled over, lay helpless, panting for breath. Nela knelt, her eyes wet, stroking her head. In a short time she died. After kneeling there by the dead horse for a long space of silence, Nela shook her head to banish the shock of loss, stood and looked ruefully at her thin-soled purely decorative hunting boots.

"Walking is very good exercise, I've heard." She said, her eyes finding Jaron's.

"Pay no mind to that," Jaron grunted. "Mind better the racket the horses made, and where that gelding flees—if the blue men did not hear, they'll be sure to run across the horse and back track it to this place. Gather up the gear, stow it—we've got to make ourselves invisible within as short a space as we can."

"So now you're a wizard, among your other trades! Know you not wizardry is neither trusted nor loved by ordinary men?"

"No wizardry, just follow me."

With his sword Jaron hacked the thorns from the upper side of a tree branch, leaped lightly up, pulled up the saddle-bags after. These he hung about his neck, then lifted Nela by her arms to a perch by his side. Carefully he cut the thorns; step by step they mounted, then began to cross the thicket thus laboriously, lost to view from the ground among the spiny leaves. The marks of their exit were visible only from above.

Their camp was marked now only by the body of the dead mare.

AN HOUR later, into the quiet of the thicket stole a file of giant blue warriors. Following the plain

trail left by the scared gleding, they came as quiet as drifting shadows—in each hand a strung long-bow, arrow on nock. Seven foot of lean blue-skinned flesh, muscular as wrestlers—painted with the red dye of the war-trail. Faces marked in weird masks by the paint, their bodies traced everywhere with the same red pattern of waves and stars. There was too the curious symbol of the Black God, a crude drawing of the black tentacled amorphous shape of him—whether imagined so or really so—few knew.

There was a deadly intentness about their still stalking of the owners of the horse. About their loins was the skin of the great lizards called Tron-beasts, in their tongue.

Watching them, one would have been struck by their utter absorption in their job of man-killing, and known that here was a race to whom cruelty and the letting of alien blood was as worship to a fanatic of Omnu. Here was a race steeped in barbaric ritual, bred to think but one thought—war and the glory of war.

They stood in a ring about the dead horse, some traced the sign of the alien booted feet till it disappeared, then rejoined the ring about the horse. At last one made the sign of magic, the crossed fingers and the stamp of the foot. Then they filed out of the thicket, frustrated by Jaron's simple ruse.

Well hidden in the branches of the tall trees beyond the thorn thicket, Jaron and Nela watched the file of warriors pass, too close for comfort. It was now late afternoon, and until darkness fell, Jaron and Nela made their way along the interlocking branches of the forest giants in the same general direction taken by the war-party.

Not long after the last of the file of warriors had passed, Nela and Ja-

ron dropped again to the forest floor, ruefully taking stock of skin scrapes and thorn scratches. Then they began to follow the trail of the warriors, a faint worn path evidently used regularly. But it was soon too dark to follow the slight track, and Jaron lifted Nela again to the safety of the trees. He made a nest for them upon the wide crotch of limbs; they sat awaiting the rising of the moon and its calf.

Nestling in the crook of Jaron's arm, Nela sighed wearily.

"I had no idea this trip would prove so strenuous."

"In the wilderness, anything can happen and usually does," answered Jaron, his own limbs aching with relief from the strain.

FROM afar came the sullen mutter of signal drums, moving across the hills as drum answered drum, and each of them knew the Blue men were talking of the strangers who had "disappeared."

Nela yawned sleepily, then asked:

"Heard you ever the wizards tales of the other worlds, which they say the Gods tell them about?"

"I have heard much of that talk from my father's court necromancer. They say that there are many worlds, up there where the stars hang so bright. Like ours, and unlike ours. Some where people rush about in great metal machines, sail through the air in vast boats, even dive to the ocean bottoms. Who live not in walled cities, but in great metal and rock towers, one above the other, like stacked chesses. But who knows?"

Nela went on musingly: "They say those worlds are round balls, like the moon and the moon-calf. That our own world is not flat, but round like a ball. I wonder if on those worlds there are couples sitting in the dark,

speaking of our world? Of our Blue men, our great wild forests, our Sea-people, of our Demon race and our Bird-men and our dog-men? Of our magicians and their wonders, and of our wars when the blood runs clear across the whole land of Gran... Of our mysterious Gods, who never die, never seem to change as we do—from whom our magicians get their lore. If they speak of these things we know so familiarly, as far-off wonders? Thinking of us as we think of them, as impossible fantasies created as much of dream stuff as of reality? Do you suppose that?"

"Yes, Nela." Jaron's voice was grave, and contained something of the quiet darkness and the wonder of far-off things. "I do think that is true, that in many nooks on many wonderful worlds there are men and women thinking and dreaming of us as we do now of them. And one day the men of our world will build ships to span those wide spaces between the worlds, and sail out to meet in friendship or to conquer the other worlds."

"That will be long after we are dead and gone, Jaron. Life is such a short and bitter thing. I wish I were a God, never changing. Yet they must grow weary to death of their strange existence..."

"Cyre did not seem weary, when she allowed me to see her. Nor did she seem unchanging, but rather a flickering distillation of the beauty of change itself, frozen somehow into everlasting being. Such creatures are too much to understand."

Jaron sank into moody silence, and the distant drums rumbled nearer, like marching giants. Now they were quite close, and numerous, beating in a wild stirring rhythm. Over the drums rose the shrill keening of flutes, riding the beat of the drums as a bone-thin witch might ride a

horse.

"The Blue Men celebrate some ritual tonight. The temple cannot be far from this spot—the sound comes so clearly."

Jaron nodded, listening. "Makes the blood chill in the veins, the music of the Blue Hordes. Somehow they are not human, but alien to our race. Heard you ever such peculiar dissonance, yet welded into fearful melody as if by memories of music alien to this world?"

"It is a strange meaning, behind the music they make. I know! They are sending a message to the Black God. It is his music, not human at all. They have learned it from contact with him!"

Jaron nodded. "That was my thought. I wondered if you sensed it, too. We've got to see this, we must know how and why they contact their Black God and what they intend. Now that they have the Fire Globe, Omnu only knows what they plan. Come!"

THE MOON was now slanting long rays through the maze of great limbs about them. Jaron rose, led the way across the mighty branches.

Closer and closer they drew to the source of the weird orchestration of the Blue Men. Now they could vaguely glimpse a great fire, and leaping about the light in dance the dark painted bodies. They stole closer, coming at last to the very edge of the cleared space, looking down at the temple from a height.

That pile was very ancient, perhaps not even built by the Blue Men, but by some greater race of the forgotten past. Shaped of the dark, veined night-stone, the veins of crystal shining over the black stones like the webs of gigantic spiders wet with dew. The dark forms of the ancient sculptured beings seemed to stir in

the red flickering light, reaching their vast arms out of the past into this barbaric scene of the present.

Above the great temple doorway the arms of Megaera, the fury. Or was that Megale represented, the mother of the Gods? Jaron wondered idly at her sensuous great body stretched above the doorway, the brooding great stone face webbed over with the crystalline veining in the night-stone, and breathing down the spirit of unknown antiquity and of that strange all-knowing power of the Gods. Somewhere inside the vast old pile the Fire Globe waited for deliverance. For an instant Jaron felt a far-off sentence touch him, whispering faintly—"Yes, Jaron of Korl, for deliverance, my deliverance from the Black One."

In front of the great doorway the log fire burned high, and Nela watched the naked Blue Women leap in suggestive, weird posturings, drawing more and more of the Blue warriors into their wild abandon.

Nela shuddered. "There is an evil to all this. Inside the temple the rites will climax the night's entertainment, and the Black God will come to feed on the victims they bring him. It is a terrible belief they have concocted of their ignorance—this mating of the Blue horde with the Black God."

Jaron nodded. "And Ennu seems to be the mainspring in the works of the evil mechanism building here. With the power of the Fire Globe to run it, the wisdom of the ancient Black God to give it wits, the numbers and fierce fighting ability of the Blue Horde to man it—what power among our people can stay its course toward dominance?"

"Yes, Jaron. I see now what was not clear to me before. I see what ambition drives Ennu and why he came plotting to me. I was a dupe, and not he mine, as I thought."

"Above all, Nela, learn by this lesson. You can't get good by an evil tool."

"What can we do, Jaron? This is a mistake it seems no deed of ours can undo."

"I am trusting Cyre to guide us. Meanwhile, let's find an entrance to the temple from the rear, or from the side. This clearing at the front is too well lit, and crowded with the dancers. We can approach along the shadows of the stone huts, over there. Come!"

SLOWLY they circled the clearing, while below them the wild dancing went on and on, the heavy voices of the men chanting, the cries of the women rising in abandon. Their hands beating their thighs made a sound like a fall of great raindrops. Theirs was an emotional abandonment to primeval savagery, to the lusts of some creature like the Black God.

There was sitting and brooding above all that wild scene some ancient sprit of lusty uninhabited evil, drinking in the sight and sound as a serpent might lap milk—and Nela and Jaron sensed this presence as a thick mist chillingly sucking at their own small warmth and life.

The white teeth grinning in the dark blue faces, the naked limbs tossing as if the limbs of trees were bent and released continually by some invisible wind—Nela whispered: "One knows the dark Gods live, one can sense their will and their thought here! How different from our own Goddess Cyre, when she speaks or thinks of living and of love for us."

Slowly they passed beyond the light of the leaping flames, reaching the shadowing dark where the bulk of the massive walls of the temple lay between them and the gathered horde. Jaron leaped to the soft sod,

caught Nela's body as she leaped after. He held her close for a moment, to reassure her, for he sensed her quivering nerves, then led the way along the shadows that lay black as fur between the crudely piled stone walls of the huts of the Blue Men.

Across the dim moon-lit patch of grass a dark veined column of sculptured stone marked the dim doorway, a black and ominous shadow behind the stone figure. Jaron glided across this open space, pausing beside the pillaring stone figure. He froze for a second into immobility as he noted a movement beyond Nela's crouching figure. Then she screamed, once, and her figure fell backward, was flung aloft to some almost invisible shoulder and disappeared!

Jaron found his sword in his hand, himself speeding back into the shadows of the huts—only to stop, pivoting to avoid the gleam of steel darting at his chest. Jaron backed, slashing down a trio of blades as he drew his assailants into the dim moonlight.

The swords of the Blue Men were long, leaf-shaped, hammered out of crudely smelted soft iron, hardened and tempered badly, yet heavy. There was a tricky wave in the blade, that made the eye find it hard to gauge the balance of the weapon in an opponent's hand, and Jaron slashed, parried, leaped and lunged in a mad effort to cut down the numbers of his attackers.

But as quickly as one tall, scowling shape fell, two took his place in the growing ring about Jaron. Jaron grimaced as he got his back against the stone of the great sculptured pillar, his sword weaving a maze of deadly magic before him—and again and again a tall warrior screamed and staggered backward out of the ring. The savages did not dart forward now, but only kept their points to-

ward him, keeping well out of his reach.

Jaron waited, too, resting his point on the grass and mocking them with shining teeth and what few curses he could think of in their tongue—such as “swine of the forests” and “sons of snakes.” Which puny cursing failed to madden them sufficiently to give him a chance to kill another.

Quite suddenly a great blow struck his shoulder from behind, and he wheeled and threw up his arm, staggering—but a flight of flaming birds seemed to explode into fragments behind his eyes, leaving him only a black pit that was himself.

Jaron struggled to consciousness out of that pit of blackness, groaning and trying in vain to rub his throbbing skull. He opened his eyes, found himself looking at his own length, bound about with endless turns of woven fibre rope, and the cold stones of the temple floor against his back. He writhed against his bonds; they held firm. He rolled over, to find his face within inches of Nela’s.

SHE WAS no longer the immaculate Queen. Her hair streamed in wild tangled disorder. Her face was smudged and scratched. Her green leather garments had been torn to shreds, leaving her only a few fragments of her former costume.

Outside the dim, vast chamber, Jaron could hear the steady throb of the drums and the cries of the leaping dancers.

Steps came slowly toward them. Jaron twisted, looked up into a lean face gashed across with a thin wide mouth, a mouth that smiled gloatingly. The man had a cruel hooked nose, and deep-set eyes with no light of humanity—but only a cold glare of triumph. His bony frame was covered with a loose black cloak, making a picture of somehow impressive power,

towering above their helpless bound bodies.

In spite of his repellent appearance, Jaron recognized the light of evil wisdom, the conscious respect for thought that all wisdom brings—and recognized too the paraphernalia of the professional sorcerer hung about his waist from a heavy braided belt. There was the forbidden crystal of malnesite, which hung clasped in the golden fingers of that tool called the “Hand of Death”. There was the malefic charm of the seven sisters, that black shriveled cluster of tiny heads, that no ordinary man could ever learn whence they came—so small they were to be human heads, and so very evil of face. There was the silver mace, dangling on its small chain of moon-stones, that is allowed only to the Masters of the Forbidden Guild.

Jaron recognized Ennu easily enough. There was no mistaking him.

“Is this how you customarily receive emissaries, Ennu, Lord of the Secrets of Fools that your baubles proclaim you?” Jaron asked softly.

Nela, at the sound of Jaron’s voice, tried to sit up, but fell back, bumping her head and groaning. Ennu stirred her foot with his own, asking: “Did you come for the Fire Globe, Queen Nela?”

“You betrayer of oaths, I am here because I said I would be here, and for no other reason. Now unbind us, and speak with us decently, or those who wait for me will ride—every man of Harn and of Dorn that is able—will kill every living thing found near this temple. You know that, yet you have attacked us! How great a fool can you be, Ennu?”

The sorcerer laughed, not unpleasantly, but somewhat like a raven caws when stealing from another raven.

“You both name me fool, which ill becomes your present situation. Since you will both be dead with the com-

ing of morning's first light—why not meet your death gracefully, instead of with lies and ugly words upon your lips. Have you no respect for the priest of the Black God?"

"Have you no respect for your given word, Ennu? Besides, you know well the Fire Globe is the symbol and vessel of Cyre, and than her there is no mightier God or Goddess. Do you not fear her anger?"

"You should have thought of that, before you plotted to steal the Globe. You see where your deed has brought you!"

NELA DID NOT answer, perhaps thinking that the Black God and this servant of his had gained ground through her own stupidity as to the way of the Gods with men.

His deep hoarse voice went on above them, unheeding them as he stared at some vision he alone saw now:

"It is only through the traitorous act of servant that one God can obtain power over another God or Goddess. You have been of use in that way, Nela, and for that I may contrive to let you live. But we need victims for the Black God's hunger, and this companion of yours—chosen, I have no doubt, Nela—because of his comely body and handsome face? He must die, for that very vigor you admire in him makes him acceptable to the sacrifice."

Ennu stood, his eyes running over Nela's near-naked body in a way that made anger rise in a flame through Jaron's bound limbs, rise and choke him with a red pounding in his veins. Then Ennu turned away, calling out some strange words to several figures hovering just beyond Jaron's sight.

Nela looked despairingly at Jaron. A heavy black stubble covered his strongly boned jaw, strangely contrasting with the bronze hair that

was only a shade darker than his tanned skin. A crescent scar on the black growth of stubble showed now plainly, the three lines of white cicatrice that ran down the line of the jaw and across his neck stood out by contrast, making a strange pattern of white against the black. His amber eyes glowed with a fierce light; a shiver of awe, as at a caged lion, ran down Nela's back pleasantly. Certainly, even in his desperate plight, this was a man after her heart.

He caught her glance. "By the seven Hells of Zur, Nela—only the Gods can save us, now. I counted on our ability to avoid their attention. long enough to get near the Globe. For, when near it, one can summon Cyre to step through the barriers and unleash her power. But we failed..."

"If one had only some knowledge of grammarie, Jaron, it would be the place to use it. Have you never picked up even one potent spell from the Wizards? You are widely traveled, one would think..."

"There are several reasons, Nela, why an active and normal man like myself shuns all wizardry. It is known to sap the strength. All contact with the world of Gods seems to bleed away the life force somewhat, by slow degrees. Too, the Wizards are a close-mouthed set, interlinked by ancient compacts. One has to serve long years, indoors, to become even an acolyte of the first mysteries. Men like myself shun it, we have no overmastering desire for dark wisdom and hidden secrets for which we would barter our very life-blood. Some things, it is true, I have learned."

Their talk was interrupted by the coming of four black robed Blue Men, their faces unpainted, evidently disciples and followers of Ennu. They approached and lifted Nela by her bonds, carrying her out of the chamber and into a small side open-

ing, so low they stooped their tall ominous height as they departed. Jaron groaned despairingly, then bellowed:

"I'll have your life's blood if you harm a hair on her head! You duped sons of perdition, you lean lickspittle lackeys of that accursed priest of the foulest pits inmate. By Omnu's forked beard, have a care..." then he ceased, feeling completely powerless and somehow foolishly futile, his words throwing back in his face the sound of his own folly.

SHORTLY after their departure, the great doors at the far end of the big chamber were thrown wide, and the horde who had been dancing and drinking about the fires outside came pouring in. They brought the odor of sweat, the oppressive and lustful atmosphere of the orgy—of the spirit Jaron had sensed brooding above that temple in the forest. Jaron looked at the rows of eyes gleaming animal-like, filling the whole vast space. Eyes avid and waiting for the cream of the night's entertainment. There was no emotion but the avidity for some great sensation which he knew his own death was to provide.

The same dark-robed men who had taken Nela now came and lifted Jaron, grunting a little with the weight of him, and bore him to the very foot of the great brooding stone statue of Megale. They threw him ungently onto the long stone altar, fastened thongs about his wrists and ankles, took off the wrappings of rope, slashing with careless jerks of the curved daggers in their hands.

Meanwhile several drummers had taken their places along the left; a brazier of blazing coals to left and right gave a red flickering light to which their palms on the drums seemed to keep time, a monotonous

rub-a-dub without meaning. Slim young girls stood in a row before the drummers, blew wide-mouthed flutes in a high, keening melody to which the drummers seemed to pay no attention, engaged in a gradual increasing thunder-making of their own.

Above the dark brooding stone figure of Megale, Jaron sensed that same brooding waiting presence he had noted above the clearing outside. This must be the mind of the Black God,, waiting his time of sacrifice, Jaron decided.

