CAPTAIN FUTURE
MAN OF TOMORROW

BEGINNING
THE ALIEN INTELLIGENCE
A Hall of Fame Classic
By JACK WILLIAMSON

SPRING ISSUE

FEATURING
OUTLAWS OF THE MOON
A Startling Complete Book-Length Novel
By EDMOND HAMILTON
"I RODE A JUGGERNAUT DOWN A CHUTE-THE-CHUTE!"

A true experience of L. S. VANDIVER, Laramie, Wyoming

"A WINDING RIBBON of glassy ice faced me as I nosed my big Diesel truck down Telephone Canyon, near Laramie, Wyoming, one dark winter night," writes Mr. Vandiver. "Behind me, on a twenty-eight foot trailer, rode 27,000 pounds of freight.

"WITHOUT WARNING, the lights went out! It was six miles to the bottom of the canyon... my left wheels were skirting a precipice... and those tons in back of me were shoving—and I mean shoving. It would have been suicide to use my brakes.

"I WAS SKIDDING TOWARDS ETERNITY when I remembered my flashlight. Its bright beam flooded the road ahead. Thanks to 'Eveready' fresh DATED batteries, I drove the six miles safely, saving not only my life, but the $12,000 truck and its 13½ ton cargo.

(Signed) L. S. Vandiver"

The word "Eveready" is a registered trade-mark of National Carbon Company, Inc.

FRESH BATTERIES LAST LONGER... Look for the DATE-LINE

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America Can't Wait
Industry needs you NOW

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There is a tremendous shortage of skilled men in almost all branches of industry. Draftsmen, electricians, machine designers, machinists, are wanted for good jobs at high pay. Executives too; foremen, superintendents, managers, are needed right now to handle the enormous demand for finished products of all kinds. If you are already in one of these fields, you owe it to your country, to your family, and to yourself to make yourself even more valuable, to climb and climb fast and help put through the most important program we have ever had to face.

Opportunities Everywhere

Home building, ship building, manufacturing plants, great utility projects, road building—everywhere you look you find a demand for men—not just ordinary workers, but men who know more than their fellows, who are better at their jobs, who know both theory and practice and can therefore train other men, thus rising to more and more important stations and being of greater and greater help. Practically every industry is included in those needing MEN, trained men, skilled men, men with ambition and punch.

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In bidding for skilled men now, industry of all kinds, everywhere in the United States is offering top pay. They want the best men and they are willing to pay for their services. But remember this, you only have opportunities for bigger pay if you are prepared to accept responsibilities. So the opportunities are even greater. Foremen, superintendents, factory managers, must be drawn from the ranks, and surely you know that the man who studies, who tries to know everything there is to know about his job will be picked first. Best of all, under the present training program, with the tremendous need for skilled men you don't have to look too far in the future for

Learn at Home

Over 40 years ago we developed a system of home study which has helped thousands of men to important positions in the mechanical and business world. Those of you who have missed college training, who haven't the time to go away to school, who must LEARN AS THEY EARN, can get education in your particular field right in your own home. Best of all, you can study when you have the time, and above everything else you will have the commendation and the respect of your employers in doing so. Best assured that every superintendent, every factory manager, every general manager will have his eye on the man who pushes forward, who recognizes the great need of the day, and who has made up his mind to be one of the first to make good.

Business Welcomes Applications from American School Advanced Students and Graduates

Whenever trained men have been badly needed, business has been quick to say, "We welcome applications from American School advanced students and graduates." We maintain an employment placement service to help put you in touch with the best openings, and we make no extra charge of any kind for this service. Write for an outline of home study training courses; check the coupon indicating your preference and mail it promptly.

Get the Facts

(No cost) All you have to do to find out about this type of training, to get the details and the outline of study, with histories of the successes of other men, is to write or send the coupon. There is no cost and no obligation of any kind. Let this great school, one of the pioneers in the home study field, explain the methods which can do so much for you. Get this information now so that you can make up your mind quickly to get started on the road to fulfillment of a real ambition, and so that you may be of the greatest possible help in this present emergency.

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Curt Newton Leads the Valiant Futuremen in the Thrilling Fight to Preserve a Priceless Lunar Heritage! Follow the World's Greatest Space-Farer, Captain Future, as He Embarks on the Most Perilous Exploits of His Career

OUTLAWS OF THE MOON

By EDMOND HAMILTON

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First Installment—Begin this Great Hall of Fame Classic Now!

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The Alien Intelligence

Dr. Bateson Delves to the Bottom of Evolutionary Research

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THE DUMMY THAT SAVED EARTH

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THE FUTURE OF CAPTAIN FUTURE

Special Features

Join THE FUTUREMEN, Our Nation-wide Club for Readers!

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Do You Want Success Like This in RADIO

Before completing your course I obtained my Radio Broadcast Operator's License and immediately joined Station WMPC where I am now chief operator.

HOLLIS F. HAYES
327 Madison St., Lapeer, Mich.

I was working in a garage when I enrolled with N.R.I. I am now Radio Service Manager for M—Furniture Co. for their 4 stores.

JAMES E. RYAN
119 Pebble Court, Fall River, Mass.

Clipping your coupon got me started in Radio. I am now in charge of the Radio Department for the American Airlines at Cleveland.

WALTER B. MURRAY
American Airlines, Municipal Airport, Cleveland, Ohio.

My loudspeaker system pays me about $35 a week besides my radio work. If it had not been for your course I would still be making common wages.

MILTON I. LEBBY JR.
Topton, Pa.

I have been in business for myself for two years, making between $200 and $300 a month. Business has steadily increased.

ARLIE J. FROEHNHER
800 W. Texas Ave.
Goose Creek, Tex.

I make $40 a month fixing radios in spare time. I started making extra money 3 months after beginning the N.R.I. course and made about $100 while learning.

WILLIAM CHERMAN
Rt. 1, Box 287
Hopkins, Minn.

Here's the Formula That Has Worked for Hundreds

If you're looking for a quick way to better pay, and a chance to get a good, permanent job in a field of real opportunity, here's the formula that has worked for the men you see above, and hundreds of others, too. It's not a "miracle cure" nor a "long-chance" operation. It is a tested, practical way to make $5 to $10 a week extra a few months from now, and to prepare for full-time job paying up to $50 a week as a Radio Technician or Radio Operator.

Beginners Train at Home to Make $30, $40, $50 a Week

On top of increasing civilian interest in Radio, the Radio Industry is rushing to fill hundreds of millions of dollars worth of Defense Orders. Over 800 broadcasting stations in the U.S. employ thousands of Radio Technicians and Radio Operators with average pay among the country's best paid industries. Radio Operators use set building, servicing, selling home and auto Receivers (there are more than 50,000,000 in use) gives jobs to thousands. Many other Radio Technicians take advantage of the opportunities to have their own service or sell Radio business. Think of the many good pay jobs in connection with AVIATION, COMMERCIAL, POLICE Radio and Public Address Systems. N. R. I. trains you to be ready when Television opens new jobs.

Extra Pay in Army, Navy, Too

Every man likely to go into military service, every soldier, sailor, mariner, should mail the Coupon Now! Learning Radio helps men get extra rank, extra prestige, more interesting duty at pay up to 6 times a private's base pay.

Many Make $5, $10 a Week Extra in Spare Time While Learning

Nearly every neighborhood offers opportunities for a good part-time Radio Technician to make extra money fixing Radio sets. Give you special training to show you how to start cashing in on these opportunities early. You get Radio parts and instructions for building test equipment, for conducting experiments that give you valuable practical experience. You also get a modern Professional Radio Servicing Instrument. My fifty-cent method-half working with Radio parts, half studying my lesson texts makes learning Radio at home interesting, fascinating, practical.

Find Out How I Train You For Good Pay in Radio

Mail the coupon below. I'll send my 64-page book FREE. It tells about my course: the types of jobs in the different branches of Radio; shows letters from more than 100 of the men I trained so you can see what they are doing, earning. MAIL THE COUPON in an envelope or paste on a penny postal.

J. E. Smith, President
Dept. 2009, National Radio Institute
Washington, D.C.

I Trained These Men at Home
I Will Train You Too

THIS FREE BOOK HAS SHOWN HUNDREDS HOW TO MAKE GOOD MONEY

J. E. Smith, President, Dept. 2009 National Radio Institute, Washington, D.C.

Mail me FREE without obligation, your 64-page book "Rich Rewards in Radio." (No salesman will call. Write plainly.)

Name
Address
City
State

Age

Would you give as little as 7c a day for Music Lessons?

Yes! That’s all it costs!

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THINK of it! For just about the few pennies you spend for your daily newspapers, YOU CAN LEARN MUSIC! You can learn to play your favorite musical instrument. Any instrument—piano, saxophone, violin, guitar, accordion, etc. What’s more, you can learn right in your own home, in spare time!

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“I DIDN’T dream I could actually learn to play without a teacher. ... I had always heard it couldn’t be done. You can imagine my surprise when after 3 or 4 weeks I found I could play real tunes. Now when I play people will hardly believe that I learned to play so well in so short a time. Any person who takes your piano course and studies it cannot help but learn to play.” —H. C. S., California.

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Find out about this easy, money-saving method at once. If you want to learn music but are hesitating because you may be drafted, we have made special provisions for those who are called. Mail coupon below for illustrated free booklet giving complete information on how you can learn to play any instrument in your own home. Free print and picture sample included. Instruments supplied when needed, cash or credit. U. S. School of Music, 2948 Brunswick Bldg., New York City. (Forty-Fourth year. Established 1868.)

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I am interested in music study, particularly in the instrument checked below. Please send me your free illustrated booklet, “How to Learn Music at Home,” and Free Print and Picture Sample.

Piano Violin Guitar Cello

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☐ Check here if under 16 years of age.

* Actual pupils’ names on request. Pictures by Professional Models.

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“I’ve always wanted to play the piano accordion,” writes H. E. from Canada. “But thought I’d never learn it. Then I read about your lessons. I don’t know how to express my satisfaction.”

AMAZED FRIENDS

“This course has been very interesting. Words cannot express how I have enjoyed it. My friends seem very much pleased with my playing; they can hardly believe I learned without a teacher.” —E. G., Atlanta, Ga.

Music is the magic key to friendship, fun, romance. The person who can play a musical instrument is always sure of a welcome. Why not let music open the door for you to a happier, richer life? Mail the coupon and find out how easily and inexpensively you can learn at home.

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NEVER before has there been as great an opportunity as now faces efficient bookkeepers and accountants.

You know, of course, that accounting has always been a profession of outstanding opportunity—a field in which the capable, trained man could go faster and farther than in almost any other field. But we believe that all past opportunities are going to be surpassed in the next five years.

And here's why:

In the first place, the defense situation has accelerated and complicated business. Hundreds of new plants, hundreds of others expanded, priorities, shortages of raw materials, some companies shifting to new products, and millions more men at work necessitate more bookkeeping and accounting—both by government bodies and by private industry.

Then our governmental policy forces the keeping of better and more complete records in every office and plant. It is not a matter of choice with any firm—it is necessity.

For instance Federal Securities Act, with its insistence upon publicity of complete facts about every company selling its securities publicly, compels more frequent and more accurate financial statements—and these in turn call for more and better accounting.

Then the Social Security tax, the unemployment regulations, the Wages and Hours Act, the Excess Profits tax and other taxes necessitated by national defense—all center around more complete accounting records.

Thus there is an insistent and growing demand for bookkeepers and accountants, a demand that already exceeds the supply and is still growing. This goes all the way along the line from routine bookkeepers to executive accountants. And it seems likely to increase much further.

