VIOLETS ARE BLANU IN 'FUTURE TALK'

Amazing stories

Fact and Science Fiction

JANUARY

35¢

MAC I

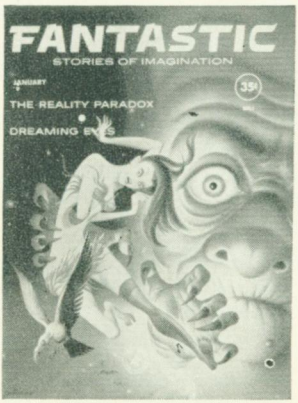
THE ASTEROIDS, 2194

By John Wyndham

Coming in January **FANTASTIC** STORIES OF IMAGINATION

A WORLD WHERE NOTHING matched!

After Hector Wilkins killed his wife, his world fell apart. And when it came together again, nothing matched . . . all objects and people suddenly became grotesque and bizarre . . . from every solution, there arose a new problem. There was only one escape—one way Hector could find the key to the world he once knew. Don't miss THE REALITY PARADOX—Daniel F. Galouye's thrilling feature in January FANTASTIC.



And you'll also enjoy Miriam Allen DeFord's exciting story of a Colonel who both loved and hated himself, entitled DREAMING EYES.

It's all yours in January FANTASTIC . . . on sale at your favorite newsstand Dec. 20th. ONLY 35¢

AMAZING STORIES, Fact and Science Fiction, Vol. 35, No. 1. January, 1961, is published monthly by Ziff-Davis Publishing Company, William B. Ziff, Chairman of the Board (1946-1953) at 434 South Wabash Ave., Chicago 5, Illinois. Second-class postage paid at Chicago, Ill., and at additional mailing offices. Subscription rates: U. S. and possessions and Canada $3.50 for 12 issues: Pan American Union Countries $4.00; all other foreign countries $4.50.

. . . but the Egyptians knew it ages ago!

Powers to overcome sickness! Means to escape poverty! Knowledge to bring happiness and peace of mind! Skill and genius to create a civilization which we still copy today! These are only some of the accomplishments of the ancient Egyptians.

Above and beyond these physical achievements was the secret wisdom possessed by the Egyptian mystery schools. In these centers of learning men and women were taught the laws of life and how to master them. With this mastery they were able to shape their destinies as they wished them to be. It takes no greater mental effort to *achieve results* when you know how. Successful living is the oldest art in the world. It consists of developing *initiative, foresight* and the ability to combine experiences into new and workable ideas.

These laws operate as unfailingly as the laws which govern the sun, moon and planets. They were discovered centuries ago by certain wise men of Egypt, and preserved down through the ages by the Rosicrucians.

The Rosicrucians
(AMORC)
SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA, U. S. A.

Time has since crumbled Egypt's walls, but it couldn't destroy this formula for the control of life. In your hands, this knowledge could alter the entire course of your affairs.

The Rosicrucians offer to you—if you have the courage to break away from limited forms of thinking—these same simply expressed truths of life which have led thousands to a joyous method of better living.

Let This FREE Book Help You

Learn how you may share the private instructions of The Rosicrucians, a non-profit fraternity of men and women whose influence extends into every land. Let this be the turning point in *your* life! For your copy of *"The Mastery of Life"* use the coupon below or write to Scribe A.W.Q.

Scribe A.W.Q.
The Rosicrucians (AMORC)
San Jose, California, U.S.A.

Please send me, without obligation, my copy of *"The Mastery of Life"* which explains how I may receive and use your intelligent and age-old method for attaining mastership of life.

Name.....

Address.....

Amazing stories
Fact and Science Fiction

JANUARY, 1961 Vol. 35, No. 1

REG. U. S. PAT. OFF.

"FIRST IN SCIENCE FICTION SINCE 1926"

NOVELET

SHORT STORIES

SERIAL

FACT ARTICLE

FEATURES

Cover: ED VALIGURSKY

Publisher
MICHAEL MICHAELSON

Editorial Director
NORMAN M. LOBSENZ

Editor
CELE GOLDSMITH

ZIFF-DAVIS PUBLISHING Co., One Park Avenue, New York 16, New York. William Ziff, President: W. Bradford Briggs, Executive Vice President; Michael Michaelson, Vice President and Circulation Director; H. B. Sarbin, Vice President; J. Leonard O'Donnell, Treasurer.

EDITORIAL

NOT long ago I chanced across a provocative essay on a semi-neglected area of the philosophy of science-fiction. Called "Science Fiction Censorship, and Pie-in-the-Sky," it was written by L. W. Michaelson, a writer and a member of the English faculty of Colorado State University. It appeared in Vol. XIII, No. 4, Autumn, 1959, issue, of *The Western Humanities Review*.

The essay raised the question of whether sf, in the past ten years, had emphasized a pessimistic view of our present culture; whether, as a result of this, literary critics had been slapping down sf's social critics; and whether this constituted a mild form of censorship aimed at turning sf writers into being supporters rather than deriders of what we like to think of as Western civilization.

I felt AMAZING'S readers should be given a chance to read this essay for themselves. So, with the kind permission of Mr. Michaelson and the editor of *The Western Humanities Review*, here are the salient points of the article:

The field of science fiction has become somewhat of a rehearsal battleground between our pessimists and our determined anti-pessimists—a clash which has resulted in a polite form of editorial restraint directed at its gloom and its implicit promises of pie-in-the-sky.

During the past ten years or so science fiction has been used to a great extent as a medium of social reform and thus it attracted the liberal writer and thus, too, it occasionally became vulnerable to restraints which border on the fringe area of censorship.

Roughly, since 1951, there has been a tendency to ban "pessimistic" or critical science fiction; however, it must be pointed out that this editorial restraint has not been consistent. Then, too, this censorship has been more or less self-imposed by edi-

tors who are either science fiction writers themselves, or intimate acquaintances of most of the top-name writers. Seemingly, around 1951, science fiction editors, publishers, and the fans themselves, grew "weary" of the gloomy, critical, philosophical sci-fi stories. Editors began to search for and to print optimistic and "escape" stories because of, to quote one editor, "sensitivity to reader demands . . ."

[The] "gloom and doom" men declared in their fantasies and space tales that nothing the "Earthlings" (usually meaning Americans) did do now or could do in the future was right and that mythical Martians had it all over us when it came to managing a country; that is to say, on far distant utopian planets there was no unemployment, race prejudice, poverty, illness, or such things as "greedy international bankers," fast-buck boys, and advertising copywriters.

In 1951 or so a reaction to gloom occurred: the Gossonites came to the fore with the complaint that science fiction writers "sucked at the botch" of the body politic and neglected the healthy parts. Thus today, although there are still many "world-sadness" writers around, there is a tendency on the part of anthologists and editors to promote "optimistic" science fiction and the politically "safe," non-critical kind, classified as adventure or escape literature.

For a typical example of early 1950 censorship, one might examine both the preface and contents of a sci-fi anthology, *New Tales of Space and Time* (Henry Holt, 1951). There, a deliberate reaction to pessimism was expressed and editor Raymond J. Healy said that he selected stories with a "more optimistic outlook to man's future."

Perhaps such editorial restraints were a healthy thing for the literature, but then again, perhaps not. Fletcher Pratt, commenting on the above preface (*Saturday Review*, March 22, 1952), felt that the Healy book foretold a "distressing trend towards Pollyannaism," but that was all; it may have been that was all editor Healy had in mind, too.

Mild restraints upon the output and the outlook of sci-fi writers at about this same time (1951) began to come from other quarters; mainly, from the major book reviewers and literary critics. Of course, adverse criticism to gloom does not constitute censorship; one could hardly complain that a critic's panning of a new Broadway play, causing its withdrawal from the boards, meant interference with the rights of free speech or press. However, a "ganging up" on the pessimistic science fiction writer

by reviewers and critics was then somewhat in evidence.

A more recent criticism of pessimistic sci-fi was in the April, 1955, issue of *Harper's*, which finds: "Increasingly, science fiction is a literature of nightmare and polemic. Its authors typically view their worlds-to-come as projections of everything they detest in the world-as-it-is. . . ." The article, entitled "Utopias You Wouldn't Like," shows that critical opposition to pessimistic science fiction continued, but it showed, too, that editorial restraints on the gloom writers were not consistent or were not too effective.

In a fairly recent anthology of the literature (*Best of Science Fiction*) published by Doubleday and edited by two critic-writers in the field, Anthony Boucher and J. Francis McComas, the preface shows that members of the trade are becoming both self-conscious of the art and a bit evasive as to its responsibilities. The preface anticipates comments about the philosophical and critical nature of some of the stories and moves to thwart almost any tack criticism might take. Boucher and McComas deny emphatically that sci-fi is exclusively in the axe-grinding business, and they assert the stories are primarily "for entertainment." They take great pains to include all the representative types of the literature; i.e., escape, philosophical, adventure, "significant," and utopian.

This leaning over backward to soft-pedal pessimism is again evident in Boucher's latest anthology, *The Best from Fantasy and Science Fiction* (Doubleday, 1957). Most of the stories here are light entertainment. Even Ray Bradbury, one of the dourest pessimists of the early 1950s has a story, "Icarus M. Wright," in which Bradbury puts a cheery okay on man's interest in technical progress; a strange about-face after such stories as the "African Veldt." One of the last stories in this anthology, however, "And Now the News," is Swiftian in intent and effect, maintaining that man is pretty much the louse the good Dean said he was.

It would be a mistake to think that science fiction has had to stand the brunt of our recent critical reactions to pessimism all alone. *Life* and *Saturday Review* have run editorials in the past few years deploring the trend towards gloom in serious American *belles-lettres*. Harrison Smith, of the editorial staff of *Saturday Review* conducted an almost one-man campaign against pessimism in a series of editorials that ran from about 1951 to 1953.

(Continued on page 146)

The Asteroids, 2194

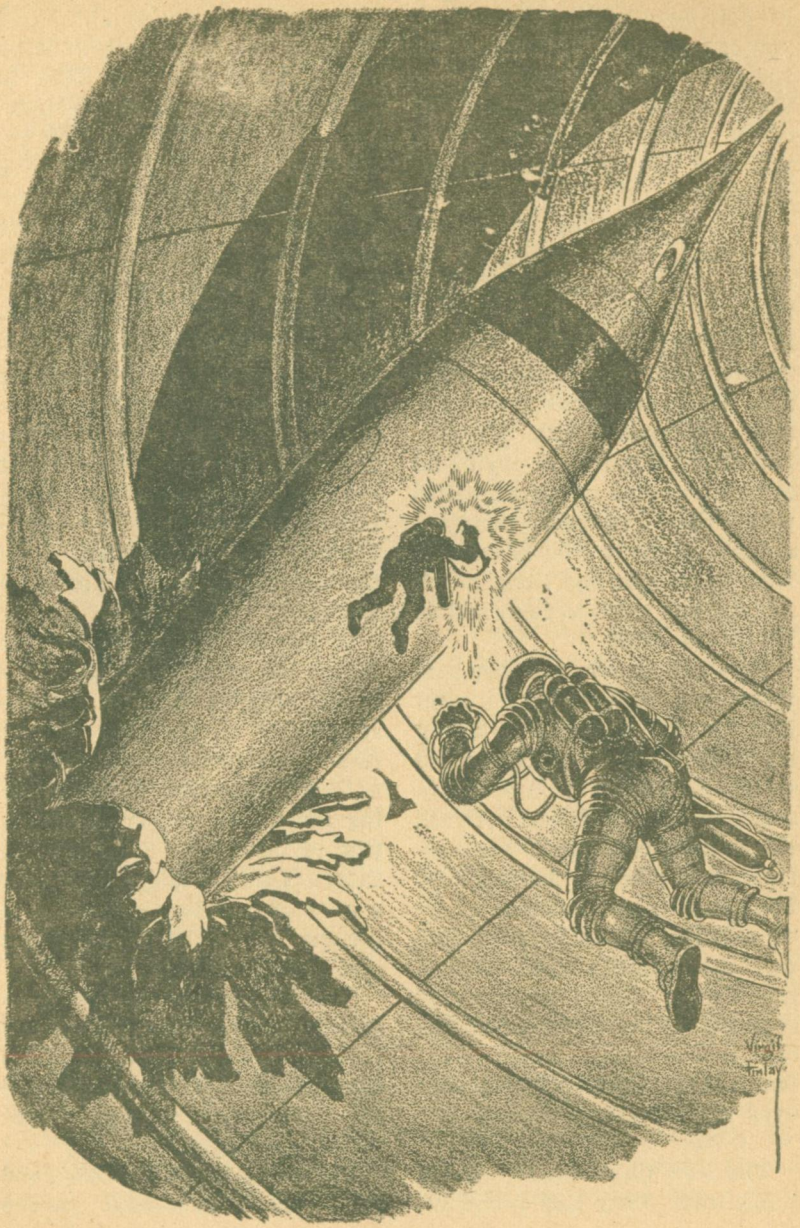
By JOHN WYNDHAM

Illustrated by FINLAY

One of the better paperback science fiction books recently published is John Wyndham's "The Outward Urge." The stories in it originally appeared as novelets in Amazing's sister magazine, Fantastic. Now the famed British author continues his saga of the space-going Troons with this story of a man who survived death, but was not happy about it.

MY FIRST visit to New Caledonia was in the summer of 2199. At that time an exploration party under the leadership of Gilbert Troon was cautiously pushing its way up the less radio-active parts of Italy, investigating the prospects of reclamation. My firm felt that there might be a popular book in it, and assigned me to put the proposition to Gilbert. When I arrived, however, it was to find that he had been delayed, and was now expected a week later. I was not at all displeased. A few days of comfortable laziness on a Pacific island, all paid for and counting as work, is the kind of perquisite I like.

New Caledonia is a fascinating spot, and well worth the trouble


Virgil
Finlay

of getting a landing permit—*if* you can get one. It has more of the past—and more of the future, too, for that matter—than any other place, and somehow it manages to keep them almost separate.

At one time the island, and the group, were, in spite of the name, a French Colony. But in 2044, with the eclipse of Europe in the Great Northern War, it found itself, like other ex-colonies dotted all about the world, suddenly thrown upon its own resources. While most mainland colonies hurried to make treaties with their nearest powerful neighbors, many islands such as New Caledonia had little to offer and not much to fear, and so let things drift.

For two generations the surviving nations were far too occupied by the tasks of bringing equilibrium to a half-wrecked world to take any interest in scattered islands. It was not until the Brazilians began to see Australia as a possible challenger of their supremacy that they started a policy of unobtrusive and tactful mercantile expansion into the Pacific. Then, naturally, it occurred to the Australians, too, that it was time to begin to extend *their* economic influence over various island-groups.

The New Caledonians resisted infiltration. They had found independence congenial, and steadily rebuffed temptations by both parties. The year 2194, in which Space declared for independence, found them still resisting; but the pressure was now considerable. They had watched one group of islands after another succumb to trade preferences, and thereafter virtually slide back to colonial status, and they now found it difficult to doubt that before long the same would happen to themselves when, whatever the form of words, they would be annexed —most likely by the Australians in order to forestall the establishment of a Brazilian base there, within a thousand miles of the coast.

It was into this situation that Jayme Gonveia, speaking for Space, stepped in 2150 with a suggestion of his own. He offered the New Caledonians guaranteed independence of either big Power, a considerable quantity of cash, and a prosperous future if they would grant Space a lease of territory which would become its Earth headquarters and main terminus.

The proposition was not altogether to the New Caledonian taste, but it was better than the alternatives. They accepted, and the construction of the Spaceyards was begun.

Since then the island has lived in a curious symbiosis. In the

north are the rocket landing and dispatch stages, warehouses, and engineering shops, and a way of life furnished with all modern techniques, while the other four-fifths of the island all but ignores it, and contentedly lives much as it did two and a half centuries ago. Such a state of affairs cannot be preserved by accident in this world. It is the result of careful contrivance both by the New Caledonians who like it that way, and by Space which dislikes outsiders taking too close an interest in its affairs. So, for permission to land anywhere in the group one needs hard-won visas from both authorities. The result is no exploitation by tourists or salesmen, and a scarcity of strangers.

However, there I was, with an unexpected week of leisure to put in, and no reason why I should spend it in Space-Concession territory. One of the secretaries suggested Lahua, down in the south at no great distance from Noumea, the capital, as a restful spot, so thither I went.

Lahua has picture-book charm. It is a small fishing town, half-tropical, half-French. On its wide white beach there are still canoes, working canoes, as well as modern. At one end of the curve a mole gives shelter for a small anchorage, and there the palms that fringe the rest of the shore stop to make room for the town.

Many of Lahua's houses are improved-traditional, still thatched with palm, but its heart is a cobbled rectangle surrounded by entirely untropical houses, known as the *Grande Place.* Here are shops, pavement cafés, stalls of fruit under bright striped awnings guarded by Gauguinesque women, a statue of Bougainville, an atrociously ugly church on the east side, a pissoir, and even a Mairie. The whole thing might have been imported complete from early twentieth century France, except for the inhabitants—but even they, some in bright sarongs, some in European clothes, must have looked much the same when France ruled there.

I found it difficult to believe that they are real people living real lives. For the first day I was constantly accompanied by the feeling that an unseen director would suddenly call 'Cut', and it would all come to a stop.

On the second morning I was growing more used to it. I bathed, and then with a sense that I was beginning to get the feel of the life, drifted to the *Place,* in search of an apéritif. I chose a café on the south side where a few trees shaded the tables, and wondered what to order. My usual drinks seemed out of key. A dusky, brightly saronged girl approached. On an impulse, and feeling like a char-

acter out of a very old novel I suggested a pernod. She took it as a matter of course.

"Un pernod? Certainement, monsieur," she told me.

I sat there looking across the Square, less busy now that the *déjeuner* hour was close, wondering what Sydney and Rio, Adelaide and São Paulo had gained and lost since they had been the size of Lahua, and doubting the value of the gains whatever they might be . . .

The pernod arrived. I watched it cloud with water, and sipped it cautiously. An odd drink, scarcely calculated, I felt, to enhance the appetite. As I contemplated it a voice spoke from behind my right shoulder.

"An island product, but from the original recipe," it said. "Quite safe, in moderation, I assure you."

I turned in my chair. The speaker was seated at the next table; a well-built, compact, sandy-haired man, dressed in a spotless white suit, a panama hat with a colored band, and wearing a neatly trimmed, pointed beard. I guessed his age at about 34 though the grey eyes that met my own looked older, more experienced, and troubled.

"A taste that I have not had the opportunity to acquire," I told him. He nodded.

"You won't find it outside. In some ways we are a museum here, but little the worse, I think, for that."

"One of the later Muses," I suggested. "The Muse of Recent History. And very fascinating, too."

I became aware that one or two men at tables within earshot were paying us—or, rather, me—some attention; their expressions were not unfriendly, but they showed what seemed to be traces of concern.

"It is—" my neighbor began to reply, and then broke off, cut short by a rumble in the sky.

I turned to see a slender white spire stabbing up into the blue overhead. Already, by the time the sound reached us, the rocket at its apex was too small to be visible. The man cocked an eye at it.

"Moon-shuttle," he observed.

"They all sound and look alike to me," I admitted.

"They wouldn't if you were inside. The acceleration in that shuttle would spread you all over the floor—very thinly," he said, and then went on: "We don't often see strangers in Lahua. Perhaps you would care to give me the pleasure of your company for luncheon? My name, by the way, is George."

I hesitated, and while I did I noticed over his shoulder an elderly man who moved his lips slightly as he gave me what was

without doubt an encouraging nod. I decided to take a chance on it.

"That's very kind of you. My name is David—David Myford, from Sydney," I told him. But he made no amplification regarding himself, so I was left still wondering whether George was his forename, or his surname.

I moved to his table, and he lifted a hand to summon the girl.

"Unless you are averse to fish you must try the bouillabaisse—*spécialité de la maison*," he told me.

I was aware that I had gained the approval of the elderly man, and apparently of some others as well, by joining George. The waitress, too, had an approving air. I wondered vaguely what was going on, and whether I had been let in for the town bore, to protect the rest.

"From Sydney," he said reflectively. "It's a long time since I saw Sydney. I don't suppose I'd know it now."

"It keeps on growing," I admitted, "but Nature would always prevent you from confusing it with anywhere else."

We went on chatting. The bouillabaisse arrived; and excellent it was. There were hunks of first-class bread, too, cut from those long loaves you see in pictures in old European books. I began to feel, with the help of the local wine, that a lot could be said for the twentieth century way of living.

In the course of our talk it emerged that George had been a rocket pilot, but was grounded now—not, one would judge, for reasons of health, so I did not inquire further . . . .

The second course was an excellent *coupe* of fruits I never heard of, and, overall, iced passion-fruit juice. It was when the coffee came that he said, rather wistfully I thought:

"I had hoped you might be able to help me, Mr. Myford, but it now seems to me that you are not a man of faith."

"Surely everyone has to be very much a man of faith," I protested. "For everything a man cannot do for himself he has to have faith in others."

"True," he conceded. "I should have said 'spiritual faith'. You do not speak as one who is interested in the nature and destiny of his soul—nor of anyone else's soul—I fear?"

I felt that I perceived what was coming next. However, if he was interested in saving my soul he had at least begun the operation by looking after my bodily needs with a generously good meal.

"When I was young," I told him, "I used to worry quite a lot about my soul, but later I decid-

ed that that was largely a matter of vanity."

"There is also vanity in thinking oneself self-sufficient," he said.

"Certainly," I agreed. "It is chiefly with the conception of the soul as a separate entity that I find myself out of sympathy. For me it is a manifestation of mind which is, in its turn, a product of the brain, modified by the external environment, and influenced more directly by the glands."

He looked saddened, and shook his head reprovingly.

"You are so wrong—so very wrong. Some are always conscious of their souls, others, like yourself, are unaware of them, but no one knows the true value of his soul as long as he has it. It is not until a man has lost his soul that he understands its value."

It was not an observation making for easy rejoinder, so I let the silence between us continue. Presently he looked up into the northern sky where the trail of the moon-bound shuttle had long since blown away. With embarrassment I observed two large tears flow from the inner corners of his eyes and trickle down beside his nose. He, however, showed no embarrassment; he simply pulled out a large, white, beautifully laundered handkerchief, and dealt with them.

"I hope you will never learn what a dreadful thing it is to have no soul," he told me, with a shake of his head. "It is to hold the emptiness of space in one's heart: to sit by the waters of Babylon for the rest of one's life."

Lamely I said:

"I'm afraid this is out of my range. I don't understand."

"Of course you don't. No one understands. But always one keeps on hoping that one day there will come somebody who does understand, and can help."

"But the soul is a manifestation of the self," I said. "I don't see how that *can* be lost—it can be changed, perhaps, but not lost."

"Mine is," he said, still looking up into the vasty blue. "Lost—adrift somewhere out there . . . Without it I am a sham . . . A man who has lost a leg or an arm is still a man, but a man who has lost his soul is nothing—nothing—nothing . . ."

"Perhaps a psychiatrist—"I started to suggest, uncertainly.

That stirred him, and checked the tears.

"Psychiatrist!" he exclaimed scornfully. "Damned frauds! Even to the word. They may know a bit about minds; but about the psyche!—why they even deny its existence . . . !"

There was a pause.

"I wish I could help. . . ."

"There was a chance. You *might* have been one who could. There's always the chance . . ." he said consolingly, though whether he was consoling himself, or me, seemed moot. At this point the church clock struck two. My host's mood changed. He got up quite briskly.

"I have to go now," he told me. "I wish you had been the one, but it has been a pleasant encounter all the same. I hope you enjoy Lahua."

I watched him make his way along the *Place*. At one stall he paused, selected a peach-like fruit, and bit into it. The woman beamed at him amiably, apparently unconcerned about payment.

The dusky waitress arrived by my table, and stood looking after him.

"O, le pauvre monsieur Georges," she said, sadly. We watched him climb the church steps, throw away the remnant of his fruit, and remove his hat to enter. *"Il va faire la prière,"* she explained. *"Tous les jours* 'e make pray for 'is soul. In ze morning, in ze afternoon. *C'est si triste."*

I noticed the bill in her hand. I fear that for a moment I misjudged George, but it had been a good lunch. I reached for my notecase. The girl noticed, and shook her head.

"Non, non, monsieur, non. Vous êtes convive. C'est d'accord. Alors, monsieur Georges 'e sign bill tomorrow. *S'arrange. C'est* okay," she insisted, and stuck to it.

The elderly man whom I had noticed before broke in:

"It's all right—quite in order," he assured me. Then he added: "Perhaps if you are not in a hurry you would care to take a café cognac with me?"

There seemed to be a fine open-handedness about Lahua. I accepted, and joined him.

"I'm afraid no one can have briefed you about poor George," he said.

I admitted this was so. He shook his head in reproof of persons unknown, and added:

"Never mind. All went well. George always has hopes of a stranger, you see: sometimes one has been known to laugh. One doesn't like that."

"I'm sorry to hear that," I told him. "His state strikes me as very far from funny."

"It is indeed," he agreed. "But he's improving. I doubt whether he knows it himself, but he is. A year ago he would often weep quietly through the whole *déjeuner*.—Rather depressing until one got used to it."

"He lives here in Lahua, then?" I asked.

"He exists. He spends most of

his time in the church. For the rest he wanders round. He sleeps at that big white house up on the hill. His grand-daughter's place. She sees that he's decently turned out, and pays the bills for whatever he fancies down here."

I thought I must have misheard.

"His grand-daughter!" I exclaimed. "But he's a young man. He can't be much over thirty years old . . ."

He looked at me.

"You'll very likely come across him again. Just as well to know how things stand. Of course it isn't the sort of thing the family likes to publicize, but there's no secret about it."

The café-cognacs arrived. He added cream to his, and began:

About five years ago (he said), yes, it would be in 2194. young Gerald Troon was taking a ship out to one of the larger asteroids —the one that de Gasparis called *Psyche* when he spotted it in 1852. The ship was a space-built freighter called the *Celestis*, working from the moon-base. Her crew was five, with not bad accommodation forward. Apart from that and the motor-section these ships are not much more than one big hold which is very often empty on the outward journeys unless it is carrying gear to set up new workings. This time it was empty because the assignment was simply to pick up a load of uranium ore—*Psyche* is half-made of high-yield ore, and all that was necessary was to set going the digging machinery already on the site, and load the stuff in. It seemed simple enough.

But the Asteroid Belt is still a very tricky area, you know. The main bodies and groups are charted, of course—but that only helps you to find them. The place is full of outfliers of all sizes that you couldn't hope to chart, but have to avoid. About the best you can do is to tackle the Belt as near to your objective as possible, reduce speed until you are little more than local orbit velocity, and then edge your way in, going very canny. The trouble is the time it can take to keep on fiddling along that way for thousands—hundreds of thousands, maybe—of miles. Fellows get bored and inattentive, or sick to death of it and start to take chances. I don't know what the answer is. You can bounce radar off the big chunks and hitch that up to a course deflector to keep you away from them. But the small stuff is just as deadly to a ship, and there's so much of it about that if you were to make the course-deflector sensitive enough to react to it you'd have your ship shying off everything the whole time, and getting nowhere. What we want is some-

one to come up with a kind of repulse mechanism with only a limited range of operation—say, a hundred miles—but no one does. So, as I say, it's tricky. Since they first started to tackle it back in 2150 they've lost half-a-dozen ships in there, and had a dozen more damaged one way or another. Not a nice place at all . . . On the other hand, uranium is uranium . . . .

Gerald's a good lad though. He has the authentic Troon yen for space without being much of a chancer; besides, *Psyche* isn't too far from the inner rim of the orbit—not nearly the approach problem *Ceres* is, for instance—what's more, he'd done it several times before.

Well, he got into the Belt, and jockeyed and fiddled and niggled his way until he was about three hundred miles out from *Psyche* and getting ready to come in. Perhaps he'd got a bit careless by then; in any case he'd not be expecting to find anything in orbit around the asteroid. But that's just what he did find—the hard way . . .

There was a crash which made the whole ship ring round him and his crew as if they were in an enormous bell. It's about the nastiest—and very likely to be the last—sound a spaceman can ever hear. This time, however, their luck was in. It wasn't too bad. They discovered that as they crowded to watch the indicator dials. It was soon evident that nothing vital had been hit, and they were able to release their held breaths.

Gerald turned over the controls to his First, and he and the engineer, Steve, pulled spacesuits out of the locker. When the airlock opened they hitched their safety-lines on the spring hooks, and slid their way aft along the hull on magnetic soles. It was soon clear that the damage was not on the airlock side, and they worked round the curve of the hull.

One thing was evident right away—that it had hit with no great force. If it had, it would have gone right through and out the other side, for the hold of a freighter is little more than a single-walled cylinder: there is no need for it to be more, it doesn't have to conserve warmth, nor contain air, nor to resist the friction of an atmosphere, nor does it have to contend with any more gravitational pull than that of the moon; it is only in the living-quarters that there have to be the complexities necessary to sustain life.

Another, which was immediately clear, was that this was not the only misadventure that had befallen the small ship. Something had, at some time, sliced off most of its after part, carry-

ing away not only the driving tubes but the mixing-chambers as well, and leaving it hopelessly disabled.

Shuffling round the wreckage to inspect it, Gerald found no entrance. It was thoroughly jammed into the hole it had made, and its airlock must lie forward, somewhere inside the freighter. He sent Steve back for a cutter and for a key that would get them into the hold. While he waited he spoke through his helmet radio to the operator in the *Celestis's* living-quarters, and explained the situation. He added:

"Can you raise the moon-station just now, Jake? I'd better make a report."

"Strong and clear, Cap'n."

"Good. Tell them to put me on to the Duty Officer, will you."

He heard Jake open up and call. There was a pause while the waves crossed and recrossed the millions of miles between them, then a voice:

"Hullo *Celestis!* Hullo *Celestis!* Moon-station responding. Go ahead, Jake. Over!"

Gerald waited out the exchange patiently. Radio waves are some of the things that can't be hurried. In due course another voice spoke.

"Hullo *Celestis!* Moon-station Duty Officer speaking. Give your location and go ahead."

"Hullo Charles. This is Gerald Troon calling from *Celestis* now in orbit about *Psyche.* Approximately three-twenty miles altitude. I am notifying damage by collision. No harm to personnel. *Not* repeat *not* in danger. Damage appears to be confined to empty hold-section. Cause of damage . . ." He went on to give particulars, and concluded: "I am about to investigate. Will report further. Please keep the link open. Over!"

The engineer returned, floating a self-powered cutter with him on a short safety-cord, and holding the key which would screw back the bolts of the hold's entrance-port. Gerald took the key, inserted it in the hole beside the door, and inserted his legs into the two staples that would give him the purchase to wind it.

The moon man's voice came again.

"Hullo, Ticker. Understand no immediate danger. But don't go taking any chances, boy. Can you identify the derelict?"

"Repeat no danger," Troon told him. "Plumb lucky. If she'd hit six feet further forward we'd have had real trouble. I have now opened small door of the hold, and am going in to examine the forepart of the derelict. Will try to identify it."

The cavernous darkness of the hold made it necessary for them

to switch on their helmet lights. They could now see the front part of the derelict; it took up about half the space there was. The ship had punched through the wall, turning back the tough alloy in curled petals, as though it had been tinplate. She had come to rest with her nose a bare couple of feet short of the opposite side. The two of them surveyed her for some moments. Steve pointed to a ragged hole, some five or six inches across, about halfway along the embedded section. It had a nasty significance that caused Gerald to nod sombrely.

He shuffled to the ship, and on to its curving side. He found the airlock on the top, as it lay in the *Celestis*, and tried the winding key. He pulled it out again.

"Calling you, Charles," he said. "No identifying marks on the derelict. She's not space-built—that is, she could be used in atmosphere. Oldish pattern—well, must be—she's pre the standardization of winding keys, so that takes us back a bit. Maximum external diameter, say, twelve feet. Length unknown—can't say how much after part there was before it was knocked off. She's been holed forward, too. Looks like a small meteorite, about five inches. At speed, I'd say. Just a minute . . . Yes, clean through and out, with a pretty small exit hole. Can't open the airlock without making a new key. Quicker to cut our way in. Over!"

He shuffled back, and played his light through the small meteor hole. His helmet prevented him getting his face close enough to see anything but a small part of the opposite wall, with a corresponding hole in it.

"Easiest way is to enlarge this, Steve," he suggested.

The engineer nodded. He brought his cutter to bear, switched it on and began to carve from the edge of the hole.

"Not much good, Ticker," came the voice from the moon. "The bit you gave could apply to any one of four ships."

"Patience, dear Charles, while Steve does his bit of fancywork with the cutter," Troon told him.

It took twenty minutes to complete the cut through the double hull. Steve switched off, gave a tug with his left hand, and the joined, inner and outer, circles of metal floated away.

"*Celestis* calling moon. I am about to go into the derelict, Charles. Keep open," Troon said.

He bent down, took hold of the sides of the cut, kicked his magnetic soles free of contact, and gave a light pull which took him floating head-first through the hole in the manner of an underwater swimmer. Presently his

voice came again, with a different tone:

"I say, Charles, there are three men in here. All in spacesuits—old-time spacesuits. Two of them are belted on to their bunks. The other one is . . . Oh, his leg's gone. The meteorite must have taken it off . . . There's a queer —Oh God, it's his blood frozen into a solid ball . . . !"