Ennu glided forward, his face rapt with an evil exaltation. He strewed powders over each of the two big braziers, which gave off a bright blue flame and an odor of a weirdly exciting nature. A grey-blue smoke-mist gathered in a cloud about the whole scene. What was that odor? It was familiar, yet elusive of exact definition. Could it be the little used Fenil, that most desired and most feared drug which gave direct and instant ability to peer beyond the barrier and into the very home of the Gods? And why was it familiar to him?

Slowly the cloud of blue smoke thickened, curdling darkly, lowering heavier, descending now in a slow sinking-wavering thickness of increasing darkness—the line of naked Blue Women posturing between himself and the faces of the waiting warriors parted left and right, giving short sharp cries of a weird, ecstatic intonation, then formed again between himself and the dark stone figure of the ancient, nigh forgotten Megale. Once these Blue Men had worshipped her, seemed now to have perverted and directed the rituals toward their Black God.

The cloud of smoke was nearly black now, descending swiftly. He could scarce make out the rythmical-

ly jerking bodies of the women or the eager grinning faces of the squatting warriors.

Far off he heard a single scream, high and piercing. He strained every muscle against the heavy leather thongs. That was the voice of Nela! But the sound trailed off into seeming vast distance, the figures of the avid priestesses about him seemed to waver into transparency and gradually disappear altogether.

HE TURNED his head left and right—gigantic and weird shapes loomed now where had been before only the webbed dark walls of the old temple; overhead a strange dark sky stretched into infinity. Starless, yet not black—this was not earth's sky as he knew it!

The incantation and ritual had given him to that dark cloud, drawing—drawing upon his body! He still felt this drawing, a sense of traveling that was not traveling, but a change! This world of blue and grey shadows, these vast and ancient shapes that were somehow strangely alive—and there, directly above him, the amorphous and utterly hideous shape that he recognized from the many drawings and depictions he had seen of the thing—the Black God himself!

Jaron did not speak. A great wonder he had never wholly believed had come to pass. He had been drawn into the world inhabited only by the undying Gods!.

But it seemed he was not to enjoy the hospitality of the place for long. The powerful tentacles of the black round that was Ennu's patron God—picked him up, the thongs that had bound him were here non-existent. Jaron struggled mightily against the vast strength in those black arms.

The *thing*—Jaron sensed its utter dense being, its completely animal

nature! Why, it was only a hunger and a will to be fed—It bore him swiftly to its faceless upper body. As it pressed Jaron against the rubbery surface, he felt the strength flow out of him. The thing was feeding on him, yet no bones were broken, no blood flowed—it just drew steadily at the life of him. The strength ran out of him, weakness came, dimly, he watched the ugly shape that was death itself helpless to even struggle.

THROUGH his weakness, through the repulsion that had seemed to replace the very soul of him—through all his body—shot suddenly a fiery glory of blue and green and orange! A voice sounded in his head, the voice of Cyre!

Jaron felt himself fall, weakly he tried to land on his feet, but only fell sprawling and lay like a dead man.

His eyes rolled; he had fallen on his back. Above him two titanic forces, two beings beyond his understanding—were locked in a strange battle.

The fiery orange and shimmering greens of Cyre wove a pattern of lightning strokes that struck and struck again at a great and evil blackness that slowly retreated into itself, driven back and back.

Strength came feebly back into his limbs. Jaron sat up.

"Gods cannot kill each other, Jaron. This world of ours is governed by laws wholly different from your own. You must help Cyre this night, for our existence is interlocked with the mental life of the men of your earth. Do you understand?"

"I must help you, yes. What am I to do?"

"Our existence is a creation of many ages of belief. There is a spring, a flow of energy, from the minds of men, which creates and nourishes

us. In this level of existence, life depends on a continued supply of this unseen product of men's thoughts. You can destroy the Black God if you will do as I command, implicitly obeying me."

Jaron looked at the radiant being that was Cyre. Her form was woman-like, yet strangely vast and mysterious here, not like the image of her he had seen in the throne room of the palace at Dorn. Her body was a radiant pillar of shimmering fires, and over it was a cloak of brilliant shifting greens that moved and writhed with a life of its own.

From under this cloak she produced a shining length of radiance, woven fibres that gleamed and moved in her long inhuman hands. This she tossed to Jaron, and as it struck his body, an ecstatic stimulation flowed from its surface into his limbs. Strength mounted exultantly in him—a strength not like his own steady pulse of life, but one that was leaping and inexhaustible. This was something of her own life-strength she was giving him, Jaron sensed. And as he drew the weirdly lovely fabric about his shoulders, belting it about his waist, his mind became swiftly more and more acute. He felt the terrific strain that lay between the threat of the Black God and the resisting strength of Cyre.

"I can only hold him thus for a short time. I cannot really harm him, his roots are deep in the minds and bodies of the Blue men who serve him. You must go back to the old Temple of Megale, and there by your work convince the Blue Men that the Black God is but a trick of Ennu's and does not really have any power or existence except by Ennu's wizardry. Your presence after you have been given to the Black God will prove to them that he lies about the nature of the Black God. If they believe you,

the roots of the Black God's strength will suddenly wither and die—and my will then will become supreme here and in your world. My Fire Globe is an instrument designed by me to focus and use these unseen and little known roots of God-life. And with the Black God weakened—I may destroy him. Now go, and my cloak will give you strength to do what must be done."

A sudden flood of the shimmering green light enveloped Jaron; he felt again that traveling that was only a change—and once more he found himself upon the long dark stone of the ancient altar to a forgotten Goddess. The thongs that had bound him lay idly across the stone, his previous dematerialization had left his bonds fall out of position.

Jaron leaped to his feet upon the stone altar, holding his arms aloft in a sudden relief and triumph over the hideous threat of death that had so nearly absorbed him.

Ennu still stood with his hands over the brazier just as before. The line of women behind the altar still stood frozen in the same lewd postures—no time seemed to have elapsed!

QUITE suddenly time seemed to take a grip. In front of Jaron's eyes, women went on with the lewd dance, Ennu's hands came back from the fires' glow and darted to his waist to tug out a dagger.

A prolonged sigh from the waiting warriors mounted into a cry of disbelief—one had returned from the place-of-no-return! Their expression, repeated on each fierce face—was one of stupefied and unbelieving surprise.

Jaron laughed, a great booming sound of triumph, of wild elation. He pointed to the far dark archway. There the blue and orange and green

glimmerings of the Fire Globe grew stronger even as he pointed.

Though the open archway the globe floated, touched for an instant the floor—then ascended to the dark roof. It hung there in a splendor blinding to the eyes. Then it slowly descended to hang again just between and above the heads of Jaron and Ennu.

Ennu gave a terrible cry of rage. He flung a handful of the strange blue powder upon the surface of the Globe. It sputtered there for an instant. Then the blue cloud of smoke ascended wearily, in a thin spiral. The blue flame of it went out—deadened by some quality of the Globe fires.

Jaron shouted—"Men, warriors, women of the Blue horde! Listen to me! This black God that your false wizard Ennu has been foisting upon you—is no God at all! A God cannot die! Just now I saw him die at the hands of his own Cyre, Goddess of the Fire Globe! The Black God disappeared before her strength as a wisp of smoke! For—he was but a conjured apparition of this Ennu's creation and no true God at all! Ennu has lied to you!"

For an instant their anger at his words struggled with the slow fire of disbelief that swept their minds. Had this man not just returned from the land of the Gods? Had they not seen him given to their own Black God—and yet return unharmed? How then could his own words be anything but true words?

Ennu, quite aware of Jaron's intent and the possibilities inherent in his destruction of the Blue hordes belief in the Black God cried out: "Oh my followers, this man but seeks to trick you into unbelief, so your own feared God will desert your unbelieving selves and leave you at the mercy of Cyre—who is not at all the Goddess of the Blue Men. Do not listen to this trickery..."

But his words were drowned in a roar of anger from the warriors who were tugging out swords and clubs and the short curved knives of their bush-work!

Jaron was not sure toward whom their anger was directed until a thrown knife grazed Ennu's shoulder and spun hissing into the surface of the Fire Globe, disappearing there as a globule of shining, melting metal.

ENNU spun in a fierce-eyed mental concentration, his hands smooth and unhurried as he muttered a spell. He flung down upon the floor the Charm of the Seven Sisters.

From each of the tiny hideous dried heads a quick flame wisped upward, grew with blinding rapidity into a shape! And there stood facing the Blue warriors seven malevolent Demonesses, their long scaled bodies red as fire, their talons darting in and out of their clawed hands as a cat's claws reaching!

Their wide and capable mouths gaped in hungry snarls. Those who had seen the seven sisters in action before began to crush backward upon the forward pushing mob of warriors. Those who were ignorant pushed close—were seized, raked, disemboweled and flung smoking to the floor there before them all!

Jaron held his nose to keep out the vile smell of burning brimstone, of charnelhouse and of grave that swept from the bodies of the seven deadly sisters. Then he realized that this was no time to stand idly by—but better to put out of commission such a potent sorcerer before worse followed.

Jaron leaped half across the space between himself and the still busily muttering, gyrating sorcerer. He had only his two empty hands to attack Ennu—hardly the thing, but perhaps sorcerers were better killed by hand

than by steel!

Ennu tugged loose his silver mace, flung it to the floor in front of Jaron. From it spread out a web of fiery little dartings, and among that web of fiery streamers a shape began to form.

It was a vast worm's head opening a bone-ridged maw big enough to engulf three Jarons—its body stretching out of sight into some dimension known only to wizards and their peers.

In Jaron's head the singing vibrance of Cyre's voice sounded— "Kick the mace toward the foul Ennu, 'twill turn the work against the worker—" and Jaron sidled, ducked the reaching thick head of the worm, with his foot kicking the deadly little mace toward Ennu.

As Ennu sprang aside to avoid the flying mace, Jaron was on him, his hands reached and closed till his fingers locked about the bony sinewed neck.

But there was now a fiery flood of strength pouring through this Wizard from some unearthly source, and try as he might Jaron could only cling, but not harm him. Ennu, not trying to fight as men fight, but wrapped wholly in his own weird methods of magic, tugged open a scrip at his belt, took out another powder, green in color—and flung a handful toward the Fire Globe.

As the powder struck the Globe Jaron heard a terrifying, heart-rending scream, the scream of a Goddess in agony—in some way that evil sorcerer had struck at her through the Globe that was her instrument.

Even as he heard her scream, the weakness swept again through Jaron's body as it had when the Black God drained him, the cloak that had clung about his back with an ecstatically strengthening life of its own—fell limp!

With his last strength Jaron thrust

a foot behind Ennu, and managed to fall forward against him. Ennu fell over Jaron's leg and lay now across his thigh, his throat still clasped in Jaron's fast-weakening grasp.

Ennu's eyes, before now sure and fiery with certain eventual victory—were the only things Jaron could see in the dimness that had now come upon him. There was no flow of strength from his Goddess Cyre, there was no thing on earth but the eyes of this foul wizard and his neck between Jaron's hands.

INTO Ennu's eyes came a fear, and bent back as he was over Jaron's leg, his own hands could not claw yet another magical tool from his belt. So Ennu came to the last resort—his own two eyes and their power over men's minds.

In front of Jaron the eyes of Ennu became two black absorbent pits of darkness. Jaron's mind whirled, weakness grew, but still he pressed the priest back and back, his spine creaked across Jaron's leg. Jaron squeezed harder on the struggling neck.

Those two eyes became to Jaron avenues to death. He tried to tug his gaze away from them. But it was of no use, and the slow little dim thinkings that was all that was left of Jaron told him—"either break his back or he breaks your mind. He has upon him the crystal of malnesite—and no man's mind can stand the eyes of one who controls that power."

Back and back he pressed the shoulders of the wizard, and darker and darker grew the mind of Jaron, and it was not Jaron who heard the wizard's spine snap, but the fierce warriors waiting. They cried out in a vast shout of admiration for the mere man who could slay a wizard with his bare hands. Jaron heard it not at all, but lay unconscious upon

the floor, the strength and the wits of him drained...

BUT a second elapsed in this unconsciousness. Then within his mind a soft and far-off voice vibrated in lovely notes:

"Thank you, oh, thank you, Jaron of Korl. Noble have you proved yourself. The fire-drug that Ennu flung through the Fire Globe struck me powerless for a space. Without you Ennu would have revived the Blue Men's faith in their God—and our cause would have been lost. I give thanks to the man-strength in you that has saved us all."

With Cyre's voice came flooding back into Jaron's body the ecstatic strength—quick with little laughing lights all through him alien and utterly sylphic—from the gleaming cloak she had given him. Jaron bounded to his feet, facing the close-pressing mass of fierce yet smiling faces of the Blue warriors.

The mass of warriors shouted in unison: "Hail the new God—Hail!"

With an irresistible rush they swarmed over him, tossed him aloft on their muscled shoulders, bore him about the gloomy chambers of the Temple, did not cease their jubilant march till the sun's morning light struck into the clearing. When they at last put him down before the embers of the great log fire at the temple entrance, somehow the shadow of the Black God's power had completely lifted from that temple and from the people.

Jaron stood with his back to the fire, his arms uplifted—acting out the part they had given him to play.

"As your new God, I proclaim to-day the great feasting day of the Blue Horde, and may it ever after be the day that my divinity is celebrated! Now bring to me the woman who came here with me, that together we

may celebrate this joyful occasion."

Nela was brought, still wrapped about with her bindings, and Jaron himself cut her loose, sat beside her where they had brought piles of moss to the fireside. The big-framed Blue women brought water, bathed her face and body—brought hot food and wine.

After Nela had somewhat repaired her appearance, she drank down a great bowl of the blue wine, and gave a laugh of pure relief and joy. The Blue women laughed too, echoing her own bright relief and the last dark mists of the sprit of evil seemed to lift from the clearing and from the faces of the Blue men and women.

After a time, as the musicians got again into swing, and the dancers again began to sway and posture—after Jaron had eaten, and Nela felt the weariness somewhat driven away by the wine—she nestled closer to Jaron's shoulder, looking up at him.

"Now Cyre will have her Fire Globe and ourselves again be the keepers of the Globe. Our troubles are over for a time..."

"Have you decided that question which you came to decide?" asked Jaron, smiling down with just a trace of God-like condescension.

"Oh, yes, I have decided, Jaron."

Jaron looked for a time at her now sleepy eyes, at the new-combed red-gold curling hair—at the ivory whiteness of her limbs lovely as a master's marble, even though scratched and bruised. He thought too of something very valuable to a man—his own freedom. And he thought of the immortal beauty of mysterious Cyre, of the strange and lovely flames that were delight entire...

So it was that Jaron of Korl won for himself an immortal protectress and mentor—and failed to fall completely slave to the soft snares of a Queen.

PROJECT

By JACK HESS

It was man's greatest undertaking — the attempt to communicate with the other worlds of the vast universe . . .

FOREWORD

Anybody who writes a satire which is a distinct poop at the human race—poops at himself at the same time. He is no longer adolescent, but a mature being and has arrived at a true state of humility.

Such satire is the other side of the psychological coin...a rebuttal to those who believe men are somewhat godlike. It destroys the quality of self-importance and gives HOMO SAPIENS a healthy opportunity to laugh at himself. Having done so he may find new dignity. In this non-sensical story about a ridiculous species, the author exposes, in a series of absurd and imaginative happenings the triviality of human impulses and reactions.

Neitzsche's shopworn "Human, All Too Human" takes new meaning as the phenomenon known as World Project unfolds. All the happenings occur between 1950 and 1954. For that reason, all the characters are purely fictional and all the gaudy events are in the realm of sheer fantasy. The implications of this story can only be dismissed when man reaches the stars.

* * *

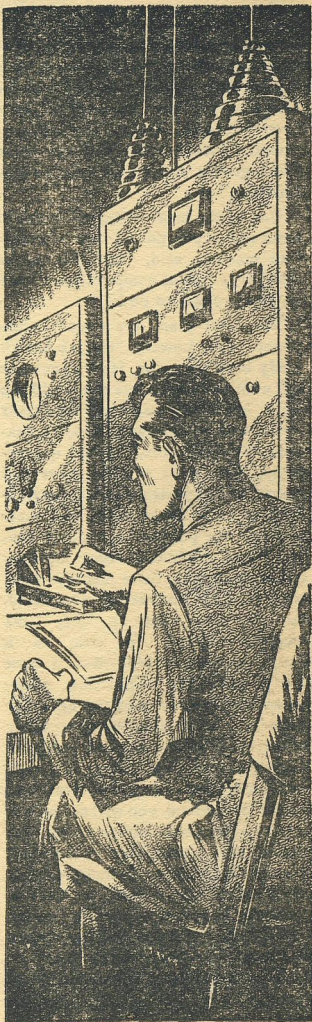
NOBODY knows at which time in his life Edward Lowery began to amass the mighty fortune which after his death was dissi-

pated by World Project. Lowery was one of those fabulously wealthy industrialists who came out of the slums of a big metropolis. He began to pyramid his money from an early and successful business; then he assumed control of another... then another. He was dogged by good luck and wound up, in his declining years, as the head of a vast system of interlocking directorates. He was unquestionably the richest man in the world.

There is a philosophical ferment which works within the soul of almost every man as the cemetery heaves into view. Either arterio-sclerosis makes him seek his God or else to adopt some disease as a target for his philanthropies. This ferment apparently reached the boiling point in Lowery in the summer of 1950. At that time he gathered together a group of lawyers—eight men accepted as legal experts in the field of probates and wills. Lowery did not want the magnificent and grandiose idea he had conceived to be contested by a group of remote and avaricious relatives. He faced the group of notable lawyers from his hospital bed in New York and said,

"I want it done *my way*! There will be no foolproof will, but a settlement *before* I die. Here is a carefully prepared list with the names and locations of every one of my relatives. Find them! Have them abrogate all interest in the monies I will leave after my departure from this earth. Each is to receive a sum in *cash* and the amounts are to be placed against their names. They will have to sign away all interest in my estate. If I

He began to send thin, piping symbols into infinity . . . $1+1=2$, $2+2=4$, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 . . .



have to pay more to one than another, it doesn't matter. What I want, as a lasting tribute to my memory is the fact that I, Edward Lowery, will have been responsible for the first communication between man and any other intelligences which may exist in this universe."