Ask for the Facts

We need not tell you what that means in opportunity for the capable man already in accounting and for the able man who gets into accounting now. Nor need we argue for the practicality and value of LaSalle training in Accountancy—over 500,000 men and women, and 2,000 C. P. A.'s have already tested and proved that.

The only question is about you—whether you fit into this field and whether you can and will prepare yourself adequately. For accounting is no magic wand to summon success—it demands much from the man whom it rewards highly.

You can answer that question wisely only when you know the facts. And the coupon below will bring you full facts about these demands and opportunities in accounting today together with the details about the LaSalle home-study training in Accountancy.

If you are dissatisfied with your present situation—and in earnest about achieving success—get the facts—use the coupon—NOW.

I'd like to see whether I should take up accountancy. Send me, without obligation or cost to me, your booklet, Accountancy, the Profession That Pays, and full information about your Accountancy Training program.

LA SALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY
Dept. 3329-H, Chicago
A CORRESPONDENCE INSTITUTION

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- Business Management
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Address: ____________________________
INSURES PARENTS, CHILDREN (Married or Unmarried) BROTHERS, SISTERS and GRANDPARENTS . . . Ages 1 to 65

Now, modern life insurance methods make it possible for all of your family, including in-laws, to be insured in one policy paying guaranteed benefits for death from any cause.

Instead of issuing five or six policies to include mother, father, sons and daughters, even grandparents, we now issue just one policy that insures them all . . . and at one low cost price of only $1.00 a month.

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To guarantee payment on each death that occurs in your insured family, we have figured this policy out on the strict legal reserve basis, complying with State government requirements in every respect. This is your assurance of Cash When You Need It Most. Claims are paid at once . . . without argument or delay. State records verify our fair and just settlements.

Guarantee Reserve specializes in full family coverage, that's why we can offer safe, guaranteed life insurance on your whole family at one low price of only $1.00 a month.

NO MEDICAL EXAMINATION
To eliminate costly doctor fees, etc., we have eliminated Medical Examination. All people from age 1 to 65, in good health may be included in this new type Guarantee Reserve family policy. No membership fees, no examination fees, no policy fee . . . $1.00 a month pays for one policy that insures all.

RUSH—MAIL AT ONCE—DON'T DELAY
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GUARANTEE RESERVE BLDG., Dept. 17-C, Hammond Ind.

Gentlemen: Without obligation, please send me at once complete information on how to get your Family Life Policy for FREE inspection.

Name
Address
City State
How to Make YOUR Body Bring You FAME
...Instead of SHAME!

Will You Let Me Prove I Can Make You a New Man?

I KNOW what it means to have the kind of body that
people pity! Of course, you wouldn't know it to look at
me now, but I was once a skinny weakling who weighed
only 97 lbs! I was ashamed to strip for sports or un-
dress for a swim. I was such a poor specimen of physi-
cal development that I was constantly self-conscious and
embarrassed. And I felt only HALF-LIVE.

But later I discovered the secret that turned me into
"The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man." And
now I'd like to prove to you that the same system
can make a NEW MAN OF YOU!

What Dynamic Tension Will Do For You

I don't care how old or young you are or how ashamed of your present physical condition
you may be. If you can simply raise your arm
and flex it I can add SOLID MUSCLE to your biceps—yes, on each arm—in double-quick
time! Only 15 minutes a day—right in
your own home—is all the time I ask
of you! And there's no cost if I fail.

I can broaden your shoulder's, strengthen your back, develop your whole muscular system INSIDE and OUTSIDE! I can add inches to your chest, give you a vis-
like grip, make those legs of yours hit and powerful.
I can shoot new strength into your old backbone, ex-
cert those inner organs, help you cram your body so
full of pep, vigor and red-
blooded vitality that you won't feel there's even "standing
room" left for weakness and
that lazy feeling! Before I get through with you I'll have
your whole frame "measured" to
a nice new, beautiful suit of
muscle.

Only 15 Minutes A Day

No "ifs," "ands" or "butters." Just tell me where you want hands-
some, powerful muscles. Are you fat
and flabby? Or skinny and scrawny? Are you short-winded, peepless? Do your legs and arms feel wood?
off with the prettiest girls, best jobs, etc.? Then write for details
about "Dynamic Tension" and learn how I can make you a healthy, con-
dent, powerful HE-MAN.

"Dynamic Tension" is an entirely NATURAL method. Only 15 minutes of your spare time daily is enough to show amazing results—and it's actu-
ally fun. "Dynamic Tension" does the work.

"Dynamic Tension"! That's the ticket! The identical natural method
that I myself developed to change my body from the skinny, skinny-cheated weakling I was at 13 to present super-man physique! Thousands of
other fellows are becoming marvellous physical specimens—my way. I give
you no gadgets or contraptions to fool
with. When you have learned to de-
velop your strength through "Dynam-
ic Tension," you can laugh at artifi-
cial muscle-makers. You simply
utilize the DOMINANT muscle-power
in your own body—watch it increase
and multiply into real, solid LIVE
MUSCLE.

My method—"Dynamic Tension"—
will turn the trick for you. No theory
or snobbery or exercise is practical. And,
man, so easy! Spend only 15 minutes a
day in your own home. From the
very start you'll be using my method
of "Dynamic Tension" almost uncon-
scionable every minute of the day—
walking, bending over, etc.—to
BUILD MUSCLE and VITALITY.

FREE BOOK "Everlasting Health and Strength"

In it I talk to you in straight-from-
the-shoulder language. Packed with in-
spirational pictures of myself and pupils—fellow who
became NEW MEN in strength, my way. Let me show you what I helped THEM do. See what I can
do for YOU! For a real thrill, send for this book today.
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I want the proof that your system of "Dynamic Tension" will help make a New Man of me—give me a
healthy, husky body and big muscle development. Send me your free book: "Everlasting Health and Strength."

Name (Please print or write plainly)

Address

City State
WITH a thousand and one things to be done around here (Sergeant Saturn does the one) we don't even have time to eat, much less loaf around and chat with the boys at the various space ports. Speaking of eating, however, the old Sarge did get around to dinner one evening not so long ago with Malcolm Jameson (TIME COLUMN, THRILLING WONDER STORIES, December). Among other scientific projects, we discussed his new novel, TARNISHED UTOPIA, about a future world gone mad and using the Moon as a prison colony. We are going to hear stirring things from Malcolm in 1942. TARNISHED UTOPIA is in STARLING STORIES for March. 

Frank Belknap Long was in the control-room the other day. He had with him another Curator Carstairs yarn for THRILLING WONDER STORIES in his brief-case. After he lightened that cargo to the manuscript department, we pulled up a couple of chairs, loaded our pipes and started chewing the fat about a new story. You fans would like Long—a quiet-spoken and intelligent gentleman who looks a great deal like Anthony Eden. And guess what came out of the confab—and with no Xeno? Frank's going to do a novel about Carstairs and Vera in a space adventure that is going to make the rocket jets smolder. Hurry it up, Frank. We're waiting.

And here's a news flash on Author William Morrison. Morrison, who is a two and three-degree college man of Brooklyn, is going to do a few short detective yarns to sandwich in between his pseudo-sciences tales. If they pan out well, and you space railbirds like them, perhaps we can get a nice detective angle in some of his science stories.

To get to the chap of most importance in this particular magazine, Edmund Hamilton ran up to New York from his space lab down Pennsylvania way, and over a cold bird and a bottle—no, that's wrong. Over a cold bottle he told the old Sarge of a bird of an idea for Captain Future to start kicking around. And was it an idea! The old space dog was plenty thrilled with the premise, and—well, read the prognostication for yourselves in THE FUTURE OF CAPTAIN FUTURE in this issue. Good old Ed is down there in Pennsylvania right now beating his brains out on his typewriter while you birds are yapping about technical discrepancies, cover paintings, and the tone of this department.

Ah, look at them sillymen. Suppose we look at this letter situation in UNDER OBSERVATION analytically. Occa-

sionally some space traveler complains of the lack of adult gravity in the old Sarge's interpolations.

Therefore, it strikes me that while we are rocketing through a comparatively empty area of space we might try a sample of the mature and sober tone ardently desired by those of the intelligensia among us. So let's start going through the ethergram file in this more dignified vein and see how it works. Here goes, even including the tone of the headings.

THE FULLER LIFE
By Jack Addleman

Gentlemen: This is my first official report as a member of the Futuremen, so without further introductions I will get down to business. Here are my compliments and vice versa on Captain Future, etc.

First of all, no more time traveling and let's have more four dimensional stories. When your Worlds of Tomorrow have described all the planets, let's have the system's moons described.

On the cover of the Fall, 1941, issue is a picture captioned in Future, Joan, Otho and an ancient Martian or Katanian, as you probably know, but what I want to know is who drew it surely not Bergey.

Signing off now. Happy space traveling—

1321a Bacon St., St. Louis, Mo.

You will note that Pilot Addleman addresses his communique to the Futuremen and starts off with the salutation, "Gentlemen." We may have our private doubts as to whether Grag and Otho will grasp this innuendo, but it certainly lends a dignified tone to things, don't you think?

The body of Mr. Addleman's concise epistle covers a vast amount of territory in few words, too. He practically turns the Solar System inside out in one sentence. Would that some of you juvenile readers of verbose tendencies were as sparing of inconsequential chatter!

The dignified reference to the cover is particularly pertinent. He simply asks, as one gentleman to another, who drew the cover—surely not Bergey. Make your own deductions.

No, Mr. Addleman, Mr. Bergey did not. Artist George Rozen painted that canvas. And thank you for the inquiry.

I have here another communication of interest to our readers.

SUPERANNUATION
By William Ziegler

As soon as I got back from my vacation I bought the fall issue of CAPTAIN FUTURE. Congratulations! It was colossal! I was glad to see Joan Randall wasn't hanging around getting kidnapped or something.

"The Lost World of Time" will be, I hope, (Continued on page 12)
TRAIN THIS QUICK EASIER WAY FOR ELECTRICITY
12 Weeks Practical WORK IN MY CHICAGO SHOPS

DOES YOUR PRESENT JOB QUALIFY UNDER THESE 4 IMPORTANT RULES?

Don't be fooled by a "mere job." Does your present job offer you a permanent job and a future in good times and bad times? If it doesn't... If it is just a "job" because conditions are good today... It may not be a job when conditions slacken up again.

You should take an inventory of your prospects now...

Ask yourself these 4 important questions...

1. Does the field I'm in today offer me a permanent job and a future regardless of good or bad times? No. 2. Is the field I'm in a permanent one? No. 3. Is it growing and will it continue to grow in the years ahead? No. 4. Is it a field that will always exist?

If it doesn't qualify under these rules, now is the time to do something about it.

Electricity is a fast growing field. It qualifies under all these rules. It offers you your opportunity—if you will get ready for it.

I'LL FINANCE YOUR TRAINING

You can get this training first—then pay for it later in easy monthly payments, starting 60 days after your 12 weeks' training period is over—then you have 12 months to complete your payments

Send the coupon today for all details. When I get it I'll send you my big free book containing dozens of pictures of students at work in my shops. I'll also tell you about my "Pay-Tuition-After-Graduation" plan and how many earn while learning and how we help our students after graduation. Fill in, clip coupon, mail today for your copy. Start toward a brighter future.

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only one of the many branches you "Learn By Doing."

SEND FOR FREE BOOK

The Coyne Electrical School is 40 years old. Many hundreds of young men have become successful through Coyne training. My free book tells you how you, too, can get a training that will prepare you for a good job and a future.