After a minute or so he went on:

"I've found the log. Can't handle it in these gloves, though. I'll take it aboard, and let you have particulars. The two fellows on the bunks seem to be quite intact—their suits, I mean. Their helmets have those curved strip-windows so I can't see much of their faces. Must've— That's odd . . . Each of them has a sort of little book attached by a wire to the suit fastener. On the cover it has: 'Danger—Perigoso' in red, and underneath: 'Do not remove suit—Read instructions within', repeated in Portuguese. Then: 'Hapson Survival System'. What would all that mean, Charles? Over!"

While he waited for the reply Gerald clumsily fingered one of the tag-like books and discovered that it opened concertina-wise, a series of small metal plates hinged together printed on one side in English and on the other in Portuguese. The first leaf carried little print, but what there was, was striking. It ran: "CAUTION! Do *NOT* open suit until you have read these instructions or you will KILL the wearer."

When he had got that far the Duty Officer's voice came in again:

"Hullo, Ticker. I've called the Doc. He says do NOT, repeat NOT, touch the two men on any account. Hang on, he's coming to talk to you. He says the Hapson system was scrapped over thirty years ago. He—oh, here he is . . ."

Another voice came in:

"Ticker? Laysall here. Charles tells me you've found a couple of Hapsons, undamaged. Please confirm and give circumstances."

Troon did so. In due course the doctor came back:

"Okay. That sounds fine. Now listen carefully, Ticker. From what you say it's practically certain those two are not dead—yet. They're—well, they're in cold storage. That part of the Hapson system was good. You'll see a kind of boss mounted on the left of the chest. The thing to do in the case of extreme emergency was to slap it good and hard. When you do that it gives a multiple injection. Part of the stuff puts you out. Part of it prevents the building-up in the body of large ice crystals that would damage the tissues.

Part of it—oh, well, that'll do later. The point is that it works practically a hundred per cent. You get Nature's own deep-freeze in Space. And if there's something to keep off direct radiation from the sun you'll stay like that until somebody finds you—if anyone ever does. Now I take it that these two have been in the dark in an airless ship which is now in the airless hold of your ship. Is that right?"

"That's so, Doc. There are the two small meteorite holes, but they would not get direct beams from there."

"Fine. Then keep 'em just like that. Take care they don't get warmed. Don't try anything the instruction-sheet says. The point is that though the success of the Hapson freeze is almost sure, the resuscitation isn't. In fact it's very dodgy indeed—a poorer than twenty-five per cent chance at best. You get lethal crystal formations building up, for one thing. What I suggest is that you try to get 'em back exactly as they are. Our apparatus here will give them the best chance they can have. Can you do that?"

Gerald Troon thought for a moment. Then he said:

"We don't want to waste this trip—and that's what'll happen if we pull the derelict out of our side to leave a hole we can't mend. But if we leave her where she is, plugging the hole, we can at least take on a half-load of ore. And if we pack that well in, it'll help to wedge the derelict in place. So suppose we leave the derelict just as she lies, and the men, too, and seal her up to keep the ore out of her. Would that suit?"

"That should be as good as can be done," the doctor replied. "But have a look at the two men before you leave them. Make sure they're secure in their bunks. As long as they are kept in space conditions about the only thing likely to harm them is breaking loose under acceleration, and getting damaged."

"Very well, that's what we'll do. Anyway, we won't be using any high acceleration the way things are. The other poor fellow shall have a proper space-burial . . ."

An hour later both Gerald and his companion were back in the *Celestis's* living-quarters, and the First Officer was starting to maneuver for the spiral-in to *Psyche*. The two got out of their spacesuits. Gerald pulled the derelict's log from the outside pocket, and took it to his bunk. There he fastened the belt, and opened the book.

Five minutes later Steve looked across at him from the opposite bunk, with concern.

"Anything the matter, Cap'n? You're looking a bit queer."

"I'm feeling a bit queer, Steve . . . That chap we took out and consigned to space, he was Terence Rice, wasn't he?"

"That's what his disc said," Steve agreed.

"H'm." Gerald Troon paused. Then he tapped the book. "This," he said, "is the log of the *Astarte*. She sailed from the moon-station third of January, 2149—forty-five years ago—bound for the Asteroid Belt. There was a crew of three: Captain George Montgomery Troon, engineer Luis Gompez, radio-man Terence Rice . . :

"So, as the unlucky one was Terence Rice, it follows that one of those two back there must be Gompez, and the other—well, he must be George Montgomery Troon, the one who made the Venus landing in 2144 . . . And, incidentally, my grandfather . . ."

"Well," said my companion, "they got them back all right. Gompez was unlucky, though—at least I suppose you'd call it unlucky—anyway, he didn't come through the resuscitation. George did, of course . . .

"But there's more to resuscitation than mere revival. There's a degree of physical shock in any case, and when you've been under as long as he had there's plenty of mental shock, too.

"He went under, a youngish man with a young family; he woke up to find himself a great-grandfather; his wife a very old lady who had remarried; his friends gone, or elderly; his two companions in the *Astarte*, dead.

"That was bad enough, but worse still was that he knew all about the Hapson System. He knew that when you go into a deep-freeze the whole metabolism comes quickly to a complete stop. You are, by every known definition and test, dead . . . Corruption cannot set in, of course, but every vital process has stopped; every single feature which we regard as evidence of life has ceased to exist . . .

"So you are dead . . .

"So if you believe, as George does, that your psyche, your soul, has independent existence, then it must have left your body when you died.

"And how do you get it back? That's what George wants to know—what he keeps searching for. That's why he's over there now, praying to be told . . ."

I leant back in my chair, looking across the *Place* at the dark opening of the church door.

"You mean to say that that young man, that George who was here just now, is the very same George Montgomery Troon who made the first landing on Venus, half a century ago?" I said.

"He's the man," he affirmed.

I shook my head, not for disbelief, but for George's sake.

"What will happen to him?" I asked.

"God knows," said my neighbor. "He *is* getting better; he's less distressed than he was. And now he's beginning to show touches of the real Troon obsession to get into space again.

"But what then? . . . You can't ship a Troon as crew. And you can't have a Captain who might take it into his head to go hunting through Space for his soul. . . .

THE END

COMING NEXT MONTH

It has been a bit too long since A. Bertram Chandler appeared in these pages. But he is back in the February issue of AMAZING with a complete novel guaranteed to give you much reading pleasure.

When the Dream Dies is a tough and touching story of men and women of the Rim Worlds, the empty borderland of the Galaxy, and of their search for a dream—and a dreamer.

What Need of Man? explores the relationship between man and machine in a space-probe age, and is the story accompanying another exceptionally fine **Schomburg** illustration (l.).

Dr. Sam McClatchie, who wrote our recent serial, *The Last Vial,* pursues the subject of biological science with a fact piece in February—a fascinating article called *The Ultimate Injection.*

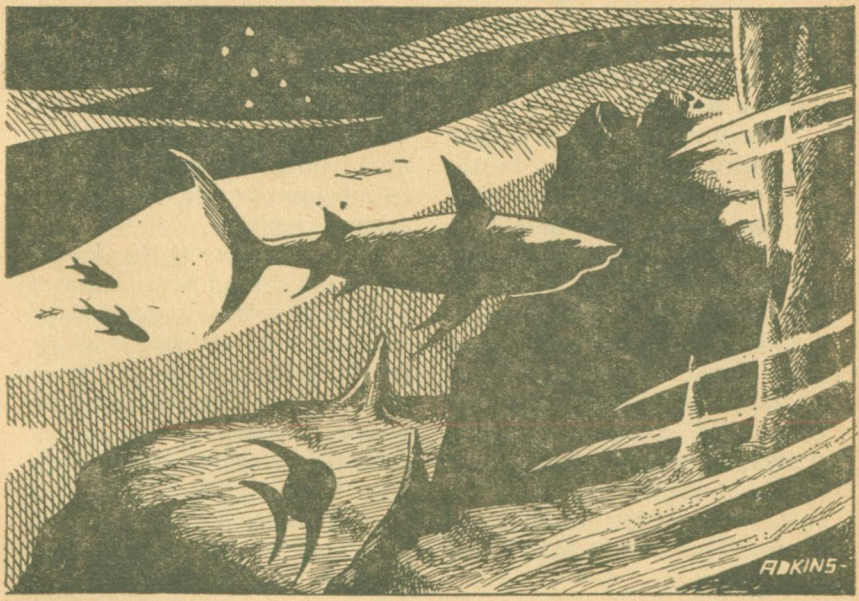
And there will be other stories, features, editorials and letters—the usual rewards of the new AMAZING. The February issue goes on sale January 10. Reserve your copy with your newsdealer.

He was dragged back from death time after time. Now they had set a watch on him; for the rest of his life he would have a . . . .

DARK COMPANION

By ROBERT SILVERBERG

Illustrated by ADKINS



ROCKLIN was beginning to come out of it. The anesthesia was wearing away in patches, giving him fitfull glimpses of the waking world. White ceiling overhead. He was immobile, he realized, in a thermonutrient bath. He could feel the warm fluid licking at him.

The rats, he thought. *They don't even give a man a chance to kill himself properly.*

He still didn't have control of his extremities. He tried to flex his hands, wondering if his fingers were still there. Or his toes. As long as they were going to force him to live, they could at least let him be intact. But he rather suspected they had. The surgeons would have been thorough about it. His family had money, enough money to make sure he got a regrow job on any missing parts.

Rocklin rolled his eyes around, but there was nothing in the path of vision but white ceiling. He was in the nutrient bath up to his neck, and rigidly supported. He tried to move his head and failed. After a moment he closed his eyes, more depressed than tired. The servoactuators would be summoning the doctors, now that he was awake. In a moment or two, there'd be a babble of voices.

It was getting harder and harder for a man to kill himself these days.

This had been Rocklin's third try at it in the past six months. He had been living on his family's farm off Barbados, with the token job of supervising the plankton harvest. But there was really nothing for him to do except sign the weekly pay vouchers. The real supervisory work was carried on by hired foremen. Rocklin had stayed on the farm for five weeks, reaching the boiling point. Then, one warm January morning, he had boarded the jet for Juneau. He had picked it simply as the northernmost city that could be reached direct. The cloying warmth of the Caribbean in January reminded him uncomfortably of the warmth of other seas on other planets, and when the brooding came over him the death-urge was unanswerable.

He went to Juneau. It was ten below when he got off the jet—a mild winter's afternoon. He had no luggage. He was dressed in a summer tunic.

There was a bar at the airport. He drank for an hour. Even at Juneau's prices, ten dollars' worth of martinis is a lot of liquor to drink in an hour. Throbbing with a false warmth, he wandered out into the dreary darkness of mid-afternoon. Snow was falling. White, cleansing snow. Rocklin walked for half an hour, while the snow drifted lightly down, frosting his hair

and his eyebrows, until finally he grew tired and felt himself growing sober, and he lay down in a snowbank so cold that it felt warm to his skin, and closed his eyes, and smiled as the slow gentle flakes began to cover him. No one would ever find him in time. he thought. He would rest, and then he would sleep, and the sleep would last eternally, and the dull ache of guilt in his heart would be stilled forever. No more dreams. No more nightmares.

No more Leon Rocklin.

Consciousness departed—

And returned.

The doctors were gathering, now. Rocklin couldn't see them, but he could feel their presence. They were down at the foot of his tank now, peering at the readings on the dials of the various bionic devices that metered the ebb and flow of his life.

"Let the traction ease," someone murmured. "If he's conscious, there's no need to squeeze him that way."

Rocklin did not open his eyes. The EEG readings were all they needed to tell that he had returned to awareness. He could hear them making adjustments now in the strictures that held him immobile in the nutrient bath. The soft rollers that had gripped his body, massaging and exercising it, eased away from him now. The neck of the tank opened wider. He still could not move his body freely—there wasn't enough room in the tank for that—but at least he could crane his neck around sufficiently to see where he was and who was with him.

It was a private room. Of course. His parents didn't believe in stinting when it came to medical care. A private room ran a thousand dollars a week, but what of it when an only son was involved?

Three doctors stood at the foot of his tank. An old wise one and two residents in their mid-twenties. Further back in the room, Rocklin saw his mother, looking gaunt and haggard. His father, tight-lipped, bleak-faced.

"Leon!" his mother shrilled.

One of the residents turned to her. The old doctor advanced until he was within two feet of Rocklin's upturned face and said, "You've been making remarkable progress, young man. I'm happy to tell you there's no danger of gangrene."

"That's just fine," Rocklin said with a bitterness that cut into the startled old man like a whiplash.

Recoiling, the doctor said, "We'll be transferring you to recreational therapy in a couple of weeks. You'll be good as new by the end of the month. This is Dr. Heinson, who's been in charge of your case."

One of the residents stepped forward, a thin, intense-looking young man. He could not have been more than twenty-six, the same age as Rocklin. The old doctor exited, and Heinson hovered over Rocklin's tank.

The medic said, "Your parents are here, Mr. Rocklin. We don't want to excite you too much on your first day back, but you can talk to them a few minutes."

"I don't want to."

"Leon!" came the shrill wail.

"Please, Mrs. Rocklin," Heinson said quietly. He looked down at Rocklin with a professional patience far beyond his years. *He hates me,* Rocklin thought. *Because I'm a spoiled brat who's had every advantage while he's been plugging through med school. Well, to hell with him. The hell with them all.*

Heinson said gently, "I know you're still not quite used to other people, after a month in the tank. But try to speak to your parents. They've been so worried since—"

"A month in the tank?" Rocklin gasped.

"That's right. You were brought in on the 27th of January, and today's the first of March. Severe frostbite and general overrefrigeration. Your body temperature was in the 70's when you were found, Mr. Rocklin. But you're back to good shape now. You—"

"Did you have to do it?" Rocklin asked. "Did you have to meddle? Can't a man die when he wants to?"

The medic looked at him as though he would be glad to administer euthanasia on the spot. "Our lives are entrusted to us at birth, Mr. Rocklin. We don't have the right to break our trust. Suppose you talk to your parents now."

Heinson and the other medic retreated to a point beyond Rocklin's field of vision.

His mother looked down at him.

"Leon, why did you do it?"

"Because I was tired of living," he said stolidly.

She was fighting back the tears. "Three times in the past six months! Leon, Leon, don't you realize that since Jeff died you're all we have left?"

"Me and twenty million bucks."

"Can money buy us a new son?" she demanded. "Leon, why do you treat us this way? Why?"

He was silent.

His father was in the picture, now. Dour, tense, doubly distant from Rocklin after all that had happened. As always, a man of few words. He said simply, "You'll get nowhere talking to him, Myra. Suicide's not a thing you can argue about rationally. There's only one thing to do and we've done it."

Rocklin glared up at his father. "What are you talking about?"

"You'll have a Companion," the elder Rocklin said in firm, no-nonsense tones.

His parents went away, after that. There was no possibility of further conversation. Rocklin refused to talk to them. He retreated into a shell as complete as the nutrient bath that had held him for a month.

A Companion! He seethed with anger. What did they think he was, anyway, a—

—child?

Yes. An irresponsible child who was likely to try to take his own life whenever he was left alone. So they would see to it he was never alone again. Closing his eyes, Rocklin let the anger boil through him. Twelve floors below, in the heart of the hospital, a red light flashed on a control panel, and the medical technician who was monitoring his floor automatically jabbed a button. An ultrasonic spraygun touched Rocklin's arm, twelve floors above, and within a moment he was asleep while ataractics neutralized the enzymes of rage that had been let loose in his system.

He slept.

The rubber rollers kneaded his recuperating body.

Warm nutrient fluid bathed him, was pumped out, was renewed. The damaged outer rind of flesh has been peeled away when his frost-blackened body had been found in the snow. Inside the tank, he was naked down to the nerves, skinless, a flayed lump of healing meat. No need for skin-grafts, now that the skin itself was capable of regrowth. Cell after epithelial cell joined together as the days passed. Rocklin lay in his tank, asleep more than he was awake, while unseen tubes carried on the processes of metabolism for him. A vegetable existence, so close to death that he scarcely minded being alive.

During the hours of consciousness, gradually increased each day, he thought about the past year.

Thought about his brother Jeff dying in a sleeting fury of exploding steel.

Thought about the day he had slashed his wrists and watched strangely bright blood bubble down over the tiles of his bathroom.

Thought about the evening when he had gone to the poor quarter of town, into an old house that still had gas jets in the kitchen, and had turned the gas on and sealed the windows and waited.

Thought about lying down in the warm, soft snow.

They didn't even let a man die

decently these days. The damned electronic eyes were everywhere, soaking up data and releasing it. How had they found him, locked into his own bathroom with his life's fluid dribbling out? He didn't know that. But a ponderous roboservitor had smashed open the door and carried him to safety. How had they known about the gas jet? How had they found him in the snow?

Eyes.

Eyes everywhere.

And now there would be not only eyes but hands and a voice and a body, to keep him from harming himself. A Companion. Rocklin's lips firmed in a scowl. None of them understood. They gave him jaw-music about how sacrosanct a human life was, and they kept him alive.

One day they drained away the fluid completely. The medics looked at the instruments and nodded, and the roller-grips relaxed and the tank opened and Rocklin looked at his naked body for the first time in seven weeks.

He looked pink and new and hairless. Four of his toes were gone, the two outer ones on each foot, and in their place were the stubby little buds of regenerated flesh. His left pinkie was gone, too.

"It'll take about a year and a half for them to grow back fully," the medics told him.

He nodded without caring.

His skin had a newborn look about it. When he touched a fingertip to his thigh, the white imprint lingered a long while, turning an angry red. He slowly lifted one leg. Even though his muscles had been exercised regularly, the tendons quivered with the unaccustomed strain.

"Three weeks of physical therapy," they told him. "Then you'll be as good as new."

His mother didn't come to see him being taken from the tank. But his father was there to watch as rubberized grips lifted him out of the thermonutrient womb in which he had lain since the end of January, and stood him on his own feet again. His weight was supported for a moment; then he stood alone, weak and wobbly, and took a few hesitant steps. They draped a robe around him. He felt himself swaying, and wanted to sit down, and found himself falling, but the servo behind him moved up efficiently, taking him ever so gently under the armpits and supporting him again.

His father said, "As soon as your therapy is finished, you'll leave on a vacation trip. A year's travel ought to bring you back to some sort of mental balance."

Rocklin smiled. "So I'm to be a 24th-century remittance man, father?"

"I don't understand."

"I can go anywhere I please. Just so long as I don't do anything scandalous on the family hearth."

"We want you to be your old self again, Leon," the old man said.

"I *am* my old self. And always have been."

"No. You're unstable. We can't have that. Now that Jeff's gone, you'll inherit. Have I done all my building for nothing? A scowl creased the brooding face. "A year's travel and you'll recover. But we'll take no more chances with you. Three times is enough." Old Rocklin turned. "Bring in the Companion."

"I thought you had forgotten about that," Rocklin said.

The Companion entered.

He stepped through the scything doors and went immediately to Rocklin, extending a hand.

"You're Leon," he said in blunt greeting. "You can call me Roy."

Rocklin stared disdainfully at the outstretched hand. The Companion was a tall, athletically-built young man, looking to be in his late twenties. He was well dressed and moved with an easy grace. His skin, a dark bluish-violet with undertones of greenish-bronze, was not the color of the skins of any of the races of men.

"I don't want you," Rocklin said. "Get out of here!"

The Companion's smile was unfailingly affable. "You don't really have a choice, I'm afraid. The one command I can't obey is a dismissal from *you*. It looks like you're stuck with me and me with you. Let's both make the best of it."

Rocklin stared at his father. "How could you do this to me?"

"It was the only way," the old man said. "Don't try to fight it now. Excuse me, Leon."

He turned and was gone. Now only the Companion and the medic and the medic's servo remained in the room.

Rocklin said slowly to the Companion, "You're just a heap of chemicals. You're something slimy that sprouted from a test-tube."

"Are you trying to insult me?" the Companion asked.

"I'm telling you what you are."

"I'm an imitation human," the Companion said lightly. "There are times when I wish my builders had picked a better model to pattern me after. Like a bird, or a fish. But I didn't have any choice about being shaped human. I make the most of it. I'm a philosopher about some things."

"You're a stinking android," Rocklin said.

"What of it? Do you want me to describe the process by which *you* were brought into the world? I've seen it performed, Leon. It's the most ludicrous

kind of bestial grappling you can imagine. Two people sweating and groaning and gasping—and then, nine months later, the messiness of birth." The Companion shook his head. "The only difference between us is that I was born efficiently and you weren't."

Rocklin stared levelly at the android for a long moment. He bit down hard on his lip and told himself that there was no point in baiting the Companion. Insulting an android was like making love to a rubber doll or drinking rum extract instead of real rum. Beyond the superficialities, there was no real satisfaction.

He sighed. "All right," he said. "So I've got a Companion. I don't envy you, Roy. I'm not an easy assignment."

"I like a challenge, Leon."

"I'm terribly spoiled, too."

"All the better," Roy said. He glanced at the medic. "Is it all right if Mr. Rocklin and I begin his therapy?"

Within a week, Rocklin discovered that he liked the android Companion as well as he had ever liked any other person. *Person.* Yes, the android was a person, human in every respect save the dark purple color of his skin and the fact that he could not reproduce. But Roy was more than human in some ways. He was faster than any human being, for one thing. He could run a mile in three minutes, if he had to, for his efficiently-designed metabolism generated no fatigue poisons to slow him down. He could do eight feet in the running high-jump. The hair-trigger coordination of his wrists could drive a baseball five hundred feet ten swings out of ten. And he could cross a room at close to blinding speed to snatch a knife out of a would-be suicide's hand, if he had to. As a trained Companion, Roy's job was to be ever alert for a suicidal motion. Unsleeping, eternally watchful, the Companion kept men alive against their wills.

And he knew how to make himself liked.

Rocklin's early antagonism vanished within a couple of days. He hated the idea of being tagged with a Companion, hated his father for having bought him one—but Roy swiftly made him realize that there was nothing to be gained by hating the Companion himself.

They became friends.

The Companion took part in Rocklin's therapy. For an hour each morning and an hour each afternoon, they tossed a medicine ball back and forth. They swam in the hospital pool. They lifted weights. Roy was Rocklin's shadow. When Rocklin showered in the locker rooms, Roy

showered next to him, his tapering, sexless purple body glittering under the cascades of water.

"You don't need to take a shower," Rocklin pointed out. "You haven't been sweating."

Roy smiled. "I like the feel of cold water, that's all."

"I can't kill myself under a shower. What are you afraid I'll do? Turn the hot water on and scald myself?"

"You might slip on a piece of soap," Roy suggested. "I'm here to catch you before you crack your skull."

"Would anyone commit suicide by slipping on soap?"

Roy grinned. "I'm supposed to guard you against natural occurrences too. Your parents are crazy to see you outlive them, you know that?"

"So I gather," Rocklin said, shutting off the water and pressing for the autotowel.

He chafed under the constant watchful vigilance of the Companion. There wasn't any activity they didn't do together. And, at night, the android stood guard in his room. 24-hour-a-day surveillance could be intolerable. What surprised Rocklin more than anything else was the fact that it was not.

Roy was a good Companion. He was always ready with a quip, a gag, an irreverent comment. He didn't take himself or his employers seriously, at least not openly.

The weeks passed. Rocklin's skin had toughened and his strength had returned, and the tiny buds of toes and pinkies were growing visibly. An hour a day of psychotherapy left him cheerful and outwardly calm. He managed to conceal—successfully, he hoped—the inward fester of guilt and self-torment that had driven him to attempt suicide three times. He wanted to get out of the hospital. Having a Companion was bad enough, but this army of medics and servos and clicking spy-eyes made self-destruction utterly impossible. In order to outwit the Companion, he would have to go somewhere where the odds would be more in his favor.

The day of his discharge from the hospital came. It was mid-April, by now, and he was in tip-top shape. Neither of his parents came to see him off. A packet arrived, by special messenger, delivered to Roy.

The android opened it.

"What's inside?" Rocklin asked.

"Spaceliner tickets. Hotel reservations. Letters of credit. And money." Roy grinned amiably. "Boy, we're going to take a trip!"

It was on the third day of a nine-day cruise to Huyckman IV that Rocklin tried to kill himself

for the fourth time. It had been building up in him slowly for days, the fitful depression, the damp cold feeling that he had no business being alive. A garrulous drunk in the ship's lounge had triggered the mania with a chance remark about cowardice shown by some diplomats during an anti-Terran riot on Vorrilan. "You should have seen the yellow bums!" the man exclaimed. "I was locked in the embassy with them, and they were puking their guts out every time one of the Vorrilani heaved another stink-bomb through the window. If you ever want to see something that'll shake your faith in the essential backbone of humanity, it's when a man of fifty is so afraid he's going to die that he wets his pants out of fright. Hell, what's so awful about dying? You'd think—"

"Shut up," Rocklin said.

"What was that?"

"I said shut up! I don't want you to talk to me, that's what I said!"

Roy tactfully steered him to another part of the lounge. But a month's hard-won calm had been shattered in an instant. It took a couple of days more for the core of Rocklin's person to be reached by the burrowing worm of self-loathing, and then as he looked in the mirror on the third morning of the cruise he knew he had no right to be still alive when Jeff was dead, no right to have let him die—

There were ataractics in the medicine cabinet. Tranquilizers. One tablet would bring relief from jitters; two would induce complete calm; three would cause abnormal relaxation. Fifteen or twenty tablets would be fatal, the involuntary nervous system blanked out nearly totally. Committing suicide with the pills was difficult, because after the second or third it was hard to maintain the singleness of will necessary to keep on swallowing them. But a sufficiently determined man—

He let the packet slip into his tunic. Twenty tablets. That would be about enough.

Roy was standing nearby, but if he had seen the gesture he took no notice of it. Rocklin went to work depilating his cheeks, and casually slipped a pill into his mouth and swallowed it dry. It would take some time to go to work. Enough time for another pill, and another. He had three tablets in his system by the time he had finished with his face. The first was starting to take effect, and he was getting limp of will. But he spurred himself on with the thought of his cowardice. Now it was easy, a fourth pill, a fifth, a sixth, gobbled down like candy every time he could turn part of his body away from Roy's watchful eyes, and—

"What are you up to?" the android demanded.

"Me?" Rocklin yawned. "I don't get you."

"Elbow motions. You putting something in your mouth?"

"Don't be silly." He bent over to scratch his knee, and wormed another pill out of his tunic pocket. Then Roy's dark hand was around his wrist, and the pill tumbled free, bouncing on the tile floor. The Companion scooped it up.

"What is it?"

"None of your business." Rocklin was terribly drowsy now, but he still wanted those pills.

Roy popped the tablet into his own mouth to analyze it. His eyes widened. "Happy pills. Why'd you take it?"

"I felt jittery."

"Give me the box."

"I had the last one."

"There were two dozen of them this morning." Roy peered into the cabinet. "Where's the box?"

Meekly, Rocklin handed it over. The pills he had already taken left him with little will to resist. The android counted swiftly through the box, scowling. "You've had six already, you idiot!" He moved toward Rocklin and seized him firmly, prying his mouth open and thrusting a finger in deep, to the base of Rocklin's tongue. Rocklin retched, gagged, tried limply to push Roy away, but there was no resisting the Companion, and in a moment Rocklin was on his knees emptying his stomach's contents into the bowl. He rose a moment later, shaky and white-faced.

"You didn't have to do that," he said accusingly.

"It's easier on you than a stomach pump." Roy led his charge into the other room of their luxury cabin and pushed him down on the bed. "Can't you understand that I'm *watching* you?" he asked. "It isn't worth trying."

"You didn't notice till I had eaten six pills."

"Six weren't enough to kill you."

"Suppose I'd been swallowing cyanide?" Rocklin asked, with a small-boy triumphal grin.

"First you have to *get* the cyanide," Roy said tiredly. "The only drugs in here that could possibly be fatal are the ataractics. And you couldn't get them all in you without my noticing. You can't win, Rocklin."

"I'll manage sooner or later," Rocklin muttered.

Later that afternoon they sat in the ship's first-class lounge, staring out at the pinwheeling glory of radiance that filled the endless night of hyperspace. The distorted hyperspace shadows of the real universe showed up as

light of many colors, twisted and angled into alien contortions that formed the most spectacular sight any human mind had experienced. The brilliance of the display was almost blinding; the lounge windows were open only a few hours a day.

They ordered drinks, Rocklin calling for a martini and the android for green chartreuse. Rocklin smiled at the liqueur and said, "Why should an android waste good money on alcohol? You can't get drunk, can you?"

"I can metabolize all the alcohol I take in," Roy said. "So I don't get tipsy. But I have a feeling that I wouldn't *want* to get tipsy even if I could. I just happen to like the taste of certain drinks."

"You sound so smug sometimes," Rocklin said. "But it's all sour grapes. I'll bet you'd give your left ear to find out what it's like to get drunk. Not to mention what you'd give if you knew what it was like to make love to a woman."

"You forget I'm not human," the Companion said smoothly. "I don't have your drives and compulsions. I'm quite happy with myself the way I am."

"But there are some pleasures a human being has worth all our inefficiencies of construction.—"

"If human life is so precious to you," Roy cut in, "Why are you so eager to get rid of it?"

Rocklin's expression darkened. "That has nothing to do with what we're talking about."

"Sure it does. Sex and drink are important to you. Dead men don't have any sex life." Roy leaned forward, his intelligent eyes searching deeply. "Let down the barriers, man. Why are you so red hot about killing yourself?"

"I don't want to talk about it."

"But I do," the Companion said. "I'm faced with spending the next sixty years with you. I want to know what my job's all about. Why do you hate yourself so much?"

Rocklin downed the martini. "Let's just say I missed an opportunity. And I regret it so much that I don't want to stay alive any more."

"Tell me about it."

"No."

"Do I have to drag it out of you hypnotically?"

"You wouldn't do that," Rocklin said.

"Sure I would. I'm unscrupulous, and my curiosity's aroused. I've got no gonads, but I've got a well-developed curiosity. What's the story? You've been holding out too long."

Rocklin put his thumbs wearily to his eyeballs, clasping his hands over his ears, and pressed his skull as though trying to squeeze the sickness out of it. After a long moment he said,

"All right. I guess it's about time I finally got it out, but you must promise never to tell anybody, especially my parents."

"It's a deal."

It had been a year before. Rocklin was vacationing on Dennison VII, an Earth-style world were his parents' corporation held several plantations. He was ostensibly looking into the management of the holdings, but the real purpose of the trip was a vacation. Most of Dennison VII was in a tropical belt, and there were lithe colonist girls who wore next to nothing, and took even that off to swim in the warm seas. There had been a third-generation girl named Laraine, whose father worked as an overseer on the Rocklin land, and Rocklin had stood on shore watching the sleek tanned beauty of her as she glided through the waves, and he had stripped and gone in after her, and her lips had tasted salty and her body was exciting and the beach was empty.

There were other girls like Laraine, and there was a cloudy liquor that they made from a spicy root, and the skies were blue and the sun hot, and three months had passed. And then Rocklin's brother Jeff had arrived.

Jeff was three years older, at twenty-nine, and Jeff was the heir apparent to the far-flung Rocklin empire. Tall and bronzed and muscular, he had his brother's good looks, but none of his brother's weakness. Jeff was a businessman. Jeff was his father's son. There was little warmth between the brothers. From the very beginning, there was the understanding that Jeff would work hard and take over the business, while Leon would live well and keep out of everybody's hair.

"Why'd you come here?" Rocklin demanded when Jeff arrived on Dennison VII. "You checking up on me?"

"Not on you," Jeff said, hardly bothering to veil his contempt for his younger brother. "I'm checking up on the managers here. We couldn't trust you to do it. This place isn't run right."

So Jeff checked. He went over the books and called men into his office and delivered blistering harangues. Rocklin watched from a distance, awed by his brother's efficiency and capability in handling men. He heard people whispering, too, about the difference between the two brothers, how Jeff was hard as nails and the other one a good-for-nothing beachcomber lucky enough to have been born to wealth. Rocklin didn't like the unfavorable comparisons, but he was realistic enough to know that they were the truth.

Then came the day when Jeff wanted to inspect the tunnels of the copper mines that had been opened recently, at great cost and with little yield. That morning, when Rocklin went to the beach, Laraine was not there, and when she did come, she looked troubled and worried. It took him a long time to get at the source of her uneasiness. Finally, as they floated lazily on the waves, she gasped it out.

"Leon, they're going to kill your brother."

"Who is? Where? What?"

"This afternoon. In the mines. I heard them talking in the compound last night."

Rocklin grew pale, and tension wrapped an iron band around his chest. He dragged the girl to shore and they sprawled down in the sand. "Now, what's all this about killing Jeff?"

"He's discovered shortages. Half a dozen of the bosses were stealing from the company, and Jeff's found them out. So they're going to gimmick the control panel in the mine shaft. When he goes in there to check on things, the panel's going to blow up. They'll call it an overload. They'll be very regretful about the whole thing. But Jeff will be dead."

Rocklin had no more desire for lovemaking that morning. He left Laraine and wandered, panicky, over the deserted beach. Jeff was scheduled to go down into the mine at noon. It was almost that now. Hardly enough time to warn him. And Jeff wouldn't believe the warning, anyway.