One of the legal eagles, with list in hand and a pen poised in a business-like manner, said, "But this seems mad! It is full of complications. How do you propose to do it?"

"My first plans are already completed," said Lowery, "the job has already been set going. Here is another list with the ample fees to be paid the most brilliant scientists in their fields, men with international reputations. You will note," he said quaveringly, "that most of them have had contact and experience in the development of radio broadcasting and electronics." He pointed to another lawyer. "You, Fielding, know the contracts made with these men are valid until World Project is completed, for you drew them up. They have accepted—and—" he rose to a sitting position in his bed—"I want you to share my belief that somewhere in the far reaches of space there are other intelligences, other forms of life. We are not going to reach them by mere words, for they would not understand, but Professor Grabowitz—whom you will concede is a top-flight mathematician—has explained that a repetition of a simple sum in arithmetic, grammar-school mathematics, will suffice. All that is necessary as a first contact is the indubitable fact that one plus one equals two; two plus two equals four; if there is intelligence anywhere, they will understand our message—perhaps realize we are trying to reach them... in a spirit of brotherhood...and love!"

LOWERY died exactly three weeks later and the fat headlines of the nation and the world blazoned the details of his audacious plan. Columnists speculated on its implications and the Board of Scientists was already assembled in plush New York offices, with all their financial futures resolved. The reporters gathered and battered them with innumerable questions. All the peoples of the Earth were intrigued, and every reporter, editor, and publisher knew it. They queried and demanded details:

"Is it practicable?"

"How long will it take?"

"Will you tell us how it will be brought about?"

Black clouds of doubt formed, the lighting struck, there was a storm of protest. Editorials denounced the spending of such an extravagant sum for a dubious experiment while millions were diseased, starving and displaced. Many altruistic organizations, soliciting donations for the discoveries of cures for various diseases, took to print and radio, denouncing the dead man. They pleaded with legal lights to find various ways and means to get portions of the vast estate for more practical uses.

The purchase of some 3,000 acres in an arid and desolate portion of a western State, upon which it was intended to construct a super-powered broadcasting station, became the signal for further yammering and outcries. Eight of the relatives tried to break the Last Will and Testament of Edward Lowery, although they had received a competence from its provisions and had all signed documents stipulating they were satisfied with their share. The case went from lower court to higher court, a legal tangle which was finally resolved by the Supreme Court which sat with all solemnity in the nation's capital. They

declared the will unbreakable in early 1951. There was, of course, only one dissenting vote.

Meanwhile the tract purchased began to spring into furious life and "World Project" had become a fact and an issue. A spur railroad was hastily built and a boom town spread with increasing population. It was now generally referred to as W. P.

But first there had to be power—high voltages of such terrific potencies that, channeled into the vast broadcasting apparatus, the grammar school arithmetic could be broadcast to incalculable depths of space—to the Sister planets; the moon, Saturn, Jupiter Mars, Venus—and to even more hitherto unreachable realms, to Betelgeuse, Andromeda, and the star clusters that fringed the known universe. As the President of the Board of Scientists said:

"Who can tell—there may be life in some form anywhere. They will certainly hear us, perhaps they will reply."

TO GET the power needed, a dam had to be built at nearby Pratt Falls, whose furious streams of water could turn the dynamos and provide the force W. P. needed.

Unfortunately, it was necessary to get government permission to construct the dam and to carry the cables over federal terrain to World Project City. Congressman Bendy introduced the bill into Congress and there were immediate political repercussions of astounding proportions. Said one southern Congressman:

"How do we know the culmination of this massive project will not seriously affect the superiority of the white race? We know nothing of life beyond our earth, or what impossible forms it may take. The men, or monstrosities, on Venus may be green, or blue, or—" and he visibly

shuddered "black!" I'm against this bill, as will be all Southern Gentlemen who want to protect the honor of white womanhood. It is a piece of damnyankee chicanery!"

In the winter of 1952 the oratory in Washington was still hot and persistent. The bill had been relegated to a committee, which had relegated it to another committee. There were three filibusters. Before Christmas of the same year, the supporters of World Project felt they had a sure majority, but a sudden blow was dealt to the bill's passage. For the House Un-American Activities Committee suddenly subpoenaed all the scientists because they feared subversive elements might be active in their midst. "Barnyard" Johnson made this suspicion clear when he pointed an accusing finger at a nuclear physicist.

"Can you assure me," said "Barnyard", "this is not a Communist plot; that, not satisfied with spreading Red propaganda throughout the world, some of you reds and pinks are now conspiring to broadcast the Communist Manifesto to the infinite reaches of space? Can you guarantee, sir, that you are not trying to mold a Communist universe?"

The bill passed one snowy night while many Congressmen were absent and others dozing. Congress had wearied itself out; months of oratory had taken their toll. Butter had gone to \$1.50 a pound and the stupid public somehow considered this important. No sooner did international headlines tell the peoples of the Earth that World Project was to become a reality, than there came an expected riposte from Moscow. Comrade Krishofsky, Hero of the Soviet Union, using every broadcasting station in Russia plus the front pages of *Pravda* and *Red Star* made the Soviets' position abundantly clear.

"This is a capitalist, imperialist at-

tack upon planetary proletarians. Imperialistic capitalism, not satisfied with the hunger, poverty and degradation handed the peoples of this world—with the exception of the Soviet Union—are actually seeking new worlds to conquer. Marx, Lenin, Engels and Stalin said nothing about this but. . . .”

The President of the United States, with one eye cocked on the coming election, made instant rebuttal. The international debate had now reached a point where war seemed inevitable. Masses of troops were moved to borders after midnight. There was talk about THE BOMB. But World Project, which had been busily grading and pouring cement in World Project City, had received its legislative “Go” sign. Thousands of newly enlisted laborers now descended on Pratt Falls and began the dam. Grotesque pieces of paraphernalia and equipment headed west and another spur to the railroad had to be put in operation. One Sunday evening, Harman Dorman, the conductor of a radio church of no particular denomination, broadcasting as a guest from a southern capital, called upon all the peoples of the world to rise and stop the horrible blasphemy known as World Project, in its tracks:

“The power to be thrown into this broadcast is so great that, thrusting upward and outward, it may well reach the Footstool itself and arouse divine wrath. We are tinkering with immensities and interfering with the Very Will. This will be a crime against Americanism, the Deity and white supremacy.”

He then recited a short prayer. Another man told the listening public they could get the printed speech for 10c.

ALMOST every newspaper throughout the world was now

devoting a daily column to news about World Project, its people, its progress, and its possibility of fulfillment. They disagreed and waxed disputatious on every possible point connected with the project outlined in Edward Lowery's last will and testament.

But the work was going on. Huge cathode tubes, so large they needed two freight cars to carry them, were hauled into World Project City. Masses of raw steel, copper and plastics were dispatched and received into this once desolate tract; now a great city with a population of six figures, numerous taverns, gambling hells, and a neon-lighted, prosperous red-light district. Most of the structures were temporary but all were built around massive towers which dwarfed the Eiffel Tower and made the onlooker gasp with wonderment.

There was a popular song with so soothing a lilt its lyrics had been translated into all languages. Everybody knew and could hum “My World Project Is You.” This song came from every juke-box in every tavern in the country.

In the summer of 1953 the whole experiment ground to a halt. Even the late Edward Lowery's vast fortune wasn't enough to pay for such a project. The Board of Scientists found an able spokesman in Congressman Condin, who dumped the whole mess into the lap of Congress and asked for a loan. This time the Congressmen were not absent; did not doze; and failed to filibuster. The loan (RH 11684A) was turned down. The build-up had been too great; the interest of all the peoples of the world had boiled to an acute tension. Many had already left inheritances in their wills for World Project and the newspapers featured the touching story of a scrubwoman in Duluth who donated \$581.62.

A man noted for his ability to raise large funds on a nationwide scale was brought in by the Board of Scientists of W. P. and a Tag Day was held. Each tag bore the simple slogans "All Life Is My Brother" and "To The Stars". Hundreds of thousands of bustling and frustrated women haunted street corners in every city of the United States rattling star-shaped cartons. The idea spread to London, Paris, Berlin, and all the cities of the world. For some subtle reason even Moscow bowed its head. There was a Tag Day there too.

With these accumulations World Project began to again pour cement, to drill and weld. The fires of its hundreds of furnaces lit the desert with glowing amber and gold. There were now Publicity Departments in every city of the United States and in the most greatly populated centers of the civilized world. They rushed daily press releases to ensure a steady flow of money.

But there were other troubles!

HERMAN Dorman wrote a book proving *The End Was At Hand*.

The Anti-World Project Society started fund-raising activities with the idea of having World Project dismantled.

There was the mystery of the unidentified fleet of planes which flew over World Project City in the early hours of the morning.

One man, who later had to be taken to the World Project City Hospital, saw a flight of flying disks which symbolically informed him that he was the Messiah designated to lead the forces of Anti-World Project.

But finally in midsummer of 1954 almost every last screw was put in place; almost every plate had been bolted. The years of concrete-pouring were about finished and the key blocks of plastic had been inserted.

The power was there too, and now an earnest, bespectacled group of men sat in the broadcasting room in World Project City, knowing the levers within reach of their hands could soon be pressed and evidences of man's intelligence could be flashed across the universe.

Waldo Winjall on his Sunday night broadcast, made a resounding speech praising everyone connected with the idea and said— "the music of spheres is no longer poetry—but will become a reality."

Right at this time, just before the conclusion of the travail which had caused so much confusion and occupied the attention of armies of men for about five years, World Project was again bankrupt. People had been remiss in the making of wills and the world, although its interest was at a peak, did not respond to Tag Days and the former money-raising formulas.

Editorial commentators who had been against the whole thing told their readers that, just as they had repeatedly said, the arithmetic would never go forth. It was a bleak hour. The world was bewildered and dazed. The Board of Scientists was frantic—and pessimistic.

Then came the astounding news that some benefactor had given World Project a huge check, one bearing upon its face a digit and a swarm of zeros which really denoted *Big Money*. The work could be completed and the kindly donor demanded anonymity.

An aroused and excited world now awaited the crucial broadcast. Before the Symbols were to be sent forth, there was to be a battery of notable speakers. The culminating oration was to be a work of art... a chunk of cosmic prose from the typewriters of eleven famous authors, each of whom added to and refurbished the radio

script. Because a slight touch of humor was thought necessary, a "gag" man had been consulted. A protest from the Writers Guild, in which the word "scabs" was used, went unheeded.

The Board of Scientists correctly approximated the excited and exhilarated condition of the world as the result of years of continual news and propaganda. Everybody wanted to listen. Radios were at a premium and loud speakers came to dusty little villages. Finally, it was announced the first signals would go out on November 14, 1954.

AS THE great day approached, the excitement mounted to indescribable heights. Of course there were some preliminary tests. These were made in the early hours of the morning, for the broadcasting mechanism was so powerful that if used at any other time, it would blanket out every network and station in the world. There were some hardy persons who tuned in on these tests around 3 o'clock in the morning and were rewarded by a fearful trembling which threatened to shake their radios to pieces.

Came the Day!

Groups huddled around radios... vast masses of humans congregated in squares beneath the branched horns of loud speakers. It seemed the whole world was listening. The speeches were to be translated into French, German, Russian, Italian, Chinese—in fact every nation and dialect were to hear it in their native tongue. Hundreds of millions of people had their ears cocked—it was the *ultimate Hooper-rating*.

At 7 o'clock that evening the President of the United States made a short speech during which he modestly described W. P. as a triumph for the Party and the Administra-

tion. He was followed by the man chosen, after months of indecision, to read the speech the eminent writers had composed. The choice was Jeremiah Bleater, whose throaty commentaries were thoroughly popular. The re-written and highly polished script was placed in his shaking hands. He followed the President and read the momentous document.

"Ah! there is *great* news tonight, folks," he said. "Mankind, hitherto jailed in its own world, human intelligence, which has so far been reserved for humans, is about to take flight, to reach into the infinites, to seek and find other intelligences with which it can commune."

The sobbing voice became throatier and pregnant with the significant event about to take place.

"When I have finished these last few phrases," he said, "simple mathematics will go forth to the far reaches of the universe, to tell anything sentiment that we, the human race, are here; that despite differences of appearance and abnormalities due to their unfortunate surroundings—we love them—yes, we love them. We are a tolerant folk!"

"But," said Jeremiah, "before these vital signals go out, I am privileged to reveal a secret. You will soon know how it became possible finally to finish World Project and you will know those responsible for the final big check, drawn on the National City Bank (this was a plug), which made it possible. In a few minutes, man will attempt to communicate with his celestial neighbors—but first—"

There followed a quartette of female voices and they went into their act bravely. The tune was lifted—being in public domain. It was "My Bonnie Lies Over The Ocean", the lyrics having been written by some perspiring advertising agency genius.

*My Soapo lies inside the bathtub.
My Soapo is sacred to me.
It killed all my bodily odors
And brought back my sweetie to
me.*

*And brought back my sweetie
to me!*

*Brought back! Brought back!
Brought back my sweetie to me—
to me!*

*Soapo—oh! Soapo—oh!
Brought back my sweetie to me!*

Everybody now knew who had given the final check. World Project had acquired a sponsor. The over-

sweet, precise and sickening voices of the McDonald Sisters came to a cloying, over-rehearsed ending. The tradition of a last slightly offkey note was faithfully followed.

HOMO SAPIENS, a large primate with a nude epidermis, like certain swine and the Chihuahua dog, whose appearance has been roughly likened to a "forked radish," then began to send thin piping symbols into infinity...1 and 1 equals 2, 2 and 2 equals 4, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

The pipings, denoting this intelligence went out—but nothing came back, except a furious crackling of static and a Great Silence. . .

ANTARCTIC ANTICS

By CHARLES RECOUR

THE NAVAL expedition to the South Polar regions last year aroused a tremendous amount of interest. The U.S. has been extremely active in South Polar exploration ever since the researches of Admiral Byrd disclosed the unsuspected richnesses to be found there. Minerals in abundance—coal, uranium, possibly oil. The sinews of modern living buried beneath vast sheets of ice still defy us but in time they will be obtained.

Plans now afoot include many new investigations of this supposed barren land. The interest of foreign nations, notably the Soviet Union, and the habit of the latter to claim territories, is being closely watched by our government. While it is still uneconomical and dangerous to undertake any large industrial operations in those frigid regions, it is reasonable to expect that technology will counteract the conditions and will supply the tools in the near future. Therefore it is necessary for our government to take action in establishing prior rights to the rich lands blanketed by ice.

This is particularly essential in light of the fact that uranium is known to exist in the South Polar regions. True, no actual fields of mines have been found, but study of the radioactivity of the area

leads us to suspect that large quantities will eventually be found. And since uranium may be regarded in the future as the most important single mineral, it behooves us to make sure we get the lion's share of it, if any. Certainly the Soviet Union thinks along those lines.

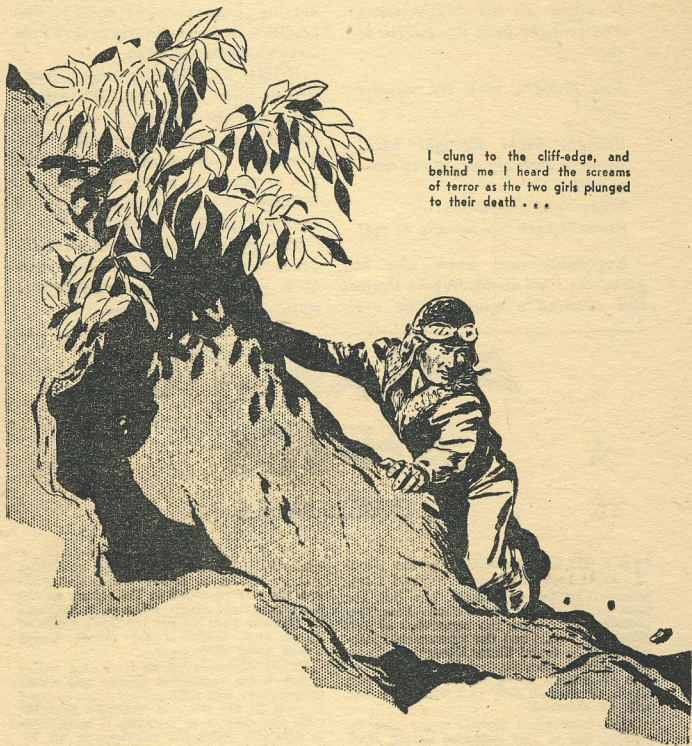
Byrd's discovery of an ice-locked valley within which vegetation existed and whose temperature was surprisingly high, spurred interest in the land. It indicates that beyond the shadow of a doubt, it is possible to establish habitable quarters in an inhospitable land. The Antarctic has claimed the bones of many men, but men of the last two decades with the aid of machines and communications, have to a great extent succeeded in beating the icy monster.

It looks as if the last refuge on earth, the one single spot where Man and his works have not been able to penetrate, is about to succumb. The land of the hardy bird and the penguin, is giving up the ghost and falling beneath the powerful assault of men and his indomitable servants, machines!

The caterpillar tractor and the airplane are the tools—men's brains are the driving elements. Science will not be licked, even by cold and ice!

* * *

The MUSIC of DOOM



I clung to the cliff-edge, and behind me I heard the screams of terror as the two girls plunged to their death . . .

By GILBERT MEAD

Somewhere in the heart of the mountain was strange music—and when it sounded from the hollow depths, it meant a frightful death!

I OPENED my eyes, slowly. In my ears strange music rang, like some barbarous hymn on a silver carillon, weirdly sweet and fiercely harsh. It came from everywhere, or nowhere. Each note struck the sheer cliffs and towering peaks, and the ageless rocks tossed it back and forth, so every new note of the bells seemed to blend with every note already rung, in a mixture of discord and harmony such as no human mind could execute, or even conceive.

I sat up. The lines of my parachute hampered me, and I freed the harness. I looked about me, and knew a moment of disbelief that I could still live. One parachute cord had caught on a thin, ugly finger of rock and flung my body to this narrow ledge. Inches away, a chasm yawned black and deep, and only that one rock finger had saved me.