H. C. LEWIS, President
COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL
500 S. Paulina Street, Dept 32-84, Chicago, Illinois

H. C. LEWIS, President, Coyne Electrical School,
500 S. Paulina Street, Dept 32-84, Chicago, Ill.

Dear Sir: Please send me free your big catalog and full particulars of your "Extra 4 Weeks' Course in Radio," also your "Pay-Tuition-After-Graduation" plan and all other features.

Name:...........................................................................
Address: ......................................................................
City: .................. State: ..............................................

Mail in envelope or paste on postcard.
UNDER OBSERVATION
(Continued from page 10)
admitted to the Hall of Fame. The planets and their beginnings were beautifully written up.
Speed up on your next issue. Here’s hoping you make it a monthly. Simplify the cover a little. There’s too much action on one page. Where did you pick up that—(censored)?—Sarge Saturn? He should be in an old folks’ home collecting his pension.
Best of luck for coming issues.—772 Forest Ave., Bronx, New York.

I am sorry to have deleted your entertaining remarks anent Sergeant Saturn, Mr. Ziegler, but they are not in keeping with the cultural tone of this department. Not to mention that they were downright un ladylike. Anyway, it is beneath my dignity to descend to Billingsgate, mule-skinner parlance, or Spacemen’s slingo in order to establish rapport with you.
In keeping with the genteel atmosphere and general air of pedantic refinement of this department, may I point out your undue familiarity in addressing the editor simply as “Ed”?
There, gentle reader, you have a taste of how a dignified Under Observation department is conducted. Gladly would I continue in this restrained vein—if you blasted space swabs would let me! How in the name of all the tailless space devils can the old space dog act like a college professor when the most of you dizzy monkeys slap me in the puss with stuff like this?

PERHAPS A ROCKET’S NECK?
By Thomas Brackett
I see you’re still guzzling Xeno. No, don’t stop. This pee-lot won’t be hard to handle as this is yours truly’s first hop outside of space.

Approved by Parents and Teachers!
flight schools. Well, by the ring-tailed Buzz-zones of Mercury's dark side, only one, mind you, one BEM on this ish's cover. Why does Belarski always have to have a violent action cover? Why not for this particular cover a space ship hurling toward the Moon? Oh, well. The lead novel, Sarge, was well up to par. But this rookie had a sort of pre-view of it in Joe Millard's article in a recent issue of another mag. Good.

Say, Sarge, why don't you mix apple jack with your Xeno? A swell drink. I've a jug on my desk right now. If you want, I'll ship you some by space express next issue.

Ah, a Hall of Fame story by Dr. David H. Keller. Very, very good. I mean "The Boneless Horror." In the recent STARTLING STORIES, STARTLING and CAPTAIN FUTURE are doing me a big favor by printing these classics of early science fiction.

The departmental work is okay. "The Ether Vibrates" mostly because of "ye old Sarge." Enlarge this department. "Thrills in Science" is very good, interesting and short. Fan mag reviews are very essential to me. Keep them up. You can drop "Science Questions and Answers."

Oh, yes, Sarge, slug Paul Cox for me. He asks why you don't use Bok. Please don't clutter up CAPTAIN FUTURE with Bok. Get Paul, Flanday and Orban. Rotate 'em, and there you'll have art's grandma. Which means good.

Well, I've discharged all my hot air cargo for this trip. — P. O. Box 514, Winnemucca, La.

In the first place, kiwi, how did you get hold of any of my Xeno? In the second place, I couldn't think of mixing anything with it. There's nothing weak enough to cut Xeno. In the third place, in some quarters they call a drink mixed with apple jack or apple cider a horse's neck. In space cafes I'm afraid the salty spacemen would get mixed up on their horse anatomy.

Anyway, you cut out the secret drinking until after you have received your astro-gator's license, first-class. Then, when you

(Continued on page 120)

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Action on Every Page!
CAPTAIN FUTURE is dead!

The rumbling voice of the big green Jovian space-sailor rose above the laughter and chatter and clink of goblets, in this crowded Venusopolis spacemen's café. He eyed his little knot of companions at the bar, as though challenging them to dispute him.

One of the hard-bitten spacemen, a swarthy little Mercurian, shook his head thoughtfully.

"I'm not so sure. It's true that the Futuremen have been missing for months. But they'd be a tough bunch to kill."

"I'll say they would!" chimed in a lanky, blue Saturnian rocketeer. "Why, Captain Future and those three queer pals of his knew the whole System like the back of your hand."

"Yes, but this time they went outside the System," rumbled the big Jov-
Curt Newton Leads His Valiant Band of Futuremen in the Thrilling Campaign to Preserve a Priceless Lunar Heritage!

ian. "Out into uncharted interstellar space, God knows for what reason. And they've never come back."

He drained his goblet of black Venusian swamp-grape wine, wiped his lips and delivered his final word.

"They'll never come back, now. Everybody's given up hope for them. Somewhere, somehow, they met their deaths out there among the stars."

*I***

"I tell you, Captain Future is dead!" Albert Wissler said with vehement emphasis to the pilot of the little space-cruiser, bearing the two Earthmen toward the Moon.

It was almost as though Wissler was trying to convince himself. The thin, middle-aged scientist had a faint uneasiness in his bony gray face and blinking eyes. As he sat there in the co-pilot's chair, his fingers were knotted together nervously in his lap.

"There's no danger in this with the Futuremen gone for good, Strike," he repeated to the pilot.

Gil Strike, the pilot, a hawk-eyed young fellow with a mean face, shifted
the space stick slightly before he answered.

"If those four devils did come back, and found us fooling around the Moon—" he began.

"Oh, you’re dodging shadows," retorted Wissler impatiently. "The Futuremen may have been something to fear when they were alive. But their ghosts can’t hurt us!"

"I still wish I hadn’t let you talk me into this," muttered the pilot, staring ahead with an uneasy frown.

Framed in the bridge window of their little craft, the Moon bulked big ahead. Most of its Earthward face was in shadow, but the western limb was a dazzling scimitar of light. Upon that narrow illuminated sector stood out boldly the black blot of the Mare Crisium and the towering ringed peaks of Langrenus and Petavius.

Their ship fell toward the shadowed sphere. This nighted face of the great satellite was bathed in an uncanny green glow. It came from the great green globe of Earth, hanging in the starry heavens overhead. The vernal descent light lent an added weirdness to the lunar landscape over which they flew.

The pilot’s hawklike eyes narrowed suddenly.

"Just what do you expect to find there that’s so valuable, Wissler?"

"I’ve told you—the scientific secrets of the Futuremen!" exclaimed Wissler. "Future wasn’t just a mere space-fighter and adventurer. He was a scientist, too, perhaps the greatest in the System. There’s been more than one rumor of his discoveries and inventions. If we found them—"

"We would appropriate the credit for them and get rich, eh?" said Strike sardonically. "Don’t spend the money yet, Wissler. I don’t see much chance of finding what you’re after, in all that."

His thumb jerked toward the lunar landscape over which they were flying. Fifty-miles below lay one of the wildest regions of the Moon, the tumbled, rocky wilderness of the great southwest crater region. In the green glow, the closely clustered craters were a forbidding spectacle.

And everywhere the lunar plains and deserts were cracked by deep fissures. It was known that far beneath them, the Moon was honeycombed by labyrinthine caverns and hollows caused by its unequal cooling ages ago. But daring men, who had attempted to explore the chasms on the surface of this dead world, had met death in the lunar landslides that were so fatally easy to cause.

Other early explorers, seeking to solve the baffling mystery of the perished Lunarian civilization, had themselves died on the glaring plains when their air supply became exhausted. The riddle of the Moon’s past seemed insoluble. There were apparently no valuable mineral deposits. So, from the earliest days of space travel, Earth’s wild satellite had been avoided and was still almost unvisited and unknown.

Strike muttered discouragement.

"The Futuremen would have their home here well hidden. No one has any idea where it’s located."

"We’ll find it," declared Albert Wissler.

He had brought a delicate-looking instrument from a case. It had a needle mounted on a quadrant.

"This is a radioscope," he told the pilot. "It’s extremely sensitive to the emanations of any radioactive substance. The thing is a recent invention."

Strike frowned.

"What’s the good of prospecting for radium here? Everyone knows there’s no radium on the Moon. Future himself said so."

"That’s just the point!" exclaimed Wissler. "There’s no natural radium deposit on the Moon. So if there’s any radium here, it must be in the Futuremen’s laboratory. They’d have some there for experiments."

Strike looked at him with more respect.

"I get it now," he muttered. "Wherever that instrument shows radium to be present, we’ll find the Moon laboratory?"
“That’s the idea,” nodded the thin scientist, blinking rapidly. “The radiograph is sensitive over a two-hundred-mile range. We’ll quarter back and forth over the surface till it shows something.”

He had brought a large Moon chart. Using it as a guide, the two men began their search of the lunar surface.

“How do you know Captain Future wouldn’t have rayproofed his place, so nobody could use this plan of yours to locate it?”

Wissler’s face fell.

“I hadn’t thought of that,” he admitted. “Maybe he did do that. But we’ll go on looking, anyway. We’ll try the other side.”

The little cruiser flew northward at steady velocity, over the green-lit wilderness of craters. Clear to the northern pole of the satellite they flew, without the radiograph needle stirring.

Strike turned the little ship and flew south again on a more easterly course. Over the giant ranges of the Caucasus and Appennines they sped, close past the towering ramparts of Copernicus, on southward until they had passed over Tycho’s numerous battlemented peaks.

Wissler had watched the radioscope with nervous intensity, but its needle had not once moved upon the quadrant.

“Your idea’s good—except it doesn’t work,” came Strike’s sour comment.

The pilot flew on southward past Tycho and they passed around to the other side of the Moon, the side that men had never seen until the beginning of space travel.

This other side lay bathed in the blazing glare of the full lunar day. Its peak and plains and craters reflected the intolerable brilliance of the unsoftened face of the Sun.

“Fly north and we’ll quarter over this side in the same way,” Wissler said doggedly.

But the result was negative. “Not a quiver of the needle,” murmured Wissler, blinking discouragedly at the radioscope.

“Your plan’s a washout—Future’s Moon laboratory must be rayproofed,” muttered Strike. He looked uneasily
across the scorching, savage wilderness. “Let’s get away from this devilish world!”

“Not yet,” pleaded Wissler. “There’s Great North Chasm ahead—let’s try it. The Moon laboratory might be hidden down in it.”

The tough young pilot’s uneasiness increased.

“I’m not going to fly down into that ghastly hole! I’ve heard old stories—”

“Just superstitious legends,” sniffed the scientist. “All right, fly over it from this height, if you’re scared.”

The greatest wonder of the Moon was coming into view ahead. From east to west, for eight hundred miles across the barren lunar plain, extended a colossal, yawning chasm. It was forty miles wide. Its sheer rock sides dropped down into a darkness of unguessable depths.

Twenty miles, Wissler knew, was the average depth of Great North Chasm. Its bottom was a realm of perpetual, freezing darkness. But long ago the first space pioneers had explored it, and had found in it those remnants of strange and ancient lunar civilization that had given rise to so many superstitious tales.

“Good Lord, look at that!” yelled Wissler suddenly, his eyes bulging at the radioscope.

The needle of the instrument had begun to jerk in ever more agitated fashion on its quadrant dial, as they flew toward the great canyon.

“That means radium somewhere down there ahead!” exclaimed Strike excitedly. “Then we’ve found the Moon laboratory’s location?”

“No—we haven’t,” blurted Albert Wissler, through lips stiff with amazement. “No small amount of radium such as Futures’ laboratory might contain could cause this on the radioscope!”

He stared at the pilot, his pale eyes blinking rapidly.

“Only a great natural deposit of radium down under the lunar crust could cause this!”