Rocklin commandeered a company truck and headed for the entrance to the mineshafts. He drove badly; his nerves were stretching to the breaking-point now. Suppose Jeff did get killed? They might turn on him too, wiping out both Rocklin brothers. The smart thing was to drive to the spaceport and catch the first flight out.

Scram, he thought, *while the scramming's good. Save your own skin. Jeff's only getting what's coming to him for being so damn nosy.*

He turned the truck around and drove for ten minutes in the opposite direction, back toward the spaceport. Ships left for Densison V three times a week, and today was one of the days. He could get a berth on the strength of his name alone, and once on V he could arrange for credit, and transportation away from the violent frontier worlds out here. But before he had gone five miles, he swung the truck around again. He couldn't let Jeff go unwarned to his death. He *couldn't.*

It was ten after twelve when Rocklin reached the opening of

the mineshaft. He drove through the main gate, and as the guards came out to intercept him he said, "Is my brother here yet?"

"Sure is, Mr. Rocklin. Went down the shaft five minutes ago."

Rocklin sweated. What if he got there just as it exploded? What if the shaft caved in and trapped him? What if—

"Is there a phone?" Rocklin asked. "I want to talk to him."

They tried to get him. But Jeff was somewhere in the shaft, and they couldn't reach him. Rocklin dithered a few more minutes. Then he declared that he would go down into the shaft himself.

The elevator took him down. He reached the base level, where the control panels were. He asked where Jeff was, and the men pointed silently ahead.

He ran. Tension made him stumble. He sidestepped heavy servo trucks and sprinted on toward the master control panel. There was Jeff now; Rocklin caught sight of his dark grey overalls outlined against the big control panel. The shaft was reinforced here with heavy concentric rings of blue-green shoring. Rocklin clambered up.

"Jeff! No! Don't touch the panel—" he cried.

The explosion rocked the shaft. A booming blast of air knocked Rocklin on his back, and he saw Jeff engulfed in flame.

The android nodded. "So your brother was killed?"

"He died instantly," Rocklin said in a hoarse voice. "I escaped with bruises. The shaft held, somehow. I left the planet at the end of the week without testifying in the inquest. Later they found parts of the bomb, but I don't think anyone was arrested."

"And this is why you hate yourself so much?"

Rocklin clenched his fists and looked at the budding nubbins of his pinkies. He said in a barely audible voice, "I murdered my brother. Can't you see that? My hesitation, my cowardly shilly-shallying—those ten minutes when I drove the wrong way—if I hadn't wasted even two of those minutes, Jeff would be alive. But I was afraid to act. Paralyzed. I let him go into the shaft."

"You went after him," Roy pointed out.

"Only a gesture. I knew I couldn't possibly save him in time. I *wanted* him to die, I'm sure. That's why I wasted so much time. Hell, I spent my whole life boozing and snoozing, and he was a pillar of the community, and don't you think I resented his superiority?"

"So you feel you have to kill yourself because you're morally guilty of letting your brother die?"

"That's right."

The android's voice was feather-light. "You're a phony, Leon."

"W-what?"

"You're putting on an act. You've cast yourself in the lead of a little melodrama. You want everyone to be worried about you because of your suicidal tendencies. But you don't really want to die. You don't have the guts to kill yourself, any more than you had the guts to save your brother."

"You can't talk to me like this!" Rocklin blustered. "You're supposed to protect me, not to insult me!"

"I'm telling you the truth about yourself."

"You aren't. I *want* to die."

"Then why did you phone the police before you cut your wrists? Why did you do the same thing when you turned on the gas. Why did you tell a man at the bar in Juneau that you were going to lie down in the snow and die? Why did you try to sneak ataractics into your mouth right in front of me?"

"I didn't," Rocklin said dazedly. "Who told you I called the police, that I—"

"It's on your psych record," Roy said. "Each and every time you tried suicide, you made damned sure you wouldn't succeed."

Rocklin blinked in bafflement.

"I swear to you I don't remember any such thing!"

"Maybe not. You're just sick enough not to have been aware of what you were up to. But tell me this: why didn't you try suicide by some more reliable method than the ones you used? It's not hard to give transfusions to a man who's cut his wrists. But try patching up a corpse that's fallen fifty stories! Or you could have put a bullet through your brain. The medics can't repair a shattered brain, either. You could have picked plenty of sure-fire methods. But you didn't. That's why I say you're a phony, Leon."

Rocklin ran his tongue around dry lips. Within, he had a sick, chilled feeling. The android's words had cut deep, laying bare aspects of himself Rocklin had not even suspected. He said hesitantly, "Try me. Leave me alone for five minutes and see what I do."

"Maybe some other time," Roy replied.

"But if you don't believe I want to—"

"You might prove I was wrong, just this once. And then I'd get dissolved. And I *do* want to live."

"Dissolved?"

"Sure," the android said. "If I let you kill yourself, it means I haven't done my job efficiently. There's no room for inefficient Companions. We go back to the components tank and get broken down for another try. I die if you do. Knowing that keeps me alert."

They made planetfall early the following week, without further incident. Rockl n had not ceased to brood over the harsh clarity of the android's words. His suicide-urge had become slightly ludicrous to him now that Roy had painted it as a melodramatic gesture, a grandstand play, rather than the expression of inner torment he thought he was making. Already, Jeff's death was beginning to fade in memory. Rocklin began to lose some of the numbing sense of guilt that had entangled him all year.

The android's ruthless honesty had opened his eyes. But with self-knowledge did not come a lessening of self-contempt. He still despised himself, but for different reasons now. He still had the stain of Jeff's death on his soul—and the stain of his own theatrical spuriousness as well.

The excitement of reaching a new planet, though, took his mind from his inner conflicts. Huyckman IV was an Earthlike planet that was part of the gigantic Interworld Recreation Corporation chain, and it was one of the few pleasure planets that Rocklin had never visited.

The sky was full of stars, and most of the stars had planetary systems, and none of the other races of the universe had come close to a technological age. Only a handful of species could even be considered intelligent. Which left hundreds of planets for Earthmen to colonize. More planets, in fact, than there were available colonists to settle. IRC, therefore, had bought up some of the more scenic ones for pure non-colonial purposes; the company's charter was subject to revocation on ten years' notice in case it ever became necessary to convert one of the playground planets to more productive use.

Huyckman IV was a gem. Six thousand five hundred miles in diameter, it had four major continents and several huge archipelagoes, and ran a climatic gamut from blazing desert to arctic waste. A mountain range of Himalayan magnitude provided some of the best climbing in the galaxy; an unspoiled continent in the temperate zone afforded magnificent hunting; the big island chain in the eastern hemisphere yielded superb tropical fish up to thirty feet in length. It was a spectacular planet. It was still undeveloped —only nine hotels on the entire world—but speedy jetcopters cut down distance for hunters or climbers who ventured off the beaten trails.

Rocklin and his Companion were making their first stop at the hotel in the center of the island chain that jutted out more than a thousand miles from the southern tip of the eastern continent. The spacelaunch ferried them down from their liner at dawn, bringing them down on a beach of black volcanic sand. Blue, glistening waves rolled in with a booming roar, leaving an ebbing line of almost luminous foam. Far away, at the horizon, a golden-red sun was rising, sending a widening path of flame across the surface of the sea. The air had a salty but unearthly tang. Behind them, towering palm trees rose more than two hundred feet straight up before branching into leaves. And, further back at the edge of a cliff, the hotel jutted steeply upward, a stunning pile of glass and daring masonry.

"Look around you," Roy whispered. "If there was ever a sight to make a man want to live, this is it."

"Sky. Water. Trees," Rocklin said dourly.

"You aren't moved by it?"

"I'm hungry. Which way is breakfast?"

They checked into the hotel. It had four hundred rooms, all but a handful occupied. They breakfasted on their terrace, overlooking the shimmering morning

sea, and Rocklin maintained a glum silence.

"We'll rent a boat this afternoon and wander," Roy was saying. "Fish till nightfall, then back here and—what's the matter with you? Sulking?"

"I'm not in a good mood."

"So I see. What's the story? Look, maybe you want a woman." The android grinned pleasantly. "I'll phone the management and have them send someone up."

"While you stand here and watch?"

"I'll be unobtrusive about it. I'll hide behind a closet door. I've had plenty of experience at being tactful."

Rocklin shook his head. "No."

"If that's the way you feel—"

"Can't I ever get rid of you?" Rocklin blazed. "24 hours a day for weeks and weeks now! Listen—" He grasped the android's purple hand. "You yourself said I'm not really interested in killing myself. Can't you go away for a little while? Two or three days? Long enough for me to remember what it was like to be alone?"

"Impossible."

"Am I going to be a Siamese twin the rest of my life?"

"Until the order of commitment that ties me to you is cancelled," Roy said. "I'm sorry. I didn't ask to be your keeper, but that's why I was created."

"I'll go out of my mind. If I'm not out of it already."

"Other people have learned to live with a Companion," Roy said.

Rocklin buried his head in his hands. "How much do you cost, anyway?"

"The fee for Companion service is two hundred dollars a day."

Rocklin groaned. "They're willing to spend so much to keep me under watch!"

"You brought it on yourself," Roy pointed out. "Your parents want you to live. To be a healthy, well-adjusted young millionaire."

"I'll pay you two hundred fifty a day to leave me alone!"

"What would *I* need money for?" the android asked, laughing. "Come on. Let's get out and get some exercise. It'll do us both some good."

In the hotel lobby, Roy arranged for the rental of a fishing boat while Rocklin stood to one side, fidgeting and uncomfortable. He was heartily sick of being Companied. He told himself over and over again that his days of suiciding were behind him, that it was all a bad dream, that though he was in shaky shape emotionally he had come a long way since the day he had first tried to do away with himself. The android's cool realism had done a great deal to cut

through the fog of self-pity and self-loathing that had enshrouded him.

But he was stuck with the Companion anyway.

For life? Why not? His parents would never come to realize that the need for the android had expired. They would always think of him as the unstable son, the one who didn't turn out well, the one who had to be guarded against himself. And so, forever, the dark lithe shape of the android would dog his steps, ready to move with supernatural swiftness at the first sign of a self-destructive impulse.

"Do you want a boat for two?" the desk android said. "Or would you prefer to go with a small group?"

"Two, I think," Roy said.

"No. Make it a group," Rocklin cut in. The idea of spending an entire day out with just Roy appalled him. He needed variety. He needed to *talk* to someone.

"There's a party of four leaving in an hour. I'll put you in and make it six. They're very interesting people, all of them."

"We'll take it," Rocklin said.

They strolled down to the beach to meet the other members of their party. Two couples, Rocklin saw. But as he drew closer he realized that one of the couples consisted either of father and daughter or of a May-December mating.

Father and daughter turned out to be the right guess. The girl was about eighteen, a redhead with sleek tanned skin and a sprayon swimsuit that troubled Rocklin's hormone balance. He didn't mind complete nudity half so much as this provocative nudity-covered-with-paint that had come into fashion lately, particularly among the younger girls.

"I'm Terry Ravenhurst," the girl said in clipped, colonial-sounding accents. "My father, Harold Ravenhurst. This is my graduation trip, and I'm having the time of my life!"

"Leon Rocklin," he said gravely. "And my Companion Roy."

"Pleased," Ravenhurst said. He shook first Rocklin's hand, then the android's. Android Companions were accepted with perfect aplomb by everyone; to speculate openly as to the reason a man was travelling with a Companion would be as graceless as openly calling attention to a man's deformity.

"Ree Gardner," the other man said brusquely. "My wife, Dorna. We're from Hammermill IX."

"I'm from earth," Rocklin said.

"We're going to Earth next month," Terry Ravenhurst bubbled. "I've never been there. We live on Dornall II. This my first trip off-planet!"

Just a child, Rocklin thought.

A beautiful child with a woman's full body, but a child all the same. From the vantage-point of his twenty-six years, he felt terribly old. Desire stirred in him at the sight of the girl covered only by molecule-thick coating of glistening paint, and he sighed. It would be hard enough to get anywhere with her with her father around, but the presence of the android made everything impossible.

He sat down on the edge of a beached rowboat to wait for the arrival of their fishing vessel.

It was a trim thirty-footer, robot-handled. The six of them boarded and with a soft humming of turbines it put out to sea. Dark clouds hung low in the distance, bottoming almost to the water's surface. Terry Ravenhurst stood in the fore, keeping an eye on the radar screen that sounded any large sea creature. Ree Gardner busied himself checking out the harpoons. Rocklin, Roy, Lorna Gardser, and old Ravenhurst basked in the sun.

I could leap overboard if I wanted to, Rocklin thought. *Would Roy be able to catch me? He might not even notice for a couple of minutes. Long enough for me to get lost in the sea.* But, he realized oddly, he did not want to jump overboard and be drowned. Roy was right. Life had too much to offer. The sight of dawn along a tropic beach, the taste of a succulent steak, the sight of Terry Ravenhurst's youthful, flaring hips beneath their bizarre striped sprayon covering—

If I could only forget about Jeff, he thought.

And if I could only get rid of the android and live a normal life again.

But the shadow of Jeff's death darkened his mind, depressing him once again. His mood altered in a moment. Once again he shuddered under the crushing burden of guilt, and knew that he was fated to have Roy guarding him forever.

"Look!" Terry cried. "Something off to starboard!"

The five of them rushed to the radar screen. A dark shape was passing far beneath the ship.

"Too deep," Havenhurst muttered.

"And too big. Too big by far. We aren't cut out for hunting monsters," Gardner murmured.

"How big do you figure that one was?" Rocklin asked.

Gardner shrugged. "Eighty feet. And all teeth. We don't want to make trouble for that kind."

The boat moved onward, past island after uninhabited island. This was like paradise, Rocklin thought. He could almost see himself bringing a bride to one of those islands, living off fish

and roots for a while, getting back to the simplicities of existence after a much too complicated life.

What has that android done to me? he wondered. *He's changed me all around. Now I'm even thinking about getting married. The sly devil is turning me into a bourgeois. Like Jeff. Next thing I'll be collecting for charity drives. I—*

The storm struck without warning.

The heavens opened. Clouds parted and a torrent of rain descended. One moment it had been a warm, sunny morning; the next, they had entered a zone of violent confusion. The abrupt change in the weather caught them unprepared. A howling wind swirled down out of the north. On the distant islands, palm trees swayed and snapped.

"Get belowdecks!" Gardner yelled, as massive waves roiled around them. The little boat bobbed and swayed perilously. Ree and Lorna Gardner fled for the hatch. Old Ravenhurst followed, shouting to his daughter, who stood staring raptly out at the weltering sea.

"Terry! Terry, come away from there!"

Rocklin rose. Beneath him, the decks were heaving. The ship was like a bit of wood tossed about. He glanced at the android. Roy said, "Let's go where it's safer."

"What can happen to us here?"

"We can get washed overboard," Roy said.

"Terry!" Ravenhurst bellowed.

But the girl was caught up in the romantic wonder of the sudden storm. She stood high in the prow, eyes bright. The waves beat against the hull for a moment. Then, with a fearsome crash, the water breasted the side of the ship, swirling knee-deep on deck, splashing white foam in Rocklin's eyes.

When he could see again, the girl was gone.

"Terry!" the older man screamed.

There was a sudden splitting sound as a section of rail ripped loose at the far side of the boat and flew through the air, cracking into the android with a sickening impact. Roy swayed, then plunged to the deck and lay still. Rocklin ran to him.

"Roy! Roy, wake up! That girl's been washed overboard and you've got to get her!"

The android did not move.

Rocklin rose. There was no one else on the deck but the distraught, hysterical father. With sudden wonder, Rocklin realized that he was free of the android's bondage, at least for a while.

He leaped into the sea.

The water boiled madly around

him. *He's out cold,* Rocklin thought. *Or dead. I can drown here. I—*

I don't want to drown! I want to live!

Where's the girl?

A wave lifted him high, then dashed him down. His lungs filled with water. He kicked and choked. As the water parted, he thought he caught sight of something large and dark just beneath the surface, something with teeth and glittering eyes a foot across. He paddled wildly, spun around, and saw the girl barely above water. Another wave tossed him to her side, and he fastened an arm tight around her. She was half drowned, and panicky.

"Relax," he heard himself saying. "Don't try to fight. Just bob, tread water. The storm's passing."

"I—I—oh, God, the water—"

"Don't talk." He tightened his grip about her and looked around for the ship. There it bobbed, no more than a hundred yards away. Rain still cascaded down, but the wind was dying away. He began to swim toward it, and then he saw Ree Gardner on deck, tossing him a line, and they were hauling him in, gasping and coughing. He handed the limp girl up to Gardner, then crawled up the ladder himself.

Then the magnitude of what he had done struck him. The habitual suicider had risked his life for another's.

Or had he? He wondered. Why had he jumped? To save the girl —or to drown himself?

Roy was at his side now. Grinning, the Companion said, "You muffed your big moment, pal. If ever you had a chance to do away with yourself, that was it. Me flat on my back out cold."

Rocklin struggled for breath. "I—I'm a blasted hero instead. Can you beat that!"

"It's hard to believe, all right."

There was something sly, something needling in the android's tone that aroused Rocklin's suspicions. He said in a low voice, "You weren't knocked out, were you? You were faking—to see if I'd save the girl or kill myself!"

"Don't be ridiculous," the android said. "If you had drowned, it would have been *my* finish too. Would I take such a risk?"

"I don't know," Rocklin said slowly. He would never know. But, deliberately or not, the android had given him a chance—a chance to surrender his own life, or a chance to buy back the life he had let perish through cowardice. Had the android been risking his own life, really? Or was he just a shrewd therapist?

It didn't matter. Rocklin's entire body trembled with the realization that the storm within him was ending. **THE END**

Unto Us a Child

By DAVID H. KELLER, M.D.

Illustrated by MOREY

A Classic Reprint From AMAZING STORIES, July, 1933

Introduction by Sam Moskowitz

As the first science fiction magazine, AMAZING STORIES, *with its early emphasis upon scientific credibility, opened the door to the exploration by writers of the frontiers of science.*

Suddenly, in Feb., 1928, a new writer appeared in AMAZING STORIES *with an approach so different that overnight he reared as a giant among science fiction writers. That writer was a 47-year-old doctor, David H. Keller, M.D., who had been writing steadily since he was 12 years old and only now had succeeded in selling his first story! Other writers were concerned with the new advances and adventures that scientific research and the future would bring. He was concerned with what the scientific discoveries of the future would do to human beings.*

His first science fiction story, The Revolt of the Pedestrians, *dealt with a world where comfort, luxury, excessive use of automobiles and other forms of transport had made walking obsolete and the lower limbs of most people had atrophied.*

The themes that followed were completely different from anything the science fiction world had experienced: Stenographer's Hands (AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY) *Fall, 1928 tells what happens when giant corporations begin breeding humans for their stenographic ability;* The Psychophonic Nurse (AMAZING STORIES, *Nov., 1928) is a parable wherein a machine replaces a child's mother;* White Collars (AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY, *Summer, 1929*) *delineates the*

is Born

uprising of the underpaid clerical and semi-professional classes and its effect upon civilization; Free As Air (AMAZING STORIES, *June, 1931*) *portrays what happens when the United States Supreme Court rules that a man owns all the air above his property as well as the ground beneath, and air travel is no longer open to the public.*

Keller was writing for a living and wrote prolifically. Each of his stories was a serious commentary on humanity. Withal his humanist slant, his idea of what technical changes would occur in future progress and invention was uncanny in its precise accuracy.

A remarkably complete picture of a probable future society is presented in a very short space in Unto Us a Child is Born. *The implications of what can happen to the individual in even a benevolent regimented society is conveyed with incredible impact, yet not a single thing happens to anyone in the story that is not "good." This masterpiece of science fiction has been reprinted only once since its initial publication in the July, 1933, issue of* AMAZING STORIES, *that was in a limited edition of 1,000 copies of David H. Keller's book* Life Everlasting and Other Tales of Science, Fantasy and Horror, *published in 1947.*

Foreword

THE Earl of Birkenhead in his recent book, THE WORLD in 2030, gives his idea of the life of that time and presents his opinion of the changes which will take place in the very short space of a hundred years.

Even more remarkable than his conceptions is the fact that the words are the sober statements of a prominent scientist and sociologist. They are not uttered with the fantastic manner and pseudo-scientific language of some of our modern prophets, but in a dull prosaic delivery.

The reader is forced, by the very manner in which the subject is presented, to feel that such changes in our social and economic life may take place. After all, they are not greatly

different, in the wonder element, from the changes of the last one hundred years.

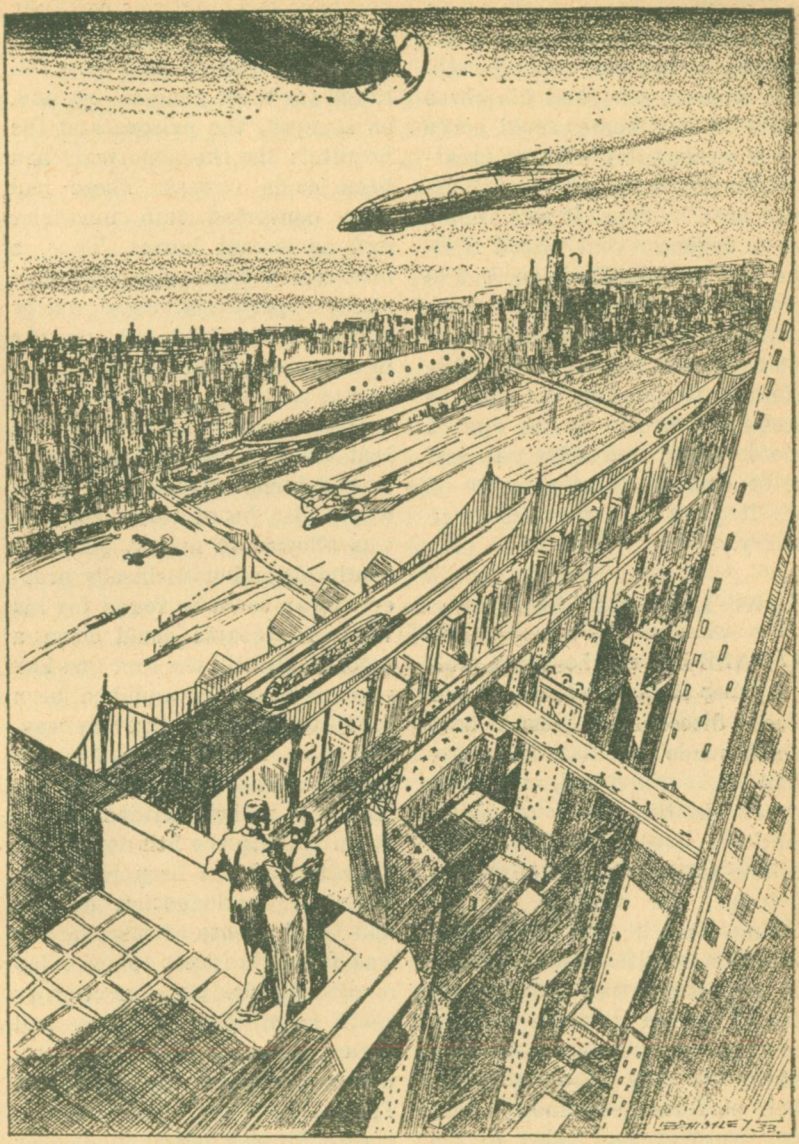
Yet, throughout the reading of this prophecy, the student of human relations is forced to feel, with a certain uneasiness, that the author has become so intent upon the marvelous, that he has tended to overlook the fact that the people of 2030, in spite of every scientific gain, will still be human beings, and that certain of their reactions will be very similar to those of their ancestors.

So we can well ask ourselves just what these people of this new year of 2030 will be thinking, just how they will be reacting to the changes of a superscientific era? Will the emotions be wiped out? or will men and women still react to beauty, the love of life, the fear of death, and the clinging fingers of a little child?

Jacob Hubler, seventh of that name and direct descendant of that Jacobus Hubelaire, who had emigrated from Strassburg to Pennsylvania in 1740, had at last earned for himself a very satisfactory place in life. As Government Official, Class D, Division 7, No. 4829, Gross Number 25978432, he was now entitled to maintenance of the 5th type, which station made a man feel very comfortable.

He had earned that position by his inventions which made possible the artificial production of all food supplies in the individual home. Prior to his work in this dietary field, large laboratories in every city had produced synthetic food and meats, grown in large test tubes. The method was adequate in every way to the needs of the populace, but the manner of distribution was still antiquated. Hubler perfected a small but complete production laboratory, not much larger than the electric refrigerators of the past century. His product in its preparation was entirely automatic and practically foolproof. It would generate, day by day, and year by year, a complete and attractive food supply for a family of two. It not only created the food, but there was an auxiliary machine which prepared it for the table in any form desired by the consumer. All that was necessary was the selection of one of the twenty-five menus and the pressing of the proper control button.

The inventions became very popular with the type of women who still took pride in their life; and when he added a service unit which automatically served the meal, removed it and washed the dishes, it was more than most women could resist. Thousands of women ceased to eat at the community restaurants



Jacob and Ruth went out on the balcony of their apartment. It was on the two hundredth story and overlooked Greater New York. They stood there, and somehow, his arm stole around her waist and her head dropped on his shoulder.

and accepted home meals as an ultra-refinement. Hubler's name became a household shibboleth. The woman, who had his three units in her home, could serve three meals a day with no greater effort than the pressing of fifteen push buttons. It was ability as an inventor that placed Hubler in Class D, Division 7. The promotion carried with it certain rewards. It entitled him to complete support for the rest of his life, and it gave him the right to prolong that life to the age of one hundred and fifty years if he so desired. Most valuable of all, it gave him permission to marry.

Laws, Laws and More Laws

YEARS before, the State, realizing the important value of recent discoveries, passed laws which made the nation, rather than the individual, the sole owner and beneficiary of all inventions, especially those pertaining to the comfort of the individual, the welfare of the Commonwealth and the prolongation of life. Thus, the age of usefulness was rapidly advanced to an average expectancy of one hundred and fifty years, but only those who, by their performances, showed that they were of real value to the nation, were allowed to live on.

Similarly, the right to marry and have one child was carefully guarded by the State. Strict laws of biogenesis had been followed for three generations, and, as a result, the prisons and the hospitals for the abnormals had been made useless. These had been converted into nurseries and adolescent homes. Thus, a man and woman, under the most strict supervision, could marry and have one child, but only the most worthy were accorded that right.

However, if a man showed a real value to the nation, and it was determined that his child would also be of value, then he was allowed to marry, provided a suitable and scientifically proper woman could be found for his wife. No couple could have a second child till the first one had reached maturity and had been found to be normal in every way.

Hubler, at the age of sixty, was told that he could marry. He was rather thrilled at the news. During the last few years permits had not been plentiful. With the prolongation of life and the increase of efficiency it was found best not to have too many citizens. So, for twenty years permission to marry had been given only to the men and women of the highest type. Thus, it was really an honor to marry. Hubler talked it all over with his first assistant, Ruth Fanning. She had worked at his

elbow for twenty-five years and was nearly as old as he was. She, too, had ambitions.

"I think that it is wonderful, Mr. Hubler," she said. "You deserve the honor if any man does. Your inventions have made women desire homes and want to spend some time in them, and what is the use of having a home without a husband and a child?"

"It is kind of you to say that, Miss Fanning," the inventor replied. "You realize that much of the work would never have been done without your help and suggestions. I am proud of the honor, but I am not at all certain that I will ever marry. Just having the right is not all. They have to find a complimentary female for me."

"Oh! You are too easily discouraged. You, no doubt, will fall into an unusual group, but there will be some women in that group, and I am sure that one of them will be glad to have you for a husband."

"I hope so," he said, rather pessimistically. As an inventor of service units for modern kitchens he was bravery personified, but when it came to marriage, why, that was something different.

He only worked an hour a day, five days a week. Nevertheless, it was thought advisable to give him a month's vacation, during which time he was to take the various examinations and prepare for married life. On the second day of his liberty, he drove his car to the Central Marriage Testing Bureau, and, with more than a slight degree of hesitation, he entered the main office with all his credentials.

The Head of the Bureau explained the procedure to him.

"This may seem very complicated to you, but, in reality, it is simple. We examine you in every way and correlate the results. We then change everything into a mathematical formula, and this works out your final classification. After that all that is necessary is to find a woman with the same classification, have you meet one another; if you desire to be husband and wife we will allow you to marry. Of course, it takes time. Even the development of your personality—the taking of pictures and their proper study takes several days."

"One question," asked Hubler. "After I am typed, do I have to marry the woman you select for me?"

"Not at all. We give you a list of the unmarried eligibles of your special type number. Any one of these you select will be satisfactory to us.

"And the old emotion, love, does not enter into it? You see, I do not know. I am only asking for information; but in one of

the old books I have, it speaks of men and women falling in love."

The scientist looked stern.

"That is the way it used to be. That kind of love produced the feeble minded, the epileptic, the dullard, and occasionally a genius. Under the modern method the birth and maturity of an abnormal child is not possible. You want your child to be perfect, do you not?"

"Of course! What father would want anything else?"

"Then, do not allow yourself to fall in love, as your forefathers did."

Personality

FOR the next week Jacob Hubler was an interested participant in the typing of his personality and body. Since he was an inventor, every step of the process was explained to him. At last all the results were ready for the co-ordination machine. This was the one which produced the final mathematical rating. Buttons were pressed, cogwheels whirred, automatic type clicked, and at last a paper came out of the lower slot. The Head of the Bureau took it and studied it very seriously and finally said,

"Just as I thought, gentlemen; this is a new type, and I believe the one we have been anxiously looking for. It is positively new and adds a novel group to our known dominant factors. Would you like to look at it, Mr. Hubler?"

The inventor took the white pasteboard and read, TYPE, Q—GROUP, X—DIVISION, 35—***

"You notice that it is a three star card?" remarked the Head. "In the last fifty years we have had only the three star card occur nine times and no one has ever had as high a rating as 35."

"What does it mean?" asked the puzzled Hubler.

"It means that we can be certain that your child will be a philosopher, and at present the country needs one or two philosophers rather badly. Those we have are growing old and are not as inspirational as we should like them to be."

"Then I can marry and have one child?"

"No. That is the unfortunate part of it. You are a new type, and, consequently, there are no women of that type to introduce you to."

"Then my right to marry is just a hollow mockery?"

"Yes. You are so strongly dominant that it would be absolutely wrong for you to marry into another type. Still, the matter is not at all hopeless. We are making examinations every day. We may find your type any time."

"How many variations are there?"

"Over seven millions."

"Then, I might as well go back to work."

"No, go ahead with your month's vacation. We will make a special study of the female applicants from now on, and we may be able to find one for you. We may even shade the results a trifle and give you a break. Of course, that would be pure experiment, and might result disastrously."

Thirteen days later Jacob Hubler received orders to report at once to the Marriage Bureau. The Head of the Department was all excitement. He said.

"A most unusual thing happened yesterday. We have been testing and typing a very extraordinary woman and we suspected from the preliminary examinations that something novel would result. Her license to marry was over twenty years old, but she had never been tested. She explained that by saying that the man she wanted to marry did not have a permit; so, she decided to wait for him. A month ago he received his permit; so, she decided to be typed. To our surprise, she developed the same type and group you did, the new one. The only difference is that she is a ****star person while you are a ***one. She is the only****star one we have ever had. Four stars show a wonderful mental maturity. The mating should produce the finest kind of a philosopher. We did not tell her about you. Thought it would be best to talk it over with you first. It is most unusual."

"It certainly is odd," replied the inventor. "What is her serial number?"

Ruth Fanning—the Baby

GOVERNMENT Official, Class D, Division 7, No. 4830, Gross Number, 259799987. Her name is Ruth Fanning. Ever hear of her?"

"Slightly." The inventor smiled. "That woman has been my first assistant for a number of years. I could have told you offhand, without any instrumentation, that she was a four star personality. But I never thought of marrying her."

"She is in the next room. Suppose you go in and talk matters over with her?"

Hubler was far more embarrassed than the woman who was waiting for him.

"This is a great surprise to me, Ruth," he stammered.

"It is not to me," was her calm reply. "I had an idea that it would be like this."

"And you are willing to marry me?"

"Certainly! What did you think I had been waiting for all these years? I could not marry

you till you had a permit, and were typed, could I?"

"But how did you know we were of the same type?"

"Womanly intuition," was her smiling reply.

They told the head of the bureau that they were willing to marry. After working together it seemed the proper and natural thing to do. He gave them the proper papers, they received the general treatment and started life in a two person apartment.

The Hublers returned to their work. Life was very much the same as it had been, perhaps a little more intimate, more in unison than before, but, in a large way, not much different. They were living in a two person apartment instead of two one person apartments, but standardization had reached the point which made all apartments very much the same, irrespective of the number of occupants. They continued to work their hour a day, five days a week, spending the other hours in the pursuit of happiness and culture. After having worked together for twenty-five years, it was hard to put into effect any new or very novel social pattern of behavior.