I had to get a two handed grip on jutting stone before I dared stand. My head was throbbing with pain, and my fingertips found a

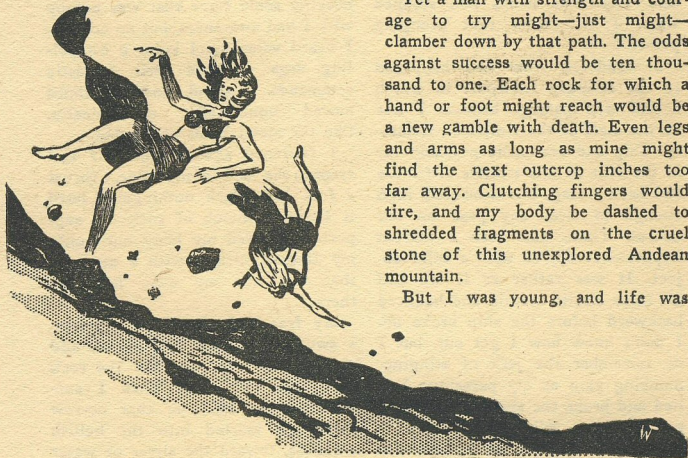
lump behind the left ear to explain the ache. Legs and arms seemed to be in good working order.

But what could legs and arms do here? Where I stood, my ledge was hardly three feet wide. To right and to left, it tapered back to join the flat, stark face of the cliff. Below me—thousands of feet below—a thin thread of water raced between the sheer rock walls. There was no route to the white peak so high above me, and no way down to the canyon floor. No way, except the leap or the fall my body must take when hunger and thirst, or madness, should drive me.

Then I saw a faint ray of hope. The cliff face was not quite as smooth as I had thought. Here and there, at irregular intervals, sharp or knobbed tongues of brown rock licked out from the side of that precipice. Some might have been as large as the shelf on which I stood; some were too small to sustain a sure foothold.

Yet a man with strength and courage to try might—just might—clamber down by that path. The odds against success would be ten thousand to one. Each rock for which a hand or foot might reach would be a new gamble with death. Even legs and arms as long as mine might find the next outcrop inches too far away. Clutching fingers would tire, and my body be dashed to shredded fragments on the cruel stone of this unexplored Andean mountain.

But I was young, and life was



pleasant. One does not welcome death at twenty-four. No American at my age could sit there on that ledge, waiting for death or madness like a trapped mouse, if even the most improbable path to life lay open before him.

To try that perilous descent at once would be suicide. The way was long. The climb would be slow and hard, and already the nearest western peak had bitten into the sun's disk. Within brief minutes, now, my tiny ledge would be in a shadow. Darkness was choking the chasm below me. I could only wait for the hours of sunlight another day would bring.

The tropic night fell quickly. There was no moon, but glowing stars gave a measure of light, and made the canyon and crowding mountains more eerily forbidding. I sat with my back against the rock wall. The luminous dial of my watch said 4:12. The hands had stopped when I fell from that plunging plane.

I wondered what had happened to the military transport in which I had won passage because I was on the staff of the American Embassy. Ship and occupants probably lay at the foot of this terrible cliff. We had been flying, I remembered, high enough to clear any peak on our course. There had been a sudden impact—but not as with a solid object. It was rather as if we had hit some elastic curtain and bounced backward before the ship broke up. I don't know how I got out, but I do remember the jerk of stinging, numbing pain as my parachute belied and broke the shooting speed of my headlong fall.

I felt a moment of sorrow for those others aboard that plane. Yet I was frankly glad that none had been my friend or comrade. And my

own problems demanded all my thought.

Search planes would come out, but even if the wreck were seen, no rescue party could reach this region on foot, and there was no spot where airplane or helicopter could risk a landing. More than one aircraft had vanished into this wilderness of rock.

Suddenly I heard again the weird, unearthly music of silver bells. Once I thought that I heard, too, above the first notes of the carillon, the hum of engines, but the sound died almost instantly. The music grew until it crashed against the mountains. It rose to a terrifying crescendo, like the thunder of inescapable doom, then faded slowly, and died.

MY BODY was stiff with cold. At that altitude, even inside the tropics, nights can be bitter. My mind began to play cruel tricks, obeying some force that was not my will. I had awareness, but no control. I heard voices, and knew a compelling urge to heed their fantastic commands. I stood, and my limbs moved unnaturally, mechanically, like the metal limbs of a robot.

I flattened against the cliff and crept to the end of my ledge. I thrust a foot into black nothingness until it found a thumb of rock for support. I lowered my body until only my fingers, strong with a strength that was not my own, held me there.

My free foot pawed for a perch. I swung the other foot lower, and clawed with one hand for the rock that foot had used. Then I surrendered my hold on that narrow shelf and started into the hellish darkness, toward the sliver of water thousands of feet below.

Dimly I realized that I was doing in darkness what my mind had re-

fused to attempt while yet there was light. Yet I knew no fear. Dimly I knew that some force outside my ken had ordered that frightful descent. Dimly I knew that I had to obey, or go mad.

The starshine was lost between those canyon walls. In that place were only death and the shiek of wind and nothing. Like a thing that was not flesh and blood—like a mindless, soulless zombie—I clambered downward, with no thought for where I went.

I yielded one hold and found another. How far I might have gone I could not guess, and did not greatly care. Once a foot missed its perch. One hand lost its grip, and I hung between heaven and hell, but even then I nursed no fear because my mind was not wholly my own. I found new holds, and continued my journey.

I found myself on a rock shelf like that from which I had started, but much larger. This ledge was at least eight feet wide, and it ran away in either direction almost as far as I could see.

See! I *could* see! A faint but real luminescence glowed all about me, marking the limits of my platform, throwing a grotesque shadow of my big body outward to merge with the canyon's blackness.

I sought the source of that eerie light, and saw a sharply bright rectangle of luminescence against the face of the cliff. I turned toward the glow, moved toward it. And some unseen thing reached from within that rectangle of light and seized me in its clawed grasp. My body went limp. My dulled mind went blank.

I AWOKE in a small room of solid rock. There was no window, and

no discoverable door. The room held me, and nothing else. It was lighted by the weird luminescence I had seen on the cliff shelf, yet the glow had no detectable source.

I got to my feet, and my form threw no shadow anywhere. The light came with equal intensity from every possible point on walls, floor, and ceiling; my body was denied a shadow because it could not block the flow of light anywhere.

Then I heard again one of the voices that had driven me here, and I had to obey it. I lay on my back, as the voice bade me, and slowly my questing mind surrendered its right to think. The voice spoke softly, insistently, and there was no escape from it. Whence it came, I did not know, but its purpose was clear.

"I, *del*. You, *dik*. He, *dan*. She, *dor*... Go, *brad*. Come, *stree*. Speak, *wid*."

The voice carried on, in English and some unknown language. No word was ever repeated. There was no pause, that I might try a word on my own tongue. Yet every word and phrase and sentence was being pressed into my mind, and I knew—as if my unseen tutor meant me to know—that the speech I was learning would be forever as completely mine as that I had used since babyhood.

The lesson ended. My mind was my own again, but my body was still a prisoner. I wondered how long I had been in that room—but what mattered time? Could time even exist where never a sun could rise, or a far star glow, to measure the march of hours?

I thought of food, and almost before the thought was fully formed, a section of rock wall slid aside to reveal a narrow tunnel. The tunnel

was empty.

"Eat," a voice said in the new tongue I had learned, and a laden tray appeared to float in air before me. The tray and the dishes it bore were fashioned of beaten gold, and in the dishes were meats and steaming vegetables, and a liquid that smelled like tea.

"If you are hungry, eat," the voice insisted.

The voice seemed to come from directly behind and above the tray, but I saw no one. I stared at the food, and the impossibility of what I was seeing robbed me of power to move.

"Take this tray," the voice commanded, and in the words was an angry impatience.

I reached for the food, and felt the very real weight of the loaded tray in my hands. I glanced up, and the rock wall was slipping silently into place. I set the tray down and hurried across the room, but found no trace of crack or seam or joint in the solid rock. I sat on the floor and ate the food and found it good.

AGAIN, TIME passed. Or, again, there was no time. My mind seemed to be my own, as if for the moment my captors had no need to deprive me of it. I dug into all I knew of memory and reason for some explanation of the events of these last unbelievable hours.

Memory was useless. Nothing in my experience—nothing in any human experience of which I knew—held a key to this mystery. Logic and reason were helpless, too. It just was not possible to explain disembodied voices that sent a man down the face of a frightening precipice in Stygian darkness. No logic justified light that had no source and permitted no shadow, sliding walls free of seam or joint, unseen

tutors who drove strange words into a captive and plastic mind. Reason refused to say how servants, invisible to human eyes, brought food before the wish for food was shaped.

Once, men of earth had believed in creatures with powers such as these, and had called the creatures jinns and leprechauns and elves. But this was the twentieth century, when man put no credence in things his vast and growing science denied.

Then horror seized me. There were still people who believed fantastic, impossible things, who built impossible worlds for their minds to dwell in, who heard voices inaudible to anyone else and obeyed those voices' commands. Sane men called such people crazy and held them in homes that were little more than prisons.

So I was crazy! This was a hopeless maniac's cell, bare of any article with which the inmate might harm himself or his keepers. Memory itself was a liar, and I had never been secretary in an American Embassy. There had been no plane crash, no terrifying crawl down the side of a cliff. The new language was a crazy man's imagined gibberish. Perhaps I was not even Otis Margate, but someone else, of whose existence I had no longer any recollection.

"No," a voice said. "You are not crazy, even by stupid Earth standards of sanity." The voice chuckled, and its very sound, coming from nowhere, persuaded me that I was in truth insane.

"You are not crazy," the voice insisted. "Here you will learn things that earth men call insane fantasies, and when you leave you will serve the lords of Yont gladly, because you will recognize the superiority of our knowledge and our ways over

the primitive science and barbarous customs of Earth. You will be a great chief among the earth slaves of the Yonts."

"I shall never be a slave," I denied, stubbornly. "I was born a free American, and I shall die one. Dying here, or somewhere else, matters little, but at least I shall die free."

The voice taunted me with mocking laughter.

"Are you free now? Would you die free, here? Is your mind your own, except when we choose that it shall be? Or your will? Did you come down the cliff because Otis Margate willed it?"

My shoulders sagged. I began to believe again in my insanity; the mere existence of that disembodied voice proved it. Then the voice was laughing again, but not in mockery. There was something both friendly and patronizing in its tones.

"You will relish your service. You will know it an honor to serve the great ones of Yont. And the men of earth will not even understand that they are slaves, for a slave, in their finite minds, must see his master to see his slavery. They will count you a ruler and call you great, for we shall govern the men of earth through you, and through those others whom we are shaping to our use."

So that was it. "Here is a world. I shall make you master of it, if you serve me....and serve me you must, rebel as you may."

TIME PASSED—or timelessness. The thought of food brought a golden tray carried by an unseen Yont. I lay on the floor, and the Yonts took my mind and did what they would with it. When that mind became my own again, I knew once more that I was insane. At least, I believed that I was insane—and

where is the boundary line between sure knowledge and implicit belief?

When the Yonts had my mind, I traveled with them through the reaches of space to where twelve asteroids swung in long, eccentric orbits within the powerful influence of Jupiter. On one of them I saw great cities where creatures vaguely like men labored at tasks which could not possibly serve their own brutish needs. Slaves, these. Such slaves as the Yonts would make of the men of earth.

No visible life moved, except the slaves, in those cities of stone and metal. Periodically, unseen guards herded the slaves into underground dungeons for sleep and food, and the huge surface buildings remained always, apparently, untenanted. But I knew that invisible Yonts had their being there.

On my third trip to the asteroid I saw a raiding force of flat, circular space ships swoop out of the purple sky. As they entered the shallow atmosphere of Yont I heard again the weird music as of silver bells. I saw the space ships—from where I knew not—literally bounce upward from some elastic net of force. I saw them break into bits, saw bodies flung from them.

Then I knew how the Yonts defended their domains against attack. I knew what had destroyed the plane in which I flew. I knew that no earth force could ever reach me in my Andean cell. That unseen silver carillon was playing the music of doom.

The Yonts gave me back my mind, and anger filled it. Yes, and fear for what these beings might do to earth when they seized it. Slowly, a plan took shape in my thoughts. Deliberately, I formed a mental demand for food. The rock wall

empty. Yont voices were busy with snatches of conversation that died as I appeared with my unseen guards. I was marched to the far end of the hall, where a dais ran across from wall to wall, and there I was halted. From the dais a Yont voice addressed me in tones of obdurate authority.

"You are a fool, Otis Margate. All earth men are fools, some more than others. Among the prisoners who have fallen to us here, a few have learned wisdom, and those few shall rule earth for us, very soon. We have hoped that you would be one of these.

"That you tried to escape from us, we do not hold against you, but we must let you see that escape is hopeless. In the hundred earth years during which we have held this place and prepared to colonize earth, no one has ever escaped. Many have tried; those who did not try were made into such slaves as you saw on Yont, because men without courage are useless to us. Those who tried more than once to flee were likewise enslaved, because we cannot trust men who defy us after they know our power.

"You are intelligent, for an earth creature. We can use you. But if you should seek again to escape—"

"I am a free American," I began again. "I—"

"You are an earth creature. What matters it to us, which side of a shallow pond your family inhabits?"

I WOULD have spoken once more, but unbelieving shock choked the words in my throat. Across the dais moved a procession of human beings, and I could see them. Thirty of them. Twenty-eight men and two women. Creatures like me, in assorted costumes that might have

opened—and I made a dash for the tunnel entrance.

I reached the opening. Before me the empty tunnel stretched. I took two running strides into the corridor, and struck against some unseen obstacle. I heard a vicious curse. Something that might have been cold metal claws closed on my ankles and threw me headlong. Other claws tore at my wrists and twisted my arms behind me. I felt myself carried back into my cell and dropped there. The solid rock wall closed off the tunnel again.

On my ankles were metal rings very like earthmen's handcuffs, linked with a short length of chain. My hands, I knew, were held in similar manacles. On the floor, within easy reach, yet beyond my power to taste it unless I chose to eat like an animal, was the food I had asked for. Food in golden bowls on a golden tray.

WHAT happened next was not calculated to make me think myself sane. The wall opened again. A voice commanded me to rise, and before I could obey, bound as I was, four cold claws caught at me—two under each arm—and set me on my feet. I sensed that some Yont walked on either side as I entered the tunnel again, my steps limited now by the inches of chain. I wondered whether or not the sheer tunnel walls concealed other cells like mine. We passed several open rooms as bare as mine, but whether they were occupied by invisible Yonts, or waited empty for other prisoners, came into a great vaulted hall, and all about me was the strange luminescence that came from everywhere and nowhere.

There was no furniture in that vast room, but the place was not

come from all the generations of a century and more. Dark men and fair men, but all with white skins. Tall men and short men. Men who smiled at me and men who scowled. Men whose faces betrayed no emotion that I could read. Each one studied me, but none spoke.

The two women were beautiful, and as unlike each other as day and night. One was large and tall and fully fashioned, with ash blonde hair and a skin fair as wild rose petals. The other was small and dark and dainty, with alluring curves that only suggested what the other's flaunted. The dark girl wore such a gown, in the red of rich wine, as I had seen in paintings of women of 1850. The fair one wore a dress that might have been made since World War II. Both looked intently at me, and both smiled, and I thought that the large one actually winked.

Then the procession had passed out of sight, and the memory of it seemed an hallucination—but the voice was speaking from the dais again.

"Otis Margate has seen those who serve us. Let him see now the creatures who slave for the Yonts."

My guards steered me out of that room and into another tunnel that ran in a direction opposite to that which led to my cell. I shuffled along as best I could. The will to resist was almost gone from me; what I had seen and heard meant only that if I were sane I was a hopeless prisoner. If I were crazy—well, what escape could I find, alone, from madness?

We must have traveled a full half mile, straight through the heart of that mountain on which my plane had crashed. At the end of the long tunnel (from which other tunnels

branched at intervals) a wall loomed. As we approached, the wall slid aside, and I stood with my unseen guards on another rock shelf in the open air.

But now no ugly, frightening chasm dropped away at my feet. Before me stretched a great valley hemmed in by towering peaks. A flight of stone steps led down, perhaps a hundred feet, to the floor of that valley, green with summer, and across the valley ran rows of massive stone buildings divided by paved roads. In those roads moved files of men bearing burdens. They moved like mindless things, mechanically. They moved with heads bowed and eyes cast down.

One stumbled and fell. He seemed to try to rise, and fail. He screamed once, as with pain, as if some whip had scourged him. Then his body rose in the air and flew aside like a thrown ball. Another creature took up his burden and plodded on with the file of slaves until they were lost to sight around the corner of a huge stone structure. At my side a Yont spoke.

"Is this the fate you would choose, Otis Margate?"

I made no reply. The Yont apparently expected none. My two guards turned me around and guided me back through the tunnel, back through the vaulted hall, and on along another tunnel to my bare rock cell.

The tunnel entrance stood open while cold claws struck the manacles from my wrists and ankles, then closed as the unseen Yonts vanished through it. I lay on the floor exhausted, too confused to think of how I might attempt escape again, yet stubbornly sure that I could not yield to my captors' demands that I enter their service. I had no desire

for food. I shaped no wish for food. But while I lay there the rock wall opened again.

A GIRL stood before me, smiling. I saw her. One of the two girls who had paraded with twenty-eight men across the dais in the great hall. The wall slid into place behind her, and we were alone together. Alone—unless some invisible Yont had entered with her!

"I am Carlotta," the girl announced, and her smile filled her dark eyes, curved her ripe lips, lighted the darkly oval face in its frame of black hair.

I scrambled erect and stood looking down at her, but my mind was so full of my doubts of my sanity that I could not speak. I could only stare. The girl sat on the floor, with her tiny feet tucked under her, and signed to me to sit beside her.

"Prince Garlok sent me. He—" Before I could ask the obvious question, she answered it. "Chief of the Yont preparatory expedition to earth. It was he who spoke in the council hall."

Still I said nothing. Mental turmoil prohibited speech. Carlotta waited a moment, then went on.

"The Yonts have been preparing to rule the earth for more than a century. They are almost ready to strike. You are perhaps the last earthman chosen to govern earth for the Yonts."