“Impossible!” exclaimed Strike, startled. “Captain Future himself always said there was no radium on the Moon.”

“Future said that, and made the System believe it, but he was either lying or didn’t know about this deposit!” Wissler cried.

His thin face was flushed with overpowering excitement.

“Start circling over the chasm—I’ll take directional readings to locate the deposit exactly.”

For almost two hours, the small space-cruiser droned in widening circles back and forth over the yawning blackness of the great canyon. Wissler feverishly noted each reading of the radioscope needle.

“That’s enough,” he breathed finally. “It won’t take me long to calculate it now.”

The pilot kept the cruiser circling idly on throttled rockets while Wissler made his excited calculations. Finally the scientist raised his head.

“One of the biggest radium ore deposits in the System’s history!” he choked. “But it’s deep under the lunar crust—more than fifty miles deep. There must be thousands of tons of it, to register so strongly.”

GIL STRIKE wet his lips.

“Thousands of tons?” he whispered. “Why, that much high-percent age radium ore would be worth billions!”

“More than that!” retorted Wissler exultantly. “This is the last big virgin radium deposit in the System. And all the planets are clamoring for more radium now, to provide even cheaper atomic power.”

Strike’s avid excitement faded.

“But what good will finding it do us? The System Government won’t let it be mined. They never give anybody a concession on the Moon, without Captain Future’s consent.”

“Ah, but Captain Future has been given up for dead now,” reminded Albert Wissler. “Beside, the people of the System aren’t going to have so high an opinion of Future when they learn of this radium he hoarded.”

The scientist’s blinking eyes gleamed.

“We’re going to take this discovery to Larsen King, the big planetary promoter. His corporation has power and influence. He’ll force a concession
for us out of the Government.”

The pilot frowned.

“Perhaps King could, but he’d cheat us out of our share. I’ve heard how ruthless and tricky he is.”

“Don’t worry, I’ll see that King doesn’t trick us,” Wissler assured him.

“And when his publicity machine gets through, the people of the System are going to have so low an opinion of the late Captain Future, the Government will be glad to throw the Moon open for exploitation.”

He flushed exultantly.

“Then we’ll not only share in the radium profits, we’ll also be able to search out Future’s Moon laboratory at leisure. Now hurry back to Earth, Strike, and we’ll start the ball rolling!”

The little cruiser darted up into the starry vault of space and roared urgently back toward the great, hanging globe of Earth.

The Moon brooded on in unbroken silence, unaware that a fateful, climatic chapter of its dark history had begun.

CHAPTER II

Star Rover’s Return

Far, far out beyond the limits of the Solar System, billions of miles out in the shoreless sea of space that stretches toward the fixed stars, a small ship was racing inward. It moved at a speed approaching the velocity of light, yet in these great deeps it seemed only to be crawling.

Tears stood in Curtis Newton’s eyes as he sat in the pilot-chair of the little Comet, gazing ahead at the bright yellow star of the Sun. He felt a warm, tremulous happiness that was choking. His tall, red-headed figure strained forward as though to go even faster. The glow of his quivering emotion lighted his tired brown face and haggard gray eyes.

“It looks so good,” he said unsteadily. “Just to see our own Sun again, after all these months—”

Months of danger and hardship were rushing through Captain Future’s memory now. Months in which he and his three comrades had quested beyond the stars themselves for a cosmic scientific secret.

They had risked the perils of uncharted outer space to find that secret, because it alone could make possible the supply of a new atmosphere to the withering little planet of Mercury. And they had found the secret! They were bringing back new life and hope for the System’s smallest world.

“It was worth all the toil and risks!” Curt Newton told the Futureman beside him. “Just for the blessedness of coming home again!”

Otho, who occupied the other chair in the little control room, exhaled a relieved sigh of agreement.

“I’ll say it is, Chief. I feel now like I’ll never want to go outside the System again!”

His heartfelt emotion was as human as Curt’s, even though Otho himself was not an ordinary human. For that matter, none of Captain Future’s three loyal Futuremen were completely human.

Otho was a man. But he had not been born of human parents. He had been created in the laboratory, long ago. A synthetic man—an android, showing that deep-buried strangeness only in the extraordinary litheness and speed of his rubbery white body, in the sensitive mobility of his colorless face, in the slant of his brilliant green eyes.

“I’ll bet the whole System’s wondering what happened to us!” he chuckled. “It’s been a long time. And we never did tell them just why we were going.”

Curt nodded thoughtfully.

“I thought it best not to raise the hopes of the people of Mercury. Though perhaps I should have told the President, and Ezra Gurney and Joan.”

The other two Futuremen were entering the control room. Two strange figures—stranger even than Otho—were Grag and the Brain.
Grag was a massive, manlike metal robot. A robot, not an automaton. His strength lay not wholly in his seven-foot body and mighty metal limbs. Behind the gleaming photoelectric eyes of his immobile face, inside his bulbous metal skull, was a sponge-metal brain of high intelligence.

The Brain was different. He was not a man, either. But once he had been a man. Once, long ago, he had been Simon Wright, brilliant, aging Earthman scientist. He had been about to die, when his living brain had been taken from his body and placed within the square, transparent serum-case that was now his body.

He could move that strange body at will, gliding upon magnetic traction beams. He could emit other tractor rays that served him as arms and hands. His microphone ears gave him the sense of hearing, and his lenslike glass eyes endowed him with keenest vision.

**THE FUTUREMEN — the three strangest individuals in the System!** To another man, they might have seemed frighteningly alien. But to Captain Future, they were the most loyal of comrades. Their differing capabilities dovetailed with his own brilliant intelligence and skilled strength, to make them the most formidable quartet of adventurers alive.

The Brain’s rasping, metallic voice asked a question.

“Shall we inform the System of our successful quest at once?”

“I want to get home first,” Curt Newton admitted, flexing tired shoulders. “It’ll be good to be back on the Moon again. Its loneliness and silence and peace are what we need.”

Curt felt familiar territory now. He drove the little ship between the planets with a skilled, sure hand in the following hours. Earth and the Moon grew at last into a gleaming, unbalanced dumbbell ahead. The bright face of the wild satellite was the focus of all four pairs of eyes. It tugged nostalgically at Captain Future’s heart. It had been his home all of his life.

Curt Newton had been born on the Moon. His father, a famous young scientist of Earth, had fled there with his bride and with the Brain for refuge from ruthless enemies. They had built their laboratory-home beneath Tycho crater. In it, their experiments had created Grag, the robot and Otho, the android. And in it, the young husband and wife had met tragic death soon after the birth of their son.

Cradled in the shadow of lonely lunar peaks, the orphaned infant had been guarded by the faithful robot, the android and the Brain. They had watched over and loved the growing boy. They had given him marvelous scientific education and training, which had fitted him superbly for the hazardous life of crusading space-adventure he had followed since manhood.

Softly, on throttled rockets, the Comet dropped toward the Moon. Half of its Earthward face was in shadow. The little ship scudded low over the peaks of the Taurus Range, heading southward toward Tycho.

“There’s the Moon laboratory!” Otho exclaimed, eagerly peering.

The Comet was slanting into Tycho crater. At the center of the great crater’s floor gleamed an almost unnoticeable crumb of glassite. It was the glassite ceiling window of the underground laboratory.

Curt dropped the little ship to a spot near the camouflaged window. Disguised doors automatically unfolded upward, to disclose a roomy underground hangar. He brought the ship to rest inside it. The doors closed, air hissed in. The Futuremen were home at last.

Curt Newton stretched mightily as they emerged from the ship.

“First I’m going to sleep a week,” he grinned tiredly. “Then I’m going to doze a while.”

“Sure is good to be home again,” rumbled Grag, as they strode along a subterranean passage from the hangar.

“I wonder where Eek is.”

They entered the main chamber of the Moon laboratory. It was a circular room of large size, illuminated by the flood of sunlight that came through the ceiling window. It was
Curt, Grag and Otho stumbled forward on the Sea of Glass almost blinded by the intense glare
crowded with the scientific paraphernalia of the Futuremen, with telescopes, spectrosopes and the like. This main laboratory was surrounded by a ring of smaller chambers.

But of one chamber scampered two queerly different little animals—the pets of the Futuremen. Oog, who was Otho's mascot, was a meteor mimic—a fat, doughy little white beast with strange powers. Eek, Grag's pet, was a moon-pup, a gray, bearlike little animal with chisel-like teeth and claws and bright, black eyes.

The moon-pup belonged to a species native to the Moon, the so-called Moon Dogs, which were almost the only known life on the dead satellite. Those fierce and much-feared Moon Dogs could exist on the airless world, for they did not breathe. Their strange bodies extracted nutriment from the metallic ores they dug for food, their bodies being of inorganic silicate flesh. They haunted certain gorges and mountains of the Moon.

Grag solicitously cuddled this little gray Moon Dog pup, which he had caught and tamed.

"Did you miss me, Eek?" the robot rumbled fondly.

Captain Future chuckled.

"Those little pests wouldn't miss you in a century, as long as their automatic feeding mechanism here kept functioning.

"That's not so," Grag said indignanty. "Eek gets lonely when—"

A bell rang sharply across the laboratory. Curt Newton stiffened at the sound.

"That's the ship-detector's alarm!" he exclaimed to the Brain.

He strode toward a tall mechanism in a corner, whose front was a panel of telltale dials. It was an ingenious device long ago installed by the Futuremen to give warning of any spaceship that approached the Moon.

Curt studied the intensity and directional dials with keen eyes. They indicated by an aura-effect, just where upon the Moon any ship landed.

"It shows two ships landing inside Great North Chasm, over on the other side of the Moon," Curt said, puzzled. "Now why in the world would any ship land there? Nothing's there but those old Lunarian ruins."

"Maybe some space pirates have planted a secret base there in the months we've been gone," suggested the Brain. "Remember, they tried it a couple of times before on this planet, and we had to run them out."

Curt nodded worriedly.

"I suppose we'll have to go over and look into it. Hang it, just when we've got home—"

"It's always the way," grunted Grag disappointedly. "Whenever we figure to get a rest, trouble raises its ugly head."

They were soon scudding back across the barren surface of the Moon in the Comet. They shot westward into the blaze of its sunlit face. Far ahead, the jagged white peaks around Thorson Crater towered against the black, star-dusted sky. Over the tremendous crater, the largest on the Moon, raced the ship of the Futuremen.

Upon the baking white desert beyond, the long black line of Great North Chasm extended east toward the Dragon Sea. Within a few minutes, the ship crossed above the rim of the gigantic canyon. The Futuremen peered down into its black maw. Far down in the tenebrous darkness, Captain Future saw a little cluster of lights.

"There's some kind of base down in here, all right," he said. "Funny, I'd have thought space pirates too superstitious about the North Chasm to use it as a secret base."

He started the Comet in a rapid descent into the black depths.

"Better stand by the proton guns," he said rapidly over his shoulder to Grag and Otho.

The depths of the chasm were a gloomy contrast to the sun-baked desert above. Sunlight never penetrated here, and only the thin starlight that sifted into the abyss showed the towering walls of jagged rock rising on either side.

Long ago when the Moon was young, the convulsive contraction of its cooling sphere had caused this gigantic split in its crust. This was the largest of the countless fissures
and cavernous spaces that honey-combed the satellite, but strong superstition clung to the monster crack.

"We're near the bottom — eighteen miles down," called Otho after a glance at the altimeter. "Say, look at that dome down there!"

"That isn't any pirate base," said the Brain sharply. "It's too big for that."

Curt Newton was amazedly surveying the scene below. He was staggered by the magnitude of the activity on the chasm's floor.