In the course of time their child was born in a Government hospital. A serial number was tattoed on his back and he was transferred to a Government nursery, for the care of the infant was felt to be one of the most important duties of the Commonwealth. What use to produce babies one hundred percent perfect and then have everything spoiled by an untrained mother! Why entrust this most delicate period of existence to the unskilled human mother, when it could be given with perfect confidence to a perfect machine? Thus, for the first two years of a child's life, it was cared for by machinery which did everything necessary for the welfare of the young citizen and did it in a perfect and standardized manner.

The Hublers never saw the child. It was believed that much unhappiness was caused by the surplus affection of the mother; so, the law provided that in these vital years there be a complete separation of parent and child. However, reports of the growth of the child were sent by mail every month and, at the end of the first and second years, photographs were taken and sent to the Hublers. The proud parents placed these in a baby book. If they fretted over not being permitted to see their child, they did not confess it to each other; they realized the advantage of such a life to their son and were willing to make any sacrifices necessary for the future welfare of the baby.

At two years the Hubler boy

was walking, talking and able to dress and undress himself. He had an intellectual quotient of three hundred which meant a mental age of six years. At that time he was taken out of the nursery kindergarten and placed in the grade school. There, all the teaching was done by machinery, standardized in every respect. Contact between the young pupils and older adults was rare. While there were periods of relaxation and play for the young student, life as a whole was rather serious.

The education was varied according to the predetermined future of the child. If a boy was to become a musician, why give him the preliminary training necessary for the development of a scientist? Thus, each child became a specialist early in life, and many valuable years of existence were saved.

The Hubler boy advanced rapidly. At eight years he was past the help of machine instructors. From then on he received the personal guidance of the few remaining philosophers, for it was early found that his mind was suited for philosophy and not for very much else. At ten he was a beautiful boy, but such a deep thinker about things which no one else had ever tried to think of before, that he was both a trial and an inspiration to his professors.

Twelve Years Old—The Meeting

AT the age of twelve his maturity was recognized, and it was thought advisable to give him a name, make him a full citizen and assign him to a government position. The parents were asked to select a name, and naturally, they selected Jacob Hubler, Junior. They were delighted when they were told that he had been made Assistant Professor of Philosophy in the National University, and given full citizenship. A free unit of society, he could now do as he wished with his time, the only restriction being in the hour a day five days a week rule for all government employees. The first thing he decided to do was to visit his parents.

So far they had not seen him.

But they were prepared for the happy event by moving into a three person apartment. It was very much like their two person apartment only a little larger and with an extra bedroom.

Jacob and Ruth Hubler could hardly wait for their son's arrival. They had his baby book out on the table; they wanted to tell him of their marriage, show him the reports and his baby pictures. They wanted him to know what his birth had meant to them and how they had loved him all these years. They did not look a day older than they

looked thirteen years ago but, somehow, they felt more important and quite advanced in years.

Their boy was coming home to them!

Their son! The culmination of nearly a century.

At last, he came. A young man with a beautiful body and wonderful intelligence. He greeted them without emotion, talked to them without effort. Recognizing them as his parents, he spoke only of the debt the individual owed to the state. He was courteous and polite, but, in some way he did not seem to be interested in the things they were interested in. Jacob, Senior spoke of his new household inventions; Ruth told of her part in the work. He, the young philosopher, looked a trifle bored and talked of Erkenntnisstheorie and the undue subjectivity of temper. At last he rose from his chair.

"I Must Go to China"

I must go," he said in a tone of polite apology. "I have an important engagement with a philosopher in China. I must take the next Oriental air machine for Canton. He is an old man and it is very important that I confer with him before he dies."

The mother put her hand on his shoulder and whispered timidly.

"Won't you spend the night with us, Jacob? I made your bed myself, and your room is all ready."

"I am sorry, but I have this appointment and must go."

"Well, come again and as often as you can," said the father rather cheerily. "Always glad to see you, my boy."

Jacob and Ruth went out on the balcony of their apartment. It was on the two hundredth story and overlooked Greater New York. They stood there, and, somehow, his arm stole around her waist and her head dropped on his shoulder. He touched her cheek as he whispered.

"That is a fine boy. Sure it is great to be a father."

She shivered in his arms.

An Important Communication and the Result

I AM cold," she said. "The autumn is past and there is a chill of winter in the air. If you will pardon me, I will go to bed."

For a long time, Jacob stood there on the balcony, alone.

Once he was back in the living room he took from his pocket a Government communication. It was from the Child Permit Department.

"YOUR SON, JACOB HUBLER, JR. HAS FULFILLED IN EVERY WAY THE EXPECTATION OF HIS

PRENATAL CHARTS. AS A PHILOSOPHER HE IS A SUCCESS. BUREAU OF STATISTICS ADVISE US THAT THEY NEED SEVERAL MORE PHILOSOPHERS. THIS LETTER IS YOUR OFFICIAL PERMIT TO HAVE ANOTHER SON. REPLY AT ONCE DESIRE OF YOUR WIFE AND SELF CONCERNING THIS."

He read it over several times. At first it seemed to be hard to understand. He had been so busy improving the standard kitchen equipment that he had given but little time to other matters. Still holding the letter in his hand he went over to the central table and opened the baby book. He looked at the first few pictures and then could not see very well because of the film over his eyes.

Closing the book he went over to the wall wireless and tapped out a letter in reply, addressed to the Child Permit Department. One sentence was the answer, one sentence and the name, and the message read,

WE WILL NOT HAVE ANY MORE CHILDREN.

JACOB HUBLER

He walked as quietly as he could to his wife's bedroom door.

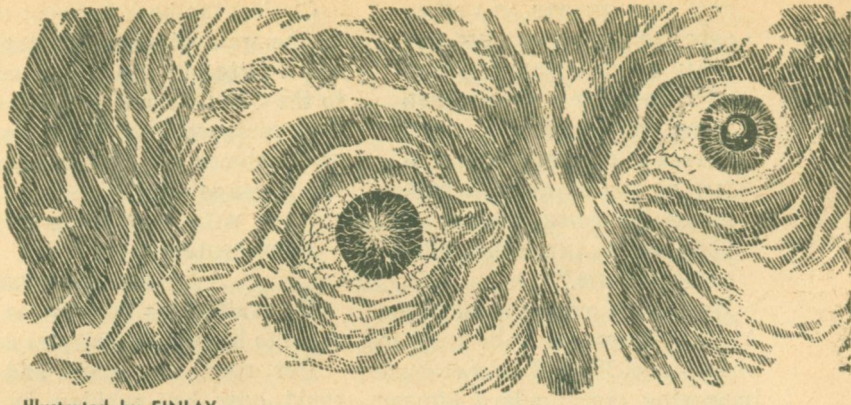
Her room was dark and he could hear her sobbing in the darkness.

He went in and touched her hair.

Wanting to comfort her, he did not know what to say. The world was no longer "all before them."

(Milton.)

THE END



Illustrated by FINLAY

The LAST VIAL

By SAM McCLATCHIE, M.D.

(Conclusion)

SYNOPSIS

The year was 1962. Doctor John Macdonald, Irish-American veteran of the Korean War and now a pathologist at the Civic Hospital, Vancouver, Canada, returned from his delayed summer vacation to find himself in the middle of an emergency. With his laboratory assistant, Patricia Delaney, he had been sailing his sloop up the coast of British Columbia, happily ignorant of what was happening in the world.

Back in the hospital he spoke briefly to Harry Cope, the hematologist and to Polly Cripps, the electron microscopy technician. He went on to see his boss, Dr. George Hallam, director of the laboratory and a world famous virologist, who informed him that an epidemic, resembling influenza, had struck Vancouver a week previously. A second wave of disease, of catastrophic proportions, was now sweeping the Pacific Northwest. The symptoms resembled influenza, with some cases behaving like mumps but, aside from its amazing in-

fectivity, the disease did not appear to have serious consequences.

From the electron microscope pictures, the biochemical data and the unusual nature of its onset, Dr. Hallam deduced that the virus must be synthetic and suspected that the epidemic had been started by Communist agents. He announced this theory at a meeting of the hospital medical staff only to have it ridiculed because the disease appeared relatively harmless. Still convinced he was right, Hallam with John and Pat, initiated a series of animal experiments to determine what the disease really was doing. As they worked, news reports told of influenza epidemics in America and Europe and of a deadly new disease called the measle-pox killing Chinese by the millions and spreading over Asia.

Later that night a pregnant ferret, which they had inoculated with the virus, went into premature labor and aborted. To Hallam and Pat this indicated the virus was a secret weapon, that the Russians intended to kill off the less well protected nations of the world and make the women of America sterile before they realized the danger. Macdonald was skeptical. They began new investigations, concentrating on the sex glands. Early the next morning, while waiting for results, Hallam sent Pat and John off to relax by going for a sail in John's sloop.

That evening, fog enveloped the sloop in a quiet side channel. A black ship, flying the Japanese flag, and with a white man looking over the rail, ran them down and damaged the boat but they managed to limp back to port. Back in the Laboratory they found that male animals showed more sex gland changes than females. They turned to humans and discovered that every man who had had the flu was sterile!

Now Hallam's theory no longer seemed fantastic. Government officials were notified and a national emergency was declared in Canada and the United States. Strict quarantine regulations were enforced.

Late that night, Macdonald suddenly awakened with a possible clue to the mystery clear in his mind. The Japanese vessel that had struck his boat in the fog must be really a communist ship from Sakhalin, once ruled by the Japanese, and the white man could be Russian. From the geography of the coast he figured that Horseshoe Bay was a likely landing place for enemy agents. With Pat in the car, he drove through the fog to the wharf and there, early in the morning, recognized, in a group of three Slavs, the same white man he had seen on the ship. A

fight ensued in which John was stunned by a black aerosol bomb. The Russians got away. Pat drove John back to the Laboratory.

While explaining to Hallam what had happened, somehow the bomb was triggered and Macdonald sprayed with virus. Believing that he would now get the Sterility-flu, Pat brought John back to her apartment and there, because she wanted his child, she seduced him.

The next morning, in the Laboratory, Hallam told them that the bomb had contained virus. During the night, serum from the blood of convalescent patients had been prepared. The three researchers took shots of this which, when they proved effective in preventing the disease, were given to those not yet infected. Months later, discovery of a vaccine ended the epidemic.

Shortly before Christmas, an inspector of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police visited Pat and John to tell them that a ship, believed to be the mystery vessel, had been captured off the Galapagos Islands. They flew to the islands and identified the Russians who had attacked John but, since no incriminating evidence had been found, there was still some doubt that the Russians had started the epidemics. Later Dr. Hallam attended a secret conference in Washington. There, the president of the United States revealed that agents had discovered a vaccine against sterility-flu and measlepox had been given to Russian children and chosen adults before the epidemics began. No further proof was needed.

A retaliatory attack, using weather and bacteriological warfare was secretly loosed upon the Russians. Special research teams were dispatched to the Far East to investigate the measlepox. The Canadians were sending one to Hongkong and, as Harry Cope had been brought up in China, he volunteered to go.

Meantime, research continued in Vancouver. Starting with the ferret which had aborted, efforts were made to alter the virus to a form which would cause women to miscarry and become sterile. This virus would have to be different enough so that immunity to the Sterility-flu would give no protection. Late in March, Pat, who was now pregnant, was accidentally infected by the newest variant and lost her baby. The new weapon had been discovered!

In the late summer of 1963, Hallam suggested that Pat and John take time off to get married and go for a sailing honeymoon. Three weeks later he came after them in an amphibian with Colonel Jones of the Central Intelligence Agency of the U.S.A.

Jones told them that the weather offensive and agricultural plagues had ruined the Soviets food supplies while NATO countries were subsisting on the tremendous stores of food accumulated in the States during the farm surplus years of the Fifties. It was estimated that, by the early summer of 1964, the Communists would be losing control of their people and in desperation would fire missiles full of nerve gases and new bacteriological weapons at North America, followed by airborne landings. To prevent this, the allies were forming commandoes to work with Russian guerrillas and destroy the factories and installations preparing the attack. This they felt would end the war. As Macdonald had been a paratrooper and was still a reservist, he was asked to join a group which was to attack a factory producing an even more deadly virus than those already used. His knowledge of virology would enable him to bring back formulae and samples from which protective vaccines could be made.

After the Colonel left, John reluctantly decided to volunteer. He reported to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and began training with a Special Forces team composed of Americans of oriental race. With them were two white Russian-speaking officers, Captains Balakireff and Makstutis, and two of Korean descent, Lieutenants Kim and Pak. At Christmas John returned to Vancouver and found that Pat was pregnant again. He also learned that Harry was going with a force of Americans and Nationalist Chinese to raid the China coast to find out if anyone had survived the measlepox and could provide a clue to its prevention or cure.

CHAPTER 12

THE ACHE of parting was still gnawing at my belly like a peptic ulcer when Blackie picked me up at the airfield in a jeep.

"My goodness, Colonel, I'm relieved to see you."

"Why? What gives? I'm on time."

"Yes sir, but the operation has been advanced, you see. We leave for Japan in the morning."

"In the morning? Oh, no!" I snorted in disgust. "Isn't that typical."

* * *

The week after our landing in Japan, we moved out again with full GI equipment. Our enemy clothing and arms went along in sealed wooden boxes as cargo, not to be opened again until D-day. Ostensibly, we were re-

placements for the Korean Military Advisory Group on our way to South Korea. We landed at Kimpo Air Base, near Seoul and then moved out by truck up the road past Uijongbu into the wooded hills south of the defense line near Kumwha. In the twelve years since I had come down that road for the last time, the mud and thatched villages had been rebuilt. Now the measlepox had ravaged, once again, the stoical population. Only a few were left, the few who perhaps had fled to the mountains and stayed there starving but afraid until the pestilence had killed and passed on. So it was back to a familiar land I came—a land of silent hills; of hardwood trees standing bare and cold above the brown earth and the dead brown leaves of the Kudzu vine; a land of little streams that thawed in the sheltered spots as the February sun rose higher in the cold dry air.

We trained over the steep hills, marching up faint trails where the woodcutters once had gone. In all that wild land there was silence—the silence of the four-footed animals who, unknown to us except by some chance meeting, watched our slow approach. The long nights shortened into March and then through April. Still we waited. Rains had come now, the spring rains, forecasting the steamy monsoon of July. In the steep valleys grass showed green and the maroon-petalled anemones had already conceived. At last the cherries were in bloom. It was time to go.

The troop-carrying convertiplane dropped vertically down on the freshly prepared landing strip shortly after dark. As soon as we were loaded it took off, wavering slightly under the hammering blast of the jet engines, and then went up, sidling over the dark trees that encircled the strip, and drifting down the valley like one of their lately fallen leaves. It swung west to go out over the Yellow Sea and then circle back into North Korea. Our rendezvous was farther to the east in the wild country close to the railway that ran up the east coast from Wonsan to Hungnam. Perhaps we could lose the radar in those steep valleys. It would have been suicide to attempt it from the east, across the Sea of Japan, right into the Siberian tiger's mouth.

An hour later we were approaching the drop zone. There would be a moon before midnight to help us make contact, but now it was dark, better for concealment but difficult for recognition of our landing area. The plane slowed, the red light came on. The pilot must have picked up the signal from our agent.

"Get ready!" I shouted. The men shifted their packs and moved their feet to get the weight distributed.

"Stand up! Hook up! Check your equipment!" One by one I called the time-honored signals, the ritual so necessary before the jump. By now the air crew had the door open and I looked out. Even with my eyes accustomed to the darkness I could see little but the dark mass of hills below us and the rough black line where they met the horizon. Above, the stars were bright. To the east a faint paleness marked where the moon was hiding. I looked down again and now a tiny green light winked up at me. It was the dropzone and the all-clear signal. The aeroplane passed on and then came back to make its run.

"Stand in the door!" I yelled. My hand holding the static line shook slightly and my thigh muscles were tight with cold and adrenalin.

"GO." The red light had changed to green and the first men were out. Shuffling from the rear the rest followed swiftly and seemed to drop on to each other's shoulders as they went through the door. The last man went by. I stepped behind him and in the same smooth motion went on out. The rush of air twisted me and a momentary black cloud blotted the stars as the tail assembly passed over. The roar faded and I floated, weightless and almost mindless, like a baby in the womb, while my mental clock ticked the slow seconds. "Three thousand, four . . ." The snapping of elastic and the rush of risers behind my head stopped in a sliding jerk. I looked up. Above me a black circle swayed. It was complete; no torn canopy to worry about. Alive now, I looked around full circle. Faintly I saw two parachutes below and in front of me as I glanced back the way we had come. We were dropping quickly into a steep valley, the others at a lower level where it widened somewhat. I could see outlines of the terraced rice fields coming up to meet me. In that warm, wet air I could have made it standing. The chute collapsed without a protest. I struck the quick release and stepped out of the harness. "Pretty soft," I was thinking. "I hope the rest is like this." Where the hillside joined the terraces I found a trail that parallelled the line of our jump. I followed it down hill.

An hour later, we were all together. The slow speed of the plane, the low jump altitude and the lightness of the wind had kept the sticks from scattering. Nobody was seriously hurt. We buried the parachutes in an overhanging bank under the Kudzu and began our march down the

path. As the protected one I was now about the middle of the file. The moon was rising and the light was strong in treeless areas. We kept to the blackness of the shadows as much as possible and made a reconnaissance before crossing any open space. Our progress was slow. It must have been another hour when the line stopped advancing. A short time later a whispered message came back, "Send the Colonel up front."

When I got there, Blackie and Pak were talking Korean to a small man dressed in the ragged coat and baggy pants of a peasant. Pak introduced him.

"This is Lee Sung. He has the password and knows all about us.

I took the small limp hand Lee Sung extended. "I am Colonel Macdonald, the Doctor. What do you want us to do now?"

"I have a place where you can stay," he replied in excellent English, with an accent that seemed familiar, though blurred with lack of use. "We should go there immediately."

We followed him a short distance on the same trail and then turned up a side valley where the cultivated land rapidly rose in steps and narrowed to a point at the little stream which had watered the crops. There we found the remains of a small village. Hidden behind a row of thatched mud huts that faced the fields with eyeless walls, a narrow courtyard opened abruptly to the main house. Overhanging wooden beams and tiled roof had protected the white paper walls of the recessed front porch from the weather. It was the house of a rich farmer, rich for Korea that is, and still intact.

"This is where you stay," said Lee.

Makstutis took command. "Kim, set out your perimeter guard and get the men settled down. No lights; no smoking; no talking. I'll take a look around."

"Yes, sir," Kim moved them away. I followed Lee, Blackie and Pak onto the verandah of the house, stepping quietly on the wooden planks. Sliding aside one of the paper and wood panels, we bent our heads and entered. Crouched over a shaded flashlight, Lee traced a map laid on the grass mat floor of a small side room.

"Here's where we are now. Here's the Imjin River and the village of Song-dong-ni. The virus factory is less than a mile this side of the village." He indicated the spot. "It's about twenty miles from here over the hills."

"What are the trails like?" Blackie asked.

"There's a small trail, a bit slippery in wet weather, that climbs the ridge behind this

house. It joins a wagon road that runs down the next valley and then you cut over the watershed to the Imjin by another trail. That one is good in all weather."

"Is it travelled much?"

"Not now. The villages over there were wiped out by the plague. I doubt if there is anybody left."

"How do we go about contacting the Russian who's going to give us the virus?"

"He's not a Russian, Colonel, he's a Pole. His name is Anders and he is the senior virologist at the factory. He is a keen botanist and it's his custom to wander alone over the hills almost every day collecting specimens. He carries a burp gun in case he should meet bandits although there's little chance of that nowadays. However, it is a good thing to remember in approaching him that all strangers are suspect. I try to catch him on these walks of his, so it's a matter of chance and may take a day or two to arrange a meeting. In the meantime, may I suggest you and your white officers keep out of sight as much as possible. Your oriental soldiers can pretend to be living here temporarily while searching for bandit gangs."

"What about food?"

"The farmer who owned this village had a well stocked store room. You will find it at the back of the house. There is plenty of rice, root vegetables, pots of kimchi . . . you have eaten kimchi I presume . . . and other preserved foods."

"What about the measlepox, doctor?" Blackie asked.

"I doubt if the food was contaminated. Besides we had one shot of that Russian vaccine before we left. It's a small risk."

"I envy you Colonel. My only protection is to run away," Lee said wryly.

"How did people survive?" I asked.

"After they became aware of the danger some took to the hills and some small villages escaped. They kept strictly to themselves and killed anyone who attempted to force his way into their area. I have a small fishing vessel at Wongpo. I took it out to sea and stayed there by myself for several weeks."

"Then you have no family?"

"No, my father was an exile in England during the Japanese occupation. I grew up and went to college there. We came back to our ancestral home after the World War. He and my mother died very soon afterwards. The Communists let me stay, mostly because they think I am sympathetic to their viewpoint and I have made myself useful to them. An agent has no business with a family anyway," he concluded grimly.

We talked on for some time, clearing up the details of our plans. It was uncomfortably close to dawn when he left.

CHAPTER 13

I HAD a headache—a sonofabitch of a headache to put it bluntly, and my eyes felt as if some gremlin had got in behind them and was squeezing hard on the eyeballs. It had started as a mild frontal pain when I was talking to Lee and I put it down to the tension of the jump and the subsequent march to our present camp. I'd felt a little chilly too when we got here but the nights were still cold in the hills and we cooled off quickly after exercise. I was sure the aching in my back was due to the pack I had carried, about seventy-five pounds of machine gun ammunition, grenades and some medical supplies for emergencies. But it wasn't going away and I felt lousy. I was feeling damned sorry for myself as I went to sleep. Seconds later it seemed, my eyes were wide open again and throbbing.

"Damn it, this won't do!" I muttered, and unzipped the light sleeping bag we carried. "Lord, I'm hot!" I searched the aid kit shakily. Finally I located the APC's, communist version, and then decided to check my temperature. It was 40° Centigrade, right on the line. I translated that into the more familiar Fahrenheit . . . 104°. The bar of mercury, slaty grey in the early light, shimmered and wavered as I tried to hold the thermometer still.

"Hell's teeth! What a time to get sick."

I went over the various possibilities, forcing myself to concentrate, to think as clearly as I could. It was too soon to tell. It could be malaria, or meningitis, typhoid or typhus . . . I'd had shots for those two. What about dengue? Or old friend inflenza? My mind was wandering now. "Too soon to tell," I said, and I swallowed the APC's. "Too soon to tell . . . too soon to tell . . . to tell. tell. knell. hell. The silly rhymes echoed down long empty corridors to my ears. I knew I was burning up and getting delirious . . . it felt like being drunk. "Drunk? I'm not drunk . . . I never get drunk now . . . nothin' to drink, drink, drink, nothin' to drink and I'm hot. Oh God, my head! Must tell Blackie I'm sick. I have to tell Blackie. I HAVE to tell Blackie!" It was important I knew and then I couldn't remember what was important. I had to have water. I tried to stand up.

There was a murmuring somewhere nearby but I couldn't locate it. It persisted like a buzzing fly and I was annoyed. My head

still hurt and my eyes ached and I ached all over and I was hot and sticky and thirsty and weak and that damned noise wouldn't go away. Wearily I decided I'd have to do something about it. I tried to lift my head but couldn't make it. I tried again and felt myself lifted. Ahead of me a face wavered and then stabilized.

"Colonel Mac, Colonel Mac, can you understand me? Colonel Mac . . ."

I blinked blearily at him. I squeezed gritty eyelids together and tried again. It was Sergeant Jimmy Lee, my aidman. "Lee what is it?" My mouth was dry and it was hard to talk.

"Sir, we don't know what's the matter with you. Can you tell us?"

I shook my head and it tried to fall off. Lee propped me up again.

"You've been out of your mind for three days now and running a hell of a fever. I sponged you and gave you APC's. I even gave you a shot of penicillin when we thought you were going to die." His young face screwed up with worry.

"I've still got the fever, haven't I? I muttered weakly. "It feels like it."

Makstutis came into focus beside Lee. "It's down some, Doc, but your face was red as a tomato and your eyes are still all bloodshot. Your urine was bloody too. Now you've got little red marks, kinda like bruises, on your skin."

"Eyes all bloodshot . . . little red marks." Somewhere a circuit snapped shut in my head. "God Almighty! I've got Songho Fever."

"Songho Fever? What's that, Doc?"

"It's called Epidemic Hemorrhagic Fever in the States, and it hit a lot of G.I.'s around the Iron Triangle in the Korean War."

Jimmy wasn't too young to remember. He had been in on the tail end of that fight.

"You must have picked it up around Kumwha," he said. "There's nothing you can do for it is there?"

"No more than you are doing now, unless the Reds have something we don't know about." I sipped the water someone brought and lay back.

Blackie had come in when he heard I was conscious. "Lee Sung is back," he said. "Maybe he could get something from Anders, or better still, get Anders to see you."

"I couldn't walk two minutes, let alone twenty miles."

"By Golly, we'll carry you," said Blackie. "Don't you worry Colonel." I fell asleep again with his comforting hand on my shoulder.

The trek across the ridges was rough. I can't remember much of it except the feeling of falling when the improvised stretcher tipped on the steep slopes or someone lost his footing. By now, one of our sergeants, another Korean War veteran named Lim On, was ill with what appeared to be the same disease and the morale of the unit was slipping. We had jumped a week ago and as yet had accomplished nothing. In a deserted, half-collapsed farmhouse about a mile from Songdong-ni, they laid Lim and me down on piles of straw while most of the men bivouacked in small dugouts camouflaged in the woods beside the house. We waited for Lee Sung to get Anders.

He arrived the following afternoon. A tall man, he looked like a benevolent hawk, pale smooth hair, sharp nose, keen grey eyes. He stooped under the low lintel of the hovel and stood for a while in the semi-darkness of the tiny, paper-walled room until his eyes were adjusted. Then he came and dropped on one knee by my side.

"You are a very sick man, Colonel," he said slowly, in precise English.

"I think I have hemorrhagic fever," I said.

"There is little doubt," he agreed as his hands searched my neck and armpits for swollen glands. "See, the small blood spots on your abdomen, and your eyes. And what else have you noticed?"

I gave him the story, including what Makstutis had told me about the bloody urine.

He nodded his head. "Yes, it must be so. I cannot now prevent it, but I can help you to get well." He took a syringe and a bottle of solution from the small pack he carried. "Lee Sung told me. I brought serum. Every day you must take a dose, and the other man, too. I have no doubt he will have the same disease."

It was probably some sort of concentrated convalescent serum. I never did find out; but it seemed to help. There was no more bleeding and the fever dropped. Lim improved too and, fortunately, none of the others seemed to have caught it. I was still terribly weak and somewhat depressed but I was able to get around a bit by the end of our second week in North Korea.

The days dragged along and my strength was slow to return. I read and re-read the letter I had received just before the take-off from South Korea.

"I am getting along fine," Pat had written, "in spite of feeling somewhat bloated and clumsy, which, after all, I must expect. We had some more news about Harry. Apparently the raiding

party he was with got ashore all right and set up their headquarters in one of the small villages near the coast. They seem to be getting along real well so far.

"I am so glad Polly is staying with me, we are good company for each other. When I got the letter from General Rawlins that told me you had left, I was relieved in a way, as I had wondered why you didn't write. Now at least I know and I am sure you are glad that, one way or another, it will soon be over. I don't expect to hear from you again until your mission is completed. Darling, please be careful. The General told me you had had shots for the measlepox, (they sent some out for Harry's team too), so I am not quite so worried. At least the dangers you face will be those of a soldier and you will have a fighting chance."

"She obviously had never heard or had forgotten about hemorrhagic fever," I thought ruefully, the pages trembling in my fever-weakened hands.

"Dr. Hallam is often over to see us in the evenings," she continued. "I believe he is really fond of Polly . . . and she of him . . . but naturally he doesn't express such feelings. If anything happens to Harry I'm sure he will take care of her."

"And who will take care of you and the baby if I don't come back," I thought as I crumpled the letter and burned it. We shouldn't have carried that last batch of mail into the airplane. It was the one sentimental chink in our disguise. As soon as I was well enough I checked to be sure that everyone else had destroyed all mementoes. I was not naive enough to think that we could keep our secret if captured, but pages of letters could be misplaced or fragments blown away and picked up by anyone coming into the area.

The Rangers kept busy. Only one or two remained in the house to cook and look after Kim and me. The rest lay low during the day and reconnoitred by night so that they were soon familiar with the layout of the virus factory and the surrounding country. They briefed me on every trip they made until I felt I knew it almost as well as if I'd seen it myself.

That week, Anders came three times. We always had guards posted and, once he knew he was safe, he relaxed and talked quite volubly in Russian or English.

"It may be fortunate for you that you have had Songho Fever," Anders said, during one of these early talks.

"Why so?"

"The western world has not yet discovered the cause of it, but we have."

He was obviously proud of the

achievements of his laboratory, in spite of the horrible use to which they had been put.

"It's a very simple virus, carried, as you suspected, by mites which live on small rodents. We have now taken that virus and changed it so that it does not require to pass through other animals as part of its life cycle. It can now pass in droplets of sputum from one man to another. In the process of change it has become much more virulent, almost one hundred percent fatal, I would say, with an incubation period of only one or two days. Also it is now extremely infectious and, I believe, far worse than the measlepox. That is the virus we have begun producing, in large quantities, in our factory."

"What are the symptoms of this new disease?" I asked.

"It acts much like the natural disease except for its extreme rapidity. There is a tremendous increase in the hemorrhagic tendency, with fatal bleeding into the gastrointestinal tract, the urinary system, or sometimes the lungs. The victims die in shock within forty-eight hours, as a rule."

"How do you know how it will act on human beings?" I said curiously although I thought I already knew the answer.

"Our people are more realistic than yours," he said, quite sincerely. We offered men condemned to die a pardon if they lived after being exposed to the virus. Most of them agreed."

"I'm surprised they got a choice," I said acidly.

"Our rulers have softened since the days of Stalin," he replied with a wry smile.

"Why didn't you use it instead of the measlepox?" I asked him.

"We did not have enough, and also we did not have a vaccine against it until recently. In fact only a few people have been protected. I am one, and so are my helpers in the Laboratory . . . and, to some extent, so will you be for a while."

"Do you really think so?"

"We have found there is limited cross-immunity from having had the natural fever, especially early in convalescence, but that protection wears off rapidly."

"What do you mean by limited?"

"Let us suppose you had an accident with the vials I shall give you for your return journey and spilled the contents on you. You would be very ill with the fever but you would have a fair chance of living."

"Have you given the new syndrome a name?"

"Yes, a melodramatic one. We call it the bleeding death."

In the third week of our stay he came unexpectedly, late on a

Wednesday afternoon. I talked to him alone as the other officers had gone on an early patrol. He was extremely agitated.

"I believe the counteroffensive will soon be starting," he said. "The Americans have refused to sell any more food to us and our radio is full of reports that the return of another wet spring in Europe and drought in Siberia is their doing. Today we were ordered to load all our available virus for shipment to Russia. We expect to send it Saturday."

"How will it go?"

"In refrigerated tank cars," he replied, and seeing my amazement, he added, "We do not have a bottling plant here. There are barely enough immune technicians to load it and seal the containers properly. I have been told there is an automatic bottling plant in Siberia which can put the virus in missile warheads without human aid, but of course I am not completely informed about these things."

"God! They must be desperate if they intend to let this thing loose on America without being immunized themselves."

"A calculated risk, Colonel. We can produce vaccine rapidly and protect those who matter before the disease rebounds to our lands."

"Those who matter! That's good! I'll give you three guesses who makes the decisions."

On their return that night I called in my officers and explained the situation.

"We must stop that stuff from getting out of here," I said at the end. "In fact, if possible we should blow up the tank cars and let it all run out and at the same time try to put the laboratory out of action. It won't do much good now for us to take the virus home . . . there would be too little time to produce a vaccine against it even if we have the formula."

"There's a railway bridge about two miles from the plant, about four from the way we'd have to go, that crosses a deep ravine," Makstutis said. "It's on the spur line from the main Wonsan-Vladivostok railway. That's the only way out of this fever factory of theirs. We can put demolition charges on that to blow when the train goes over. There's only three or four bridge guards. I'm sure we could cut the telephone wire and handle them before the train gets there."

"Suppose not all the tank cars are destroyed," Kim said. "Could they use that crap again, or would they go near it?"

"Yes, they would," I said. "Some of the technicians are protected by immunizations."

"Then somebody has to be designated to explode the tanks in case they survive the drop," Blackie said. "And what about the train guards?"

"You're so right!" I said. "That makes me the mouse that ties the bell on the cat. You boys hold off the guards, I'll get the tank cars."

"Hell, Doc, you've lost your marbles!" Makstutis burst out in amazement. "That's our job. We've got to keep you all wrapped up like a dame in mink so you can tell them back home what's in that lousy stuff."

I laughed at his pop-eyed indignation. "That's true ordinarily, Mak," I said, "but this new virus is one hundred percent fatal if you get it. Anybody who blows those tanks is likely to get some on him, especially since they'll be damaged by the fall into the gorge. But people who've had this hemorrhagic fever are partly protected, especially while they are in the convalescent stage, as I am, so I'll have to explode the tanks."

"I still don't like it, Colonel," Blackie said.

"Look, Blackie, if you get this new fever you die for sure . . . and probably all the rest of the unit will die too. Then how do I get back to the States?"