"I'll do nothing of the sort!" I exploded. "The Yonts can—"

Then I shut up. The girl laughed lightly.

"Go on, if you like. I am no bearer of tales."

"Fat lot of difference it makes how you carry tales! The Yonts look into my mind whenever they like, anyway."

"No." Carlotta shook her head.

"The Yonts can seize your mind when they wish, and then you will think as they direct, but they can not receive any message from your mind unless you aim your thoughts at them."

"Nonsense! I have only to think of food—"

"True. And when you do, you are subconsciously projecting the thought to the Yonts because it is they who supply food. Now you are concentrating your thoughts upon me. You thought of food just now—mentioned it—and none came. The Yont in the tunnel, assigned there to receive your thoughts, gets no message from you."

She was right about one thing. I was concentrating my thought upon her. No normal man could do otherwise within the web of her nearness. But why should the Yonts send this lovely human to tell me the limitations of Yont power? There had to be here some hidden trick. Carlotta was laughing at me.

"The Yonts think me wholly their creature. Garlok has sent me to capture your emotions and enlist you irrevocably in Yont service."

I was still skeptical.

"If they can seize my mind, what need to persuade me?"

"They want enthusiastic servants, not mindless robots. You must be persuaded—or reduced to the level of those slaves who are now rebuilding the ancient, lost city you have seen to be the Yont capital on earth." Again the girl paused a little, then continued. "The slaves you saw on the asteroid, and those you saw here, are of two classes: men who rebelled, and men of too low an order to be trained as rulers. Their minds have been permanently taken over."

I shrugged my shoulders. The case looked hopeless.

"Then I'll be a robot. I shall never serve the Yonts willingly."

CARLOTTA laid a small hand on one of my big paws. She meant it for reassurance, but its effect on me was something altogether different. I had to move a little away to keep from making a fool of myself. The girl gave no sign that she noticed my withdrawal.

"You need be no robot. Shield your private thoughts. Aim them at me. I have been here for more than a hundred years, and I have learned almost all that the Yonts know of mind control and thought transference."

"A hundred years!" My tone must have betrayed my disbelief. Now it was she who was crazy! "You don't look twenty. You—"

"My father and I were captured with two Indians in 1844. But ten earth years are as but one to the Yonts, and I have acquired that quality from them. Thus I age but one year in ten among them, and physically I am not yet twenty-one."

I knew that a single year on the Yonts' home asteroid was as long as ten earth years. Could that have anything to do with their longevity? Carlotta's next words drove the thought from my mind.

"My father rebelled against the Yont demands. I was too young to rebel. My father is a robot in the lost city."

As the girl finished speaking, she slid to my side. Her two warm arms encircled my neck and her head fell back as if her parted lips awaited a kiss. In that instant the rock wall slid open. Carlotta set a hand at the back of my head and drew me to her. The door closed, and she tried to free herself, but I was loath to let her go. Her face was flaming.

"Forgive me. Your guard looked in, and I had to show some progress in my mission."

I couldn't make sense of this jumbled mess.

"He may be still here," I argued.

"No. He looked in, but he did not enter. I sense their presence, though I can no more see them than you can." *

We talked on, and I learned much of the Yont plan for enslaving the earth. Each chosen human instrument would be granted some of the Yonts' extraordinary power, and sent out to make himself dictator of his native land. I would sit in Washington and rule the whole United States under Yont direction.

When each dictator had made his own place secure, all would meet in a world congress to establish a world government, and then the Yonts would assume open control from their now secret headquarters here in the unexplored Andes.

"Within a very few days now," Carlotta finished, "the main fleet of Yont space ships will arrive. Yonts will begin to spread through the earth, ready for the time when you and I and twenty-nine other people shall establish their rule for them."

The plan was fiendish—and feasible. It could work. And it *would* work, unless some among us found strength and courage to upset it. To me, just then, the situation looked hopeless for earth.

"Maybe it is," Carlotta conceded. "But we can try."

The rock wall opened again, and she was gone, with a last kiss burning my mouth.

THE YONTs seemed to be very sure of me now. They seized my mind and poured into it what I would

* Yont bodies are made of substances, yet unknown on earth, which do not reflect light rays within our visible spectrum. Such rays pass through their bodies, which are therefore invisible to us. The rays reflected by their bodies are outside the scope of our vision. Their visible spectrum is much wider than ours; the Yonts therefore see all that we do, and much more besides.

need to know to make myself a ruler, and to govern a great nation. In my hours of conscious self-control my thoughts were busy with schemes for destroying the Yonts and their plot, and my attempts to shield my thoughts from them seemed to work; certainly, my captors gave no sign of knowing my secret rebellion. I kept aiming my thoughts at Carlotta, and that was easy; never had I known such loveliness as hers.

After two sleeps, a Yont led me into a room that opened off the tunnel from my cell. On the floor in a semicircle, with their feet tucked under them, sat my fellow humans. Both women were there. Carlotta smiled, and I started toward her, but the large, blonde girl thrust out a hand and pulled me down beside her.

"Watching for you," she began. "I'm Maribel Crouch." The woman spoke in English! She laughed at my astonishment. "I *am* English. My brother Cyril and I have been here a year now."

She gestured across the human arc, and a man of my own age nodded coolly. His smile was chilly and formal. He was as big as his sister, and as blond. Glancing at him, I saw Carlotta again, and wondered whether jealousy, anger or sincere concern explained her expression. Maribel was squeezing my hand.

"We'll see a lot of each other," she promised.

Before I could say anything, an unseen Yont was speaking.

"Who would be a ruler must enlist in his service the cleverest men among already accepted leaders. That we can do for you, by mind control. Each of you must first, however, win a prominent place by demonstration of knowledge, which we supply.

The present disturbed state of world affairs is our opportunity, and

we must move quickly. You, Boknovsky," —a husky man with sandy hair and high cheekbones nodded—"shall have a weapon more terrible than atom bombs. A nation bent on conquest will hail you."

"You, Margate, are our only American. We could not move until an American joined us. To you goes the one sure defense against all weapons, the music of doom. A people eager for peace will count you a savior.

"Crouch, you and your sister will have the secret of cosmic power that makes space flight possible, and you will join forces with Margate because today your nation sees no way out except as the junior partner of the Americans."

Maribel and her brother exchanged swift glances. The man was obviously annoyed by this slight upon his nation. Maribel shrugged her shapely shoulders, and smiled at me, and squeezed my fingers.

To each human the Yont assigned some means of seizing leadership in his own land. And after that meeting my cell was left always open, except when I framed a wish to have it closed, and I wandered at will in the maze of luminescent tunnels and rooms. I saw nothing and no one, except my fellow humans. I talked with Carlotta, and we perfected plans that were doomed to be discarded when the chance to use them arrived. I talked with Maribel, too.

"It is a glorious honor to be chosen a nation's ruler," the Englishwoman suggested as we sat together in my closed room.

"It would be a greater one," I said, "to save a world from other-world aliens."

Maribel studied my face until I grew uncomfortable under the steady, compelling gaze of her big gray eyes. Then:

"For you, I think, I could risk anything. Give up anything, even a

throne." And her caresses were as warm and eager as Carlotta's.

"Be careful of that woman," Carlotta warned once. "I do not trust her."

"Girl!" Maribel scoffed, when the chance offered. "By her own count, she's one hundred fifteen years old."

BUT HOW often can any normal man turn away from the charms of a lovely woman? Who isn't flattered by the earnest attentions of two such creatures? And could any man even remain normal in those caves of eternal luminescence, where unseen creatures of unguessed shape governed all that one did and much that one thought?

I knew that the time of decision was very near at hand when a Yont led me into a vast room which had hitherto been always hidden from me behind blank rock walls. The place was a huge laboratory filled with machines. Some looked like enormous generators. Some suggested fantastic radio hook-ups. Others were built in forms unlike anything I had seen or imagined. When we entered, all were silent. The room might have been a workshop of the dead. It depressed—almost frightened—me.

The invisible Yont technician beside me began to talk, and I knew that here, all about me, was the source of the music of doom.

"The musical notes are a natural phenomenon, Margate. They are merely the audible reports of the air vibrations caused by passage of rays of force past which no metallic object can penetrate. These machines"—he seemed to be indicating the generators—"develop the power to discharge the force rays. And these"—he led me by pressure from his cold claws until I stood beside the weird radio hook-up—"determine the directional flow of the rays. All needed controls are on the instrument panel yonder."

I moved across the room to the huge panel on one wall. It was simply an array of push button switches, each labeled in characters which more nearly resembled Arabic letters than anything else I could think of. And I could read them! The Yonts had pressed even their strange alphabet into my plastic mind.

Vertical. Horizontal. And under that one, four others: *North, East, South, West. Distance, from center,* and in a circular group, *1 krot, 5 krot, 25 krot, 50 krot, 100 krot, 500 krot, 1000 krot.* A krot, I knew, was almost 1000 yards. By punching the proper buttons, the operator could set up a vertical wall of force at almost any selected distance from this mountain laboratory to block invasion. By using all four directional switches, he could box in almost any chosen area. He could lay a horizontal net of force above his refuge, like an invisible roof, at a chosen height. He could build both wall and roof at once if he wished.

The nation which possessed this secret would indeed be as safe from invasion as were the Yonts in their Andean hideout. The man who could bring that secret to his people would surely have in his hands the means to make himself absolute master. *And he might possibly have, too, the means to block the invasion of the Yonts themselves!* I stared in rapt fascination at the buttons on that panel and envisioned their potential meaning. *Power. Quarter. Half. Three quarters. Full.*

My Yont instructor threw a monkey wrench into the machinery of my swiftly developing ideas of salvation for earth.

"For the moment, it is enough that you see how the music of doom is controlled. When you have overcome your tendency to think rebellious thoughts, will be soon enough to teach you the secret of construction

and operation."

With that, he herded me out of the laboratory, and behind me the rock wall sealed the room off again. I glanced about the tunnel, to mark in my mind the exact location of that room, then returned to my cell. I shaped a mental command for the closing of my room and sat alone on the floor trying to puzzle out several things.

THE YONTS were aware that I was not yet wholly their creature. Had Carlotta been wrong about their inability to read thoughts not aimed their way? Had the girl herself betrayed some of the thoughts I expressed to her? Had Maribel Crouch kept suspicion of me alive by reporting my one disloyal (to Yont minds) remark in her hearing?

I began to envision terrible things. Suppose that others among the humans were secretly disloyal to the Yonts, but had not let their disloyalty show as mine had. Suppose that Boknovsky should get possession of the promised weapon, more destructive than atomic bombs, and then use it, not to prepare Yont rule, but to conquer America. Suppose—but there was no use supposing. That way lay insanity...if I was not indeed already completely mad.

Have you ever been hemmed in by powers you could not see, deprived of the opportunity to share any thought with another human lest you destroy yourself and all you love? Can you even imagine the hell of torture and doubt and fear that lived with me through every hour when my mind was my own?

Yet I *had* to do something, if only to escape from this place and warn the world of the fate that lurked in these mountains. That thought made me laugh. If I did escape and told my story, men would certainly call me crazy and lock me up and ignore my

tale, and their doom would be no less sure than it now was.

Then I laughed again, but not for the same reason. I had been overlooking something. Already I had proved a hundred times that I could get my cell door open by wishing it open. Whether it was operated by some mysterious mind-control mechanism, or by some Yont guard or slave at the command of my mind, I did not know, and did not care. My mental command *would* open it. Could I not get into the music-of-doom control room in the same manner? Might I not there learn something more than my one visit had taught me? The place might be guarded—it probably was—but that was a chance I would have to take. One of many chances I must take.

I commanded my cell door to open, and the rock wall slid back. I started along the tunnel. Nothing barred my way. I turned into the corridor that led toward the laboratory—and Carlotta stepped from an open room to touch my arm.

"Otis," she began, "I have—" I tried to shake her off, but she would not be denied. I stepped into the room with her, and she ordered the closing of the door. We were alone.

"The Yonts are coming," she announced, and her face was tense. "All of them. Their space fleet will arrive within the hour, and the whole Yont plot will be put into operation."

I was slow to grasp the terrible import of her words.

"Nonsense," I argued. "They're not ready. Why, you heard Garlok say that they cannot carry out the plot without an American agent, that I am their only American. And just a while ago, one of them warned me that they still doubt me. They can't—"

Carlotta shook her head furiously. "You don't understand. The main body of the Yonts will spread through

the earth, and even if you fail them, they will still have every other important nation on earth under their control, so that your country cannot stand alone against them."

THAT GAVE me pause. For a moment I stared in silence at the lovely woman beside me. When my mind should have been on other things I saw again every delicate line of her face and her body. I touched her hand, and she caught a big finger and held it. If I went from here, this beautiful creature must go with me.

"If I should return to earth conditions," she whispered, reading my thought, "you might see me as I am by earth count. A very old woman who has lived more than a century of earth time." She waited for some reply. There was none I could make. "If I can help you," she said, "I will."

I do not know how long we sat there in silence. There seemed no way to measure time in that maze of eternally luminescent caves.

"If only I knew just when the Yont space fleet would enter earth's atmosphere," I muttered at last, "there is at least one thing I might do before the Yonts get me."

Carlotta did not even ask me what I meant. We sat speechless for another time space. Then Carlotta's senses, attuned to Yont ways for more than a hundred years, told her something I could not have guessed. She leaped to her feet and pulled me up with her. She commanded the door of her room to open, and the tunnel lay before us.

"The space fleet is entering our atmosphere right now," she whispered. "I have caught the thought message from the space fleet commander. It's too late to do anything."

"Maybe not," I said, and ran along the tunnel toward the room where the switches controlling the music of doom. An unseen Yont

blocked my way. I struck against him and bowled him over. I felt one of his claws snatch at my ankle, but managed somehow to break the grip and race on. I made a turn into the next tunnel, and again barged headlong into the invisible body of a Yont. Him I knocked aside, too.

I came to the blank wall behind which lay the control room. Desperately, I wished the door open—and the wall slid back!

I ran to the instrument panel. I punched the button marked *Horizontal*. I punched the distance button and the one labeled *5 krot*. I reached for the power switches, and someone or something took me off my feet with a football tackle.

I could see my assailant. It was Cyril Crouch. I rolled toward him and smashed a fist into his too handsome face. I got a leg free and rammed a knee into his groin. His hold relaxed. I leaped to my feet and jabbed at the button for *Power*. A humming sound filled the place. It rose to a screech, then to a terrifying roar.

Every Yont in that place would be at me within seconds, I knew. Cyril Crouch was coming at me again, and I got in another blow at his face. His own punch missed, almost; it glanced off my cheek. And behind him, his sister Maribel was racing toward me, her beautiful face a twisted mask of rage. Yes, and Carlotta was hanging onto her, trying with her small body to impede the advance of the large Englishwoman.

I managed to stab the button marked *Full*, and the roar of the machines in that room changed gradually to the music of silver bells a thousand times magnified. The music of doom!

I TRIED to fight my way out of that room, and somehow I reached the still open door. Cyril Crouch was

lying on the floor behind me, out from my last blow, but his sister was clawing at me, dragging me, slowing my progress, and Carlotta was fighting Maribel with feet and teeth and hands.

I felt the grasp of unseen claws. I kicked and swung at unseen targets, and some of my blows struck fair; others hit nothing.

"This way, Otis! This way!"

The voice was Carlotta's. She had broken away from Maribel Crouch. I saw her standing in the tunnel, a half dozen yards to my right. I raced toward her—and saw her thrown against the wall by some unseen force—the claws of a Yont, I guessed. I tried to get to her, but other claws seized my arms, and I fought like a madman to break their cold grip. I could not know how many Yont foemen blocked my way, or where they might be. I could only fight, and struggle onward. In the end I must lose, but for the moment, at least, I could still struggle. I reached Carlotta's side, but she shook her head at me, even as some Yont captor dragged her away.

"Leave me!" she commanded. "On down the tunnel—there's a door at the end—you can—" Her words ended abruptly, as if some claw had closed on her throat.

I hesitated an instant, then leaped at the unseen thing which held the girl. The Yont released her and turned on me. I felt my fist smash into some yielding substance that might have been Yont flesh. I grabbed Carlotta in my arms and raced on toward the end of the tunnel. I stood before a blank wall.

Carlotta was gasping for breath.

"Open," she begged. "Command it to"—

In answer to her demand, a section of wall slid back—and there before us lay the ledge from which I had been snatched into the Yont caves. A

narrow ledge, and beyond it a chasm. A sheer rock wall, and at its foot an ugly ravine where a thread of water cut its way.

There was a way down. I knew that. But even if I could make that perilous climb alone. I could not carry Carlotta down. And she could never make that trip herself. I was trapped again, trapped as completely as I had thought myself trapped when I woke to consciousness after my parachute leap.

Strangely, no Yont came to drag me back from that ledge—but someone came. It was Maribel Crouch. The Englishwoman leaped at me, fingers bent like claws, teeth bared like the fangs of a raging beast.

"I might have been Queen of England!" she screamed. "You have robbed me! You and this creature! This hag!"

She tore at Carlotta's body. I tried to fend her off with one shoulder while I laid the weakened Carlotta on the rock shelf. Maribel thrust Carlotta aside with a foot, and the girl who had lived for more than a century among the Yonts rolled helplessly to the rim of that ledge. She strove desperately for a finger grip. I leaped to help her, and struck against the big body of Maribel Crouch. The blonde woman lost her balance and fell. Carlotta missed the hold she sought, and the two of them plunged into that terrible, deep abyss.

FOR AN instant I waited there, dazed. Cold Yont claws grabbed me, and I fought the unseen creature on that narrow shelf. I broke its grasp, but even as its hold relaxed I toppled over the edge. I felt the Yont fall away from me, into the canyon. Like Carlotta, I pawed for a hand hold; my fingers were stronger than hers, and I got a grip on that wafer of rock.

I searched with one foot for a

perch, and found one. My other foot located another outcrop. I started down the face of that precipice, as once before I had begun the descent. The sun was pouring white light into that chasm. I let my eyes fall to the depths below me and wished that it were night again, so that I might not see the almost impossible risks of my climb.

But still I went down. I *had* to get down.

Then I began to climb upward toward the ledge I had left.