The canyon floor, forty miles in breadth from cliff to cliff, lay in freezing darkness that only the starlight faintly relieved. A few miles to the west vaguely glimmered the mysterious white ruins of ancient lunar civilization, which had invested this place with so many legends.

Enigmatic remnants of a perished race who long ago had inhabited the young Moon! What had they been like, those Lunarians of long ago? No one knew, now. It was believed that as their world withered, they had retreated into this great canyon, in which air might still have lingered, and had died here. Curt had more than once explored these puzzling ruins.

But now a little world of new life had sprung into being on the chasm floor near the ancient ruins. A huge glassite air-dome of three-thousand-foot diameter rested upon the rock floor. Inside the dome, blue-white krypton lights shed a strong illumination. The dome contained power stations, air-pump houses, supply shacks, barracks and offices.

These structures were grouped around a towering square edifice, clearly recognizable as the shaft-house of a vertical mine tunnel. Men in scores were coming and going busily around the building. And the four freighters which had preceded the Futuremen had landed amid other parked ships on the chasm floor near the dome.

"Why, that's a mining dome!" Grag exclaimed in astonishment. "They're mining here, on our Moon!"

Otho's green eyes flashed.

"Some greedy promoter has come sneaking in here while we were gone, prospecting for metals—"

"Prospecting for radium, you mean," rapped Curt Newton, his eyes troubled. "The location they picked for operations admits no other explanation. Somehow, they've learned of the radium deposit inside the Moon."

"And we kept that radium deposit a secret for so long!" exclaimed Otho. "How the devil did they learn about it?"

Curt was upset. He had himself long ago discovered the existence of the deep radium deposit, by sensitive instruments.

He had never tried to penetrate down to the radium so far beneath. For his chief desire had been to keep it secret, and he had not wanted to risk leaving a trail that would lead others to it. But now it had been found!

"They've no business mining on this world!" Grag was booming angrily. "We'll run them out and wreck their dome in double-quick time."

"Wait a minute, don't fly off your orbit," Curt interrupted. "These people are mining here illegally—the Government would never give them a Moon concession without our consent. When they learn that their operations are discovered, they'll get out quickly enough."

HE BROUGHT the Comet down to a landing on the chasm floor beside the four freighters. He and Otho slipped into their space-suits; neither Grag nor the Brain needed such protection. They strode toward the dome, found an automatic airlock entrance in its curved glassite wall. Passing through this into the air-filled dome, they looked indignantly around.

Before them lay a busy, noisy scene. The ceaseless droning of great cyclo-trons in the power stations was a monotonous undertone for the throbbing of air pumps, the rattle of metal trucks and the whirring of machinery in the towering shaft-house.

Captain Future saw a man outside a distant office structure apparently issuing orders to a group of workmen.
Future and his aides strode purposefully forward. Then came a yell of surprise and alarm from a passing Jovian miner, who had happened to glimpse the queer quartet.

The tall red-haired figure of Captain Future, leading the stalking metal robot, the fierce-eyed android and the gliding Brain, seemed to petrify the motley crew inside the dome with amazement.

"The Futuremen!" somebody shouted.

The thin, bony-faced man who had been giving orders turned and recoiled, appalled.

"The Futuremen—alive after all!" he muttered.

"Who are you?" Curt Newton demanded, his voice crackling.

"I'm Albert Wissler," faltered the other. "Superintendent of this lunar base of the King Planetary Metals Company."


"But we have a concession from the System Government!" cried Wissler feverishly. "It gives us full right to mine for the radium here."

"Don't lie to me," Captain Future rapped contemptuously. "The Government would never give you a concession on the Moon, and you know it."

For answer, the scared Wissler darted into the office building and returned with a document that he held out triumphantly.

Curt's face changed as he examined the paper. In it, the System Government conceded rights to mine all lunar radium deposits to Larsen King's Company. The concession was signed by James Carthew, the President.

"A cheap forgery," grunted Grag.

"No, Carthew's signature is genuine," said Curt in bewilderment. "I can't understand this."

Wissler regained confidence.

"You see, we've every right to mine here and you'd best not try to interfere with us," he began importantly.

Otho started furiously for him, but Curt stopped him.

"Wait, Otho!"

"Aren't we going to run this gang of greedy rascals off the Moon?" Otho cried, his slant green eyes blazing with fury.

"Not that way," Captain Future told him. "They must have got their concession by fraud. The President wouldn't ordinarily sign such a permit without consulting us. We're going to Earth and see him about this!"

Reluctantly, fiercely glaring back at Albert Wissler and the others, Otho and Grag followed Curt and Simon Wright back out to the Comet.

CHAPTER III

Tragedy on Earth

Like a falling meteor, the Comet screamed down through the atmosphere of Earth.

New York, seat of the Solar System Government, was on the daylight side of the planet. The clustered chromaloy towers of the metropolis caught and brilliantly reflected the Sun.

Curt steered down through the maze of interplanetary and local traffic toward the glittering pinnacle of Government Tower. This dominating spire was the center of authority for nine worlds and thirty-one moons. In it also was the general headquarters of the great Planet Police, whose swift, grim patrol cruisers enforced the law from Mercury to Neptune.

Curt landed skillfully on the little square deck atop the truncated tower. At once, he and the Futuremen started down the nearby stairs.

"We'll soon find out what's behind all this," Curt muttered.

They came down into the big suite of offices from which James Carthew, the System President, guided the destinies of nine great worlds.

Two men came toward them. One was North Bonnel, the young studious assistant to the President. The other man, of bulldog visage and formidable
looking in his dark uniform, was Halk Anders, chief of the far-flung Planet Police.

Captain Future felt sharp relief at sight of them.

"Bonnell! Halk! Did you think we were never coming back?"

North Bonnell answered slowly.

"We thought you were dead. But a little while ago, we received word from the Moon that you had returned."

Curt was astounded at the cold unfriendliness in their faces. They had ignored his outstretched hand. Halk Anders was frowning at him.

"Why, what's the matter with you two?" Curt Newton asked, thoroughly puzzled. "Aren't you glad to see us?"

"What do you want here?" demanded Halk Anders flatly.

It was like a slap in Curt's face. He was stunned by this hostile greeting from two old acquaintances with whom he had cooperated in more than one emergency.

"Why, I want to see the President," he said, bewildered. "But I don't understand—"

"President Carthew has been inspecting the Mercurian migration, and won't be back here until tonight," Anders said coldly.

"You can ask for an appointment with him in the regular manner," Bonnell told Curt indifferently.

Curt Newton was too dazed to speak. So were the Futuremen, with the exception of Otho. An oath ripped from the android's lips.

"Here's a cursed warm reception for us four you thought were dead! We come back to find the Moon overrun with miners operating by Government concession. And you tell us we can't even see the President!"

"Did you think we'd greet you like conquering heroes?" spat Halk Anders. "Now that the whole System knows the truth about you?"

"The truth? What truth?" cried Curt Newton. "What the devil are you talking about?"

Before the man could answer, two newcomers hastily entered the room. One was a grizzled, gray-haired man in the black Planet Police uniform.

The other was a dark-eyed, lovely girl. "Ezra Gurney! Joan!" exclaimed Captain Future. "Maybe you can tell me what this is all about."

JOAN RANDALL ran into his arms. Tears of joy glittered in her eyes as her soft face lifted to his. In this moment, she did not look like the cool, alert girl agent of the Planet Police who had shared more than one dangerous adventure with Curt New-

"Captain Future, I knew you'd come back!" she cried. "Everyone said you'd met death out there in interstellar space, but I knew you'd return some day!"

Ezra Gurney, veteran marshal of the Planet Police and another old comrade of the Futuremen, was pumping Curt's hand.

"I also said that nothin' could kill the Futuremen," he drawled, grinning in delight. "Grag, you an' Otho look perky as ever. What the devil were you four doin' out there all these months?"
Curt Newton's troubled face had softened for a moment as he kissed the eager girl. But now he discovered that North Bonnel and Halk Anders had left the room. The bewilderment came back into Captain Future's eyes.

"Joan! Ezra! What's happened?" he demanded tautly. "Bonnel and Halk were hostile, seemed to be accusing me of something—"

Gurney's faded blue eyes were grave.

"You'll find nearly everybody in the System unfriendly to you right now, Cap'n Future."

"It's a shame, the way people who owe you so much have turned against you!" exclaimed Joan, her fine eyes flaming with indignation.

Curt felt more and more amazed. Gurney took his arm.

"Come down to my office, Cap'n Future. I've plenty I want to tell you before the President gets back."

Ezra Gurney's small office was down in the Planet Police section of the great building. It was cluttered with worn atom-guns, old space charts, strange stone idol-heads from Saturn, Venusian swamp-bows and other souvenirs of the veteran marshal's years in the Space Patrol.

Curt sat down wearily in the chair the old veteran pushed out. Joan's dark eyes clung to his face, while the Futuremen gathered round.

"The man who's turned the whole System against you," drawled Ezra Gurney, "is Larsen King."

"King?" Curt Newton's eyes narrowed. "The promoter who got the concession on the Moon? How does it all hook up?"

Gurney's brows knit.

"You see, you fellows were gone so long in outer space that nearly everybody in the System figured you were dead. Because he thought that, a sneakin' little scientist by name of Albert Wissler went snoopin' around the Moon. He discovered that there's a big deposit of radium ore inside the Moon, an' he told Larsen King about it.

"Radium ores are in big demand all over the System, Cap'n Future. Usin' them ores for fuel instead of copper, the big atomic-power plants can produce power a lot cheaper. An' of course, everybody in the System wants cheap power.

"So the radium deposits of the nine worlds have been worked to the limit. This big Moon deposit would be worth billions now. Larsen King knew that, and asked the Government for a lunar concession to mine that deposit.

"President Carthew didn't want to grant King a concession. He told King that the Government didn't grant concessions on the Moon without askin' Captain Future's consent, on account of the Futuremen's past services. King claimed you Futuremen were dead anyway, but the President said that hadn't been proved yet. So Larsen King put pressure on the Government, by floodin' the whole System with liyin' telesisor propaganda."

"Broadcast: "This Moon radium would give all you people cheap power. But the President won't let it be mined without Captain Future's consent. But Captain Future, instead of being the hero you people thought, was tricking you all. He was selfishly hoarding all that Moon radium for himself, keeping it secret. Even if Future's alive—which isn't likely—why should he be consulted?"

Gurney's eyes were stormy.

"That's the propaganda King's company hammered away with, an' they kept up till most people believed it, Cap'n Future."

"So that's it," breathed Curt Newton. "They actually believe that I concealed the Moon radium's existence because I was hoarding it for myself!"

Ezra Gurney's gray head bobbed earnestly.

"Of course, Joan an' I knew you had some good reason for keepin' the radium a secret. But most people, even people like Halk Anders and North Bonnel, who ought've known better, were convinced. An' the popular feelin' against you brought such pressure on the Government that they had to grant King the lunar concession."

Curt Newton's tanned face had
grown dark with passionate resentment, and now his voice rang bitterly.

"The blind fools! Couldn’t they understand that it was not for ourselves that we were conserving that Moon radium? We concealed its existence because we knew the System would some day have dire need of untouched radium resources. We didn’t want that great deposit wasted on unnecessary cheap power projects by greedy exploiters!"

Joan Randall’s eyes lit up.

“So that’s why you kept the radium a secret—so that it could be conserved for the System’s future use. I knew it must be something like that.”

“Apparently you two are the only ones who did have faith in me” Curt said bitterly. His gray eyes were hot with anger. “We went into outer space through hardship and danger to secure a secret that would help the System peoples. And we come back with that secret—to find what?”