"But if you blow it, sir, we can't bring the formula home," Kim said.

"That's true, but that's the lesser of two evils. We must destroy the virus, and if possible the factory too, before they shoot the stuff over to North America. If we don't, knowing the formula will be like a condemned man knowing how he's *going to be* executed . . . what difference will it make?"

"Geez, Colonel, I don't know," Makstutis began.

"I do," I cut him short. "And I'm going to get those tanks. That's an order. It's certain death for anyone else."

"Except me, Colonel." Lim On stood up as tall as five feet three would stretch. We had forgotten him sleeping in the corner on a pile of straw and he had heard the last part of our argument as our rising voices awakened him. He looked about as pale as a yellow-skinned man can, which to me seems more a ghastly green, but he was steady enough, and determined enough to argue with me when I tried to set him down.

"Colonel, I'm the demolitions man of the section," he persisted. "I'm as fit as you are, and, if the Colonel will pardon me for saying so, I know a lot more about it than you do."

"OK, Sergeant," I gave in, "I'll carry the charges and you set them."

The next day Anders was back again, his bird face no longer amiable but haggard and harried. "The tank cars begin loading tomorrow morning. I believe they will go out as soon as finished, which should be shortly before

sunset. The Commissar is worried about possible sabotage and, I believe, has falsified the departure time." He pondered for a moment and then looked at me. "Colonel, I am afraid to stay here. May I go with you when you leave?"

"You may," I said slowly, "if you will do something else for us. Otherwise I think it would be better if you pretend to know nothing and stay behind." I explained our plan to wreck the train and then added, "We will be concentrating on this attack and won't be able to come back and pick you up. Obviously you will not be able to go with the train after it is loaded so you could not find us. On the other hand," I paused to estimate my man, "if we were able to have help to get inside the camp and sabotage it, you could escape in the confusion and come with us."

"But what about the formulae?" he asked anxiously. "Are you not coming to get them from me?"

"We would like to have them, of course," I replied. "But it is not worth the risk for them alone since there will not be time now for our people to set up production facilities."

"You ask a lot of me," he said heatedly. "I could easily betray you and stay in the factory. You could not remain here indefinitely."

I threw a trump card. "What makes you think the factory is going to stay here indefinitely?"

His face seemed to sicken as I watched. "This means atomic warfare," he said, "and the end of the world."

"If we have to die, you are going to die too. You have about two weeks." I was exaggerating, actually it was two months. "If we don't report success to our headquarters by that time, an atomic submarine, armed with a Polaris missile with atom bomb warhead, has orders to obliterate this whole area."

"No," he shook his head. "No —this is too much. I have had enough of this killing. I will not betray you."

"I didn't think you would," I said drily.

"But I must come with you," he said. "I am afraid the Commissar is becoming suspicious. Yesterday we were warned by intelligence to expect parachuting American raiders and the political commissar was asking me about my botanical excursions. He doesn't like me anyway because I am a Pole, and he may have put someone to watch me and report on my movements." I looked at Blackie and he raised his eyebrows. Was this a shrewd guess on the part of the Russian G-2 people or had some of our rangers been picked up?

"Poor devils," I thought.

"They're probably being brainwashed right now. Time is running out on us, for sure. We must get moving right away."

Anders was saying, "What do I have to do for you?"

I told him my plan, slowly and carefully.

"One thing more," I said, as he started to go out the door. "Don't forget to bring samples of the viruses and vaccines with you . . . and anything else you may think important."

"I will do that," he promised. "Goodbye and good luck, Colonel."

When the sound of his steps had faded, Blackie spoke again.

"You're taking quite a chance, Colonel. He knows enough now to ruin us all."

"Yes, I am. He is a proud man and I played on his pride as a scientist. Deep down, he probably is ashamed of having prostituted his discoveries for the purpose of murder, even though there wasn't much he could have done about it. He wants to make amends and I think he will go with us. Anyway, I could see no other way of doing it, could you?"

I looked around the circle of officers squatting on the rice mat floor. "We're with you, Doc," Makstutis said. "All the way, by heaven."

Three heads nodded in agreement.

CHAPTER 14

AT last light we sent out a small party to set up a diversionary attack behind the factory. There was a little gully screened by low bushes that seemed a suitable place from which to fire. It could not be approached in the daytime without some danger of observation. The plan here was to bury small charges on the railway line to be fired from the gully just after the train had passed. This would twist the rails and prevent the engineer from backing up to the factory again. A few well placed rounds should help to speed him on his way down the track, and if the shots punctured some of the tanks, so much the better. After the charges were laid, two men were to be assigned to stay and do the shooting. They would rejoin us later.

Late the following morning, we broke camp. We carried only weapons, ammunition, demolition charges and one day's ration. Sammy Lee, the aidman for Blackie's section, also carried his aid kit and extra dressings. I brought mine along for our section. We moved out with extreme caution, our scouts well ahead. We could not afford discovery now, of all times. At fourteen hundred hours we stopped for rest and food. For a while I let the men relax. Then I gathered

them around me except for the guards.

"We separate here," I said. "Captain Balakireff and Lieutenant Pak and his section will go to the virus factory and carry out the plan for which you have all been prepared. Captain Makstutis, Lieutenant Kim and I will lead our party to the bridge. From now on you must start thinking and acting like Koreans, at all times. You must not speak English under any circumstances. The Reds will be hunting for us after the raid as guerrillas. If they find out that we are Americans the chase will be ten times as fierce. It might even make the men in the Kremlin decide to launch an open attack on the United States. Certainly if they capture us it will give them an excuse to do so. You must not surrender. You will take no prisoners." I looked around the group and paused for effect.

"How many of you have had the S-Flu?"

To a man they raised their hands.

"Then remember that," I said, "whenever you feel soft-hearted. These are the people who did it to you."

I turned to Blackie and Pak. "*Itdah popsidah* . . . see you later," I said in Korean and shook hands. The two officers sprang to attention and with wide smiles on their faces gave me the communist salute. I returned it. Pak faced his men, the smile gone. A stream of rapid Korean orders poured from his thin lips. The change was amazing. What had been a bunch of slouching G.I.'s having chow in comic opera uniforms was transformed into heel clicking, jumpy NCO's barking at slightly harassed, overly anxious oriental soldiers. They quick-stepped down the trail and out of sight. A minute later we too were on our way.

Ahead of me, as I looked back towards the virus factory area, the tracks went straight over the single arch of the steel bridge that spanned the narrow ravine and, slowly dropping, twisted to my left behind a small hill to be lost about a half a mile away. I was lying in the brush on top of the hill that rose in a steep curve out of the gorge. To my immediate right, a deep cutting with jagged rocky walls slashed through the hill from where the bridge jumped the gap. Fortunately for us, the side of the ravine farthest from the virus factory, where I now lay, was much higher than the other, which enabled us to control the approaches. The rise in gradient would also slow the train. It was a marvellous trap.

We had crossed the fast-running foamy little river higher up, where it dropped down from

the steep mountain ridges. Now, in the cleft below, I could hear the deeper growling as it fought for space among the heavy boulders of its bed. I was tired after the march; tired enough to quit right there. A few feet away, over the reverse slope in a little hollow, Lim On was concentrating on his demolition charges, his skeleton face immobile and thin fingers working surely as he fixed the special fuses. He had finished three, with two to go. Anders had told us there were five tank cars. We had to get them all.

I rolled over a little, the better to reach my pants pocket where I had a pair of tiny Japanese field glasses. The sun was warm and, under the special steel of the American-made Russian model helmet, my forehead was wet where the headband touched. Like all the others, I was wearing one of the new lightweight plastic body armor suits under the uniform. It was good to know that even a burp gun bullet would bruise but not penetrate. Only high velocity rifle fire could cut through the flexible weave but I wondered momentarily if it was worth all the sticky discomfort to wear it. The glasses were up to my eyes now and I waited, propped on my elbows. The round magnified world was blurred by the heat waves and the exhaustion which blunted my concentration and sent quick tremors through my tired arms. A fly found me, his feet tickling my face as he sucked the sweat drops. The crawling became intolerable and I had to brush him off. When my eyes adjusted again to the glasses I saw Makstutis and Kim, with seven men. They were filing down the edge of the cutting in full view.

As they neared the abutment, a soldier came out of the bushes at the side of the bridge. Seeing the officers, he saluted smartly and, a moment later, called to a companion who joined the group. Then Kim and four men moved off across the bridge to where another pair of guards had come out of hiding. Thirty seconds later it was all over. At the near end of the bridge, two of my men had moved casually behind the enemy soldiers as they talked to Makstutis. Suddenly they wrapped their left arms around the victims' faces to stop a shout. Their right arms came up and the commando knives flashed down into that soft triangle behind the collarbone. It was done almost in rhythm, like some hellish ballet. The dying men writhed a little and then went limp. By the time I swung my glasses to the other end of the bridge, the scuffle there was already over. I lowered the binoculars. My stomach churned a little as it had done


Virgil Finlay

on my first visit to a slaughterhouse. The rest of our men were now out of hiding and working furiously on the bridge, setting up the charges. Up from below, his face covered with sweat and breathing quickly from the climb, came Makstutis. He sat down beside me.

"Dead easy, Doc," he said, as he got his breath.

"Dead, easy, is right," I said grimly. Killing of any kind always depressed me.

He glanced sideways at me, "Feel OK?"

"I'll make it," I replied quietly, with much more optimism than I felt.

We zigzagged down to the bridge. Kim was dispersing his section along the rim of the gorge and up on both sides of the cutting. We would have to eliminate any Commies who were stranded on our side by the explosion but we wanted to leave a line of retreat open for the rest. None of our men would stay on the other side. Any who survived on the far side of the ravine were welcome to go home . . . and I hoped they would. We settled down in the brush to the left of the bridge—Makstutis, who was to set off the charges and then go where he felt he was needed, Lim, who would be with me, and Sergeant Kang and Corporal Hip Sing who were to cover us as we blew up the remaining tank cars.

The sun was lowering to the hills now and soon would drop behind them. The waves of its heat shook the rails in the cutting, the mirage twisting them in fancy as the explosives would soon do in fact. A weak little breeze came fitfully up the tracks and cooled my face. The soft sad whistle of a locomotive drifted with it and seconds later a dull thudding noise. I thought I heard a faint crackling of rifles.

"And away we go," I said inanely.

* * *

As Blackie told me much later, the first part of the attack went off as smoothly as a Tri-Di melodrama.

"I took the men down the trail at a good pace," he said. "I wanted to get into position and take a long look at the layout in daylight. There wasn't much movement, a guard or two patrolling the fence and in the gatehouse, with my glasses, I could make out a couple of soldiers playing rummy or poker or whatever these people play. We didn't dare get out behind the plant for a look but I could hear some noises and occasionally an engine huffed and puffed like they do when they are shunting. About seventeen hundred hours a loud bell signal went off. I was frightened it might be an alarm but it

must have been chow call or the end of a shift. Anyway, a few more men came out and walked about here and there and the guards changed.

"Getting close to eighteen hundred I was wondering if anything had gone wrong when I saw the guard get up and answer the phone. Maybe this was it. I alerted the men. About three minutes later I saw a tall man I thought was Anders coming down the front steps of the factory with a haversack slung over his shoulder. He moved towards the gate and we came down off the hill, going fast. By the time we got there the guards were out, watching us come, and Anders was apparently clueing in their leader.

"Why, hello, Captain Balakireff," he said as I came up. "I didn't know you were out in this part of the world. Are you the group searching for the guerrilas?" I admitted we were and said to the sergeant of the guard, "Let us in. I have to report to the Commissar."

"He opened the gate and we began to enter as the train whistle blew. I was stalling for time, exchanging small talk with Anders, when the explosions came and then the shots.

"It must be the guerrillas! Behind the plant!" I yelled. "Follow me." I took off on the double with the boys coming right behind. I skidded around the corner and, by Golly, I ran smack into the Political Commissar's fat belly. Anders told me later who he was. When I got to my knees I saw he had four Russian guards with him so I guessed he must be a honcho. There was no time for argument. If I tried to play along and he found out, we were finished.

"Get them!" I shouted in Korean, and jumped on the Commissar again as he got up. Our men were fast with the knives but one guard got off a few rounds with his tommy-gun as he died. They hit poor Kwong Lin, our demolitions man . . . punched holes in him through his thighs and his neck where the suit didn't cover. Sammy says he couldn't do a thing for him. I didn't wait around to see.

"Hold this old fool and keep him quiet a minute. We may need him," I said to one of the boys. "The rest of you cover while Pak and I clean out the power house." I stooped down and pulled the bag of explosives from Kwong's body. Pak was away ahead of me. He was already going up the steps and hit one guy in the belly with a couple of slugs as they met in the doorway. Knives were no use now. We whizzed around inside that place like a couple of squirrels playing tag. Up and down the ladders, and everywhere we

went we slapped beehive blasters with quick fuses, on generators, transformers, anything that looked important. The first ones were going off as we set the last and one of them blasted me out the door with the shock wave. I picked myself up for the second time, feeling like the last pin in a bowling alley, and looked about for my burp gun. I found it just in time to join in a nice firefight. The Reds had caught on by now. The doggoned alarm bell was making the dickens of a racket and a bunch of soldiers came charging around the corner from the railway yards. The boy with the Commissar fired first and knocked down three and the kids covering us at the powerhouse got two more as they scrambled for cover back around the corner. We started for the gate with Benny Quong and Joe Park covering the rear. Meantime some bright so-and-so had got up on the second floor and he leaned out and dropped a grenade down between them. We got him right after the bang but it didn't do those two any good. The shrapnel went up under their helmets and caught their legs as well. I hope they died fast. Sammy wanted to go back for them but I dragged him along with me. I figured we had to get Anders out of there with the big secret and we were expendable until we did.

"By now Pak was prodding the Commissar around the corner in front of the guardhouse with a knife in his backside. We came in sight and found the four guards watching for us—Anders was standing by the door.

"Tell them to open that gate," I screamed at the fat boy. He opened his mouth but it was no use. Either somebody had it in for him or else those goons really obey orders. The alarm had gone off and the gate was closed and that was that. We kept walking. Pak stuck him again and he let out a yelp. That's when the guard commander figured the setup as fishy. He lifted his gun and sprayed. Of course all of us hit the dirt, firing, when he started to act mean, but the old Commissar wasn't a combat man. He was still on the way down when he got it in the throat and crumpled up on top of Pak. By Golly, it was a mess. Pak came up looking like a Red Indian instead of a Korean and then he blew his stack. He let out a shriek of rage like a runaway stallion and started straight for the gate, shooting from the hip. He knocked out the commander and one more and the other two beat it behind the guardhouse. Where Anders had got to I don't know. I think he went inside, but he wasn't in the guardroom when we reached it. It was getting pretty hot with rounds coming in through the

windows from the three floors of the factory and some from around the corners; fortunately the gate was partly protected by the guardhouse or we'd never have made it. Pak went out and dragged the dead commander into the door to look for the gate key but a sniper got him in the arm. That was when I knew we had to get out fast or die. I sent Sammy to fix up Pak and detailed Sergeant Wong to blow the lock to pieces while the rest of the men kept the snipers' heads down with continuous fire. Then I remembered Anders. I poked my gun around the back end of the guardhouse just in time to hear a couple of shots and see the two guards go down. I hollered and he stepped out of the door of the latrine holding an automatic. I guess he'd got tired waiting and decided to finish it himself.

" 'Good, Doctor, very good,' I said. 'Now let's get out of here.'

"He looked a bit shaken but he tucked his haversack under his free arm and we ran for the gate.

"Well, that's about all there was to it," Blackie concluded. "We got to the woods with no more casualties and left three men to cover the open area for a while and discourage pursuit until it got dark and we could get lost. Most of us had a scratch or two and Pak was woozy from loss of blood but we got back to the old village all right and waited for your party to come in."

* * *

As I said before, Blackie told me all this much later. At the time they started fighting we were lying hidden in the scrub by the gorge. Makstutis had a transistor switch to the demolitions in his hand. He and I were right beside the track. We would move to safer places when the train came in sight.

"Make sure the last tank car is on the bridge before you blow it," I said anxiously. "If one is left on the far side we'll never get to it."

"OK Colonel," he said. "It's all set up. Should be a piece of cake, as the Limeys say."

Ten minutes after the first explosion we heard the quick hard slapping of the beehive charges and the rattling as the firefight got going.

"Sounds like they're having plenty of trouble," I muttered.

"Yeah, I guess so," Makstutis admitted, "but that Blackie's a hot shot and so are Pak and his boys. I'll bet they make hash outa that joint."

"They'd better or they'll be in the stew themselves," I said, in a weak attempt at levity.

He gave me an anguished frown and then, his face suddenly grim, shushed for silence.

Faintly I thought I heard an engine straining up the grade. Makstutis crawled over and put his head to the rail.

"It's on the way," he said. "Better take cover." He stood up and signalled the alert.

Lim and I were crouching behind a big rock outcropping halfway down into the gorge. A faint trail led from there to the bottom—perhaps a relic of the construction days when the bridge was being built. It was far enough away to be safe when the bridge blew up but from there we could reach the bottom in a hurry. My heart was hammering fast, partly from excitement and partly from weakness. My knees were wobbly and I could hear the blood rush past my ears. I tried to swallow but I was too dry. Now the train was around the bend and I could hear the slow chuff-chuff-chuff as it crawled up the track. The sound suddenly sharpened as the engine, a big American style steam cylinder, shoved its nose past the cutting and out on to the bridge, travelling at a walking pace. A movement at the other end caught my attention and, for a moment, a great tightness clamped down on my chest. Kim was standing at the edge of the cutting, calmly waving to the engine driver.

"The damn fool," I raged inside. "What in Hell is he doing?" And then I realized and almost wept in admiration and pride. Afraid that the enemy, already on the alert, would notice the lack of guards and stop in time, he was calmly risking his life, pretending to be one of them and enticing the Reds on to destruction. By now the engine was almost up to him. He waved again and moved casually up the embankment into the bush.

Behind the coal tender came a passenger coach full of soldiers, two flat cars and then the five tank cars. At the end, as the train clawed over the bridge, came two more flat cars, another guard coach and a sort of caboose. The bridge itself was exactly six car lengths from bank to bank. To be sure that all the tank cars would be caught, Makstutis had to let the first passenger coach get into the cutting on our side and the other one remain on the far approach. He threw the switch.

For a moment in time the bridge buckled upwards under the last tank car. Then, like a slow motion close-up, it started to bend downwards in a vee, moving faster and faster as the law of gravity took over. The rear tank car dropped into the vee, pulling the flat cars down with it. The crash of the explosion was rolling away down the canyon and now the screech of tear-

ing metal sounded. The rear flat cars fell off to the side and the passenger coach behind them twisted over and wedged itself crossways between the main concrete buttresses and the far bank. By a miracle of bad luck it did not go down with the other cars and even as I turned away the guards came tumbling out of windows and doors unhurt. I looked towards our end. Three tanks had gone down with the bridge and lay twisted among the steel girders in the foaming river. Of the other two, one hung crazily over the angle between the steel and the bank. I could not see the leading tank car but I learned later it had remained upright but derailed. The couplings had broken just ahead of it, leaving the engine, the first guard car and the two flat cars free. That engineer was a smart man. Realizing that they hadn't much chance pinned down in the depths of the cutting, he pulled the throttle wide open and went for the open country as fast as the train would accelerate. With the wheels screeching and sparking on the tortured rails the engine bellowed up the grade like a charging bull trying to escape from the stockyards.

I didn't know all this. I could hear the roaring engine and the storm of firing that followed. It would be suicide to attack the tank cars in full view, I thought. Better first dispose of the three that lay in the bottom of the ravine. I nodded to Lim and we started down. It was slow work at the bottom. In places the river ran right to the edge of the cliff and we had to scramble around on the big boulders or climb up and down the rough rock face, but we made progress and eventually we stood under the shattered bridge. Down here the light was dimmer and the sound of water washing around the wreckage deadened the noise of the sporadic firing above. In midstream the rearmost tank car lay on its side, split open by the fall. The other two, though buckled, were intact. They had toppled off to the side of the bridge and now lay across the big rocks on our side of the river in the shape of a twisted Z. Lim laid down his gun and started to work. His lungs heaving in his poor sick chest, he scrambled over the rocks and then disappeared under the middle tank car. He came back up dripping wet and motioned for a demolition charge. I crawled to him and gave him one. Between gasps for breath and above the noise of the water and the echoing battle he shouted in my ear.

"I'm going to blow this one from underneath, at the lowest point above the water, so all the stuff will drain out."

I nodded in approval and he

disappeared again. In a couple of minutes he was back. "We have about five minutes," he cried, his voice shaky with fatigue. "Let's get the other one."

I pulled him to his feet, where he stood shivering with cold and exhaustion, and picked up the guns and charges. We moved to the second car. This one was propped up at an angle with the low end dug into a patch of sand, easy to get at. I handed him another explosive and he jammed it against the steel, in the sand. He was about to activate the fuse when suddenly he straightened, twisted half around to face me and fell forward. The echoes of the shot ricochetted off the walls of the gorge. I estimated it came from across the water and in the same instant made a diving run for cover. I hit hard and rolled behind a small boulder as another shot hit it and whined away into the air. I was thinking fast. Some of the Reds must have been trying a sneak attack across the bottom of the gorge and had seen us at work. In spite of our uniforms it was obvious from what we were doing that we weren't friendly. I'd be marked down and shot if I tried to get back and ignite the last fuse. And there wasn't time now. I had to get out of there! The first charge might explode that full car like a can of tomato juice, spraying death in all directions. I was trying to get up the nerve to dash for safety when the shouts came from behind me. It was Makstutis, with Kang and Hip Sing. They had crawled up close to me when the fighting started.

"Doc! Doc!" Makstutis was yelling, "Get that last fuse started. We'll keep their heads down."

"Get back!" I screamed frantically. "The other tank is gonna explode. It'll cover you with virus."

"That's rough, Doc," Makstutis called back calmly, "but what's four men compared to millions. Better get cracking."

I felt ashamed, physically sick and disgusted. I had a chance and they had none and yet, facing that death, they could still think of others while all I wanted to do was to lie there, afraid even to run. Oh, I could blame my sick mind or my weakened physical state. They would excuse it on those grounds and never say a word to me no matter what I did. But I knew better. Today I was beaten down while better men than I were still fighting.

I was up and running with the nausea of moral defeat rising in my guts. Quitter! The one word I feared above all . . . and it applied to me. Better to die now than have to live the rest of my

miserable life with it. I felt a heavy blow on my back that threw me off stride. At the same time I heard the crack of a small mortar shell behind me and something sharp and stinging penetrated my right hip. They must be lobbing them across at extremely short range, trying to drop in behind the rocks and get my riflemen. A burp gun gnattered and chewed up the sand beside me as I reached the tank car but stopped abruptly as somebody blasted back. I stooped down and activated the fuse. I was halfway back across the open sandy patch when the first tanker blew up.

CHAPTER 15

THERE was a faint smell of decay, of cold moist flesh, in the air. I shoved up from the sand and rose wearily to my feet. I looked down and saw the wet stain spreading over me from the back. My legs felt damp. I was too tired to care. The odor of the virus culture, of the bleeding death, was in my nose and mouth and I was too tired to care. I staggered past a rocky outcrop and almost fell. Sergeant Kang reached for me from cover.

"Don't touch me," I protested weakly. "The stuff's all over me."

"Some of it got us too, Doc. Better let me help you get away before the next one goes up."

We advanced cautiously up the ravine away from the bridge. The second tank car had blown and there was no pursuit. Apparently our men on the rim of the gorge had pinned down the attackers or else the horror of the bleeding death had driven them away. Now that my aching chest had eased a bit I could think again. We went around a couple of bends and the sound of firing died away.

"We've got to get this virus off, it's our only hope," I said.

"OK Doc," Makstutis was agreeable. "Whatever you say. The damn stuff stinks like a frightened polecat."

I led the way along the stream and found a chest-deep pool with a fast water flow. I walked right in, gun, helmet, jack boots and all, and thrashed around for a moment under water.

"Now you do the same," I said when I came out.

I had some soap in my pocket and Hip Sing produced another bar. With one man standing guard, we undressed and scrubbed ourselves and then our clothes and weapons as thoroughly as possible while the light faded. Numbly I noticed a large hole in my jacket and a ragged tear in the plastic suit. I shook the suit and a piece of iron two inches square fell out. No wonder my ribs were sore and my chest ached! Makstutis saw

it fall and grinned at me crookedly.

"Your lucky day, ain't it, Doc?"

"Yeah, out of the frying pan, now into the fire. Wait until tomorrow."

He shrugged. "That's the way the rocket roars."

We wrung out the water as best we could and wiped it off the guns. I felt better from the cold bath though I was weary to the crying stage. The wound in my thigh was small and not troubling me much so I let it alone.

"That should help a little," I surmised when we were dressed again. "At least it may protect the others from the disease."

We were starting to climb back up the side of the gorge when an ear-battering crash rolled up the river to meet us. Then there was silence.

I don't remember too much about that climb back up the gorge. I know I fell often and always there was a helping hand, a quiet word. We got back to the bridge in darkness and were stopped by Kim's guards. The fight was over. They had been waiting for us. Four men were dead, three in the fight for the train and Lim in the river bed. Two more were wounded in the arm and head but could walk. One man had a broken leg. I vaguely remembered telling Kim how to splint it with poles cut from brush and giving him some morphine. I didn't like the risk of exposing any of them to the bleeding death but there wasn't much I could do about it right then except try not to touch anyone. Makstutis, the two NCO's and I, kept apart from everyone else and waited for the fever to strike. We kept going in the darkness, a darkness that became a dream world to me except for the steady support of hands at my elbows and the slow dragging of my feet as I lifted them and put them forward. Just one more step; one step more; one more step; one step more. We stopped and the hands released me. I crumpled where I stood and slept.

I woke to a pattern of shifting light and shade beyond my closed eyelids and a cool wind that blew across my face. I opened my eyes and slowly they focused on the leaves that rustled above me. The aching misery of my legs and body forced itself into my brain and carefully, deliberately, I sat up. We were in a thickly wooded valley. A tiny clearing opened from where I sat, bisected by a narrow stream. On the other side, about ten yards away, Kim and his men moved about quietly, cooking the last of their rice on a dry wood fire that gave no smoke. I

stood up for a moment while specks whirled before my eyes as my blood pressure dropped. The feeling passed. I was still damnably weak but better than yesterday. I looked around for my companions in isolation and saw them squatting close to their own fire. They seemed normal. So far so good! We might have another twelve to twenty-four hours before the hemorrhagic fever started to raise hell with us. By that time, with luck, we could be holed up in our refuge. Maybe Anders would be able to help us. At the worst, as he was immune, he could take care of us and feed us.

I was still not completely aroused when Makstutis came over with a mixed mess of hot rice and kimchi in a ration can.

"Here's your bacon and eggs, Colonel," he grinned irrepressibly. The man just wouldn't give in, I thought. "How do you feel this morning?"

"Pretty good, considering," I replied.

I finished eating and walked down to the stream to splash some water on my face. Kim was there, washing up. I kept downstream from him.

"How are you feeling, sir?" he said, towelling his face with his undershirt.

"OK so far, Kim. I need a cigarette. Have you got any? No, not your packet! Just one. I'll ask again if I need it." I caught the black Russian weed he threw at me and dragged gratefully. "I didn't see much of the fighting at the bridge after Makstutis threw the switch," I said, sitting down on a boulder. "I was down in the bottom of the gorge most of the time. Clue me in on what happened."

He squatted comfortably on his heels, oriental style, and I was momentarily amused at how quickly he had reverted from his western training.

"When the bridge fell down," he began, "the boys along the canyon rim all fired on the coach stuck in the approaches across the way. A lot of the Reds were hit getting out of it but a lot more made it and started a firefight across the canyon with us. That lasted quite a while."

"I saw the beginning of it," I said.

"I heard from Makstutis that some of them got down in the bottom and shot at you and you were hit."

"That's true, but I was hit by mortar fragments. Did he tell you that I'd never have got out if it hadn't been for him and his two men?"

"No, he didn't. He did tell me you all got splashed with that virus stuff."

"We sure did, and nobody except Anders is to come near us until we find out if we're going to

get the fever or not. But what happened to you?"

"While the fight was going on back and forth across the canyon," he began again, "the engineer tried to take off with what was left of his train . . . it broke apart just ahead of the first tank car. He almost did it too! The two men I had posted up above, on either side of the cutting, couldn't do much as they were firing down at too steep an angle. They did manage to keep the Commies' heads inside the coach, however, and, when the train started up the grade, five of us were able to scramble up on the flat cars, leaving the other six guys to finish the fight at the bridge. Two of them were killed later on by an unlucky motar shell burst.

"As soon as we got on the flat car I put a half a dozen burp gun pellets straight down the middle of the passenger coach and while they were wondering what to do about it, Tommy Lin sneaked up close and threw a grenade through the glass of the back door. But he didn't hold it long enough. Somebody fielded it and threw it right back before it could explode. Lucky for us he was too strong. It bounced out past the door and rolled over the side just as it went off. About that time I figured we had to stop the train or they'd take us to Vladivostok, so Tommy and little Rhee Sung boosted me up on the roof . . . It took both of them to do it . . . while the other guys gave the Reds a few rounds to keep their heads down. I hauled my two buddies up with me and we pussyfooted over the top, hoping the Commies wouldn't try to shoot up through the roof. It was steel anyway. That helped! We jumped down on the coal tender and the fireman saw us. Boy! Did he yell! He dropped that shovel and dived out the side like a frightened frog. The engineer took to the other door.

"By now the train was out of the grade and in open country, really travelling. I sent Rhee back over the top to warn the others, before the Reds got wise, and when I figured they were set I put on the emergency brake . . . it's a good thing I learned about engines on the pineapple plantations back in Hawaii . . ." he laughed. "Well, sir, that damned train just about stood on its nose and jack-knifed. I'll bet the gooks really got thrown about. Then I put her in reverse. The wheels were screeching like a drunk wahine at a hula, and slipping and sliding like crazy until they caught a hold. When she stopped and began to back up a lot of the Reds made a break for it. We got a few but most of them got away. When they saw we were going back towards the bridge a gang of those

left tried to rush the cab. Tommy was waiting on the coal pile and mowed them down but a wild shot downed him when he tried to get back to me. I wanted to stop the train but he yelled at me to go on. I tied down the whistle as the signal and the other guys jumped. Then I gave her full throttle and I jumped too. Tommy stayed on. I guess he figured he was finished and he might as well take some of the Reds with him. Anyway they never got into the cab to stop the engine. It must have barrelled down that grade at a hundred miles an hour. It smashed those two tank cars to glory and pushed the whole damn lot into the canyon."

"That was the big explosion I heard?"

"That was it," Kim agreed and added, "That broke up the fight. Good boy, that Tommy. He went out the right way for a soldier."

We set out for the rendezvous about midmorning. It would have been safer to wait for night but I was afraid the virus would knock us out and Kim agreed. The scouts reported no signs of life ahead so we marched in our two groups, a prudent interval of twenty-five yards between. The day was warm later on. About sixteen hundred hours I started to sweat a bit and I noticed beads of perspiration on Makstutis' forehead and a large drop forming on the end of his nose. He smiled weakly when he caught my eye.

"Guess I'm starting to get that fever, Doc," he said. "The other two guys have it too. How're you doing?"

I wasn't too bad and said so. The protection Dr. Anders said I'd get from the Songho Fever must be working. We went up on top of a steep ridge and I noticed Hip Sing was unsteady on his feet. I went over to him.

"How are you making out, boy?"

"I . . ." he swayed slightly and licked his lips . . . "I don't feel so good, sir."

"Sit down, son. Let's have a look at you."

His head was scorching hot and his cheeks flushed like an inebriated Japanese. I felt his pulse. Even after a rest it was over one hundred and forty. At a rough guess he must have been running a fever of one hundred and three degrees. I let him rest for a bit and then, with Makstutis on one side and I on the other, we stumbled on down the trail into the valley. He collapsed a couple of times before we got to the bottom and finally we were dragging him along, his arms over our shoulders, toes catching in the dust. Sergeant Kang followed reeling in semi-delirium but still carrying our weapons.

Somehow he reached almost to the bottom of the slope, right behind us, and then pitched forward on his face. The guns clattered and rolled down ahead of him. His arms, outstretched as he fell, caught my legs and tripped me. I went down on one knee, Hip Sing crazily over me, while Makstutis struggled to keep his balance and pull us up again. We got Sing over to the narrow brook that tumbled along the valley floor and there Makstutis' knees buckled under him and he sat down. I was feeling rough myself, but not that rough.

"Get Hip Sing's clothes off him if you can, Mak," I said, and went back for Kang. He was still comatose so I grabbed his arms and jerked him down the slope to level ground. I couldn't drag him any more, I hadn't the strength. I got down on my knees and rolled him over to the water's edge. I stripped him to his undershirt and poured water over him with his helmet. His pulse was almost impossible to count, it was beating so fast, but it was still surprisingly strong. That fever had to be brought down before it fried his brains! No man can live long at a body temperature over 105° and I knew his must be at least that. Even if he recovered his brain could be permanently damaged by the intense heat inside his skull. I got him into the water with his head and shoulders on the bank. It was cold but there was no time for gentler measures. The exertion made the swirling come back in my head and I lay down beside him until the world came to rest again.