I knew what was happening. The Yonts had recovered from the confusion of my escape. One among them had seized my mind and ordered me to return to them. I had to obey! I hoisted myself upward and reached with one foot for a higher perch.

I could hear the weird music of doom. I realized that I had been hearing it since I fought my way out of the control room. As I turned my eyes upward, seeking a new handhold above me, I saw a flight of flat, circular objects in the patch of sky between the high canyon walls. That would be the Yont space fleet. The Yonts had come from their asteroid, and I was going back to face them all.

In that instant, the music of doom ended abruptly. Someone inside the caverns had remembered at last to shut off the power. But he had remembered too late.

A crash such as no other man, perhaps, has ever heard and lived, deafened my ears. It echoed and reverberated among the mountains until my mind reeled with its vibrations. I had climbed to a point immediately

under the rock shelf when enormous boulders and great chunks of ragged rock and a storm of debris shot past me, into the chasm.

And then I was no longer trying to climb back to that shelf. My mind was my own again. No Yont owned it.

Airmen who have since flown over that region say that some vast natural cataclysm has blown away half the side of a mountain and filled a valley that once lay among those peaks. I guessed, even while I hung there beneath that rock ledge, that the Yont space ships had been smashed against their own net of force. Then, when the power was shut off, weapons, that may have resembled earth bombs in some ways, cascaded down and did their frightful work.

The Yonts already on earth had died in their shattered tunnels. Nothing else could explain their sudden release of my mind. And in the valley of the lost city Carlotta's father had been buried with his mindless fellow slaves. It was better so.

How long I may have hung there, clinging to knobs and fingers of ancient Andean rock, I shall never know. But the curse of the Yonts had been lifted from earth, from all the worlds of space. Their fantastic music of doom had played their own terrible funeral dirge.

I released one handhold, and found another, and lowered my body a little nearer the canyon floor, where Carlotta slept with Maribel Crouch and a nameless Yont under tons of crushing rock.

THE END

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THE ANCIENT GEOMETRICAL MONUMENT

Article 4 — Its Sixth Sense

By ROCKY STONE

(This is the fourth of the TAG-M series of articles which bring to the public an understanding of amazing discoveries which are of priceless and practical value today, and which were also keyed in the Ancient Geometrical Monument (TAG-M), whose displacement cornerstone or model has been called for centuries the Great Pyramid, and whose keyed factors give the "tesseract" which contains the solution to the mystery of the universe and man—along with the scientific symbol for time, the fourth dimension, which is the measurement of the energy of the universe.)

THE M-GIANTS, the wise mental giants of long ago, demonstrate their knowledge of the sixth sense of man in the "timing" of the purpose of the Great Pyramid, and they show just how this wonderful sixth sense (which makes the human mind, when stripped of ignorance, the finest assets imaginable) can be used practicably and successfully in everyday life experience for the benefit of anyone who knows, understands, and uses its method of action.

Similarly to the method whereby the Great Pyramid, the displacement model of the Ancient Geometrical Monument (TAG-M), completely contains the lower truncated pyramid (*the past of man*) of TAG-M, and does partially displace the other five truncated pyramids of TAG-M (*the present subjective instant and the future of man; the past, the present objective, instant, and the future of the physical events of nature*), the mind of man not only contains the sixth sense of man completely, but also displaces the five physical senses.

The functions of the sixth sense of man were apparently understood

and used by the M-giants in a very perfect method, since their geometrical time-capsule—planned for the use of our generation—has been opened, interpreted, and understood at today's present crises of man (which is human society's *operation "Cross-roads"* in the mental evolution to a saner civilization and a happier life).

The sixth sense of timing exhibited in the chosen displacement model or time-capsule, the Great Pyramid, will puzzle our generation until its veil of mystery is swept aside, so that our and future generations may benefit from the correct knowledge and wisdom of the ancient M-giants—and the Great Pyramid will have fulfilled its purpose.

The measurement, labeled *the pyramid inch* by past investigators, was left keyed by the engineers, who were responsible for the construction of the Great Pyramid, in what has been called the "Boss" on the so-called "Granite Leaf" which is in the "Ante-Chamber" or the approach to the so-called "King's Chamber." L.P. McCarty, in his "The Great Pyramid Jeezeh", gives an illustration of *the pyramid inch* subdivided

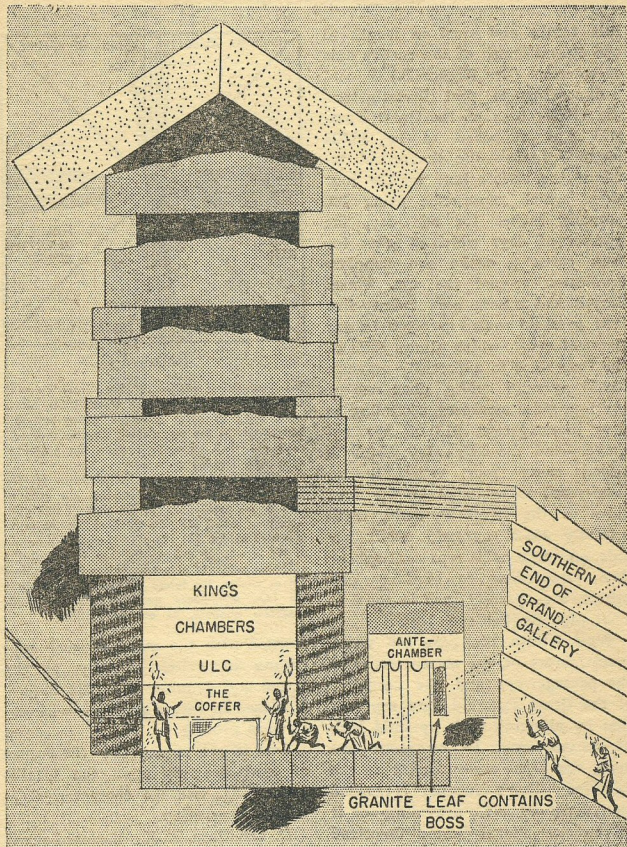


FIGURE P

Upper Light Chamber, ULC, and the Ante-Chamber in which is the Granite Leaf which contains the Boss in which the Pyramid Inch is symbolized



One pyramid inch, (1.001 plus English Inch) sub-divided into tenths.

(L P. McCarty)

into tenths and equal in length to one 500-millionth of the earth's axis of rotation. (See Figure P.)

According to past investigators, the *visible* base of the Great Pyramid was supposed to be 36,524 *pyramid inches*—the theoretical total of the *visible* base for the four sides, which represents, using 100 *pyramid inches* for one day, the number of days which it takes for your earth to make one complete revolution around the sun. Piazzi Smyth and others used twenty-five (25) *pyramid inches* as equal to one *pyramid cubit*, which allows each of the four sides to apparently measure 365.24 *pyramid cubits*, since one of the four sides measures, according to past investigators, 9131.05 *pyramid inches*—and the extra day which is added every four years, during 'leap-year', is included in the four sides of the Great Pyramid, theoretically 365.24 *pyramid cubits* per side, and each cubit representing one day. (According to McCarty and others, the *pyramid inch* is equal to 1.001 plus English inch.)

Well within the past 100 years, investigators of the measurement of the passageways and the corridors of the Great Pyramid have reported that by allowing each pyramid inch of measurement to represent one year, the final measurement in the so-called "King's Chamber" is reached by August 20, 1953, providing—as it is reported Piazzi Smyth theorized—that on the plane of the "King's Chamber" each *pyramid inch* represents one month, instead of one year.

Five years from now, it may appear that there was an error approximately four years, since the disclosure of the purpose of the Great Pyramid may appear to have been August, 23 1949 to or September 22, 1949. (Our generation is now con-

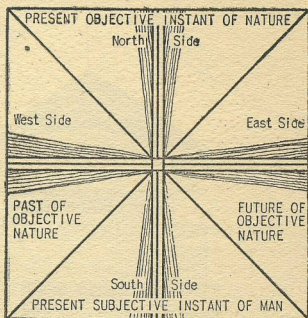


FIGURE 1

The geometrical picture of the Great Pyramid, cornerstone of the ancient Geometrical Monument, when its outer limestone casing was still intact and the sun was shining directly overhead, casting a shaft of sunlight down the center of each side, forming a cross.

The FIVE (5) of the ancient cornerstone: (1) The Great Pyramid, itself, representing the past of man to our generation. (2) The present subjective instant of man, (3) The past of the objective events of nature, (4) The present objective instant of the events of nature, (5) The future of the objective events of nature . . . (Since Man has free will or choice, the future of Man depends upon the I.Q., intelligence quotient, and the C.Q., character quotient, of our generation.)

fronted with the most unusual happening in written history, as the actual and genuine scientific facts—disclosed in future articles—will verify and prove.)

And it will appear that *the future of man* depends upon the intelligence, I.Q., and the character, C.Q., of our generation.

D. Davidson, M.E., disclosed many facts and theories in "The Great Pyramid: Its Divine Message," in which he stated, "The message is proclaimed in terms of natural science, and is, therefore, a message from scientists to scientists, or to such as understand the terms of natural science."

In Article 1, *the cube of infinity* was shown as simply as possible,

while in Article 2 it was disclosed just how the six (6) truncated pyramids of TAG-M were "anchored" and oriented to this *cube of infinity* which is not only eternal and unlimited, but is also *invisible*, since it cannot be seen by the physical sense of sight. It was pointed out that the *cube of infinity* is the CHAMBER OF THE ENLIGHTENED, as well as actually being the CHAMBER OF THE GRAND ORIENT of ancient prophecy.

The *cube of infinity* opens up new vistas in calculus (from Latin word meaning *stone*), and calculus is defined, "a method of computation; any process of reasoning by use of symbols; any branch of mathematics involving calculation," (Webster's Collegiate 5th).

The infinitesimal of the "atom"

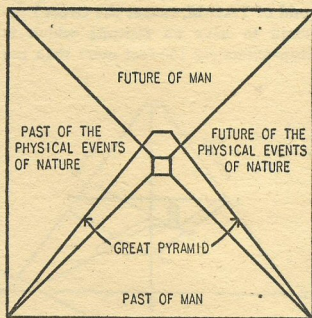


FIGURE J

Displacement of the Great Pyramid in the Future of Man, The Past, and the Future of the physical events of Nature, completely covering the Past of Man naturally in our time, which was displaced into the Future of Man at a time long ago. The front and the back truncated pyramids, representing the present subjective instant of man and the present objective instant of the physical events of Nature are not shown, but the Great Pyramid displaces these also.



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and the infinity of the apparently curved universe now have interactivity and interdependence which antedate Euclid in mathematics and geometry, as has been indirectly indicated in Article 3.

Observant persons, who desire to skip over a mass of mathematical data, can easily see and perceive in Figure J that if the *real* base of the Great Pyramid were 760 feet, 11 *pyramid inches* (9131.05 *pyramid inches*), the altitude of each of the truncated pyramids of TAG-M would be approximately 380 feet (using 12 *pyramid inches* to the foot). Since the altitude of the Great Pyramid from its *visible* base has been reported to be approximately 5813 *pyramid inches*, it would appear that the displacement of the Great Pyramid into the *future of man*, represented by the upper truncated pyramid of TAG-M, causes the Great Pyramid to have an altitude which is approximately 100 feet more than the

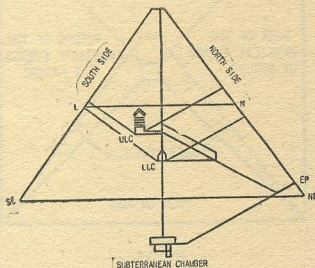


FIGURE K

East view of cross-section of Great Pyramid. ULC, upper light chamber, which has been called also KC, "King's Chamber".

LLC, lower light chamber, also "Queen's Chamber". EP—Entrance Passage

VN—Symbolical of violet wave-length.

SE-NE—Base of Great Pyramid, symbolical of red wave length.

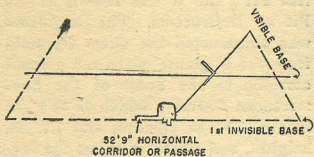


Figure Q

altitude of the truncated pyramid which represents *the past of man* in TAG-M.

Figure J shows that the Great Pyramid contains *the cube of infinity* which is not only the "missing cornerstone" which cannot be seen by the physical sense of sight, but is also partially displaced into the so-called "King's Chamber" in the South section of the Great Pyramid which partially displaces *the present subjective instant of man* pyramid symbol of TAG-M. (See also Figure K.)

It also happens that the *real* bases of the Great Pyramid extend below its *visible* base of 760 feet 11 *pyramid inches*, just as the wavelengths of infra-red extend to greater measurement 'below' the wavelengths of red. The somewhat invisibility of infra-red rays to an unaided physical sense of sight, is thus clearly shown symbolically below the *visible* base of this great wonder of the world.

The depth of rock in the natural rocky plateau of Gizeh allowed the building of the displacement model or cornerstone of TAG-M in such a practical way that the engineers of the Great Pyramid's construction were not forced to erect a much higher pyramid at a greatly more enormous cost in time, materials, and labor, and this depth of the Gizeh natural rocky plateau afforded the

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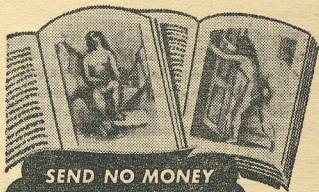
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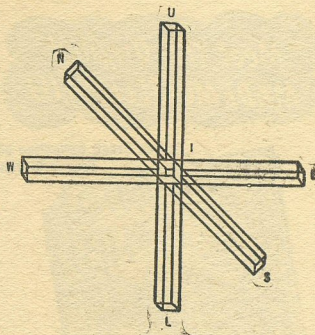


FIGURE Q

UL — The 'altitudes' of the upper and the lower truncated pyramids, representing the past and future (U) of man, each extending from a 'face' of the cube of infinity.

NS — The 'altitudes' of the North and the South truncated pyramids representing the present objective instant of the physical events of nature and "its past" in the mental pictures of the present subjective instant of man (S), each extending from a 'face' of the cube of infinity.

WE — The 'altitudes' of the West and the East truncated pyramids, representing the past and the future (E) of the physical events of nature, each extending from a 'face' of the cube of infinity.

NS, WE, and UL are perpendicular to each other at the cube of infinity, which is the basis of the finest 'tesseract' — since infinity contains all time and time is the fourth dimension, the measurement of universal energy which grows into, permeates, and resurges from mass or physical forms.

opportunity of better symbolizing the message of the M-giants to our generation in their great geometrical time-capsule.

Figure Q shows how the Great Pyramid extends to its first *invisible* base which is approximately 100 feet below its *visible* base of 760 feet 11 pyramid inches (9131 pyramid inches). Almost in the exact center of this first *invisible* base is the Subterranean Chamber which has been called in years gone by the "bottom-

less Pit", and it was known as the Pit of destruction. The engineers who constructed the Great Pyramid from the M-giants' plans ran a small corridor to the South of the Subterranean Chamber which is 52'9" in length, 2'5" in breadth, and 2'7" in height, and which is below the level of the North short entrance to the Subterranean Chamber at the lowest end of the descending passageway! This small short 52'9" corridor gives the 'level' for the first *invisible* base of the ancient geometrical time-capsule. (The square shafts in the floor on the East side of the Subterranean Chamber are now held in reserve for future reference.)

Just as the top of the Great Pyramid had approximately 100 feet more in altitude than the altitude of the standard truncated pyramid in TAG-M which symbolizes the *past of man*, so the first "invisible" base of the Great Pyramid, which includes the "bottomless Pit" of destruction, is approximately 100 feet lower than the *visible* base. It would appear that in this manner the M-giants portrayed that the human race of our time has the choice of two ways after August 23, 1949 to-or September 22, 1949. It has been claimed by past investigators that the measurements of time in the passageways to the so-called "King's Chamber" and "Pit" of destruction arrive simultaneously, —but in any case the human race now receives its choice of two ways of life.

To portray the meaning of the M-giants more clearly and simply, the choice is given to an educator, as correct knowledge or ignorance; to a doctor, as health or disease; to a business man, as profit or loss; to an accountant, as accuracy or error; to a religionist, as heaven or hell; to a scientist, as genuine science or unverifiable theory; to a philosopher,

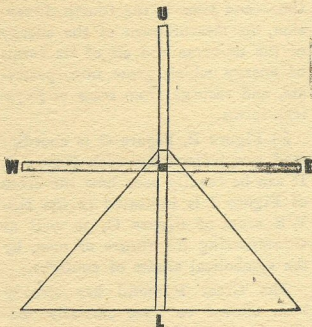


FIGURE R

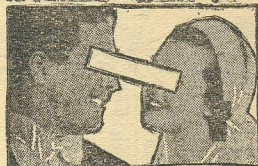
Showing the WE and UL of Figure O. Truncated pyramid represents Great Pyramid whose slope angle is over 51 degrees, which causes a displacement above a truncated pyramid having the same base, but a 45 degree angle of slope.

as wisdom or superstition; to a politician, as honor or dishonor in the records of history; to a judge or lawyer, as justice (right) or tyranny (wrong); to a psychiatrist, as sanity or psychosis; to anyone and everyone, as life, liberty, happiness, and security or death, ignorance, sorrow, and failure. Since the correct knowledge or wisdom of the M-giants has not only already been decoded and interpreted, but has also been proved and verified in actual experience and experiments,—and is ready to be given to anyone or everyone who desires to attain the highest and greatest progress in mental evolution, which do you choose?

None need gamble—TAG-M always throws a seven (7), and the most important part of the message from the M-giants to our generation will be in your possession thru this TAG-M series of articles.