“Let’s wash our hands of the whole cursed System and go back out to some of those other star-systems to live!” Otho cried furiously.

“Now, wait,” Ezra Gurney begged. “I know you Futuremen are mad, an’ Lord knows you got reason to be. But not everybody thought the worst of you. I didn’t, an’ Joan didn’t, an’ neither did President Carthew.”

“Then why did the President let Larsen King have the lunar concession?” Captain Future demanded angrily.

“He was forced to by popular pressure on the System Council,” Gurney explained. “But I’m sure the President would revoke King’s concession, if you explained to him why you were secretly conserving that radium.”

A ray of hope shot across Curt Newton’s dark, strained face.

“If Carthew would cancel the concession before King’s miners actually reached the radium, no real harm would have been done,” he said slowly.

His anger began to cool.

“I shouldn’t have flown off my orbit the way I did. But we’ve been so tired in body and soul, and then to come back here to a reception like that—”

“It would be enough to make anybody explode!” Joan declared. Then: “Why don’t you get some sleep before the President returns?” she suggested earnestly. “He won’t be here for several hours, and you look ready to drop.”
Curt reluctantly obeyed her advice, and stretched out in a chair while Otho curled up in a corner. It had been many hours since either of them had rested. As he fell asleep, he heard Joan and Ezra Gurney talking in low voices to the Brain and Grag, who never slept.

A hand softly shaking his shoulder roused Curt. Night had come, and outside the window he glimpsed the marvelous vista of New York's brilliant towers silhouetted against the summer stars.

He rose, rubbing sleep from his eyes, and found that it was Joan who had awakened him. Her soft face was excited.

"President Carthew has returned!" she told him. "He's up in his office now, and Larsen King is with him."

Curt stiffened

"King? Then he must be afraid that I'll get them to revoke his concession."

"Yes, an' that sneakin' satellite of his, Albert Wissler, is with him," growled old Gurney.

"He must've come hurrying from the Moon."

When Curt Newton and the Futuremen, with their two friends, returned to the President's tower offices, they found both North Bonnel and Halk Anders still there. The unfriendly Planet Police chief frowned at them.

Larsen King was coming out of the President's office, with Albert Wissler and a hawk-eyed younger man with a mean and predatory face.

"That fellow's Gil Strike, one of King's new men," muttered Ezra Gurney. "He's been out at the Moon mine with Wissler."

Captain Future paid neither Strike nor the sneaking scientist any attention. He had stepped forward to confront King.

Larsen King coolly returned Curt's gaze. He was a big, aggressive man of forty, broad shouldered and bullet-headed. His black brows and coldly challenging eyes lent his brusque face a hard strength. He radiated self-confidence and consciousness of power.

"So you didn't die out there, Captain Future," he sneered. "I wonder that you had the nerve to come back to the System, after your selfish trickery had been exposed."

"Why, you lying fourflusher—" Grag exploded, his huge metal arms reaching as he plunged toward the promoter.

Albert Wissler recoiled with a squeak of terror, and Gil Strike snatched for a concealed weapon in his jacket. But King did not flinch.

"Hold it, Grag!" Curt ordered sharply. His voice was slow and bitter as his gray eyes bored into King's face. "I know your type, King. It's a type that would squander the life of the System itself for a filthy profit. I've dealt with men of your kind before."

"You seem to think you're still a hero to the System," Larsen King taunted. "You'll find out that's all over. Furthermore—"

Curt coldly brushed past him and entered the office of the President. He stood silent for a moment after he had closed the door.

"Captain Future!"

James Carthew, venerated President of the Solar System Government, rose to his feet behind his desk. He came across the room to Curt Newton.

Carthew's figure was stooped, his shoulders sagging, his hair gray. Crushing responsibility had aged him before his time. But in his fine face and tired eyes, there was warm understanding as he gripped Curt's hand.

"We feared you were dead, my boy. But I never quite believed it, any more than I believed the malicious slanders spread about you."

The tautness went out of Curt Newton's face.

"Thanks, sir. That means a lot to me," he said unsteadily.

Carthew led him over to a chair by the desk. It was a small, austere simple room. It was hard to believe that from it was guided the destiny of nine worlds. But though bare of ornament, its windows that were open to the summer night gave it a background of New York's splendor.

"Tell me where you have been all these months, my boy," Carthew insisted. "We'll talk later about this Moon radium business."
Carthew sat, listening intently and nodding quietly now and then as Curt Newton told of their long quest in outer space. At one point, the President straightened in astonishment.

"Do you mean to tell me you discovered on your trip the secret of creating matter out of cosmic radiation?"

"Yes, sir, we have," Curt replied. "The formula can create only small amounts of the heavier elements—there's too much distortion of cosmic radiation if you try to create heavy elements in quantity. But an unlimited supply of the lighter elements of air and water is available."

Incredulous relief shone in Carthew's eyes.

"Unlimited atmosphere can now be produced? Why, that means new life for fading Mercury!"

Curt's voice was earnest.

"But that radium deposit inside the Moon is even more important, sir. A day may come when the System will face a dire emergency, which could be solved only by use of that radium as a source of super-power. It must be conserved for such an emergency. It mustn't be squandered by exploiters."

"That's why, when we discovered its existence, we didn't try to dig down to it but kept it an utter secret."

"I thought that might be your reason," Carthew nodded. "But I couldn't convince the Council members. King's propaganda campaign had turned them against you. They insisted on granting the concession."

"But will you try to get the Council to revoke that concession?" Curt asked tensely.

"I'll try, and I feel sure that I can do it," Carthew promised. "This wonderful thing you have brought back for Mercury will certainly counteract King's vicious propaganda. Moreover—"

There came a sudden, incredible interruption. A glittering, buzzing object flew into the office from the open window. It looked like a little metal torpedo, two feet long, propelled by diminutive rocket-jets. In its prow was a glass electric-eye, and a pair of powerful jointed pincers like metal claws.

"A telautomaton!" exclaimed Curt Newton, leaping to his feet in alarm.

Curt had recognized the flying object. Telautomatons were self-propelled and guided by remote radio control. The operator of one could see to direct it by its electric-eye. Telautomatons had been designed for undersea salvage and similar jobs, but criminals often used them for theft and other low purposes.

The telautomaton was flashing with blurring speed toward Carthew's desk. Its large pincers grabbed up a heavy iridium vase on the desk. Holding the vase, it whizzed on through the air making toward the petrified President.

"Look out, sir!" cried Captain Future.

His proton-pistol had flashed into his hand. But before he could fire, it was too late. The hurtling telautomaton reached its goal. The iridium vase it clutched struck the head of President Carthew with shattering impact.

Carthew collapsed without a groan. In the same split second, the telautomaton dropped the crimsoned vase and streaked out of the window.

"Carthew!" yelled Curt in an agony of alarm, dashing forward to the prone figure behind the desk.

James Carthew lay face upward. His tired face was peaceful—more peaceful than it had been in life. The whole side of his skull had been crushed in by the terrific impact of the heavy vase.

Appalled, Curt Newton looked down at the pallid features. His first reaction was one of choking grief. It was the oldest friend of the Futuremen who lay dead here.

He heard the door burst open. Halk Anders, young Bonnel, Larsen King and others were bursting into the room. They stopped with exclamations of horror as they saw the prostrate figure and the blood-stained iridium vase beside it.

King's horrified cry came loudly in the frozen silence.

"Good heavens, Captain Future has killed the President!"
CHAPTER IV
Outlawed Futuremen

Curt Newton paid no attention to the accusation for the moment. He was rushing toward the window through which the murderous telautomaton had vanished. He peered out into the summer night. There was no sign of the deadly little mechanism. Its work done, it had been recalled at once by whoever operated it by remote control.

Larsen King pointed accusingly at him.

“You murdered the President because he had given my company a concession on the Moon, and wouldn’t revoke it!” he charged.

“You’re talking nonsense,” Captain Future rapped. “Carthew was going to revoke the concession. He’d just said so when a telautomaton flashed in through the window, seized that vase and struck him on the head, then disappeared.”

“So that’s your story, is it?” Halk Anders said grimly to Curt. “You maintain that a telautomaton did it?”

“It’s not just my story—it’s the truth,” Curt retorted. “You don’t doubt it, do you?”

To his amazement, Halk Anders shook his head.

“You may be telling the truth, Future. Or, on the other hand, you may not. It seems queer that if a telautomaton was used to kill the President, the mechanism utilized that vase to strike the blow. Why wasn’t it just flung right at Carthew’s head?”

North Bonnel, the dead President’s secretary and assistant, had stood until now with his studious young face dazed by grief. But now Bonnel seemed to have become aware of the controversy.

“Wait, we can soon prove whether or not it was Future who killed the President!” he exclaimed. “Every word said in this office, every sound, will be on the record of the Ear.”

“The Ear?” Larsen King demanded, frowning. “What’s that?”

“This office of the President,” Bonnel explained, “has a hidden supersensitive microphone called an Ear. It picks up and records on steel tape every word spoken in here. That is so that every one of the President’s conferences with officials will be on record.”

Curt Newton drew a breath of relief. For a moment it had looked as though suspicion would really rest on him. But the record of his conversation with the President would clear him.

“The recorder of the Ear is in my own office,” North Bonnel was saying agitatedly.

They all followed Bonnel back through the other offices into a contiguous room. The young secretary went to a secret panel in the wall. Opened, it disclosed a recording mechanism of the type that transcribed distant sounds electrically upon a moving steel tape.

Bonnel took the spool of tape out of the mechanism, placed it in a little boxlike instrument on his desk. He touched a switch.

“This spool will have recorded everything said in the President’s office this evening,” he said. “First, your talk with him, Mr. King.”

Voices issued from the little box. They were clearly recognizable as the voices of the murdered President and of Larsen King.

The colloquy was short. King expressed his anxiety lest the return of Captain Future endanger his Moon concession.

“You need not fear that, King,” Carthew answered. “The Government will not revoke your concession, now that it has been granted to you.”

Curt felt puzzled. This didn’t sound like Carthew. There was a short silence. Then the recorded transcription of his own talk with Carthew began to come from the unwinding steel tape.

Curt recognized his own voice. But to his amazement, it was saying things that he had never really said!
"What do you mean by giving King a concession to the Moon radium?" Curt heard himself angrily demanding. "That radium belongs to me!"

"It belongs to the System peoples, Captain Future," replied Carthew's voice. "You did wrong to hoard it secretly for your own selfish use."

Thunderstruck, Curt Newton heard his own voice storming on, reproaching the President for granting the concession, demanding its instant cancellation. And the voice of Carthew, angrily refusing.

In a flash, Curt understood. This Ear record was faked! It had been previously prepared by clever imitation of his and the President's voices. The phony transcription had been substituted for the real record.

Larsen King's work! King, knowing the President was about to revoke his concession, had planned this murder. He had had a confederate substitute the faked record, so that it would point to Curt Newton as the killer.

"You'll either cancel that concession or I'll kill you!" the imitation of Curt's voice was storming on the faked record.

"No, don't do that, Captain Future—Oh, God!" came the imitated voice of Carthew in appalled accents.

There was a crunching thud, then silence. The Ear record had come to an end.

Curt Newton spun fiercely around to expose the fiendish trick.

Halk Anders was covering him with his atom-pistol! The bulldog face of the Planet Police chief was dark and grim. And the face of young North Bonnel was appalled.

"Don't move, Future!" rapped Anders harshly. "You are under arrest for the murder of President Carthew."

"I still don't believe it!" flamed Joan Randall. "Captain Future never said things like that to the President!"

"Of course he didn't!" exclaimed Ezra Gurney disgustedly.