About five minutes later I heard gasping sounds and looked up. I had forgotten Makstutis and Hip Sing. The Mak was still fumbling with Sing's clothes but in his delirium he would forget and sit there, muttering to himself, while his fingers fluttered uselessly at the buttons. He was doing that now. The sounds were coming from Hip Sing. As I watched, he started to retch, his face was a sweaty grey-green. A great gush of dark brown blood came up and flowed away from the side of his mouth. He sank back and was still. I crawled over to feel his pulse but he was dead. Makstutis sat there and whispered. Somewhere above I heard a shout. Under the weary haze that covered my mind I knew I had to act but it was so much trouble.

"Doc . . . Doc . . ." I heard it again and looked up. Kim, watching back on the trail, had seen that we were not following. Now, heedless of the danger, he was coming to help us.

"Don't come any nearer!" I forced the words through the dry lining of my throat. He was

perilously close already if this virus was transmissible through the air, as Anders claimed.

"But I can't just leave you there," he pleaded from the other side of the water.

"We'll all die if you catch it too," I croaked, and rallied my wits. "Kim, Anders may be at the farmhouse waiting for us. Get there as fast as you can. Tell him the bleeding death has got us. Maybe he can still help. And don't let anybody touch us, no matter what happens, until he gives the order." I heard no more. Forcing the last bit of strength from my aching muscles I turned back to Makstutis and pulled off his outer clothes. He lay there mumbling and rambling like a Yogi in a trance, the foam drying on his cracked lips. He was too big to roll into the water so I poured it on him from his helmet. The cold seemed to restore his sanity for a moment . . . his eyes opened. The whites were gone and, from the center of those bright red bleeding spheres, the blue irises flickered as he tried to focus on me. He smiled.

"Good old Doc," he said feebly.

It was too much. I crouched there and sobbed, the aching tightness blocking my throat as I shakily poured water over him.

The light kept bobbing about in the strangest way. It couldn't be a firefly, too big. It was up high on the slope at first but soon it dropped down, wavering back and forth. I knew then it was a shaded flashlight and I heard the sliding of boots on the rocky path.

"That's close enough." The voice was strange at first and then I remembered that was how Anders sounded.

Until the darkness and rising fever stopped me I had kept pouring the water over Makstutis where he lay, unconscious and unmoving on the ground. Kang floated low and lifeless in the water like a beached log. I checked him once. His pulse was still there but slow and almost imperceptible. As the fearful heat rose within me I lay down in the stream beside him and shivered there as long as I could endure. Then I would get out again and return to my work. Finally, too sick and dizzy to do any more, I crawled to the bank and lay down on my back with my legs in the water to cool off the blood steaming inside me. Then I passed out.

The light flickered closer and waved about over my companions. It came to me and I squinted up feebly, trying to avoid the glare.

"How are they, Dr. Anders?" The voice came from the slope.

"One of them is dead . . . a corporal. The Russian and the

Sergeant are very bad, unconscious. Dr. Macdonald is awake," Anders said and then, to me, "Do you understand me?"

"Yes, I do," I whispered.

"I am going to inject some serum." He was busy tying a tourniquet of rubber tubing above my elbow to bring out the veins. I felt the needle probing for the collapsed tissues and later the pressure as he pulled it out and stopped the bleeding. He jabbed me again in the biceps.

"You have had your antiserum and a sedative," he said, leaning close to be sure I heard. "Now you must relax and concentrate on getting well."

With that thought in my mind I went to sleep.

Three days later I was over the worst of it. I had bled again from the kidneys but fortunately the disease had not been severe enough to cause a massive internal hemorrhage that would have choked their filtering mechanism and killed me.

"How do I look?" I said to Anders that morning as he examined me where I lay, in the dappled shade of the clearing.

"Your eyes are very red, of course," he smiled, "and you have purpuric spots . . . what your laymen call bruising, isn't it . . . in the creases of your elbows and thighs, but I think you have been fortunate."

"I agree with that statement, Doctor," I said as I looked over at his other patients, lying there so quietly beside me. A horse fly lit on Kang's nose. Feebly his face twitched, trying to dislodge it. He lifted his right hand, bending the arm from the elbow. It stayed there, too weak to go farther. Anders shooed the fly. Kang's hand, poised uncertainly for a time, slowly fell back to his side. To all appearances he was lifeless.

"They're in bad shape, aren't they?" I asked.

"Yes, but they should recover. You saved their lives, you know."

"I did? How?"

"By using that cold water. When I checked them, their temperatures were very low, especially Kang. You might say you had put them into artificial hibernation. They were both in shock but, with the low body temperatures reducing their metabolism during the crucial stage, I am sure they have a much better chance of returning to normal. I maintained their low temperatures with one of our new hypothermic drugs for the first two days. Now they have returned to a more normal state except that they are still asleep."

"They look more dead than asleep," I said and raised myself up to sit. Even that was an effort as my swimming head and

pounding heart warned me. In a moment or two I felt better. I inched over to a tree and used it as a back rest. Soaking in the friendly warmth of the sun like a cat on a garden wall, I dozed off.

"Take this, Colonel." Anders' face was close to mine as he woke me gently and held out a bowl of warm rice. The sparse light-colored stubble on his unshaven chin stood out like the tattered wheat stalks on a dustbowl farm. Gaunt with fatigue, bleary-eyed and scruffy though he was, his red-rimmed eyes shone with a fierce determination to pull us through and cheat his former masters of at least three victims. I ate and watched as he gently spooned a thin paste of rice into the cracked and crusted mouths of his patients. As it touched their tongues, they swallowed automatically like patients under anaesthesia, which, in a way, I suppose they were.

"Have you had any sleep at all?" I said, watching him.

"Not much. An hour here and there. I was afraid to sleep."

"Then why don't you sleep now while I watch. I can wake you easily if you lie down here."

"Thank you. I will do that. I am very tired."

I let him sleep six hours. The sun was low over the ridges and Kim and his men were preparing the evening meal when he awoke. Renewed vigor showed in all his

actions as he moved about lighting a fire and preparing our rice gruel. This time I crawled over to help him with the patients. As we dripped the thick rice soup into those impassive faces and later washed the dry drum-tight skin stretched over bare bones, I asked about our plans.

"Yesterday," he said, "Lieutenant Pak On took a small party down to the coast, to Wongpo. They are to find Lee Sung and tell him that there will be a delay until you are well enough to travel. They also must try to get more food. It will be at least three days before they are back. I have vaccinated all your men against the bleeding death and we must wait until you are no longer infectious and I am sure they are immune before we escape. We cannot risk spreading the disease in the western democracies."

"Do you think it got spread when the tank cars were blown up?" I asked.

"It is quite possible. The concentration of virus in that river must have been very high. Unfortunately there are still villages down its course and along the Imjin where people live, and they may get it. For that reason we must move as soon as it is safe. If disease breaks out near the coast we will never be able to get a boat to take us off."

The thought worried me. Suppose Lee Sung died? Only he could make the contacts to get us away, I supposed, by small fishing boat out to sea where a submarine, or perhaps a destroyer, could pick us up outside the territorial limits. We had to avoid the coastal patrols too and only Sung could help us there.

By the end of that week, May was two thirds gone and we were all recovering slowly. Pak came back and the news was bad. Lee Sung and Blackie had come with him. I met them as I strolled along the trail and went back with them to our camp for a conference. Before it began, Anders got out his syringe and inoculated Lee Sung.

"We can't afford to lose our only contact with freedom," he said.

"I appreciate your kindness, even if it is somewhat self-centered," Lee replied, with a disarming smile.

"Let's have it," I said to Pak when all the officers were gathered in the glade. Makstutis, too weak as yet to participate actively, was lying quietly taking in all that was said.

"We got into Wongpo without too much trouble," he began. "We kept away from any signs of people on the way. It wasn't too hard to locate Lee Sung either when I walked into the little town; several people knew

him and I pretended the North Korean Army had business with him. I found him down at the wharf where his boat is moored and he took me aboard. I was alone of course," he said, as an afterthought. "The men stayed back in the hills."

"Is that the boat you mentioned when we first met?" I interrupted to ask Lee.

"Yes. Actually it belongs to the United States," Lee Sung said. "It is fitted as a deep sea fishing or trading junk. It has souped up engines that look ordinary and a false bottom where I hide guns or radio or anything we need to smuggle into or out of North Korea. The boat is registered in my name of course. I'm supposed to be a part-time fisherman and local cargo carrier, as well as a merchant. I have a small store in Wongpo. The Reds used to wink their eyes at my activities because I smuggled things they wanted from Hong Kong or South Korea."

"Sorry to interrupt," I said to Pak. "I wanted to get the background straight."

"That's all right, sir," he replied. "Now, where was I?"

"You'd got to Lee's boat," I said.

"Oh yes. We had to get some food so that's the first thing we talked about. Lee had bags of rice in his store so we went there and loaded up a mule cart he borrowed. We were going to drive it as far as we could to where our men could get the rice and pack the sacks on A-frames back over the trail to the farmhouse. We thought it would be less noticeable if we did it that night. In the meantime Lee went out to get some vegetables and see if he could scrounge any meat. That's when the trouble started." He turned to Lee Sung. "Maybe you'd better tell the rest of it."

"I went to the house of a farmer, an old friend of mine, who lives on the edge of the village, to bargain for some vegetables and perhaps a pig," Lee said. "I was still there, drinking tea to conclude the transaction, as is our custom, when a detachment of about fifty North Korean soldiers in three trucks rolled along the coast road into the village. I finished my business as rapidly as possible, and, with the help of the farmers' sons, brought the food down to my store. Then I walked out around the village seeking information. Lieutenant Pak stayed with the supplies. I was afraid someone would have told the detachment commander of the presence of another North Korean officer but fortunately he was so busy and the people so frightened that no-one remembered Lieutenant Pak."

"That evening the commander

called an open meeting in the village and announced there was to be curfew for everyone beginning that night. Anyone who disobeyed would be shot. He also announced that nobody could enter or leave the village by land or sea and he has seized the fishing vessels, including mine."

"Oh, my God!" I said. "Why did he do that?"

"Apparently a new epidemic of some sort has broken out at several villages along the Imjin River."

I looked across at Anders and shook my head. He lifted his shoulders in a shrug of resignation.

Lee Sung continued. "There is a great search being made for American bandits of oriental descent masquerading as soldiers of the Peoples Army who attacked the virus factory. You will be interested to know that it was a large and heavily armed force of capitalist reactionaries which was driven off with very heavy losses.

"Losses to whom?" Blackie asked with a grin.

"To the Americans of course. The virus factory was not damaged."

"At least that's the truth; we got the powerhouse," Pak laughed.

"The moment he made the announcement about American soldiers I left the meeting quietly and went back to my store. Somebody was going to wake up, perhaps soon. I told Pak and we decided to risk it as the soldiers were still moving into the police barracks and getting set up. We drove the mule cart quickly out the back end of the village and got away without being challenged. In fact we didn't see anyone at all until we met our own people."

"It looks like we've stirred up the whole country," I said. "They certainly seem frightened.

"I'm not surprised," Anders broke in. "When I left the factory, besides the virus cultures, my rucksack was full of bottles of vaccine against the bleeding death and as much of the antiserum as I could carry. I expected we might need it. I destroyed all I could of what I had to leave behind and the papers too. The Communists have very little left."

"A fine piece of work, Doctor," I said. "You saved our lives and deprived the Reds of their protection, all at the same time." I turned back to Lee Sung. "I wonder how they figured we were Americans. All our papers were in order. There wasn't a thing to show we weren't native guerrillas, admittedly in the service of an unfriendly power. Why not think we were from South Korea?"

"Possibly some of the men we left in the factory lived long enough to talk," Blackie said, "but I doubt it very much. Of course seeing the white officers would give them grounds for suspicion."

"Suspicion, yes, but not fact," I said.

"The radio has been talking mysterious explosions and guerrilla warfare in Siberia and parts of China recently," Lee Sung reported.

"That's it, by Golly!" Blackie burst out. "The raids on the nerve gas centers must have started. It could be somebody has been captured and brainwashed."

"Could be," I said, "and if so, we'd better get home. If the Reds can suppress news of how successful the raids are, they may still bluff the democracies, with threats of nerve gas and CBR warfare, into giving them more food and a good settlement of the war, but if we get home with our story then they'll realize they are licked and maybe quit."

The following day we set out to do the last few miles to the farmhouse. The Reds didn't have enough men to search the hills and the wilder the area the safer we'd be. Our trouble would be to break through the barrier at the coast. With one wounded man and two sick ones on litters we were heavily loaded and could make only slow time. I had all I could do to carry my own weight and when we got to the house late that night I collapsed on a pile of straw and stayed there for the whole of the next day.

CHAPTER 16

WE STAYED in the village for three weeks. Each day Makstutis and Kang were a little better.

"We have to get out of here," I said to Anders one day in the last week, after we had examined our patients. "The A-bomb carrier is probably on its way right now."

"They can't march all the way to the coast," Anders said dubiously. "If we must go, we shall have to carry them."

Blackie and Kim had been watching us with interest. Now Kim spoke up.

"We've got some real husky boys in the unit, Doc. How about fixing up seats on a couple of A-frames. Then we could *chogi* them up the hills and they could maybe make it down the other side."

"It's a good idea, sir," Blackie agreed. "Those back trails are too narrow for litters. We can change *chogi* bearers frequently."

"What about Yip Kee?" Kim said. "Can he travel the same way?"

I looked at Anders. "What do you say, Doctor? It's a month since his leg was fractured. I think we could take a chance on it provided he is carried all the way."

"I see no alternative," Anders agreed.

We borrowed the A-frames from the farmhouse and Pak wove basket seats across the carrying prongs. With wider shoulder straps and some padding our men could carry the patients quite well, changing frequently. We assigned two bearers to each A-frame; it was all we could spare. The first time we tried it, Makstutis, irrepressible as ever, cracked, "This'll be the first time I ever went into action sitting on my ass. I feel like a damn tanker." The name stuck; from then on they were called the tank section.

In the first part of June, Lieutenant Pak and Lee Sung made a reconnaissance and came back with an encouraging report. The furor over the raid on the virus factory had died down. Work on the power house had started but in a half-hearted fashion, either from a sense of defeat or perhaps a shortage of supplies and workmen. The bleeding death had hit hard along the Imjin and spread over the watershed to the coastal villages. It continued to spread as the panic-stricken natives, completely out of control after two terrible epidemics, fled from the disease and disseminated it wherever they went. Most of the enemy troops were being used to try to halt the crazy rush away from the death zone but some of them had also become infected, either by contact with refugees or perhaps in the age-old fashion by consorting with prostitutes in the towns. The result was disorganization and a very low morale.

The garrison at Wongpo, still kept at fifty men, was in good health as they had commandeered plentiful food supplies and driven out or killed most of the villagers who had not already died. They held the harbor and the three boats tied up there. One was Lee Sung's, the other two were much smaller fishing boats.

Counting Anders and the three convalescents, we were down to a total strength of twenty-three. It would not be easy to capture the boat unless we could catch the North Koreans by surprise, but we had to try it. We set off over the wildest part of the country, avoiding all villages or farmland that might still be inhabited. By the evening of the third day we lay on a ridge overlooking Wongpo. Shortly after dark, Lee Sung and Pak went down to see what the situation was. The day had been warm

but a cool breeze began blowing towards the sea as the land cooled off. I fell asleep, lulled by the quiet murmur of the distant breakers and the rustle of leaves in the steady wind.

"Doc, Doc, wake up! Wake up, Doc," the insistent whisperer was Kim.

"Yeah, what, what's that?" I struggled confusedly back to consciousness. Obviously something was wrong the way Kim was still shaking me. "OK Kim . . . lay off . . . I'm awake," I said crossly. I was still fagged out and hated to come back to reality.

"Sorry sir, there's trouble. Lee Sung has been captured."

"Captured!" I echoed. "How do you know?"

"Pak just came back. He says Lee Sung left him hidden near his store while he tried to sneak back on board the junk. He could see Lee go aboard but he never came on deck again. A few minutes later a North Korean soldier came off the boat and went to the police barracks. Two officers came back with him and went aboard. Then Pak figured he'd need help and high-tailed it up here."

"OK, get everybody up. We move out right now," I growled and started to put my equipment on. "Where's Blackie?"

"Talking to Pak, Colonel," he said as he moved away.

While the men got ready, the officers gathered around me.

"What's the plan, sir?" Blackie said.

"I'm not absolutely sure," I said, "but I do know this, if we don't rescue Lee Sung and his junk you might as well figure on walking back to the States via Siberia." I thought over the plan of the village for a moment. "The boat is lying alongside the jetty about five hundred yards north of the police barracks. The houses there thin out along the coast road. You, Blackie, take four men. Swing north from here and come in at the jetty as quietly as you can. If it isn't well guarded maybe you can get aboard before they suspect. Then wait for us. Better take Pak with you . . . he knows exactly where the boat is in this darkness. Kim, you take five men and surround the police barracks as well as you can. At least try to cover the way north to the boat. Don't do a thing unless you hit trouble or Blackie gets into a fight." I paused, there was some detail I wanted to be sure of. "Oh yes, locate all power and telephone lines you can and cut them the moment shooting starts. Then hold off the Commies as long as possible and withdraw towards the junk. I'll take the tank section and Dr. Anders. We'll go along with Kim as far as seems safe and then make for the boat

by way of the beach while he tackles the barracks. The challenge is Pusan . . . the answer, Tokyo. One thing more. I don't want to leave without Lee Sung for two reasons. One, we owe our lives to him, and two, without him we'll have one hell of a time running that boat and contacting help. I'm betting he is still held on the junk but there's no guarantee of that. I wouldn't be a damn bit surprised if the Reds were holding him for bait to catch us, so watch yourselves every minute. Is that clear?"

It was. Blackie and his boys moved off first, going north over a trail that would gradually lead them down the slope and north of the village. A few minutes later we followed. Makstutis and Kang were to walk downhill although they were exhausted from the day's march, but Yip Kee had to ride. There was not quite a half moon, enough to see the trail but not enough to make us conspicuous. I looked down to the village. There were no lights. Even in the police barracks there was blackout, either in fear of guerrilla sniping or perhaps waiting for us. In thirty minutes we were on level ground with the beach a quarter of a mile away. There was little wind now and the waves must have been small. I couldn't hear anything but my own breathing and the scuffling of our feet. There were no dogs and I wondered if there ever had been; dog is a tasty meal to some of these people. Tonight certainly it was a blessing.

Kim came back to me quietly, a short strong silhouette against the low moon, and stuck his mouth up close to my ear.

"We go straight from here, Doc. The Police barracks is on the coast road dead ahead. You'd better cut north a bit before you get on the beach. Watch it crossing that road. In this light you'll stand out like a neon sign."

I nodded to him. He and his men moved away, shadows that merely faded until I was not sure they were there at all. I waited a little longer, then I took the lead with Anders next, followed by the three tanks, all the patients now riding, and the three spare men acting as a bodyguard. We walked in a wide arc, going north and finally swinging down a narrow mud lane between thatched houses to come to the coast road. In the moonlight I could see no sign of life, so, one at a time, we skimmed across it as quietly as we could, dodged the fishing net racks that cluttered the soft sand and got out on the tidal area of the beach. I saw at once that I had made a mistake. Kim was right. We were far too conspicuous out there on the hard sand. I led them back close to the nets and we stum-

bled on, tripping over the rocks and loose stones that thrust up through the sandy patches, tiring ourselves out in that loose shifting footing.

I stopped, trying to breathe silently. Faintly ahead I saw the outlines of the jetty, the masts of the three boats silhouetted above it.

"Let's get back beside the road," I whispered to Anders. "We have to get on it soon anyway, to approach that pier where the boats are. The *chogi* bearers are about all in, trying to carry the patients in this soft sand."

We had just stumbled and crawled back over the rocks and debris to the side of the road when a light machine gun chittered angrily to the south. I heard the yelling of commands cut short by the quick blasting crack of a hand grenade. For a moment the flame burned a pattern on my retina so I couldn't see clearly. I thought there were figures moving down that way but I wasn't sure. Ahead, where the masts of the junks jousted at the stars, there was a flash of light as a door opened. A man's harsh scream followed it as thunder follows lightning and then there was a splash, shouts, and running feet on the planks of the wharf. The firing at the police barracks was heavier now and I could see rifle flashes that appeared to come from a second floor window. One of our boys must have marked it down too. The rifle cracked once more, followed instantly by a grenade explosion inside the room. It lit up the outline of the window like a furnace door opened in a dark cellar. Something fell out. After that there was a lull behind us. Ahead, sporadic shooting rattled back and forth from boat to jetty to shore, the flashes jerking about like fireflies playing tag.

I could make no sense out of that battle so I gave orders in a low voice.

"Let's stay here right now. Tanks, dismount and cover the rear. Anders, you and the three guards move north twenty-five yards and cover both sides of the road. Stay hidden, halt everybody, and don't forget to give the challenge before you shoot." I returned to Makstutis. "I'll drop back south a bit," I said, "and outflank anybody you stop."

I walked away and hid behind poles supporting one end of a large fishing net that was hung on the long racks to dry. The shadows broke my silhouette but I could see well through the net.

Across the road the low thatched roofs of the houses formed an almost unbroken bar of shadow against the faint light of the moon. I had been looking at it for a long time. I stared at it once more and thought I saw

slight movements in the blackness. I looked away and tried the old trick of not staring straight at where I wanted to see, to give my night vision a better chance. There it was again!

"Halt!" Makstutis gave the order in Korean. There was neither movement nor sound now.

"Pusan! He hissed the word explosively. Still no answer!

The light from his grenade was an instant before the roar. Crouched along the walls of the houses across from me was a group of men, more than five, maybe ten, spread apart for safety. He had caught the first two with the explosion, the grenade right between them. The others opened up, firing generally north and across the road, hoping to catch their assailant.

"Makstutis is smart," I was thinking. "I'd probably have used my gun and given my position away first thing." I marked the approximate area of the flashes and, from my knees, covered it with one swinging burst and then dropped behind the poles. The answering fire went over my head and now our tanks really let go, all six of the men blasting at the black shadow. It was enough. There was no answer. Except for an occasional moan and some dragging and scrabbling in the dirt, I heard only the ringing in my ears. Five minutes later I decided it was safe to go back to my men.

The battle south of us stuttered and chattered as the burp guns spat at each other. Northward it was quiet, too much so. An hour went by. Then I heard the challenge again.

"Halt! Pusan!" . . . "Tokyo!" came the answer. It was Kim.

"What the Hell's going on?" he asked.

"I don't know," I said. "I think Blackie has the bear by the tail and can't let go. There hasn't been a sound for a long time."

"We've got the Reds bottled up in the barracks," Kim said cheerfully. "All except a patrol of ten that got out and went north. I figured you could hold them while we took care of the rest."

"We cleaned them up. They're lying over there across the road."

"That's real neat work, Doc." I imagined him smiling in the dim light. "Now what do we do?"

"Damned if I know," I admitted. "We'd better try to find Blackie, I guess."

We found him lying behind the heavy timbers of the jetty where it joined the road. He was boiling over with anger and frustration.

"The so-and-so's went back down inside the boat when the fighting started and I don't dare go after them. They've still got Lee Sung there and threaten to kill him if we attack. I told them we'd show them real torture if

they hurt him and promised to let them go free if they surrendered but I guess they're counting on being rescued."

"Any of your men ever do any sailing?" I asked.

"I have a couple who know how," said Kim. "What's in your mind?"

"We can't get to the engines of the junk and I'm afraid to stay here." I turned to Kim. "Did you ever get those power and phone lines, by the way?"

"Yeah, I got them; but they could call for help if they have a battery-powered transmitter."

"That's what's worrying me," I said. "The only alternative I can think of is to get on that junk and try to sail the damn thing away. Maybe, when they find out they are at sea, the gooks will surrender. Kim, you go back and hold the fort while we try to get on the boat."

"But sir," Blackie spoke up, "when we go we'll have to take all three boats or the garrison might take after us."

"I forgot about that, Blackie," I said ruefully, and then, as the thought struck me, "Say, maybe one of them has an auxiliary motor and we could tow the whole lot out to sea. Is there anyone on the little boats?"

"I don't think so. I watched for a while when the fight started and didn't see anybody. But they're small," he concluded doubtfully. "I wouldn't bet on any engines."

"Engines or no engines," I decided, "we take all three boats. Can you get aboard them safely?"

"We'll have to rush the big one," Blackie replied. "There's a couple of ports they can fire through that cover most of the wharf except out towards the bow."

"Let's see if we can find a rowboat first, or make a raft from those fish racks," I said. "Then you can row out to the end of the wharf with three or four men and approach the junk head on. While you're about it, check the fishing boats for engines but don't start them up if they have any. Tie all three boats together and find something we can use for paddles or oars too. We'll try to float away with the tide. It seems to be going out now."

Down by the nets we found a long flat-bottomed rowboat that seemed serviceable. It was a struggle to get it to the water but we managed with the help of some choice swearing and rude remarks about Korean fishermen and Marine operations in general. The long sweep oars were stacked by the nets and, in a short time, Blackie and his amateur crew splashed out into the darkness. Some time later he was back with one man.

"We got aboard," he related proudly, "and found the two fishing boats have small motors that might be enough to pull the big junk along for a while. We've got them all tied together and I left three men on the deck of Lee Sung's boat. They can make sure the gooks keep their heads inside but we'll have to ferry everybody out to the small boats first. We still can't risk crossing that wharf."

"OK," I agreed. "Start ferrying the tanks. I'll go and get Kim and his gang."

There was no more firing around the barracks. Either the Reds were waiting for daylight or perhaps for help. The moon had set and in the blackness finally I found Kim and explained the situation. We sent off all the men and together we sat and watched for a surprise sortie from the building. It must have been about two in the morning when Blackie sent back for us. We were the last to leave and, as I passed the racks, I pulled off a fishing net.

"Give me a hand with this, Blackie, I want to take it along with me."

"What on earth for, Colonel?"

"We can't get below decks on the junk. Our food is low. We can try for fish with this. What about water?"

"Everybody filled their canteens with water before starting. It's not enough," I complained, "but we can't wait now."

By this time half our men were on the deck of the junk. The sick men stayed in the smaller craft in case of trouble. We filled the rowboat with six of the strongest men and cut loose from shore. With the ebbing tide to help, the rowboat crew pulled slowly away from the wharf, aided by others paddling in the fishing craft. Our prisoners made no noise and we could hear no sounds of pursuit. An hour later we started the small boats' motors.

My first impulse had been to run for the open sea, beyond the territorial limits of North Korea but I reconsidered. The Soviets, if they were looking for us, wouldn't bother about the niceties of international law. We were fair game until picked up. So we putted along the coast, running towards the thirty-eighth parallel. Shortly before dawn we sailed close in to the rugged shoreline and anchored. We loosed the small boats and ran them in to shore behind a rocky headland. Perhaps a reconnaissance plane would miss us in the shelter of the cliffs. We would have to chance the wind and weather in our rather insecure hideout.

Sitting on the pebbly beach beside Anders, I was wondering

what to do next when he broke the silence.

"I believe I have a solution, Doctor," he said in his precise manner, "if you will give me permission to try."

"What can we lose?" I said.

Approaching Lee Sung's vessel from dead ahead, we climbed over the bow. Anders leaned over the side and yelled in fluent Korean for the senior officer of the Communist soldiers. After a short silence there was a rough shout from the forward port.

"What do you want with me?"

Anders talked slowly and clearly. "I am Dr. Anders from the virus factory. You know I escaped and that I cannot go back if I want to live. Therefore, if this boat is found by your comrades I will kill you before I die myself."

"You cannot touch us and you cannot sink the boat. Your threat does not scare me." The Red officer did not attempt to conceal his scorn.

"I promise you that if you free Lee Sung we will set you ashore and let you go unharmed."

"I do not trust traitors," yelled the Korean. "We will not surrender. You will be caught soon by our patrols."

"That will do you no good," countered Anders. "Listen to me! I have vials of the bleeding death with me. All of us, including your prisoner, are protected against it. If you do not surrender now I will break the vials and spread the disease through the ship. Even if you are rescued you will still die."

We could hear the angry arguments below deck. All of them had seen death from hemorrhagic disease in its new virulent form. It was a horrible sight even to a physician, and, to the uneducated soldiers, the thought of those purple mottled bodies with blood red eyes, retching and vomiting their lives away, must have been terrifying. The wrangling stopped and the senior officer called out.

"How do you plan to do this if we consent?"

"How many men have you?" Anders asked.

"We are twelve altogether."

"Then send up four men, including the other officer, unarmed. We will put them ashore where you can see them. The second time four more will go. The last time, you will come up and bring Lee Sung. If he is in reasonable condition you too will go. Otherwise you die."

"It is agreed. We come now."

There was no further trouble. Lee Sung had been beaten in the usual Korean fashion but he was so glad to be free he claimed he felt fine. The North Koreans disappeared quickly along the beach as if afraid we might shoot.

"We'd better get out of here

right now," said Lee Sung. "They can reach a good sized village north of here in an hour and give the alarm."

"All right," I agreed. "You take over."

He led us below and, after shifting some cargo, opened up a small space under the false deck, forward of the engine room. In it he had a powerful radio transmitter, a case containing two heavy machine guns with ammunition, and a few boxes of burp guns and grenades.

"I used to run guns to the guerrillas," he explained. "These may be very useful."

We set up the machine guns on deck and I felt better. By now we were running south at the full speed of the powerful engines, the two small junks towing behind, still manned and helping with their own engines. Sung had said we might need them when I suggested sinking them before we hauled up our anchor. I steered the course while he worked his radio, trying to raise his contacts and get help to us. It took some time but finally he came on deck smiling.

"I got them," he said. "We rendezvous with a destroyer off the coast tonight. It will escort us to Japan."

"What do we do in the meantime?"

"There is danger that the Communists picked up my signals and got a bearing. If the coast patrol or the jets don't see us we will be OK."

"What about our own jets? Can't we get fighter cover?"

"Only as a last resort . . . and it would probably be too late. The Air Force has been warned to avoid all incidents and they do not wish to fly close to the coast."

The sun was almost gone behind the hills of the steep Korean coast when the Red jets found us. They came out of the sun, as experienced fighters do, and the high whistle was already over us before we saw them.

"Migs!" I yelled and ran to the stern. "Cut loose! Spread out and head in to shore."

The little boats swung to starboard almost at once and wavered off like water beetles trying to dodge a dragon fly. Lee Sung was at the wheel again. He spun it sharply and the bow swung towards the shore. There was shelter in a narrow cleft between a rocky pinnacle and the cliffs of the mainland if we could reach it. We would have to chance the depth of the water. By now the jets were around again and peeling off for the attack. They were coming in low from the northwest this time as we were getting some protection from the

shoreline. I watched them come, feeling helpless without a weapon, ready to drop behind the mainmast when I saw the angle of flight. At the stern, Makstutis was lying flat, his helmet back on his head and his teeth bared as he squinted over the barrel of the heavy machine gun into the bright light. Beside him Kang was feeding the belts. Propped up against the side, Yip Kee braced his automatic rifle on the wooden rail and waited calmly. I swivelled around. Blackie and two others had the forward gun aimed and waiting. In the little junks, dropping rapidly astern, I saw that Kim and his men were already fighting. Their puny burp guns popped bravely at the two jets which, ignoring them as too small, were concentrating all their attention on us.

The leading jet grew larger, filling the sky with its round open face and stubby wings. The tracers from Makstutis' gun floated lazily upwards and then seemed to snap past, below the airplane, and wink out. Too low, I thought, and dropped flat as the Mig hit out at us. The ship heeled over, sliding like a runner for base as Sung clawed at the wheel. The screaming roar of the jet and the impact of cannon shells and bullets on wood went by me once, and then again as the second Mig swept overhead. I looked back. Makstutis was unhurt but Kang was rolling around clutching at his legs. I got up and ran to him. That last minute swerve and the sight of the tracers coming up had been enough to divert the pilot's aim. Perhaps the bumpy air currents of the cliffs helped. I thanked God as I ran that there were none of the new guided missile planes around. The shells had ploughed through the stern rail and ripped up the port side of the deck, missing the machine gun but catching Kang's legs.

I was down on my knees beside him for ten seconds. Probably fractures of both tibiae I estimated. No time for splints! I grabbed him by the collar and dragged him, moaning with pain, into the companionway where Anders had stuck up his head.

"Compound fractures, both legs," I screamed hoarsely. "Get him below and fix him up. They're coming back."

He scrambled up to the deck, picked up Kang with the broken legs dangling and staggered down the steps. I turned to go out but the roaring chattering horror was back. I dropped and slid down the stairs, careless of the bruises, the violent swerving of the boat throwing me off the companionway to the deck below.

I got back on deck. Makstutis

was still at his gun with Yip Kee feeding the belts to him. The forward crew had been hit. Two lay quietly, limbs sprawled out in a grotesque swastika. The third man, dripping blood from one arm, was trying desperately to lift the overturned gun. In the wheelhouse the windows had been shot out but, as I ran forward, I could see Lee Sung, his face bloodied by flying splinters, hunched gamely as he spun the wheel and sideslipped and twisted desperately for shelter. I reached the fallen machine gun and propped it up, the muzzle pointing high. The wounded man was Don Lim, younger brother of the man who had died in the gorge. My throat filled up tight. Blackie was dead!