Figure I shows the geometrical form of the Great Pyramid, the

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is just
another name for



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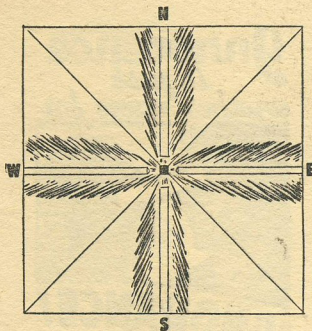


FIGURE S

Looking at the coordination of Figure O and Figure I from above, the WE and NS of Figure O are shown protruding from the sides of the Great Pyramid model approximately 100 feet below the top, which shows how the slope angle of over 51 degrees, due to the Great Pyramid's displacement into the future of man truncated pyramid, does not allow perfect coordination, although the displacement of the five truncated pyramids are displayed while the past of man truncated pyramid is contained in the Great Pyramid.

greatest geometrical time-capsule ever made by the hand of an earth-man, from a point of view above it when its outer white limestone casing was still intact and when the sun was at meridian and was sending a flashing shaft of sunlight (symbol of the energy of the universe) down the center of each of the four sides. In Figure I the ancient geometrical time-capsule appears to have the correct spacing form of an envelope in which letters or messages are sent today, and it is the "envelope" for the M-giants' message to our generation which is sealed by the cross and the "missing cornerstone",—and this message from ancient time can be understood and used either by the end of the twentieth century or by the end of the third or fourth generation.

Figure O contains the cube of in-

finity which is the symbol of all time—and time is the fourth dimension, the measurement of the energy of the universe and all of its forms of energy which grow into, permeate, and resurge from mass or physical forms.

In Figure R, Figure O is coordinated proportionately with Figure I. It can be readily seen how the cross of Figure I is indicated in the NS-WE cross of Figure O, as well as encompassing the future of man, by the symbolical shafts of sunlight.

The Great Pyramid has already been shown to have partially displaced parts of the four truncated pyramids whose altitudes are the four four-sided "bars" of the two four-sided "double-bars" of the NS-WE cross of Figure O, and these four truncated pyramids represent the present subjective instant of man (which is within man) in relation to the past, the present objective instant, and the future of the physical events of nature on the South, West, North, and East sides of the ancient geometrical time-capsule. Each truncated pyramid gives the square, while the six (6) truncated pyramids and the cube of infinity of TAG-M give the cube of the penetrating power of the universe, as well as of the other forms of universal energy.

Because the future of man has been displaced by the Great Pyramid apparently up to 1949, it can now be granted that the Great Pyramid contains naturally the past of man. (It must be realized there is a tremendous history, not known by earth people today, which goes back far beyond 4004 B.C.)

The exact scientific basis for the genuine science of man cannot be understood without the application of the method indicated by the NS-WE cross, representing the present sub-

jective instant of man in relation to the past, the present objective instant, and the future of the physical events of nature, which enfolds the past and the future of man. Therefore, the FIRST SEAL of the M-giants' message to this generation has been opened.

The "missing cornerstone" which is actually *the cube of infinity* cannot be seen by the physical sense of sight. The many blocks of stone in the Great Pyramid are, to a more or less degree, symbolical-in small replica form-of TAG-M. The disclosures concerning TAG-M will completely astonish the ordinary average citizen living today, and there are many facts which will not be disclosed until later in the present century. The function of TAG-M, which contains *the cube of infinity*, and of the NS-WE cross can be disclosed in the TAG-M series of articles, so it now appears that the FIRST AND THE SECOND SEALS of the M-giants' message have been opened—and the priceless contents are even now ready for action—while the celebrated "Eureka!" of Archimedes has already been an event of the past.

The genuine scientific facts discovered and verified do not depend upon the Great Pyramid except to show that there was correct knowledge understood thousands of years ago which apparently has not been known, at least publicly, up to the present time. From now on let us face the facts of life.

The M-giants apparently had wonderful tolerance, open-mindedness, and observational ability while they apparently realized that anyone could make mistakes—and even today there are erasers on lead-pencils, Aristotle is reported to have said that "Man is a political animal", and down thru the centuries what can be called



SELLS FIRST STORY AT 60

"Since I am crowding threescore, my objective in taking the N. I. A. course was not to become a professional writer. However, while still taking the course, I sent an article to St. Joseph Magazine. It was immediately accepted. Encouraged, I wrote others. Our Navy accepted them and asked for more. All thanks to N. I. A."—Albert M. Hinman, 1937 East Silver Street, Tucson, Arizona.

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Have you ever attempted even the least bit of training, under competent guidance?

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It is seldom that anyone becomes a writer until he (or she) has been writing for some time. That is why so many authors and writers spring up out of the newspaper business. The day-to-day necessity of writing—of gathering material about which to write—develops their talent, their insight, their background and their confidence as nothing else could.

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political science has been merely assuming the aspects of a pseudo-science—altho there are exceptions.

Anyone who attains the mental stature of the real founders of the U.S. Government can easily perceive that without the Bill of Rights the U. S. Government could not have been established—and that without the practice of the Bill of Rights the U.S. Government cannot endure in practice. When the methods of the M-giants are understood and used in practice, it will be readily apparent that in order to complete the American Revolution, the "R" must be taken out of Revolution.

Gautama Buddha is reported to have stated, "Ignorance is the source of all evil", while Zoroaster is supposed to have made a statement which can be interpreted, "Evil of every sort is always the result of ignorance." It will appear that, in fact, FREEDOM FROM IGNORANCE is the greatest freedom, as well as being the general and the correct definition of and for *liberty*. Did Thomas Jefferson admonish, "Educate and inform the masses for only in them do we have a sure reliance for our liberty," simply because active, correctly informed, public opinion becomes the law of a nation which must be enforced?

The Great Seal of the U. S. A. has a reverse side on which is a truncated pyramid, a symbol of a truncated pyramid from TAG-M, with its Motto, "Novus Ordo Seclorum", and this is the first time that the reverse side of the U. S. Great Seal has been used as a defense for the U. S. Government. In law, a seal is a mark or symbol attached to a legal document and importing a formal quality to it.

It happens that the TAG-M symbol on the reverse side of the Great Seal of the United States not only

imports a formal quality to the Declaration of Independence and the U. S. Constitution, but it also ratifies and confirms the principles in the Bill of Rights in the first Ten Amendments to the U. S. Constitution, simply because of the fundamental principle or the scientific basis for the genuine science of man which is keyed in the Great Pyramid, the displacement model and cornerstone of TAG-M.

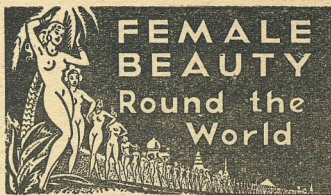
The U. S. Government is made up of principles: *not persons*. The principles in the Bill of Rights of the U. S. Government are not "scraps of paper", but these scientific principles were made a part of the U. S. Government as the result of centuries in man's bitter experiences in life—which bitter experiences, thru the trial and error method, pointed out the way to the beginning of sane and genuine scientific government for man. Gladstone regarded the U.S. Government as the finest which had ever been brought forth from the brain of man down thru the centuries of written history.

Principles are combinations and correlations of law and ethics. Law, the study and the correct knowledge of justice (right), is a method of action—and the fundamental law or basic method of action to be used in the case of each and every U. S. citizen, is definitely and clearly defined in the Bill of Rights, backed up by the 14th Amendment, in the U. S. Constitution. It also happens that law, a method of action, and ethics, the study and the correct knowledge of normal human action, behavior, and conduct, are interactive and interdependent.

The principles of the Bill of Rights in the U. S. Constitution, the U.S. Government, are true and natural, and can be found to be def-

initely the fundamental law of the U.S.A. by merely conducting a nationwide poll of U. S. citizens during which the answers to the following questions would be enlightening: (1) Would you want to be imprisoned without receiving any fair trial whatsoever? (2) Would you want to receive an unfair trial where you were not allowed to face your accusers? (3) Would you want to be imprisoned without having a copy of the charges or knowing the nature of the charges brought against you? (4) Would you want to be imprisoned after an unfair trial where you were not allowed to bring forth genuine facts for your defense? (5) Would you want to receive cruel or unusual punishment before, during, or after any trial? (6) Would you want to be under the arbitrary judgment and action of anyone in or outside of the personnel of the Administration of the U. S. or any State Government, when such judgment or action was ultra vires in relation to the principles of the Bill of Rights?

The Administration of the U. S. Government, like those of the States, is made up of persons, all of whom require a highly genuine standard of ethics in order to properly and correctly administer the principles of the U. S. Government for the benefit of U.S. citizens—and the genuine and scientific principles of the Bill of Rights are the composition of the permanent shield for the protection of any U. S. citizen, while all who are in positions of authority and responsibility in the Administrations of the U. S. and State Governments are under oath to not only abide by the principles of the U. S. Constitution, but also to protect and fight for those principles to the best of their ability.



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From the research made by Montesquieu and others, the Administration of the U.S. Government is made up of three Branches—the Executive, the Legislative, and the Judicial—by which method the ethical imperfections of man could be controlled as much as possible.

The M-giants keyed certain genuine and simple scientific facts in the Great Pyramid which forever eliminate dictatorship of an informed ple. The actual scientific facts of the science of man are therein keyed, which allows jurisprudence to become a genuine science—since there is epitomized therein a genuine standard for normal human action, behavior, and conduct (the ABCs of man), and law is only the method whereby human action, behavior, and conduct are controlled by proper rules and regulations. Because of the foresight of the M-giants, even law will be administered in accord with scientific principles when the fundamental basis or principle of man is understood and used by world people.

History records many examples of what happens when any country becomes morally decadent, but instead of relying upon the conclusions of Spengler's "Decline of the West",

U. S. citizens can now cooperate in the advance of human society to a higher and saner civilization and culture. It would appear that there is a possibility that there will be a government of principles, instead of persons, which will be in practice world-wide by the third or fourth generation—and anyone and everyone in positions of authority and responsibility now have the opportunity to be judged in an enlightened history concerning our generation.

All genuine scientific facts embodied in the principles of the U. S. Government are further strengthened in the opinion of men by the message from the M-giants, and the security of the U. S. Government, the Administration of the U. S. Government, and each and every U. S. citizen is increased—and whether or not you belong to the "Instant Men" of 1949, today's shocktroops and reserves for the "Minute Men" of 1776, depends upon whether you choose death, ignorance, sorrow, and failure, or life, liberty, happiness, and security.

End of Article 4

(Article Number 5 Next Month)

★ WHO OWNS WHAT? ★

A PROBLEM which is becoming more serious as time goes on, is the question of *how whom* will claim *what* when spacial navigation becomes a fact. This is not easy to decide.

We know for a certainty that in the not distant future human beings are going to start their interplanetary ventures with a trip to the moon. Most likely the first to get there will be Americans, because we are putting forth the greatest effort on rocket research. No European power seems to be doing much along those lines. Russia of course is trying but how well we don't know.

Now when the first rocket ships from the United States reach the moon, they

will of course claim it. And in so doing we will have obtained a position of unbelievable power. The only trouble here seems to be the thought of an Earth nation claiming what almost amounts to a planet. It seems a little ridiculous.

Another possibility existing is that the moon may be claimed by the United Nations and that equitable distribution of that world and its resources—if any—can be made more fairly.

While it is not now a pressing problem, it will soon be and we suspect that we are going to be subjected to a legal tangle that will make most other Earthly squabbles look childish.

PETE BOGG

THE END

WORLD GIRDERS

By A. Morris

THE ASTONISHING news released by the Air Force set many a head wagging and many a brain thinking. A B-50 flew non-stop around the world in ninety-four hours! How Jules Verne must be spinning in his grave! His old book "Around the World in Eighty Days" seemed terrific at the time—now look—ninety-four hours.

The feat was made possible by the technique of refueling in mid-air. This is quite a problem, one that is seldom considered as to its difficulty, by the average man. You can't simply connect two planes by a hose and pour gasoline from one to the other. First, the hoses must be connected and trying to do this at two hundred miles an hour is a first-rate problem. Furthermore, the fuel tanks of the B-50 are gigantic and pumping thousands of gallons of gas is a major problem. Special pumps, special hoses, complex connections, all were devised for the flight. Then the pilots of the fueler and the "fuelee" had to accurately match their speeds. That the flight was completed is a tribute to cold nerve. The Force forgot to point out that it has lost quite a number of planes through this technique.

The Royal Air Force had perfected the operation and given a good deal of data to our Air Force. This exchange of technical information has been of extreme value in advancing the Air Age. We'll see a lot more of it. Probably next time, it'll be a jet!

KING OF THE SACRED GROVE

IN A SACRED grove of trees by a lake near the village of Nemi, Italy, there grew a certain tree round which night and day one could see the hunched figure of a man pacing back and forth. In one hand he always carried a ready sword and his piercing eyes steadily peered about him as though at any moment he might be pounced upon by a murderer. He himself was already a murderer and a priest, and the man whom he was on guard against was also a priest that would someday murder him and hold the priesthood in his stead. That was how this high office was gained. The candidates for the priesthood could only attain the office by slaying the priest and after having done so, retain his office till he was slain by a craftier priest.

This office carried the title of king, but certainly no crowned head had more worries than this year after year, in all kinds of seasons, he had to keep watch and not let the forty winks cost him his life. *R. Dee*

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The CLUB HOUSE

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Conducted by **ROG PHILLIPS**

ME AND THE rest of the birds have deserted the sunny southland at the date of this writing, and are once again in Chicago. Only I didn't come north to lay eggs like they did. My object was to feather my nest. My only trouble is that the squirrels in Evanston keep chasing me. They must think I'm a nut. But, as you will see shortly, I'm not nuts. I'm a long ways from being nuts. In fact, I'm—aw, YOU say it.

"Rog is positively smart."

See? I tricked you into saying it! A hundred and fifty thousand or more people this month—right now—are saying that! So what if I AM smart? You can be smart too. How? By supporting the **SEVENTH WORLD SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION**, the **CINVENTION**.

It's science fiction fandom's own annual convention. If you can't make it to the **CINVENTION** in person, at least send your dollar to help make it a huge success. I don't know what you'll get for your dollar—probably a raft of fanzines in a thick **Cinvention** memory book, or a nice **Cinzine** professionally printed telling you everything that happened there—but even if you don't get anything for it you will have the satisfaction of knowing you helped make the most successful fan convention of all time even more successful.

So that you will know more of what it's all about, I have invited the **CONVENTION COMMITTEE** to take over this time and tell you. Here's **Houston and Ford**:

Some background data on the **CINVENTION**; **SEVENTH WORLD SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION**.

Have any of you ever wanted to meet and talk to a Science Fiction Author? Stick around for a few minutes and we'll tell you how to meet not one, but 14 or more of the top writers of Science Fiction.

Fantasy Fans for many years have striven to unite into a real and solid unit of thinking minds. Not much was attempted until 1939. That year saw the first convention devoted entirely to Science Fiction. It was held in New York and was timed in with the current World's Fair. It wasn't too big, but it was a start; and as such was a success. Next year saw the second convention held in Chicago. It was termed the **CHICON**. 1941 produced the **DENVENTION** at Denver; and World War II. This put the brakes on a lot of things; conven-

tions included. Things were held in suspension until 1946 when the fans started returning from Service. That year saw the **PACIFICON** in Los Angeles. Philadelphia was picked for the following year and with the added impetus of a greater activity in fandom, the **PHILCON** resulted. 1948 marked the beginning of a more international aspect to the conventions with Toronto, Ontario being picked as the spot. The **TORCON** members traveled from quite a distance with persons coming in from all four corners of the U.S. There was even one fan who flew in from Hawaii. It was at the **TORCON** that Cincinnati was selected as the convention city for 1949. Result: **CINVENTION**.

In the past all of the conventions have been titled "World Science Fiction Conventions". This year is of course the "Seventh World Science Fiction Convention". However, we believe that we will live up to being a "World" convention since Ted Carnell of London, England is coming over especially for this convention. In addition, Stirling Macoboy of Australia is trying to come. He is currently trying to sell enough books out of his collection in order to build up a large enough bank credit in this country to qualify him for a visa.

Now, you ask, what makes a person want to travel all these distances for just a 3 day gabfest? The best answer we can think of is simply: "he's a fan". Travelling that far represents the extreme, of course, in a Science Fiction Fan, but all of us will go out of our way quite a bit. The main thing is that nowhere in this world can you find a breed like a Science Fiction Fan. Ever try to talk to anyone about any Science Fictional ideas? He just simply looks blank and mentally consigns you to the booby hatch. As a form of literature, Science Fiction has struggled against the tide of intolerance and narrow-mindedness for Centuries. People who were willing to accept superstitions without question, regarded (and still do) Science Fiction as a form of insanity. This has resulted in the fans tending to group together.

However, the change has started, the merely faint stirrings of awareness when one considers the vast millions of humanity yet to be awakened to the capabilities of mankind and the possibilities to which Science Fiction is the key. Man dreams first of all, but must awake in order to benefit by his dream.

Many meetings have been planned, no

doubt carefully and thoughtfully, but none, so far could be classed as having been completely successful. Not failures either, for they were primary steps toward the unity of the group of which we are a part. Each year sees these conventions grow bigger and better little by little. Those of you who have in the past been content to sit back and let the more active fans carry the ball, should be doubly interested in the CONVENTION. The annual conventions present a solid front of Science Fiction against a world dominated by scoffers.

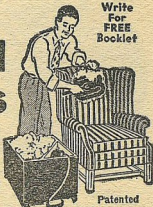
While we are patterning this meeting fundamentally after preceding meetings of its kind, we feel that we have more to offer than any meeting prior to this date. For instance, just take a look at this list of authors who have said they intend to come. E.E. Smith, Ph.D. author of the famous "Skylark" and "Lensman" series. An early contributor to Amazing Stories, he now has 6 books to his credit. Arthur J. Burks, he has been writing for over 20 years. You'll want to hear his talk at the CONVENTION; he recently spent 2 years in Brazil, and will have as his theme "Lost Races Along The Amazon". Geo. O. Smith has two books to his credit plus numerous stories in the magazines for the last 7 or 8 years. Robert Fletcher has one book so far and numerous stories since 1934. Bob Tucker has been a fan until recently when he started writing detective stories with other fans as characters in his plots against a background bordering on Science Fiction. Milton Rothman is another fan who grew up into an author. His stories have appeared recently in the magazines. Judy Merrill is one of the few women authors to be found in Science Fiction. Her stories presenting the women's viewpoints are interesting and bring up ideas hitherto overlooked by the males. Theodore Sturgeon has one book to his credit and has been writing for the magazines for 10 years. Readers of UNKNOWN will remember him. Hannes Bok is a well known fantasy artist as well as being an author, too. He finished up Merritt's: FOX WOMAN & BLACK WHEEL, besides doing other numerous stories for the magazines. L.A. Eshbach is our Author Guest Of Honor. He contributed during the early '30's after a period of being a fan. He now runs FANTASY PRESS, a publishing co. devoted exclusively to Science Fiction. David H. Keller, M.D. contributed to Amazing Stories in 1928. He now has quite a few books and stories chalked up to his credit during the past 21 years. H.L. Gold is recognized for his book "None But Lucifer". Fletcher Pratt is very well known. Besides his own stories and books, he has teamed up with L. Sprague de Camp to produce some of fantasy's best stories. Basil Wells has a new book out "Planets Of Adventure" plus his magazine stories since 1940. In addition, we have several others who are as yet uncertain of their attendance.