"That Ear record was faked," Curt said levelly to the Planet Police Chief. His eyes stabbed at Larsen King. "I know who faked it and planted it there. I know who killed the President by means of that telautomaton. Just give me a few hours to prove it, and I'll—"

Halk Anders laughed mirthlessly. "You'll get more than a few hours. You'll get a few weeks, down in our prison, until your trial."

Curt made his decision then. He wasn't going to let these misguided officials lock him away! It was better to risk life in an attempt to break away to freedom, for only if he were free could be possibly combat Larsen King's scheme.

Bonnel had gone to the audiophone on the desk, and was summoning a detail of officers from the Planet Police floor. Curt Newton flashed a glance at the Brain, Simon Wright. He was hovering unnoticed beside Grag in mid-air. The Brain's expressionless lens-eyes instantly caught the direction and meaning of Curt's glance at the atom-gun in Anders' hand.

The Brain acted! Hurling his square "body" of transparent metal through the air upon a sudden jet of traction beams, Simon Wright moved with such velocity that the eye could hardly follow.

He struck Halk Anders' right forearm with a sharp impact that sent the
atom-pistol of the Planet Police Chief flying from his hand. At the same moment, Captain Future drew his own proton-pistol.

He fired at the glowing krypton bulb in the office ceiling. The needle-like ray of protons shattered the bulb. The room was plunged in darkness.

"The Comet!" Curt yelled to the Futuremen in the dark. "Quick!"
"They're getting away!" bellowed Halk Anders furiously. "Grab them—turn in a general alarm!"

Curt, Grag and Otho were driving through the confusion and darkness toward the door. The mighty metal form of Grag brushed the others in the room aside like tenpins. They heard Simon Wright ahead of them.

Curt turned and called back into the dark, confusion-filled office.
"Ezra—Joan—we'll be back!"

They plunged down a softly lighted corridor, heading toward the stairs that led to the landing deck atop Government Tower.

Clang! Alarm bells were letting go all over the great building. Bonnel had found the alarm switch in the dark.

"Let's get out of here!" yelled Otho, his eyes blazing with excitement. His proton-gun had leaped into his hand.

"No shooting!" Captain Future rapped as they ran. "We're not going to endanger the lives of men who are only doing their duty."

They heard Halk Anders' yell behind them, the pound of running feet as a detail of dark-uniformed Planet Police started in pursuit. As they raced up the stairs, it seemed that the great building was a giant wasp's nest that they had stirred into fierce activity. Brazen throats of bells were clamoring deafeningly, and hoarse voices yelling.

They burst out on the little landing-deck where the parked Comet glittered under the stars. Tumbling into it, Curt jumped for the control room. The cyclotron started with a bursting roar, as Otho swung the door shut. Curt jammed down the cyclotron pedal and yanked back the space stick.

Pluming flame from its tail, the Comet slammed skyward. Curt sent the little ship screaming up over the mammoth pinnacles and lights of New York, recklessly arrowing up through the local traffic levels.

On the Comet climbed, straight into the stratosphere. Earth had dropped to a shadowed convexity beneath them. Overhead gleamed the silvery crescent of the Moon, a brilliant half disk.

Grag had turned on their television to the wavelength used by the Planet Police. The big robot called out abruptly in his booming voice.

"Listen to this, Chief?"
A hard, rapid voice was hammering from the televisior.

"All cruisers and stations of the Planet Patrol! Emergency Flash! President Carthew has just been murdered. Captain Future, accused of murder, has escaped custody. He and the Futuremen are breaking for space. They are hereby declared outlawed, and are to be taken at all costs!"

"They're calling up all the Patrol squadrons in this part of the System to net us," Curt gritted.

"Holy sun-imps, we're 'outlaws' now!" Otho exclaimed. His slant green eyes flashed. "They'll find us Futuremen the slippiest 'outlaws' they ever handled!"

They were out in clear space by now, the Comet streaking outward through the void with every rocket tube thundering. Looking back by means of the telescopic rear viewplate, Captain Future glimpsed a little swarm of tiny metal specks that followed them.

"GHQ Squadron of the Patrol is on our tail," he muttered. "But they can't overtake the Comet—it's the other squadrons that matter."

"Where are we going to head for?" Simon Wright asked coolly. "They'll surely have us cut off from the Moon already."

Curt nodded tensely.
"Yes, the Lunar Squadron will be strung out waiting for us," he said. "We'll have to break for outer space. There's a spot in Mars' southern
desert where we can hole up till the chase dies down. Then we can return and work secretly to uncover Larsen King's plot."

He held the racing ship on a course toward that sector of black space whose brightest star was the red dot of Mars. As time flashed by, a barrage of code signals streamed constantly from the televisor.

Then Curt glimpsed a thin swarm of metal specks in space ahead of them. They were fast cruisers, coming on in "space-sweep" formation.

"That's the Martian and Asteroidal Squadrons coming to meet us!" he exclaimed in dismay. "They've got us boxed—we're cut off from Mars!"

"Can't we get away by using the vibration drive?" cried Otho.

Curt shook his head grimly.

"It would be suicide to try to use the vibration drive's speeds inside the System. We're in a neat trap."

CHAPTER V

Slow Motion World

The Futuremen realized the full peril of their position. The Patrol had an efficient system for dealing with space pirates and other fugitives of the void. It's fast code signals could swiftly fling a net of heavily armed cruisers around any sector of space, by gathering together the cruising squadrons of that part of the System.

That was what had happened now. The Patrol squadrons had rapidly converged from a half-dozen different directions. It was now impossible for the ship of the Futuremen to slip through the tightening net, without discovery.

Grag uttered an angry bellow.

"They'll find it easier to box us than to keep us boxed! We can blast our way through them with the proton-guns."

"Calm down," Captain Future ad-

vised curtly. "We're going to try to get out of this—by skilful maneuvering, if possible. Don't use those guns."

"Even you can't slip out of this net by clever piloting, Chief," Grag protested anxiously. "They're just waiting for us to try to break a h e a d through them!"

He pointed agitatedly with his metal arm toward the distant swarm of cruisers ahead. They were coming on in a hemispherical, cuplike formation—the famous "space-sweep" strategy. The GHQ Squadron close behind the Comet was seeking to drive it into that cup.

Curt Newton grinned tautly.

"We can't get through that formation ahead, so we're going back—right through that squadron behind us."

Otho's jaw dropped.

"Devils of space! Maybe we could run back through them before they could gun us—they wouldn't be expecting that!"

"If we get back through them and give 'em the slip, where will we head for?" Grag asked. "For Venus?"

"No, for that's just what they would expect," Curt replied.

He pointed toward a tiny yellow speck that lay in space far back to the right.

"We'll hide out there on Eros till the hunt dies down."

"On Eros?" repeated Otho in dismay. "But nobody ever lands on that crazy little asteroid!"

"That's just why they won't think of looking for us there. Eros is our best chance," declared Captain Future. "Get ready, all of you. I'm going to let those cruisers almost overtake us, and then do a hairpin loop right back through 'em."

The brilliant stars of the abyss looked down upon this racing drama between worlds. The Patrol cruisers, spouting flame from every rocket tube in their sterns, began rapidly to overhaul the Comet as Curt deliberately reduced speed. He gripped the space stick tightly.

"Hold tight, all of you!" he gritted. "Here we go back over!"

Curt yanked the space stick back
into his lap. At the same time his foot jammed the cyclotron pedal to the floor.

The Comet stood on its tail in space as the full power of its raving cyclotrons was diverted into its keel rocket tubes. It roared back over in a hairpin loop no other pilot would attempt at such speed.

Curt Newton felt as though his brain were exploding from the pressure. His senses cleared enough to let him glimpse that they were rushing headlong back into the midst of the pursuing ships.

"Look out for a collision!" Otho yelled.

Patrol cruisers loomed up head-on in front of the Comet. Curt's lightning maneuver had taken the pursuers utterly by surprise.

He slammed the space stick side-ward and the Comet swerved to a blast of its lateral tubes, avoiding collision. They screamed straight back through the swarm of Patrol cruisers. Guns of a few cruisers let go with a startled, scattered fire, but the atom-shells went wide of their mark.

"We're through them!" shouted Otho. "Pony on that power, Chief!"

Curt kept the "cyc"-pedal to the floor. The Comet thundered Earthward at the highest speed of its rocket drive.

Captain Future glanced back. The squadron of Patrol cruisers was curving around to follow them. But the ships of the formation could not double back in a hairpin loop as Curt had done, lest they run into each other. They had to swing around in a broad curve, losing much time.

"Hah, they're finding out now they're not chasing clumsy space pirates!" exulted Grag's booming voice. "We're slipping them!"

The Comet was taking full advantage of the pursuers' loss of time. Streaking through space as though on wings of flame, it pulled out of even telescopic sight of the turning Patrol cruisers.

"Now we'll zoom for Eros," Captain Future declared, his gray eyes sparkling with excitement. "They'll be sure we're heading back across the System for Venus, and will comb space from here to that world."

They lost the swarms of Patrol cruisers that had been about to trap them. But Curt well knew that the squadrons would quickly reshape their plan, that all the System between here and Venus would be cracking with code to draw the net around them again.

He kept the Comet streaking at highest speed toward the yellow speck of Eros. The little asteroid, whose extraordinarily eccentric orbit brought it nearer Earth at times than any other body except the Moon, was at present a third of the way between Earth and Mars.

The asteroid presented an outlandish appearance as the ship of the Futuremen drew near it. It was almost the only world in the System that was not spherical in shape. The little planet had the oblong shape of a brick, and turned over and over in space as it followed its path.

"Look at it—it even looks wacky!" said Otho, staring in intense dislike. "Chief, can't we find some other hide-out than that crazy little flying brick?"

The Brain spoke up satisfactorily.

"I'm glad we're landing here. It'll give me another chance to study the peculiar Erosian gravitational field which causes that curious time-phenomenon."

Otho gave up.

"All right, take me there—what do I care? What have I got to live for, anyway? I might as well go crazy on Eros as die out in space."

Captain Future paid no attention to the android's grumbling. He was keenly surveying the little yellow, bricklike world as he approached.

Small as it was, Eros had a tiny satellite. It was a silvery object that circled the asteroid in a regular orbit. Curt only glanced at the object, which was now on the opposite side.

Eros grew into a large, yellowish bulk as the Comet dropped in toward it. Thin air whistled outside, for one of the marvels of this tiny world was the fact that it was able to hold an atmosphere.
Curt flew above the sunlit side of the oblong asteroid, keeping well away from the low black hills at its western end. He knew from his previous visit that those so-called Magnet Mountains could tear every atom of iron out of a ship that approached too closely.

They flew over a rolling plain covered with tawny grass, crossed above a river that flowed in a deep canyon around the asteroid, and then found themselves above a great forest of giant yellow growths that looked for all the world like exaggerated mushrooms.

"That's the eastern Fungus Forest," noted the Brain, his lenslike eyes peering closely. "The biggest Erosian town is just north of it."

Curt nodded.

"I remember. We'd better land by the town—and we'd better do it before that queer gravitation field starts affecting us."

He sent the Comet scudding down on throttled rockets over the crowded yellow fungi of the weird forest. At its northern edge lay a small town of pale stone structures, curiously minaretted edifices in which dwelt the human Erosians native to this little world. Captain Future landed the ship in the concealment of the towering fungi nearest this town.

"We'd better go into town and explain to the Erosians why we landed," he said quickly as he cut the cyclotrons. "They don't much like visitors if you remember."

"Now it begins!" groaned Otho gloomily as they emerged from the ship. "In about ten minutes, that magnetic gravitation field will start affecting our bodies like it did on our last trip, and we'll go screwy again."