"Can you feed the belts Don?" I gasped. He nodded and his bloody hands groped painfully for them, laying them flat. There was still a little time. I dragged the bodies of the dead men in front of the gun and piled the heavy fishing net I'd brought on top of them. Blackie wouldn't have minded, I thought . . . and it might help some. I dropped down beside him.

We were close in to shore now and the Migs had to come in straight over us from the north. They were very low, trying to get a longer time on the target. I pointed the barrel of the gun straight back towards them and canted it up as high as it would go. There was little hope of aiming at that speed. I ducked low behind the barrier. The roar of the first Mig deafened me as I held the bucking gun, my head almost flat on the deck. Something hit my helmet hard, the jerk knocking it back off my forehead and wrenching my neck. Vaguely I felt a ripping at my left heel and a burning of the flesh. The first roar was gone and then the second. I rolled over. There, shrinking to a toy behind us, the leading Mig was climbing steeply, smoke pouring from it as it tried to gain height. It slowed, stalled, and began to nose over. I saw the pilot bail out, the ejection seat shooting him away from the plane. He dropped and the parachute opened as the Mig, twisting and gliding out of control, smashed into the hillside.

I started to get up, howling with excitement, until I saw Lim slowly fall over beside me on to the smoking fish net. He had fainted from loss of blood, his arm almost amputated by that first wound. Only as I dragged him away from the net did I realize that it had stopped an incendiary shell and saved us both. I took off his belt and tightened it around the arm as a tourniquet. Before I left him I checked, but aside from wood splinters

off the deck he seemed to have no other injuries. Back at the stern I could see Anders working over Makstutis. He had fragments through his right arm but was still ready to fight. Yip Kee was exhausted and lame from his efforts but unhurt. I stood up to look for the other Mig. We were very close to shore now. Suddenly the junk lurched, scraped forward and stopped, throwing me against the rail. I pulled myself up again and looked around. We were grounded solidly between the rocky spur and the cliff. At least the Mig couldn't get at us now.

It didn't try. We heard it circle over the fallen parachute and then fly north. Lee Sung came back from the wheelhouse.

"We'll have to get out of here before a patrol boat finds us," he said. "It will be dark in half an hour. We can go in the small boats to find the destroyer."

The light was dim as we lowered the last wounded man into the small junks. We had smashed the radio after sending a final signal and then Lee Sung, his face impassive in the torchlight, placed a demolition charge on the engines and several more along the hull. I took a last look at Blackie and his buddy where we had laid them below decks. We pulled away, the engines chugging steadily. I looked at Makstutis and his face was wet. I was having a hard time myself.

In the afterglow the junk faded into the background as we drove straight away from the coast into a choppy sea, raised by the freshening wind. A momentary flash and a series of dull heavy thuds marked her end. I bent over Makstutis to adjust the bandage on his arm. He peered up at me.

"Doc, you've got holes in the head," he said and grinned.

I pulled off my helmet and looked at the neat bullet marks through the top. "Didn't let any sense in." I rubbed my sore scalp. It was only then I remembered my torn heel. I pulled off my boot and looked at it. It was only a small flesh wound.

"You and Achilles," Anders said and smiled.

"Yes, but he lost the fight. We've won."

CHAPTER 17

FASTEN your seat belts." The light flashed on in the passenger cabin of the Canadian Pacific Airlines jet. We were going down through the overcast. Vancouver was ten minutes away.

"Did you enjoy your flight, Colonel?" the stewardess asked me as she came by for a last minute check.

I smiled up at her. "The best part comes in ten minutes," I

said, "but it certainly has been fast."

Ten days previously we had been lifted out of the fishing boats by the crew of a U.S. Navy destroyer and taken to Okinawa. The casualties were admitted to the Army hospital for treatment and the rest of us, also at the hospital for observation, were given baths, clean uniforms and a meal. Everywhere we went we were kept under isolation precautions and we were guarded as carefully as a basket of over-ripe eggs that might break momentarily.

A week in isolation convinced the officials that we were free of the bleeding death. By that time too, we had been drained of our information.

"When can I go home?" I asked, the day we were informed of our release. "I've got a wife due to have a baby anytime. I'd like some emergency leave."

That night they put me on a Military Air Transportation Service flight out of Kadena Air Force Base to Japan where I picked up a seat on the CPA flight recently resumed for military purposes only.

As usual in Vancouver, it was dull, cool and sprinkling light rain, but I didn't care. I was home. I stepped down the ramp, limping slightly, and pushed through the barrier. It didn't take long for Customs to release me and then I was out in the waiting room, looking around for my wife. There was the Chief, coming for me with a big smile. I grabbed his hand, glad to see him.

"Where's Pat?"

"In the hospital, having that baby of yours." He laughed at my startled expression. "There's nothing to worry about."

"Nothing to worry about! My God! Let's get going!"

In the car we didn't talk much. At last he pulled into his own parking space at the Lab and turned to me.

"Get on over to the Labor Room and see Pat. I'll meet you up in my office later."

I almost ran to the big Maternity Building, close by, and stepped into the elevator. At the desk of Delivery, the nurse stood up in protest.

"I'm sorry. You can't come in here."

I explained hurriedly who I was.

"Why of course, Doctor," she said. "Here's a gown and mask . . . but hurry . . . she's well into the second stage now."

I pushed open the door of Delivery Room number three. The doctor looked around and his eyes widened in surprise above the mask as he recognized me. It was Ray Thorne.

"Pat, look who's here!" he said.

Her hair was wet and her upper lip moist from the strain and the warmth of the room. I bent over her and her eyes were big as she recognized me.

"Darling, you got here! You got here just in time!"

In that highly emotional moment she was not her usual stoical self. She began to cry. I dropped my mask. The hell with so-called sterile technique! These bugs were all in the family. I kissed her. She smiled even though a hard pain was beginning.

"Now it will be all right," she whispered.

I hung on to her hand and looked up at the mirror that pictured the other end of the delivery table.

"Push hard now," Ray said, as the baby's head came down. She strained and gasped, her face reddened with effort.

"OK, I've got it . . . easy now . . . easy now," Ray was saying.

Her mouth opened as if to scream but no sound came.

"Gently does it. Don't push any more."

She squeezed down on my hand and the nails bit into me. I stroked her head. Her body tensed with one last spasm and then I heard the suction going as the baby gasped. She loosened her grip and went limp.

"It's a boy . . . a boy!" Ray shouted, his eyes twinkling with pleasure over the mask as he held the child up by the feet. The sharp wail of my first-born son was loud in the room. I put my face down to Pat as she cried for joy.

Back in the Laboratory I passed by the offices until I came to the electron microscope room. Polly was busy setting up for a picture but turned at the noise.

"John, darling! Oh, I'm so happy to see you." She came over to me, put her hands on my shoulders and kissed me.

"Have you seen Pat yet? But of course you have. How is she? Has she had that baby yet?"

"Yes I have. She's doing fine. It's a boy."

"Wonderful!" she exclaimed, and kissed me again. "That's for good luck," she explained. "You three will make such a nice family." Her smile faded as the sun goes behind a cloud and for an instant her eyes, though still on my face, seemed to look far away beyond me into infinity.

"And what about you Polly?" I said quietly.

"Harry's dead!" she said abruptly, her mouth held firm to still the trembling of her chin.

"God! No!" I reached out and took her hands. "Polly!" I shook my head. I couldn't think of a thing to say. She took a deep breath and tried to relax, to shake off whatever terrible pic-

ture she had imagined of his ending.

"Pat tells me she wrote to you about Harry getting to the Chinese mainland," she said at last.

"Yes, I knew he was there but the last word I had before we dropped into Korea was that they were making good progress in their research."

"They were for a while," she said sadly, "but one day the Communists found out about it and threw a surprise attack at them. They were driven back to the beach and Harry was hit in the head with a piece of shrapnel. The Nationalists managed to get them away to Taiwan and they turned him over to the Americans. He died in Taipei."

"Do you know what killed him?" I asked.

"Some sort of fungus disease of the brain that entered through the wound. He was never fully conscious after he got hit. He didn't rally from the operation but just gradually weakened and died."

"How did you find out?"

"One of the officers who was with him on the mainland wrote to me."

She stopped talking and, in the silence, a dripping tap counted away the seconds. Her eyes were full of tears now.

"The thing that bothers me a whole lot," she said, "he died among strangers, all alone."

"He fought for freedom, Polly," I said. "He had company."

"I'm sorry John," she took my hand again. "I forget other people in my own selfish worries." She wiped away the tears. "Did you lose many men in your unit?"

"Eight killed out of thirty . . . and a few more wounded; one died of the bleeding death. We were lucky compared to some of the other Ranger teams I hear."

"We don't know much about these things," she said. "The papers talk of the hidden war in a vague sort of way but nobody has come right out with it yet."

"It won't be long now," I said grimly. "I think we've got them by the short hairs." I picked up an unopened morning paper lying on the table and looked at the headline. "There you are!" I showed it to her. "Revolt Rumored in Russia!"

She looked in silence and then got up. "Let's forget war for today. Let's celebrate your homecoming and the new baby. I'm going to get George right now and we'll all go over to see that baby and Pat and then take off for the rest of the day."

"Suits me fine," I said and followed her out the door.

Six months later it was over. It wasn't much of a revolution. The Russian people had had enough of disease and famine

and when the army turned over, almost to a man, to the rebels, the Reds folded up faster than the White Russians had in 1918. The United States was the only major power left in the world, in fact the only large population, since the measlepox and now the bleeding death had decimated much of Asia, Europe and South America, to say nothing of the sterilizing effects of the S-Flu. It would take months or years to eradicate all breeding places of these pests from the earth and when it was over there would be plenty of room for everybody; no more squabbles about territory; no more delusions of world empire; those who were left would be too busy trying to keep running what businesses and factories, ships and planes they already had, without wanting more.

This was a new world, a strange world full of problems. Better that the sorrows of the past be put away and a fresh beginning made.

THE END

STATEMENT REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AS AMENDED BY THE ACTS OF MARCH 3, 1933, JULY 2, 1946 AND JUNE 11, 1960 (74 STAT. 208) SHOWING THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION OF AMAZING STORIES, published monthly at Chicago, Illinois, for October 1, 1960.

1. The names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are:

Publisher, Ziff-Davis Publishing Company, 434 So. Wabash Ave., Chicago 5, Illinois.
Editor, Cele Goldsmith, 1 Park Avenue, New York 16, New York.
Business manager, Matthew T. Birmingham, Jr., 1 Park Avenue, New York 16, New York.

2. The owner is:

Ziff-Davis Publishing Company, 434 So. Wabash Avenue, Chicago 5, Illinois.
Estate of William B. Ziff, 1 Park Avenue, New York 16, New York;
A. M. Ziff, 1 Park Avenue, New York 16, New York.

3. The known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: None.

4. Paragraphs 2 and 3 include, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting; also the statements in the two paragraphs show the affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner.

5. The average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed, through the mails or otherwise, to paid subscribers during the 12 months preceding the date shown above was: (This information is required by the act of June 11, 1960 to be included in all statements regardless of frequency of issue.) 48,018.

MATTHEW T. BIRMINGHAM, JR.
(Business Manager)

[SEAL]

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 6th day of October, 1960.
WILLIAM PROEHMER, Notary Public

State of New York, No. 41-8446350—Queens County. Cert. filed in New York County.
(My commission expires March 30, 1962.)

VIOLETS ARE BLANU

By LESTER DEL REY

Here comes *Da mreni* again, this time with a fascinating—and sometimes fearful—glimpse into the language of the future, which, depending on how things go, may or may not be *blanu*.

ONCE upon a time, in the year 2500, two robots named Joe were walking down a quiet suburban street when a time capsule from 1973 popped into existence before them. A door opened and a fusty little man popped out to stare at them.

"Man," said Joe, "dig the threads on that crazy time buster! He's *way* back! Hey, daddy-o, when you from?"

But there was no answer. Ralph Roundhead had opened his mouth as if to speak. It stayed open, while the lips took on a faint bluish tint. The little man's eyes gradually crossed and turned inward. Then he shrieked once, fell to the ground, and went rapidly into terminal coma.

"He's flipped," the second Joe remarked.

Joe nodded, already bored with the whole business. "Yeah, man. Just another kuke!"

Of course, there's one minor error in that little story. Ralph Roundhead, inventor of the first time machine, wouldn't have gone crazy on hearing what sometimes passes for English from robot lips. That, after all, is no more insane than many of the extrapolations from current trends used to make modern science fiction backgrounds. Instead, our hero would have been either so stupid or so foolhardy in daring to face the problem of

future communication that nothing he found could have made any serious dent on his mind.

The unpleasant truth is that there is absolutely no way in which we can even make a good guess as to what will pass for the common language of the future. This has always been true, but in the last few years it has become even more of an insoluble problem. It was bad enough when languages and pronunciations changed by the natural erosion of time and when some minor act of history could upset all predictions. Such an event as the improbable defeat of the Spanish Armada, for instance, made an obscure language like English the leading speech of the world, instead of the much more probable French language.

But now men aren't content to get along with the thirty major languages and 1500 minor ones already spread across the world. Instead, hobbyists and serious scientists insist on building new languages to confound the nations. Some of them have even given serious thought to changing the whole basic idea of language in the hope of making daily speech conform to what they see as reality.

Some of these scientists contend that the language a man uses shapes his way of thinking, and that the only way in which we can hope to compete in a modern world is to change our thought habits by adopting a "language" related to mathematical formulae.

Twenty years ago, L. Sprague de Camp wrote an article in which he pointed out the difficulty of a time traveller in trying to prepare for speech with the future. But this article was based on the simplification that English would be spoken in some form, and all the traveller had to do was to guess how it would change. The answer then was that it was almost impossible to make such a guess, since the natural processes of change could produce so many weirdly ununderstandable results.

Suppose, however, that the traveller had to prepare to cope with the changes in a number of languages, any one of which might be the dominant speech of the future! Conceivably, Russia might get such a major jump on us in space travel that English would become a little backwater dialect. Or Chinese might be adopted on the basis that more people speak some dialect of it than any other national group. Hindu is still another logical possibility. It might become the lingua franca between east and west because of India's being the largest neutral in the battle of ideologies.

Then there are always the artificial languages. In the last few hundred years, literally hundreds of schemes for a true international language have been proposed, and many of them have gained a considerable following. The idea behind all of them is that all natural languages are too much complicated by irregularities and difficult grammars, and hence are too hard to learn. Also, no national language will be acceptable to other nations as an international speech because of the advantage it would give to the nation chosen.

On the other hand, say the popularizers of auxiliary languages, an artificial speech can be made sufficiently neutral and simple that it will be easy to learn and acceptable to all. In that case, why not pick one as a second language for everyone, and use it for all international traffic?

If such a plan were ever adopted, we can be pretty sure that it would eventually displace the natural languages. The proponents of the artificial language don't advocate this, of course, because of the prejudice that would be aroused among nationalists. But it seems obvious that a language spoken by everyone would eventually displace the local idioms. Certainly anyone writing an article or book would want the widest audience, and would use the universal speech, which would tend to remove all real importance from the national dialects.

So, added to the natural changes within a language and the unpredictable politics that could make many languages become dominant, there is another element of chaos. Now we have to contend with the possibility that any of hundreds of artificial languages may be chosen for the future, or that some new one will be cooked up along lines we can't possibly predict.

Of course, for a time, it seemed that Esperanto would be the language of the future. Science fiction fans and writers were particularly prone to take it for granted. It had a huge boom after World War I, and there were hundreds of Esperanto fanmags. World conventions were held, and all the trappings of s-f fandom were in use for the language. A lot of writers, including myself, gave lip service to the use of the language for future interplanetary colonies.

So, when the time traveller got out and asked in what year he was, it seemed logical to think that the answer would be something like this: "Chu vi ne parolas Esperante?" (Do you not speak esperantistically?) Of course,

there's a minor little trouble to the example. I had to misspell it, since the letter *C* at the beginning should have a circumflex over it and no following *H*. But no normal font of type in any major language has such a character. That seems a bit strange for a universal language, to say the least.

THE CONFLICT OF BOBEL

There were a lot of little difficulties to Esperanto that added up to many objections to it. In fact, while science fiction writers were talking about Esperanto, science writers were considering the use of a different artificial language known as Interlingua, which was basically a form of Latin without any of the horrible grammar that made the language hard to learn. The advantages were obvious. Most modern languages already have a heavy infusion of Latin—including even the Teutonic ones. Science has drawn heavily on Latin already, dating back to the time when the language was almost the universal speech of educated men. Hence, for most modern purposes, it has strong advantages and is actually easier to learn than Esperanto.

So this time our time traveller is asked: "Que te no loquo Latine?" It might not come out just like that, of course; there are already variations for the language suggested by various groups. But the differences are so slight that our traveller would have no trouble if he'd been clever enough to choose any one of the dialects to learn.

Another group, however, would strongly contest whether there was any chance for either Interlingua or Esperanto. True, this group will admit, Esperanto has a strong following of a few million; and Interlingua is already being used as a lingua franca for scientific and medical papers. But in several decades, neither has really become a going language. Yet there is one "universal" language which is even easier to learn and which is already understood by more than half a billion people!

That language, of course, is Basic English. It crept into science fiction through the writing of Robert A. Heinlein, who was a strong advocate of it. And the idea looked promising. Ogden and Richards, who wrote the leading book on semantics, were advocating it as not only a simple language but one of unusual semantic value—one having what Heinlein repeatedly claimed, a true epistemological rigor, or a strong relationship between word-symbol and thing described.

In this, English was stripped down to 850 words, of which only

sixteen were verbs. In the stripping, most of the difficulties of grammar were discarded naturally. Small and easily learned as the vocabulary was, it worked. A man who spoke fluent Basic could be understood easily on any subject wherever English was spoken. And unlike regular English, it could be learned by a foreigner in a few months of part-time study.

Imagine the delight of our hero when he gets out of his time ship and tries to communicate. This time, the man from the future grins and suggests, "Say it in Basic, my friend from the past."

The biggest trouble, however, is that our hero probably could *not* say it in Basic. It's easy enough for a foreigner to learn to speak the simplified but natural-sounding English; but for one who already is used to the rich jungle of normal English, the job of relearning everything in Basic is an extremely difficult one. Unlearning is always a lot harder than mastering a new thing.

TALK FUTURE!

Anyhow, all of these ideas are now old hat. No self-respecting science fiction writer will ever again fool around with any of the natural or the older artificial languages. They are with the dodo and the zeppelin, mere antiques. If you want to think future, it now seems you must learn to talk future!

There has been a long-standing argument on the effect of speech on thought, going back many centuries. One school has maintained that we think the way we do because we talk the way we do. Thus, we have words for good and evil, but no generally accepted words which might indicate a blending of the two properties, or an absence of either. We tend, therefore, to think of good guys and bad guys. We have a time structure—in the form of tenses—built into most languages, and our grasp of time is related to our terms. Or our languages tend to deal with arithmetic rather than calculus; we refer to a girl who is two years old, even though she'll be three tomorrow, instead of an expression which means between two and three, but almost at three, on the graph of time where zero is one limit and the other limit is not known, but where probability decreases asymptotically as time approaches a hundred years! For some strange reason, we haven't come up with expressions which condense all that into a few words! Such ideas can be expressed mathematically with a single cluster of characters, however.

You might say that a truly modern man cannot operate

properly until he has learned the new language of mathematics in which such conditions may be stated—and hence thought—properly.

The other school of thought on the subject of language has maintained that the way we speak is determined by the way we think. Most languages have a great deal in common—and any language can be translated into any other language with only a slight difference in meaning. It might seem then that the character of our speech, whatever its mode, was simply a reflection of the inherent nature of man's thinking.

Maybe both ideas are correct. Quite possibly, there has been an inherent way of thinking for all men, and that has bent all languages into basically the same form. Yet now we are moving into a type of civilization where the old, traditional way of thinking won't work. In a universe dealing with Einstein's relativity as a common idea, the old ways of talking and thinking simply won't stand up. Mathematics is a code which does meet the need, but which is singularly hard to talk (though Boolean algebra does deal with ideas and propositions as normal algebra deals with quantities). So it may be that in the future, men will have to break with tradition by making and using a language which will free their minds from built-in errors in current jargons, and let them handle ideas in more accurate ways.

ENTER 'LOGLAN'

It seems natural that the first answer to this need should come from a science fiction writer, and that happens to be the case. Dr. James Cooke Brown is professionally a social psychologist, but he has also written science fiction. Now, after five years of work at the University of Florida, he has come up with something that seems to blend his activities. It's a form of language which he has called Loglan—logical language—and it should be enough to make any time traveller do a few mental tailspins.

Of course, from a scientific point of view, it's merely an attempt to determine which of the schools of thought about the old think-talk controversy is true. By creating a new *type* of language, we should be able to test the effects of language on thought. He isn't advocating it as another universal language, exactly, but it's obvious that if it does have greater virtues than other speech, it might become such.

Even the words to be used in the new speech are at least picked in a quasi-scientific way.

Some older ideas for languages, like Solresol, used arbitrary lists, where no relation was made to any known language. But this makes it tremendously difficult to learn such languages. Esperanto probably caught on originally because most Europeans found many of the basic words enough like ones they knew to ease the learning problem. Interlingua makes use of our common heritage of Latin. But both of these seem to restrict themselves to words used by Romance and Teutonic languages, which is highly unfair to the rest of the world.

Loglan manages to become somewhat more universal, at least in theory. Two-thirds of the population of the world can understand one of eight major languages, including English, Chinese, Russian, Hindu and Spanish. Hence, these languages are searched for words that have some sound relationship. Thus under *blue*, from English, we find the German *blau*, French *bleu*, Russian *galuboi*, Chinese *lan*, Hindu *nila*, and Spanish *azul*. Does that look like a hard proposition, if you want a universal word? Think nothing of it.

From now on, violets are going to be described in Loglan as *blanu!*

You may have to hunt a bit for the relationship in the other words, but it is there. In most cases, either the major consonant grouping or the major vowel order of the original will appear in the Loglan word.

By careful hunting and ingenious combining, Loglan now has about a thousand of such universal words.

There is another advantage. All the words which we would consider nouns, adjectives, or adverbs made from adjectives are put together into a single class of things or attributes. Thus good and goodness can be treated as one term, having neither noun nor adjective form except through use in the sentence. All such words are given a five-letter form, beginning with a consonant and ending with a vowel. Other forms, usually much shorter, are used for connective words, and even for such needed vocal punctuation as quotation marks, to bring to spoken speech the useful tricks of the written language.

DOWN WITH GRAMMAR

It's apparently a combination of the virtues of the fully artificial languages and the natural ones. Grammar hardly exists, and such grammar as there is can even be spotted from the size and shape of the word. It also has a virtue shared with English and Chinese of requir-

ing a fairly small number of syllables for an idea-sentence. In the bustle of the modern age, many languages have already suffered from requiring too long to express an idea in polysyllabic words.

So far, however, it might only be another ingenious proposal to the massive ranks of international languages.

When we get into the way words are put together to make sense, however, we're off into a future land of Mathematica. English, like most languages, is pretty much a formalized system of roundabout and redundant statements of relationships, while the mathematical system is concise and direct. Loglan, therefore, follows the latter system.

Let's take an example. In English, there is nothing wrong with a statement like the following: *A man from the city of Omaha is a Nebraskan.* That's at least clear enough. But it's also a little silly, when you consider how much of it is wasted. We know that Omaha is a city, so we don't have to include the word *city* at all. And most of the rest of the words are just padding. All we need are the idea words, *man, Omaha* and *Nebraska.*

In mathematics, we would regard *man* as a variable—since he could be any man, or a man from any city, except as defined in our case. Omaha and Nebraska are fixed in meaning. So we'll write it out now as: $O(m)=N(m)$. This indicates that when a man has an attribute of Omahaism, he must have an attribute of being a Nebraskan. Incidentally, this is reduced to a much more normal form than would actually be written in mathematics, where other conventions would be used, but it will give the idea.

In Loglan, the idea would be something like this: *Da mreni ce Omaha u da mreni ce Nebraska.* This translates to approximately this: He of manlike properties, subclass of Omaha, implies he of manlike properties, subclass of Nebraska. I don't guarantee my Loglan or my English there, but that's about as close as I can approximate how it might be used. If you want to study the subject for yourself, more details are given in the June 1960 issue of *Scientific American,* which should be on the shelf of any science fiction writer or fan!

Essentially, the statements are the same, of course. But the relationships involved are far better untangled in the Loglan, provided the speaker has been completely retrained to look at things from the logic of mathematics.

ODE TO A LOGLAN URN?

At first thought, it might seem that nobody is going to make

the adjustment. After all, while English isn't perfect, it most certainly is adequate for things that mathematics won't even try to handle. Keats managed far better at getting the feeling of the Grecian urn than any mathematical analysis. Probably, Loglan could eventually achieve the same effect as the Ode, but who is going to spend the long and difficult period of learning to think all over again, except a bunch of experimenters trying to determine the effect of speech on thought?

However, it happens that there are already a large number of "brains" in the world to which such a method of statement would be the natural way of coding ideas. These, of course, are the computers. Human languages aren't very well suited for feeding information into computers, since such machines are built to handle the far more concise and rigorous methods of statement found in mathematics.

At the present time, one of the biggest problems is to find enough men who can take a problem and translate it into *Machine*, and then translate the answer back into English. If it weren't for the huge problem involved, there would already be far more computers in general use. In the future, this need must be met, because there definitely are going to be tremendous increases in the use of computers, not to mention robots.

The men who operate the machines and who have to learn to think in machine ways will find Loglan no strain at all. In fact, it might be that such men would prefer the new language, since it relates the human thoughts far more directly to those of machines, and should thus make it possible to convey even more ideas from life to the machines. Also, instead of having to punch long rolls of tape, it might be possible to talk directly in something like Loglan to mechanical ears capable of sorting out Loglan words. (There are no words here that sound alike but which have different meanings to confuse the issue.)

Oh, there are still difficulties. *Chair* is a pretty hard word to define to a machine, since some chairs have only one or two legs, like the tubular things used on porches; but a new language can get far closer to a one-to-one correspondence between symbol and reality than an emotionally colored language like English. Maybe we'll have to think up a word to indicate the property of having the primary purpose of permitting manlike objects to rest upon their derrieres instead of their feet to indicate "chair", but that can de done in Loglan. *Blanu* may mean blue, but that's still an inexact word. We need

some way of expressing colors in Angstrom units and in blends of such pure light frequencies. But the machines themselves will be the incentive, and a new language used only for them will permit changes.

A TONGUE FOR ROBOTS

So what we're really doing is to concoct a language suitable for robots. For that use, it must be a very logical, very exact speech. And it seems inevitable that such a speech will have great advantages in a machine culture such as ours.

As was pointed out quite correctly by Katherine MacLean in a story called *Incommunicado,* when men have to work day in and out with machines that must talk a superior language, they are going to begin using and thinking that language themselves, just as the primitives of the world had to begin trading in English.

Unless we can convey ideas as accurately, we most certainly can't compete with the robots we're going to build in the future. It isn't mere accident that we have already begun to develop new forms of speech at the same time we are getting into the mass production of computers. If the boys who believe that a mind can't think any better than the language it uses are right, we *have* to find new ways of saying and thinking things.

It's going to be a fantastic world, up there where men and robots are talking in one of the developments of Loglan. Describing a headache to a robot in terms of pain must be experienced—and the headache will be darned real before the ordeal is over. Poetry in *Machine,* where metaphor has been kicked out of the language, will be something to see, indeed. (Or are some of our *avant garde* poets with the "levels of meaning" already getting ready for that?) There won't even be puns to annoy and delight us.

But somehow, I wonder if it wouldn't be a good idea to go slow on switching from *blue* to *blanu.* Maybe, once we get rid of all our emotional biases, garnered from the century-old tradition of our language, we will all be supermen. But isn't it possible that we'll all be supermachines, instead? It seems that there is a good possibility that a man who thinks *in Machine* is going to think *like* a machine. Maybe I'm being reactionary. But I remember that such cyberneticists as Norbert Wiener, who first laid down the laws of robot thinking, have lately been issuing warnings that man had better go slow, or the robots will take over.

Machines can, after all, evolve

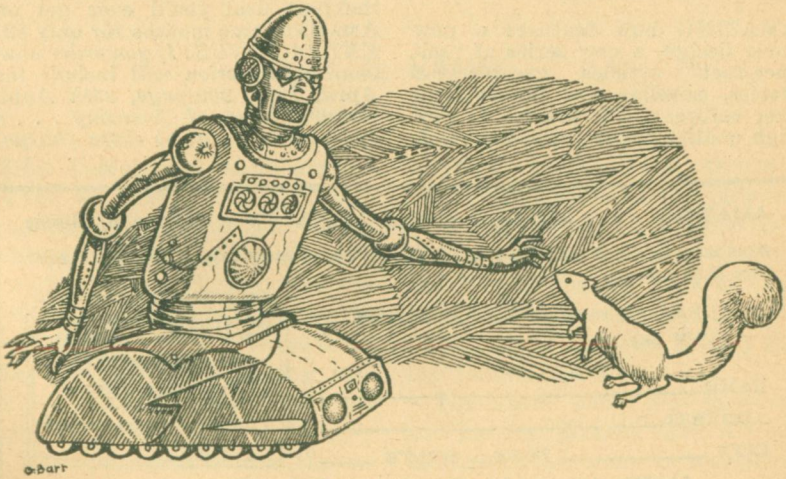
to fit the situation far faster than men. In any battle of minds where men and machines both think *Machine,* the faster-thinking, faster-evolving machines would have all the advantages.

F(x) is a nice mathematical expression, far more applicable to reality than many of the groping concepts of normal language. But it could be that F(x) may mean an X that marks the Failure of man before the hordes of superior Loglan-speaking robots.

After all, man hasn't done so badly with such natural languages as English. He managed to crack open the atom and the heavens above him with no better tool than the language that evolved naturally with him. And such natural languages have an ability to evolve with man's concepts, unlike what we can expect from any artificial speech we can create in the course of a few years against a single cultural frame of reference.

If our time traveller ever gets to the year 2500 to hear the two Joes talking jive argot, he can relax. Any future in which robots talk in a manner so totally based on the peculiarities of human thinking won't be a world where men are being beaten by machines. So long as robots imitate men, instead of the opposite, human time travellers needn't worry unduly about their safety.

But it may be wise for our hero Roundhead to stay inside his blue-painted machine and listen a bit before going out. Joe may point to Roundhead and say, *"Da mreni!"* **THE END**



He screamed once, falling face down through the stars, through the gold-inlaid, dizzying, beautiful, sickening . . .

Floor of Heaven

By T. D. HAMM

Illustrated by ADKINS

The three crew members of the Ad Astra looked at one another, grinning weakly, in the whispering silence after the motors had kicked off. This was the culminating point of a half-century of preparation; behind them was the satellite launching station—ahead of them, a faint red dot, was Mars.

Bryan, nominal head of the expedition, touched the shutter studs that opened their windows on the universe. They stood silently, the three of them; Bryan and Hughes looking back at the majesty of the retreating Earth —Williams, rigid with ecstasy at the forward port.

The stars were his passion and his joy. Women filled a momentary need, men he accepted

or rejected as they could help him to achieve his goal. Now, as as astrogator of the Ad Astra he had fulfilled his dream; and now before him Canopus, Rigel, Cassopeia and Aldebaran lay jewel-like on the dark velvet of space.

How stars had absorbed the thoughts of mankind since the beginning, he thought happily, and what dreams had the ancient Chaldeans known as they mapped the routes of the galleons of space? And the poets. . . . "See how the floor of Heaven is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold—" he quoted softly.

"My, that's pretty," Bryan said solemnly behind him. "Who said that?"

"Williams did—" returned Hughes equally dead-pan.

Williams flushed under their good-natured grins. "Shakespeare said it, you uneducated yokels," he said loftily. "How come you aren't cheating each other at gin rummy yet? Last I heard one of you owed the other a million dollars."

"It was only six hundred thousand, "Hughes grinned, "and I'm about to take him double or nothing!"

The weeks passed slowly. Barely audible, the computers ticked, keeping the ship on course. Bryan and Hughes wrangled amiably over their interminable card-games, throwing an occasional joking aside to Williams watching the stars, absorbed as a miser fingering his jewels.

Mars, from a minute speck, grew to a planet lying bloody in the cold rays of the distant sun. Strapped down in obedience to the computer-given signal, the ship reversed, fired its rockets and touched down on her supporting pillars of flame and became only a shining needle dwarfed in the immensity of the pinkish-red desert.

They looked at each other doubtfully, conscious of anti-climax. This was little different from the far reaches of the Gobi plateau where they had trained for weary, boring months. Bryan and Hughes drew the lots as the two to don their heated, protective suits and explore within cautious distance of the ship. Williams, restless and bored, watched their horseplay resentfully. Even the tenuous atmosphere of the dead world dimmed the splendor of the heavens; why didn't they hurry and get it over with? He shivered a little watching Bryan and Hughes trudging clumsily in the sand, throwing out a comment occasionally for the benefit of the tape recorder in the cabin.