All of these authors will be glad to autograph your copies of their books and to talk to you. Here's your chance to talk to them about one of their stories that is your favorite; or just simply to say "hello". They'll be

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right in there with the fans, and talking their language. They're coming because they too are in the same boat as the rest of us. They, also like to talk to someone whose mind is not closed to new ideas. During the three day period you will have plenty of chances to meet & talk to all of them on an equal and mutual basis. You'll be surprised how friendly they are.

Ted Carnell will be our Fan Guest Of Honor. He is the leading fan in England, and will be able to tell us quite a bit about what is going on in fandom over there.

That's not all. The different publishers of Science Fiction will have displays of their latest books and will give the lineups for the future printings for months to come. Their displays are always colorful and interesting.

After that will come the auction on original covers and interior illustrations from the different professional magazines. We'll have books, other artwork, and artwork from the book publishers as well. This auction is what helps pay the convention expenses and the donations are free. A fine gesture on the part of the donors and shows the wonderful spirit of co-operation that exists. Without this spirit, and these donations, these conventions would never exist.

Then to top that off, we're going to have a **FAN AUCTION**. In this auction, the fans bring whatever material they want and we'll auction it off; charging 20 percent for the convention. Sounds like a lot of auctioning, but they are really one of the high spots of all the conventions. You'll see, and perhaps buy, more rare items than you've seen in the past year. All fans collect something or another; and here is their chance to help fill out their collections. Been trying to pick up some item yourself? If you don't see it here, you can find someone who has it back home.

The various authors' speeches, and the auctions will probably take up the first 2 1/2 days. After that will come the business session. At the business session, the profits, if any, are split up according to the wishes of the majority; and at the same time the city for next year is chosen. It is in the business session that one gets a chance to see Democracy in action. In order for a city to be selected, all the members present at the convention, vote for the site of their choice. There is no "inner circle" or minority running the show. YOU have your sayso. As an example; Don Ford went to Toronto to his first convention and came back to Cincinnati with that city picked as the site for the next year. The same thing could happen to you. Speaking of Democracy and Science Fiction; one simply does not find Science Fiction fans in a country ruled by a dictator.

Finally, on the night of the third day, there comes the traditional banquet. It is at this time that a few toasts are made, and farewells bid until the next year. This year we've invited the various fan clubs over the country to participate in putting on some brief entertainment from each group.

At the banquet we'll try to get as many as we can to put on their entertainment at that time. From the response we've received already, it looks like we may have to have a few of them present theirs on the night before!

All of the above shows the co-operation and enthusiasm that this convention is building up. With its central location, easy transportation facilities into the city, and the excellent program that is shaping up, we confidently expect to set a new attendance record. We have selected the Hotel Metropole as the site for the meetings. You can for instance, get a room at the Metropole and attend all of the meetings and never leave the hotel. At the door we'll be passing out maps of the city and a mimeographed guide of some of the interesting spots around the town that fans will enjoy. You can look up some of the scenes in John Uri Lloyd's rare book ETIDORPHA. Book collectors can browse through 4 floors of Smith's Acres of Books with about 100,000 books in stock; which is one of the Midwest's best sources of Fantasy and Science Fiction. There are other book stores, magazine stores, and jazz collectors can have a field day at Klayman's record shop; the largest in the Midwest. For the rest who just enjoy sightseeing, you can find plenty of that in Cincinnati. Well how does it sound? Sound like something you've always been waiting for? For the time of your life drop around this coming September 3-4-5, (Labor Day); you'll receive a warm welcome. In the meantime, send a dollar to Don Ford, Box 116, Sharonville, Ohio for your membership card and help support fandom's biggest convention yet. Those of you desiring more information, send for a copy of the CINCY REPORT from the same address. In it you will find a list of hotels and their rates, all the latest up to date convention news, maps of the city, and a list of members. We'll help you get lined up with members who are driving through, and anything else you need. So, act now; write that letter; and we'll be seeing you this Labor Day week-end.

for the CINVENTION Committee:

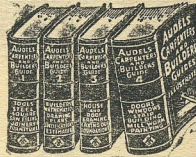
W. B. Houston

Donald E. Ford, Treasurer—
Recording Secretary

There's a lot of fanzines to review this time! You know, I used to look at the pile of fanzines and want to hold some back for review in the next issue—just in case no one published one during the coming month. Now they really come in, in such numbers that it continually amazes me. I wonder how they do it! We'll lead off this month with the first one to arrive in the mail.

SCIENTIFANTASY: 20c; Bill Kroll, 1031 W. 18th St., Des Moines, Iowa. A 32 page photo offset Pocketzine that can be equalled but not surpassed. This is the second issue, and Bill Kroll and John Gross-

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man show definite promise of being among the regulars, now that they're started. There's a comic strip that's as good as Buck Rogers. Also plenty of articles and poems and stories, with plenty of illos. E. Everett Evans writes an article that should be of interest to all fans. Under the title, "A Puzzle...", he asks the question, why will fans take to anything with the tag of science on it, but shy away from anything with the tag of religion? Of course he is talking about a small percentage of fandom in that. And he is overstressing it. Many an adult Christian passed through a state of atheism at some time or other. To my way of thinking, religion is a matter of capability. It isn't a matter of being able to say, "Yes, I know what is meant by the term, God, and I do (or don't) believe it has an existential neumenon that it applies to." Under that category you can find as many cleavages between atheism and theism as there are definitions of the word, God. Religion is more a matter of being able to feel reverence toward something now and then. And I mean true reverence, not superficial piousness.

John Grossman dropped me a line saying he and Bill have lots of material lined up to make future issues every bit as good as the first two, so why don't you send him 20c and get the next? **SCIENCE, FANTASY, AND SCIENCE FICTION:** official organ of the **FANTASY ARTISANS CLUB**, which means that a lot of amateur artists contribute their very worthwhile efforts to this zine. It already has a circulation of three hundred, and is growing under the capable handling of Frank M. Dietz, Jr.. Quarterly, 20c, 65c/yr. Photo offset.

The April issue presents Jogros, one of the fan artisans, or is his name Joe Gross? The list of artists contributing to this issue is the same as the membership list of the club. In addition there are nine interesting articles and a poem.

Wilkie Conner writes a good article on fan fiction, with fanzines as the medium of expression for budding authors where they can get reader reaction to their style of writing, and thus find out their weak points. David H. Keller, M.D., gives with an article on the future of current investigations in telepathy. Forrest J. Ackerman, in an article titled "April Showers" writes an article commemorating the 23rd anniversary of Amazing Stories. He says he has read Amazing for all 23 years of its existence, and congratulates its editors on such outstanding stories as "New Adam," "I, Robot," "Priestess Who Rebelled", "4-sided Triangle", "Star Kings", and "The Brain".

A **FAN ARTISTS FOLIO:** 75c; S.F. & S.F. Amateur Press, P.O. Box 696, Kings Park, N.Y. is now out. (I notice I didn't put in the address for their magazine. It's the same as for the folio.) This folio contains ten photo-offset stf drawings from the contest held by the Fan Artisans which ended March 10th. You can put these ten drawings on the walls of your room and change it into a real fan den. Artists fea-

tured are Ben Abas, Jon Arfstrom, Lin Carter, Jack Gaughan, Joe Gross, John, Grossman, Bill Kroll, Sol Levin, Russ Manning, and J. Henk Sprenger.

DAWN: the fanzine from Kentucky. April; 10c; no. 3; Lester Fried, 2050 Midland, Louisville 4, Ky.; fandom's letterzine, containing running discussions and arguments. You don't know what you're missing if you don't get this letterzine to whet your wits and make you get out the typer and knock off a letter yourself! Six regalength pages of letters from such notables as Rick Sneary, Norman Ashfield, Art Kinsella, Redd Boggs, Russell Watkins, Bill Butts, and Paul Cox. Then there's another six full pages of articles.

POLARIS: 5c; March issue; Dan Mulcahy, 4170 Utah St., St. Louis, Mo.. Dan is an actfan who works hard to make his zine a success. Also he is active in F.A.P.A.. This second issue contains a review of a magazine called FATE, which seems to have the distinction of being a non-stf prozine of general interest to sfans. An article titled "More Than You Think", by Ed Cox, discusses women authors of stf.. "The Case Of The Missing Psychologist" by Art Rapp, is a humorous bit of criticism. Dan promises some surprises in the next issue. Get it.

SPACEWARP: 15c, 2/25c; Arthur Rapp, 2120 Bay St., Saginaw, Mich.. Art got a little behind on his publishing and brought out three issues in a hurry to catch up. (It makes me feel like I'm way behind in my reviewing to have three issues to review.) They are the Feb., March, and April numbers. Art is a smart editor. He keeps mild controversies alive in his zine to keep things interesting. One of the old standbys is on Phillips Lovecraft, pro and con, by Jack Clements. That's in the Feb. issue. In the "Psycho Lab" Ed Cox tells about himself. As readers of SW know, that department is to acquaint readers with well known fans by getting them to tell about themselves in a humorous and entertaining manner.

Thing I treasure when I find them are brief expressions that give a world of description by implication. One such is in this issue of SW. It's in "Psychic Residue", by Andrew Gregg. It says, "...there is a small and totally ignored sign, NO DUMPING."

In the March issue Lee D. Quinn asks Art Rapp how he would like to see a profanzine. Art doesn't say yes or no, but he does say that, "it is my opinion that the project will never come to flower. It depends on co-operation in fandom, and when has fandom ever co-operated on a large scale?" I agree there. Fandom is a loosely connected group of individualists, and such a group will begin to be a solid knit unit about the time human instincts fit Americans for nothing but pure socialism. Wilkie Conner has an article titled "The American Way", in which he says, "I am not a fan. I belong to the NFFF and read some pros, and I write letters to the letter columns and correspond with a few fen who wrote

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me first. Also, I write some so-called stories for Spacewarp, and sometimes write something for another fanzine. Otherwise, I am not a fan. But I do enjoy the limited fan activities I allow myself."

The April SPACEWARP contains a wonderful deadpan article titled "Dimensional Gate" in which Stanley Forest describes a coil to put around the head for inducing magnetism in the brain for the purpose of "seeing things". By means of it he "saw" a white priestess in a white, shimmering robe. He says, "Anyone repeating this experiment and seeing the white priestess—she's mine! I saw her first!"

And of course the "Great Stf Broadcast" continues in all three issues, along with many other stories and articles. Art Rapp has now joined the ranks of F.A.P.A., and a very valuable addition he will be.

FANTASY-TIMES: 10c; James V. Taurasi, 137-03 Thirty-second Ave., Flushing, N.Y.; twice a month; the complete coverage news zine of fandom, and perhaps with a record of longer continuous publication than any other fanzine. The March 15th number and the two April numbers on hand, as well as the extra announcing the folding of all Street and Smith pulps except Astounding Science Fiction. The March 15th number reports on the Dutch stf magazine which printed four issues and then folded. Tom Gardner continues his revue of 1948 in Science Fiction.

The first April issue reports Amazing's change of printers. Also the cancellation of the Awards meeting by Ray Van Houten due to lack of support. It was a noble try. Perhaps something will result from it eventually anyway. Awards don't seem to interest fans overly much. The Cosmic Reporter by Arthur Jean Cox is full of interesting little bits of news this time. Tom Gardner continues his revue of prozines in 1948 with Amazing Stories.

The second April number reports that Los Cuentos Fantasticos, the Mexican science fiction magazine has folded with its thirteenth issue. That's too bad. As has been said before in the CLUB HOUSE, I for one do not begrudge foreign stfzines using my material and translating it into foreign languages. Say—I wonder if the reason they folded was because they used one of my stories once?

If you are interested in fan doings and what goes on in the prozine field having to do with science fiction, then Fantasy-Times is your best newzine. It is able to handle more subscribers, and it is a reliable zine, with a long record of regular publication. For two dollars you will get it twice a month regularly for a full year—twenty-four issues. Or you can send a dime and get one copy and see it for yourself.

STF TRADER: 5c; K. Martin Carlson, 1028 Third Ave. South, Moorhead, Minnesota. That April and May numbers. In each it says that Jack Erwin is editor. And in each, the only material that is not ads, is a small fourth of a page of editorial. But, as Jack Erwin says in his brief editorial,

"It is my contention that a higher percentage of subscribers of the mag will respond to ads if they are taking because of the ads." So there you are, and since the postage on this zine is two cents they are getting only three cents for it. Ads are reasonable in cost, too; 50¢ per page.

FANTASY COMMENTATOR: 25¢, 5/- \$1.00; A. Langley Searles, 7A East 235th St., New York 66, N.Y.. The spring number contains part 15 of Sam Moskowitz's "The Immortal Storm", a history of fandom, and carries this history up to 1939. This history is COMPLETE as it goes along, recording the development of the prozines and of fandom, and the influence of each on the other. In addition are several articles and features, all carefully written and of high quality. FC is a fan publication slanted for the serious fan.

PAN DEMOS: 25¢ 5/\$100; Don Kunde, 1165 Grant St., Apt. 208, Denver 3, Colorado; March issue, vol. 1, no. 2. This fanzine has the same format as GORGON, and is copyrighted. It doesn't equal GORGON yet—but what fanmag can?

The March number is called the oriental issue, and has a lot of pasted-in illustrations, most of which are by Austin Miller. The cover illo by Hannes Bok is a masterpiece of fantasy drawing.

ROCKET NEWS LETTER: Journal of the Chicago Rocket Society; 15¢; Vincent Story, 5747 University Ave., Chicago, Ill.. This number contains a thorough-going article on the physiological aspects of space flight, by N.J. Bowman, Ph. D.. If you are interested in the problems of space flight and live near Chicago, write Vince for information on the Rocket Society.

SPACETEER: "Florida's finest fanzine."; 10¢; Lin Carter, 1734 Newark St. S., St. Pete., Fla.. Co-edited by Bill Paxton, Dearborn, Mich.. This is the winter number, and the third issue of this zine. This is a good, entertaining fanzine, that you will enjoy—but what's this? —it's the last issue! Too bad; but Lin says he has lost the use of the mimeo he had been using. This last issue was run off professionally—which cost about twelve bucks. He also says that any of you who have unexpired subs can get your money back by requesting it. Since Lin went in the hole on his publishing experiment, I hope none of you do. He shows a sense of responsibility that should be an example to everyone starting out in the fan publishing business.

You know, in the CLUB HOUSE I stick my neck out for budding fan publishers. I haven't yet heard a kick, so I can presume that no kicks are due. Still, a few months ago a fan sent me the first issue of his zine for review, I reviewed it, and lots of people sent him money for subs; then much later I received a letter from him saying he had decided not to continue publication two weeks after he sent me the review copy. He SHOULD have notified me immediately. It would have possibly caught me in time to keep him from having to send back the subscription money.

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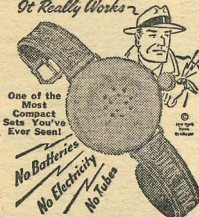
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Anyway, Lin Carter was not in that class, and I doubt if many are, so there's nothing to worry about. Fan publishing is lots of fun. You learn how to mimeo, edit, plan a publication, mail it, and you have the pride of accomplishment. Few fan publishers publish more than a year or two. It is almost invariably a costly and arduous job. Those of you who lose a buck or two on unfulfilled subscriptions—and who hasn't?—should mark it down as a contribution to the fan publishing field as a whole.

CATALYST TWO: Thomas Riley Fowler and Clifton Bennett, Apartado 11, Tecate B.C., Mexico. You will remember the first issue of CATALYST, published by these two back-to-nature boys in Mexico. They seem to have attained their objective of getting a lot of interesting fan correspondents. They received more requests for Catalyst one than they could fill, so they've printed two hundred and fifty of Catalyst two. Twenty-five pages. Bennett says, "The cost of publishing and mailing is met by Fowler and myself, and we are capable of continuing CATALYST without help as long as we feel it puts us in touch with the kind of people we want to know."

THE SPACESHIP: 10c; Robert Silverberg, 760 Montgomery St., Brooklyn 13, N.Y.. "No long term subscriptions so we can drop it when we want to," Bob writes me. This is no. 2, the May issue. This is an all fiction zine, and has several very interesting stories in it, three of them being part two of serials started in the first issue. They are all written by Bob Silverberg and his co-worker, Saul Diskin, who are both very capable amateur writers.

ODD: 5c to NEO fans. Published by Ray Fisher and Max Kaesler, 1302 Lester St., Poplar Bluffs, Missouri. President of the NEO fans is Shelby Vick, 411 Jenks, Panama City, Fla.. A story titled "Atlantis" by George P. Salyer begins the issue. By the way, this issue is vol. 1, no. 1. It's a well rounded fanzine. The mimeographing isn't too hot this first issue, but it takes time for any fan editor to get onto it. There should be lots of improvement in the next issue.

That winds things up for this time. Don't forget the CINCON! Be sure and send them a buck to help make it a huge success. And BE there if you possibly can, because it will be something you will always remember.

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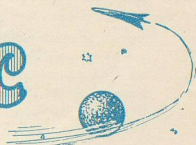


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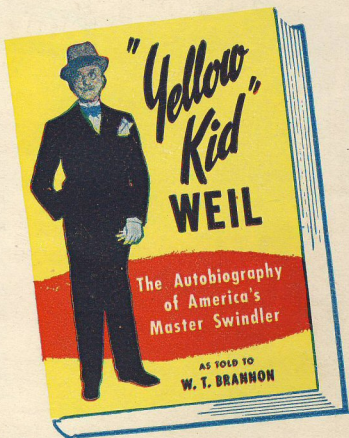
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