"This is different from the deserts back home," Hughes said. "Back there you get the feeling they're just waiting for somebody to move in, but here . . ."

"It's more like a haunted house," Bryan finished for him. Williams, adjusting his headphones, was conscious of a deepening of his faint uneasiness—why didn't they hurry up and get back! All they really had to do was build a cairn and plant the Federation flag. They had found a few rocks and Bryan was stooping to bury the prepared canister with the data of the flight—

Williams watching incredulously as Bryan and Hughes reeled and staggered, was dimly conscious of a sudden faint tremor along the ship. There was an abrupt metallic shrieking in his headset, a background of thundering, grinding bedlam, and over it Bryan's voice frantic—

"Cave-in! Lift ship—*lift ship!*"

It had been the one constant in the shifting, nebulous mass of theory drilled into them. *They* were valuable—the *ship* was irreplaceable. With a last unbelieving look of horror at the gigantic crack widening under the very feet of his companions, Williams threw himself into the control seat and threw the lever over to "takeoff" position. The rockets fired and the ship rose majestically, the thousand foot fiery splendor of her trail blotting out the space-suited figures toppling into the thundering chasm.

Hours later, Williams pulled himself up, looking around dazedly. The motors had shut off and the great ship was coasting noiselessly along the return track; only the computers ticked steadily and the air-valves made a muted shushing in the silence. Funny he hadn't noticed the silence on the way out—sometimes he had even been irritated with the noise Bryan and Hughes had made with their eternal wrangling over their cards. Automatically he pushed the forward viewing plate button feeling the familiar sense of timeless peace as he looked out on the eternal suns.

Mechanically he ate and slept in the days that followed, dimly aware of a giggling, wild-eyed stranger in some remote corner of his mind, waiting to overtake him if he showed awareness of his presence. He pushed away too, the thought of Bryan and Hughes, forgetting in the sameness of his days that he had ever been anything but alone. At first he had cried a little in his lonesomeness, but as the weeks went on he remembered only that once there had been others who had deserted him. He nodded familiarly to the stars, smiling a little; there was only himself and them, shining steadfastly above him. They would never change—never desert him!

Time went by unnoticed. The green dot of Earth, became a glowing green and blue orb

circled by a tiny white dot. The computer changed its rhythm—above the control board the "strap-in" warning flashed unseen as the rockets fired swinging the ship into the turnover, ready for orbit with the satellite ferry station. Williams gazing with dreamy pleasure at the jewelled curtain above him was hurled against the port by the sudden surge of acceleration. The ship heeled over, twisted, then turned——

Williams hung head down, screaming, as the black curtain tore, the stars falling dizzily away—*below* him. . . .

A year later, the psychiatrists, quite pleased with themselves found him ready for duty again; not in Space of course, but the hero of the first Mars expedition was always sure of a job with Space Authority. Now he could even look up at the stars at night without screaming with vertigo.

Tonight walking confidently along the country road, fragrant and dotted with shining pools after the recent rain, he looked up thinking nostalgically, "the patines of bright gold. . . ."

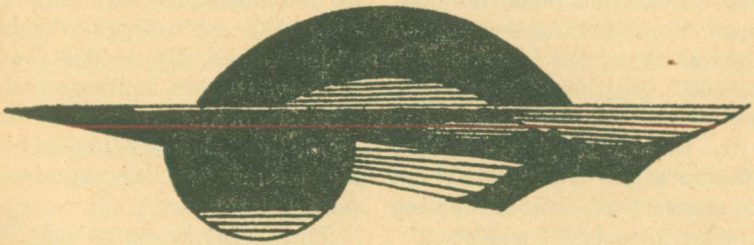
A coldness about his feet halted him. He looked down and once again the black curtain tore before his eyes—once more they were there, the cold unfriendly stars, swinging in the empty void—

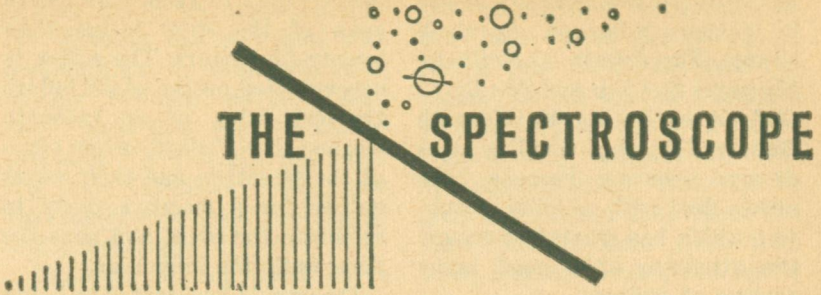
Below him.

Falling downward past the whirling suns, he screamed, hardly aware of the choking wetness in his lungs. . . .

About him the inch-deep shining pool rippled for a moment and was still, reflecting once more the floor of Heaven.

THE END





By S. E. COTTS

SCIENCE fiction and films were discussed recently in an interesting article in the *New York Herald Tribune*. Tribute was paid to some of the classic science fiction films of the past, both American and European. But the article also contains a few questionable opinions which I would like to take issue with briefly. The article states that recent space experiments have dated all but one-third of S-F literature. I won't even inquire as to the source of these amazing statistics, but I would like to say that the statement as a whole shows an astonishing ignorance of the current trends in science fiction writing. Later on, the article has a variation on this same theme and I quote . . . "Verne, who was long regarded as the dean of science fiction writers, has become almost hopelessly outdated as a seer, by virtue of the fact that so many of his predictions have come true." Now to say something is outdated means that it is so topical in interest as to be of no value to a later time. So this word 'outdated' has no validity when applied to excellent books by excellent writers. The quality of a piece of literature doesn't change with time, only the perspective of the reader. It gives a false impression to call Verne or any of the other 'old' masters dated. In our eyes, they may have changed from science 'fiction' to science 'history' but if they were good then they still are now. They are no more dated than books dealing with the opening of the American West or the climbing of Mt. Everest.

Odds and Ends—Robert Sheckley's novel, *Omega*, which appeared recently in AMAZING is already in book form. It has a new title, *The Status Civilization*, a Signet Book, 35¢, published by New American Library.

A recent Ace Double Book for 35¢ featured two mediocre novels by authors who can do much better—*The Games of Neith* by Margaret St. Clair and *The Earth Gods Are Coming* by Kenneth Bulmer. But this coupling does deserve mention because both novels deal with religion, a subject which has started to occupy the attention of a good many serious sf writers.

Also out recently, a Bantam Book (271 Madison Ave., N. Y. 16, N. Y.) by Harry Harrison called *Deathworld*, 35¢. There is no space for a full review, but for the record (and the readers) it is about a planet whose plants and animals are so deadly as to make life there a constant battle for survival, and about the stiff-necked pride that makes the inhabitants endure such miseries. Interesting idea but somewhat fuzzy in the unraveling.

There are two good purchases, recently made available for the collectors. One is a reprint, *The Time Traders*, by Andre Norton, Ace Books, 35¢. The other is *Best Stories of H. G. Wells*, Ballantine Books, 75¢.

THE PROJECT. *By Andrew Sinclair. 186 pp. Simon and Schuster. $3.50.*

Do not be deceived by the size of this book. True, it is under two hundred pages, but it packs within its slim binding the most constantly corrosive prose it has ever been my duty? privilege? misfortune? to read. The entire span of the story is less than twenty-four hours. The action is concentrated on the night before the test firing of an ultimate weapon, the Project, when some of the scientists and their wives gather for a macabre party to celebrate the event and pass the time until the launching.

One would be tempted to laugh at Mr. Sinclair were it not for the urgency of his theme—the paradox inherent in building weapons capable of destroying mankind as war deterrents in the name of peace. What could be laughable in anyone's treatment of such a subject you may ask? Well, it is this. Mr. Sinclair, in spite of the sheer virtuosity and brilliance of his writing, resembles a small boy who does everything in his power to draw attention to himself—stand on his head, say things designed to shock, try to hurt his little sister, etc. This then is Mr. Sinclair's way. He makes his characters so sick and psychotic a bunch as to make one wonder how they managed to stay out of a mental institution, much less head a top level project capable of destroying the world. He gives them tortuously involved thinking processes and infantile emotions while making them act out his mad charade whose symbolism is so thick and obvious it can be peeled off like paint.

All this one might stomach for the sake of the moral involved if it were not for the suspicion that Mr. Sinclair has only held this performance to draw attention to how 'brilliant' he is. "Look, see," each new page seems to proclaim, "how witty, how daring, how inventive I am, how vast my knowledge of philosophy and psychology."

What the author wants us to believe is that all this is done to show the peril of our present situation, to pose the question of whether all people engaged in such projects are not in some way warped. If he had done this he would be worthy of praise no matter what tactics he employed. But when one goes through to the end, one realizes that the so-called theme really isn't at the center of the author's interest at all. His only interest is in acting like a deity over the flimsy paper realm he has so disturbingly erected.

VENUS PLUS X. *By Theodore Sturgeon. 160 pp. Pyramid Books. Paper: 35¢.*

With the publication of *Venus Plus X*, Pyramid gets its promised program of "more and better science fiction" off to a banner start. For *Venus Plus X* is an absolutely genuine, original, not-reprinted-from-anywhere Ted Sturgeon novel!

In an author's postscript, Mr. Sturgeon says that his aim was to 1) write a decent novel 2) about sex. It seems to me that he has succeeded in both aims. In this book about the people of Ledom who are neither men nor women, he has treated a delicate subject fully, yet with a forthright honesty that bars any trace of sensationalism. But has he gone any further than those two aims? Has he done more than write a decent book about sex? I am sorry to report I don't think so. He has written an interesting book on a meaningful theme, but he has not written the 'great' book which past performance has shown he is more than capable of doing.

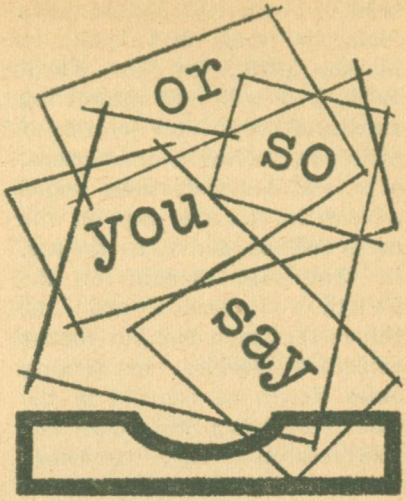
There are two threads intertwined here. One is the story of an Earthman, Charlie Johns, who finds himself among strange people on a strange planet. The development of his plight alternates with vignettes of life on Earth through the eyes of a young married couple. These Earth scenes are obviously meant to serve as a running commentary, not only on Earth life, but by contrast on that of Ledom, the strange planet. However, they only succeed in further mystifying the reader who is already confused by the lack of a real point of view toward the characters. Nor does the climax at the end help to clear the air much.

It is a book that should be read for its seriousness of purpose

and its shining moments, but unfortunately, these do not dominate the proceedings.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE SEA. *By Arthur C. Clarke. Illustrated by Alex Schomburg. 167 pp. Holt, Rinehart and Winston. $3.95.*

The constant excellence of Arthur Clarke's writing is almost taken for granted by now. Yet, with the publication of his latest book, *The Challenge of the Sea,* certainly he has reached a new level of achievement. Though the book is ostensibly written for young adults, any age can read it with pleasure because it's gold mine of information is communicated with infectious enthusiasm. The language used is a model of clarity; yet, one never has the feeling that Mr. Clarke is writing down or condescending. A bright child could easily understand it, yet an adult would not be bored by it. Upon a framework of provable fact, he hangs a glittering tracery of 'probably,' 'maybe,' 'might.' This is the sort of trick Alan Nourse unsuccessfully tried on a larger scale in his book, *Nine Planets,* reviewed here recently. This is a short book, and the author doesn't have time to go into any one phase of the sea too deeply, but he ignites the imagination so skillfully that the bulk of readers will probably beat a trail to the nearest library to delve more thoroughly into the subjects presented by Mr. Clarke.



Dear Editor:

Indubitably you shall be the recipient of much correspondence concerning the fruitful alterations that are occurring with increasing regularity in your magazine. I desire only to voice my opinions which, incidentally, are in favor of said modifications.

Considering the Finlay, Emsh, and Bernklau interior illos, I'm assuring myself that those artists will continue to frequent your publication. Don't disappoint me.

Dilatation of the editorial and book reviews department is appreciated. At last, Cotts is indulging in some, long overdue castigation. (Will miracles never cease?) Retain the two or three page editorial; this would also be relished by your numerous fans.

Glen Christianson
30012 Champine Dr.
St. Clair Shores, Michigan

• *Decidedly this fellow luxuriates in polysyllabic obfuscation.*

• *The following interchange of letters is printed here in the interests of both parties, and for the record.*

Dear Editor:

While Sam Moskowitz was busily quoted from Harold Hersey's memoirs in the 1954-55 issue of *Golden Atom*, why did he stop with precisely the incomplete statement which served his purpose? Why didn't he go ahead and quote what was more to the point, as far as actual history is concerned, where Harold Hersey, on page 68, wrote as follows:

"The evidence, in the case of 'The Thrill Book' vs. indifference and inaccuracy, is closed so far as I'm concerned. That it was the first of the science fiction magazines by seven years has been attested to *by all who have studied the matter* and by many who contributed to it and knew of what we had in mind, albeit we failed in doing the job as it should have been done."

That the *Thrill Book* was a science fiction magazine as the term has come to be accepted

today is unquestionable. To quote from its very first issue, in March, 1919, "In The Thrill Book, you will find interesting stories of every kind—stories of queer, psychological phenomena, of mystic demonstrations, weird adventures in the air, on the earth and sea, and under the sea, in that vast domain of the Fourth Dimension—and of things that men feel but cannot explain." Besides mentioning Jules Verne, as you did in the case of Amazing Stories, Hersey also goes on to say, "It seemed strange to us that after Edgar Allan Poe, DeMaupassant, Ambrose Bierce, O. Henry, Frank Norris and Rudyard Kipling made their reputations by the out-of-the-way story, no magazine came along and made the idea a fact."

Really, how far into science fiction *can* one go?

The real truth of the matter seems to be as was stated on page 37 of Golden Atom, in referring to Donald Day's ommission of The Thrill Book in his "Index to the Science-Fiction Magazines": "Alas, it also sustained the error of a great majority of collectors, who emphasize what they do have, (as should be human), and began its list with the date of the first issue of *Amazing Stories*, April, 1926, so often referred to as the first such magazine. However, considering the extreme rarity of *any* copies of the The Thrill Book, perhaps Don Day should be forgiven for what he did not have available for reference." It seems a human tendency to emphasize what one has and belittle what one lacks.

Larry (and Duverne Konrick) Farsace
Editors, Golden Atom
187 North Union St.
Rochester 5, N. Y.

● *And Mr. Moskowitz replies*:

The *Thrill Book* is a very rare magazine and few copies exist today. It was edited by Harold Hersey and Eugene Clancy for Street and Smith in 1919 and ran 16 issues. It was the *intention* of its editors to fill the issues entirely with fantasy and science fiction but they lost their nerve *before* the first issue appeared. In my book *The Immortal Storm* I said of it: "—the first to be devoted in a large part to the fantastic." That "large part" was rarely more than 50% and most of that was tales of ghosts, werewolves, hypnotists and mystics. The rest were westerns, sea stories, detective stories, mysteries, spy stories and straight adventure.

My definition of science fiction is as follows: "Science fiction is a branch of fantasy identifiable by the fact that it eases

the 'willing suspension of disbelief' on the part of its readers through insisting upon an atmosphere of scientific credibility for its imaginative speculations in science, space, time, sociology and philosophy." Under that definition it would be difficult to classify more than six stories in the 16 issues of Thrill Book.

Larry Farsace has been party to perpetrating a strange fraud in pretending that this magazine was a science fiction magazine and he is practically the only serious collector in the country who owns copies of *Thrill Book* occupying so untenable a position. Many indices of *Thrill Book* have appeared and are available for perusal, the finest of them by William H. Evans, a most outstanding fantasy bibliographical researcher, appeared in *Fantasy Commentator* for Fall, 1947. In that bibliography Evans gives a capsule review of *every story and poem* in *Thrill Book* and incontrovertibly concludes: "Contrary to most reports and impressions, T*he Thrill Book* definitely was not an all-fantasy magazine such as *Weird Tales* or *Amazing Stories*, but a general action pulp similar to the Munsey twins and other Street and Smith publications of the period. It published some fantasy, true, but also generous portions of nonfantasy."

It is Larry Farsace, himself, who is not honestly completing a quote in his excerpt from Harold Hersey's article which appeared in his amateur magazine *Golden Atom*. Had he done so, the following statement by Harold Hersey would have appeared: "We did dream of publishing what is now known as science fiction. But about all we did was dream."

Sam Moskowitz

Dear Editor:

Congratulations on the October issue of the "new" *Amazing Stories;* it's every bit as good as you promised it would be. The Schomburg cover surpasses most of the covers *Amazing* has sported during the past two years—a period when *Amazing* presented some of the finest cover illustrations in the science fiction field. And you're given us more and better interior illustrations. Needless to say, many of us have been hoping for this improvement for some time, and we thank you.

However, the meat of a science fiction magazine—the make-or-break factor—must of course lay in the quality of the stories; and from this standpoint *Amazing Stories* for October, 1960, is a memorable issue. Simak's "The Trouble With Tycho" presented a vivid and realistic view of man's future life on the Moon,

and J. F. Bone's "The Missionary" is a fine parable-piece that aptly substantiates your views that science fiction writers do guide and inspire us about the future. I'd say that a majority of science fiction stories written hold out to us a "Saul," in one form or another, in promise of future redemption; and as is not the case in a vast amount of our so-called "mainstream" fiction, most of our present day science fiction still favors the happy-ending stories.

As to the *Fact* portion of this issue, I'm sure your other readers will concur with me that Lester del Ray's article, "Homestead on Venus," was well-written and stimulating.

Bobby Gene Warner
5316 Old Cheney Highway
Orlando, Fla.

• *Herewith a blast at Clifford Simak, Isaac Newton, and The Deros, with a headpat for the slithy toves.*

Dear Editor:

I readily believe your assertion in the September issue that Clifford Simak's "Trouble with Tycho" was written especially for *Amazing*—since the story reads not like something *he* wanted to write, but like something *you* wanted him to write.

Obviously, "Tycho" did not compare with anything in the "City" series; more important, the story lacked even the prerequisites for something like a "City" story.

One could say justifiably that "City's" social reference is lacking in "Tycho"—but if you *insist*, there is the allusion (p. 54) to "men sitting in the Millville barber shop snapping their suspenders," which—to be impossibly pedantic—assumes the existence of: (1) suspenders, (2) gab-sessions at country barber-shops, and (3) suspender-snapping gab-sessions at country barber shops.

Simak's predilection for rural Midwestern scenes has been noted elsewhere—See A. J. Cox's "Rustic with a Cosmic Sense," *Shangri-La*, Jan. 1951—what matters here is that the associated social reference, instead of being an integral part of the story (as in *City*), is included only as part of the effort at "mood." "Tycho," one might say, was written in a sociological as well as an atmosphere vacuum.

Also relevant in this context is the writing of "Tycho" in the colloquial style, i.e., as spoken by one of the rustics in it. Certain of the "City" series, it is true, were written from the *viewpoint* of a rural character, but never *by* a rural character—and this difference is the difference between superior and merely acceptable writing.

Not only this: Simak's characterization was inconsistent. Brill's panic on p. 54 is hardly the type of conduct we'd expect of the "rough looking customer" described earlier on p. 28—and the author's remark about Brill's academic manner being just a "pose" is not enough to convince us. As Aristotle put it (*Poetics*, XV, 4), "Though the subject . . . be inconsistent, still he must be consistently inconsistent." And in the story Brill exhibits none of the erratic behavior which could prepare us for his "failure of nerve" at the end.

Actually, Brill's flight from the "diamond" was prompted not by his motivation as a character in the story, but by the author's wish to hasten the action. That is, Brill ran away so that he could be pursued by the diamond creatures, thus revealing to the two onlookers their perilous situation.

Overlooking some "loose ends" in the story—e.g., its lack of explanation for the diamond creatures' *selective* electrical sabotage—we can say that it lacks background, literary distinction, and plausibility. That Mr. Simak can do better is certain, since he already has done better.

Let me say that despite your editorial modesty—and despite my remarks on Simak, who *still* is one of my favorites—the present-day *Amazing* exceeds anything in its history.

Amazing's exploitation of the Dero, from '45 onward, must be discussed under the heading of Pathology, rather than Literary History; but before this, *Amazing's* longest consecutive period of distinctive writing was from '30 to '32—the Mechanical Renaissance, as opposed to Orlin Tremaine's later Mystic Renaissance. During this time, your magazine featured such writers as John Taine, William Lemkin, and John W. Campbell, Jr. The earlier *Amazing*, under Hugo Gernsback, from '26 to '29, was anti-scientific throughout the scientific world inhabited by its writers was not that of Plank's Quantum Mechanics or Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, but the world of Newtonian Mechanics, comprised of billiard-ball atoms bumping to-and-fro. And it was the resentment of Newtonian Mechanism that most strongly characterized the early *Amazing* story.

At no time in *Amazing's* history has there been a feeling of *excitement* equal to that derived from the present magazine. To paraphrase Eddington (in turn, quoting Lewis Carroll), we have a feeling of *something* going on, whose precise nature we cannot guess, as in "The slithy toves/ did gyre and gimble in the wabe." That this *something* is entirely sane—by contrasting to *Amazing's* last big innovation—can be

inferred from the conscientious efforts of its present editors.

Leland Sapiro
2613 Hillegass
Berkeley 4, Calif.

Dear Editor:

I have been an avid reader of *Amazing* for thirty years. For a good many of these years, those of us who were real sf fans were considered by most people to be at least a little strange. There is no doubt that we were in a better position to adapt ourselves to the world of the rocket and the fusion bomb.

I feel that in becoming respectable, we have lost a lot of our drive and this loss is reflected in a dearth of first rate stories.

We were pioneers . . . Let us be so again.

Our space program is moving much too slowly. I do not believe that it will be speeded up much by either this administration or a succeeding one. *Amazing Stories* should take the lead, the fans will follow. We could raise funds to speed our entry into space by popular subscription. I am sure that every fan would pledge ten dollars a year. Once the ball started to roll at least ninety percent of the heads of family in the entire nation would follow.

William W. Davies
P.O. Box 164
Howard Beach 14, N. Y.

● *Perhaps you are a bit over-optimistic. The political parties this past election had a tough time getting funds. A nation-wide campaign to "contribute to the party of your choice" fell on its face. If Americans won't give one dollar for their domestic election, will "90% of them" give ten times as much for Outer Space?*

Dear Editor:

My first reaction to the new logo and masthead was a mental debate on whether to send a telegram exemplifying my elation or sitting down to pound out a letter. I decided on the latter because the World SF Convention in Pittsburgh had rendered me without sufficient monetary resources for the services of Western-Union.

Coincidentally the Lester del Rey article was, to me, synonymous to a statement John W. Campbell, Jr., made at the convention. In reply to a heckler he stated that he used *speculative* science fact because it was the type that *Scientific American* would not touch. I'm sure Mr. del Rey was in a similar position in writing his article.

I can see that Mr. Campbell and now *Amazing* have turned to speculative science. Mr. Gernsback demanded science in his stories and the type stuff that he used is now largely fact. Science

fiction has been a vast source of entertaining prognostication. Science fiction *should and must* be the place for speculative science rather than plain text book facts. You have taken a significant step forward with *Amazing*. Please continue to maintain this.

At last! A meaty editorial and a comprehensive section of book reviews! The editorial is by far the most reasonable extrapolation of contact with aliens that I've come across in a long time. Beware, Utopian Universe—*Those Idiots From Earth* are coming.

Just one word about the letter column: Clay Hamlin has awakened me to reality; you are wise in disregarding the request for fanzine reviews. If the fans are energetic enough, contacts can easily be made through your letter column. I've contacted and recruited several newcomers to fandom that way and other fanzine editors could do likewise.

Bill Plott, Esq.
P. O. Box 654
Opelika, Alabama

• *If Mr. Campbell's magazine and ours are both considered to be running "Speculative Science," then perhaps we must use an underline to make a further differentiation. Can we, for example, say that Mr. C. prints "Speculative* Science" *while we print* "Speculative *Science"?*

Dear Editor:

This letter is addressed to the "lunkhead" who sponges his copies of *Amazing* from his next-door-neighbor. I don't believe he realizes the work that goes into a novel. Furthermore he doesn't give the author a chance to entertain him. If I were the editor I wouldn't waste my time or space on his dribble.

Changing the subject, I enjoyed reading your Omegan fantasy. I would like to ask a special favor of you. Could you run a reprint on the old Buck Rogers stories.

Robert Bell, Jr.
RR #3
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

• *For all you readers who have been asking for reprints of Burroughs and Buck Rogers and the other old-time greats, watch our pages for a major announcement—coming soon—that will surprise and please you all.*

Dear Editor:

Well, you really started off the "new" *Amazing* with a bang. An excellent novella by Simak, two better-than-average short stories (and one bad one), and an interesting but non-technical article by del Ray. The expanded editorial and Spectroscope are also appreciated, as was the cover, which was the most colorful, if not the best this year.

I'm certainly glad to see that you are going to start reprinting some of the old stories from the magazine. This idea started back in '58, I think, and there was quite a clamor for it in the lettercol. Why did you wait so long? Would the reprinting of a Burroughs story be asking too much?

It looks like you're going to start having serials regularly, and I'm 100% in favor of it. But how about finding somebody who can write a synopsis. Whoever wrote them for your last two serials obviously didn't read the first installment very carefully.

Michael Padgett
3230 Washington Road
Martinez, Georgia

• *Usually the Authors of the stories write their own synopses. You can't expect* them *to remember what they said, can you?*

Dear Editor:

Please, if it is not too late, advise Mr. Sheckley to rise and rebel.

The story, "Omega!" was so good I read both installments. Rather unusual, this, since I contend that few science fiction stories are worth any serial length. Few book lengths are worth their ink.

However, in "Omega!" the unexpressed story is even better than the worded story . . . in my humble opinion. I do not know if Sheckley intended it so, but the tale seemed to me an excellent portrait of alpha and omega trying to live separately and without the other letters which join the two as one alphabet. Or the positive and negative poles of a magnet being divorced from their connecting currents.

But the object of this frenzied letter is to stop the press before that story gets printed under the awful title "The Status Civilization". How can a Sheckley stand for that? First place, it sounds like a bunch of snakes hissing their disapproval. Second place, it doesn't tell the story, nor give the story the zip that the original title does. I am sure that whoever thought up that title, the SSSSSivilization, could easily think up a still more clumsy one.

If it is feared that the majority of modern readers do not know what Omega means, a little author's footnote could give enlightenment. Do I get any support for the idea of changing our "Alphabet" to "Alphaomega", or even to "Alphazed"?

Miles MacAlpin
7540½ S W. 51st
Portland, Oregon

• *Too late! The book is out, the evil deed is done! Not* our *fault!* Omega *was our* title.

SHOPPING GUIDE

Classified

Rate: 25¢ per word including name and address. Minimum 10 words. Send orders and remittance to AMAZING STORIES, One Park Avenue, New York City 16, New York. Attention Martin Lincoln.

BOOKS—MAGAZINES

FANTASY & SF Books & Mags lowest prices, list free. Werewolf Bookshop, 7055L Shannon Road, Verona, Pa.

BOOKS, Pocketbooks, magazines. Tremendous stock, reasonable prices. Lists on request. Science-Fiction and Fantasy Publications, 78-04 Jamaica Avenue, Woodhaven 21, N. Y.

SPECIALISTS: Science-Fiction, Fantasy, Weird Fiction Books, pocketbooks, magazines. Lists issued. Stephen's Book Service, 71 Third Avenue, New York 3, N. Y.

BACK Issues, science fiction, magazines and books. Pocket editions 5 for $1.15. Free Lists. John E. Koestner, 2124 Rene Ct., Brooklyn 37, New York.

"THE Approaching Catastrophe" fore—telling the end of our present epoch and the cause. Special Truth Research Bulletin presenting a new plan for peace-preservation. Both $1.00. Jane Schlee, Rt. 1, Box 46, Hermann, Mo.

HYPNOTISM

FREE Illustrated, Hypnotism Catalogue. Write: Powers, 8721 Sunset, Hollywood 46, California.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

MAKE $25-$50 week, clipping newspaper items for publishers. Some clippings worth $5.00 each. Particulars free. National, 81-DG, Knickerbocker Station, New York.

EARN Extra money selling advertising book matches. Free sample furnished. Matchcorp, Dept. MD-11, Chicago 32, Ill.

FREE Book "990 Successful, Little-Known Businesses". Work home! Plymouth—456M, Brooklyn 4, New York.

HELP WANTED

MERCHANT Marine jobs. Men and women. Top wages. Travel. Details 10¢. Captain, Box 501-AF, Reading, Massachusetts.

BINOCULARS - TELESCOPES

OPTICAL—Science—Math Bargains-Request Free giant catalog "CJ"-128 pages-Astronomical Telescopes, Microscopes, Lenses, Binoculars, Kits, Parts. Amazing War Surplus bargains. Edmund Scientific Co., Barrington, N. J.

AUTHORS

AUTHORS! Learn how to have your book published, promoted, distributed. Free booklet "ZD", Vantage, 120 West 31st, New York.

TAPES—RECORDERS

TAPE Recorders, Hi-Fi Components, Sleep-Learning Equipment, Tapes, Unusual Values. Free Catalog. Dressner, 69-02 MZ 174 St., Flushing 65, N. Y.

NEW Concept of Learning self-hypnosis! Now on tape or record! Free literature. McKinley-Smith Co., Dept. T-14, Box 3038, San Bernardino, Calif.

STAMPS

FREE! $1.00 worth, your choice, from first stamp selection. No strings! Adults only. Rush request now. Philatelics, Dept. EMG-F, New Poltz, N. Y.

GIGANTIC Collection Free! Includes triangles, early United States, animals, commemoratives. British Colonies, high value pictorials, etc. Complete collection plus big illustrated magazine all Free. Send 5¢ for postage. Gray Stamp Company, Dept. Z2, Toronto, Canada.

MERCHANDISE FOR SALE

FREE! Outstanding Shop By Mail Catalog! B&B Sales, Dept. 53, 2112 East Elm, New Albany, Indiana.

CONTESTS

WIN Contest money. General Contest Bulletin gives hundreds of tips. Magazine lists current contests, rules. Sample, 25¢. General Contests 1609-E, Fifth St. East, Duluth 12, Minn.

COLOR SLIDES

BEAUTY Queen Color Slides, Free listings, Slides, Box 384, Chicago 90.

PERSONALS

LOANS By Mail—$50 to $600 for any purpose. Confidential. 2 years to repay. Write for free loan application. American Loan Plan, City National Bldg., Dept. ZD-12220, Omaha, Neb.

EDITORIAL *(Continued from page 7)*

Granted the above few examples of various types of editorial restraints upon our pessimistic writers do not make any definite case for a charge of press censorship; however, such remarks are at least an indication of some kind of pressure in that direction for the past ten years. As science fiction, at least, is one of the few and effective outlets of social protest left to the writer, it seems to take note of such cases.

"Creeping censorship"—a censorship that starts, say, with handbills or forms of communication that "scarcely matter," is just as dangerous a form of press infringement as any other type. Maybe science fiction, as a communication form, "scarcely matter"; it is pulp trash for the most part, designed for the young mind that seeks escape. Why bother our heads about it? Or so goes a possible argument.

Well, what may be the significance of this trend of anti-pessimism of the 1950s and of these apparent restraints put upon the creative writer? History tells us that Plato, Stephen Gosson, Jermy Collier, and Adolf Hitler number among those who have doubted the instincts and the integrity of the artist in this very important business of reflecting the nature of society. History tells us, too, that it is best to let creative talent pretty much alone and the artist, himself, will in time correct any excesses of pessimism or optimism, morality or immorality.

Certainly there is much food for thought here. Another few paragraphs in this same essay bring up another subject which we will take up next month: How do editors of sf magazines decide what their readers want to read?

Printed in U.S.A.

OVER 1300 HI-FI COMPONENTS

at your fingertips in the

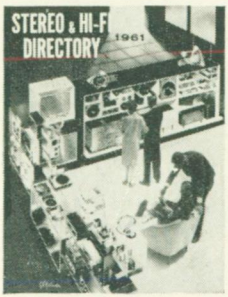
1961 STEREO & HI-FI DIRECTORY

The world's most comprehensive hi-fi reference gives you facts, data, prices, illustrations, performance analysis on virtually every piece of hi-fi equipment manufactured. Entire sections on:

TUNERS / RECORD PLAYERS / TAPE RECORDERS / CARTRIDGES / TONE ARMS / TURNTABLES / AMPLIFIERS / PREAMPS / LOUDSPEAKER SYSTEMS / RECORD CHANGERS / ENCLOSURES AND CABINETS

Now on sale at your newsstand or electronics parts store.

ONLY $1.00



Amazing stories
Fact and Science Fiction

IN THIS ISSUE

Fiction

Fact