Captain Future led the way, his tall, red-haired figure striding through the thin, warm air and dappled sunlight and shade of the strange fungus forest. He looked up anxiously, but saw no ships in the brassy sky.

The fact strengthened his confidence that their pursuers had been thrown off the trail. The Patrol would not give Eros a second glance, for the most intrepid spacemen avoided it like the plague. The squadrons would assume that they were making for Venus, to hide in the great swamps.

A few minutes later the Futuremen entered the little town of minaretted buildings. There were scores of Erosians in its streets. These yellow-skinned men, women and children all wore dark, close-fitting garments not unlike the black zipper-suits of Captain Future and Otho.

But all these yellow people looked like living statues. They seemed—frozen. In all the throng, there seemed not a single movement. Here a man striding along with a burden stood with one foot raised for the next step. Here stood two wrinkled old men who appeared to be conversing, one with an arm frozenly raised to emphasize his soundless speech. Nearby, children who seemed to be chasing each other were frozen in vivid tableau.

It looked for all the world as...
though a strange doom had stricken all these people, petrifying them instantaneously. The spectacle was uncanny even to the Futuremen, who had seen it before.

"It gives me the creeps," Otho murmured in strong distaste. "Like being in a city of the dead."

"They're as alive as we are," Curt retorted. "They just live slower."

"I'll say they do—a hundred times slower," Otho muttered.

These yellow Erosians were not completely motionless. They were all moving, but so slowly that the eye could hardly perceive it.

MINUTE by minute, the upraised foot of the man striding along with his burden came down toward the paving. When it finally rested on the stone, the other foot began slowly to rise in another step. All the other yellow people were moving or talking at the same half-paralyzed tempo.

"No wonder they call the place 'Slow Motion World,'" rumbled Grag.

"And in a few minutes we'll be moving and living as slowly as they do," sniffed Otho. "Hanged if I like it!"

Already, in fact, Curt and the Futuremen were feeling the first tingling sensation that warned them the strange magnetic gravitational field of Eros was beginning to affect their bodies.

The gravitation of this little asteroid was powerfully reinforced by a strong, peculiar magnetic field. This magnetism affected the electric nerve-currents of any living creature which remained more than a few minutes on Eros. It slowed down those nerve-currents, and thus stepped down consciousness, thought and physical metabolism.

Thus, any man who remained more than a few minutes on this asteroid found himself living at a tempo a hundred times slower than normal. Yet because all other life on Eros lived and moved at the same tempo, he would seem to himself unchanged. It was this peculiar condition of the asteroid that made it sedulously avoided by spacemen.

"We are slowing down already," the Brain observed with keen interest. "Do you notice?"

"I don't feel any different," Grag declared skeptically.

"Look at those people in the street!" Otho told him. "Can't you see the difference?"

The yellow Erosians around the Futuremen seemed to be moving faster than they had. More and more rapidly they appeared to move—but in reality, it was only that the Futuremen were living and moving slower.

Within a few more minutes, the Erosians around Curt and his comrades seemed walking and talking at normal tempo. Captain Future realized that he and his companions were now on the same motion level.

"I'm glad that's over," he declared, and added with a fleeting grin, "When on Eros, live as slowly as the Erosians."

The yellow people were now gathering around the Futuremen with excited cries. Curt and his comrades had been recognized.

"It is the four explorers who came to our world before!" went up the cry.

"Glad they remember us," remarked Curt with relief. "Though I guess they have so few visitors they don't forget 'em."

The gathering crowd made way for the approach of a dignified yellow man of advanced age. Captain Future recognized the Erosian ruler.

The yellow official greeted him with apparent pleasure. Curt had a unique faculty for cultivating the friendship of strange planetary races. And he had made friends with these Erosians on his first visit.

"You have come to explore our world again?" asked the yellow king after his formal greeting.

"Not this time," Captain Future replied. He spoke frankly, as was his inborn instinct. "We were being pursued by men who believed we had committed a crime of which we were innocent. To escape them, we landed here."

"You shall stay here as long as you wish," avowed the Erosian ruler. "You are welcome to be our friends and guests."
They were led to one of the little minaretted buildings, and given to understand that it was their home for as long as they cared to stay. Yellow women brought food—cooked fungi, and a colorless wine.

"Not bad, if you don't mind a musty taste," remarked Otho, wiping his lips. He stretched hugely. "Can't we get some sleep, Chief?" Curt nodded.

"Might as well. Keep your eye on things, Grag. Wake us at once if you hear anything like a ship."

Captain Future slept dreamlessly on the woven grass mat that was an Erosian bed. He woke to find that night had come. The minaretted little structures outside gleamed palely in the starlight. In the distance, the fungus forest was a dark obscurity.

"Nothing's happened," reported Grag, stalking in from outside.

"Nothing except that Otho's snores drew a crowd of Erosians for a while."

"I resent that!" exclaimed Otho, who had also awakened.

"Cut it, you two," ordered Curt. "It's time we held a council of war. We've got to plan how to defeat Larsen King's grab for the Moon radium."

He paced to and fro in the dim room, frowning in thought.

"We've got to keep King's Moon miners from reaching that radium," Captain Future said. "That's our prime objective. Once we've assured the safety of the radium, then we can endeavor to clear our names of this 'outlaw' stigma.

"We shall have to take risks," he went on. "For we haven't much time. It won't take King's men so long to get down to the radium deposit."

Captain Future made his decision.

"We've got to get down to that radium deposit before King's men! If we can get to the radium first, I've a plan by which we can gum up King's whole scheme. We'll have to find a different way down to the radium deposit. We'll have to enter one of the fissures near North Chasm, find our own way down through the caves."

"You know how risky that will be, The Comet flamed skyward
lad!” warned the Brain. “You know better than anyone else the dangers of exploring those fissures.”

Captain Future shrugged.

“It’s a case of must, Simon.” He turned toward the door. “And we’d better start now. It’s going to be hard enough to land secretly on the Moon for our attempt.”

“Start now?” echoed Otho in surprise. “Why, the Patrol ships will still be around here. We’ve only been here five or six hours.”

“You forget that we’ve been living a hundred times slower than normal since we got here,” Curt reminded him. “It only seemed five or six hours to us, but actually we’ve been here about four weeks.”

“The devil!” exclaimed Otho. “You mean to say I’ve been sleeping here for a solid month?”

A little later, after taking leave of their Erosian friends, the Futuremen entered the Comet and rose from the surface of the asteroid. Passing its little satellite, they flashed the time-honored “salute” signal. By now they had shaken off the slower life-tempo.

There appeared to be no patrolling squadrons now in this sector. Captain Future headed at once for the Moon, where the outlawed Futuremen must risk their perilous scheme to penetrate the dangers of a dead world.

CHAPTER VI

Alien City

Dawn was creeping across the outer face of the Moon. The advancing day flowed like a slow bright tide over the stark, pekar-ringed craters and the deathly white pumice deserts. It touched the fused Sea of Glass to blinding brilliance. In gloomy gorges of the northern mountains, packs of the weird gray Moon Dogs trotted forth in fierce search for their metallic food, as the long lunar day began.

But in the glaring northern desert, the Great North Chasm was still a well of perpetual cold and night. Sunlight had never penetrated this forbidding abyss, which for so long had guarded its enigmatic memorials of a mysterious vanished race. Its only light was the one point of man-made illumination at its bottom.

The glittering bubble of the big mining dome down there glowed with inner radiance. The blue-white glare of clusters of kryptons boldly revealed the interior of this precarious oasis of air and life. Droning of power plants, beating of air pumps, slap of hurrying feet were all a background to the dominating throb of machinery in the tall shaft-house.

Larsen King turned from the window of the little chromatoly office building, from which he had been surveying the activities here.

“Six weeks of this,” King said bitingly, “and how far down have you got? Less than a mile! At that rate, it will take a lifetime to reach the radium.”

King’s bullet head thrust forward angrily as he spoke, his hard impatient black eyes raking the other two men. Young Gil Strike, tilted back in his chair and lazily smoking a long green rial cigarette, had a look of unconcern on his predatory face. But Albert Wissler shifted uneasily in his chair. The thin, blinking scientist seemed to squirm inwardly at his employer’s words. “It’s not my fault the tunneling has gone so slowly,” Wissler said hastily. “I can explain—”

“Explanations are all I’ve had from you,” King interrupted brutally. “That’s why I came out here from Earth today. I want results!”

His eyes narrowed.

“I understand you’ve spent more time roaming over the Moon, looking for Captain Future’s hidden laboratory, than you have at your job here.” Wissler answered sullenly.

“Future’s home would yield a lot of valuable scientific secrets, if we could find it before he comes back.”

“You’ll have plenty of time to search for it later,” Larsen King declared coldly. “The Futuremen will never come back.”
"I notice the Planet Patrol still keeps a lookout for them around the Moon," said Wissler meaningly.

"That's just a matter of form," scoffed the promoter. "Future's left the System for good. It's all he could do, now that he's an outlaw."

Gil Strike laughed softly to himself, as though at a private joke. His hawk-like eyes had lazy amusement in them.

"I sure enjoy hearing people so bitter against Future for murdering the President," he drawled. "I hand it to you for cleverness, King."

Larsen King's lips thinned, and his voice was dangerous.

"I told you to keep your mouth shut about that."

Strike shrugged carelessly.

"What's the difference when there's only the three of us?"

"Walls have ears, you fool," rapped King. "And don't you forget that it was you who actually operated that telautomaton, Strike. If you talk yourself into trouble, you'll have nothing to prove I gave you your orders."

ALBERT WISSLER had listened uneasily to this exchange, a fidgety, half-fearful look on his thin face. He jumped when King turned to him.

"I'm going to inspect the work myself," snapped the promoter. "Come along."

Larsen King's tall figure, impressive and commanding even in his blue silken zipper-suit, led the way across the blue-lit enclosure of the dome. Workers in grimy gray glanced at them inquiringly. These hard-bitten planetary miners had been gathered from every world. Among them were lanky, blue Saturnians, peaked-headed Neptunians, red Martians with hooded eyes, and tough-looking Earthmen.

The noise inside the cavernous shaft-house was deafening. It came mostly from the giant revolving winches and drums at the mouth of the tunnel, and from the low metal trucks that ceaselessly rattled in and out of the shaft. The throb of air pumps, drone of atomic power turbines and bawling of orders all added to the uproar.

The tunnel was not a vertical shaft. It was a twenty-foot tube bored obliquely downward in a westerly direction. Two parallel cogged tracks led down its steeply slanted floor into the depths. Empty metal trucks moved down into the tunnel along one track, and trucks loaded with shattered moon-rock came up the other track, to be shunted out of the shaft-house for eventual dumping outside the dome.

Wissler raised his voice above the uproar.

"We're boring down toward one of the big caves, you know. Sonic probing shows there's one not far down. Once we hole through into it, we'll work our way on down through the labyrinth of caverns and fissures toward the radium deposit."

"Why didn't you drop a vertical shaft straight down toward the cave, instead of slanting down toward it?" King demanded critically.

"We save time this way," Wissler assured him. "We're following an ancient fissure that seems to have been closed by a landslide ages ago. It's easier boring through broken rock and debris than through solid rock."

Larsen King was unsatisfied.

"You're still not making the progress you should. I can't understand why the work's going so slowly. Look at those trucks coming up empty now!"

He pointed accusingly at the line of emerging metal trucks that rattled up from the tunnel. They were, in fact, all empty now.

Wissler looked troubled.

"Something must be wrong with the boring crews down there. I hope to heaven nothing's aroused their superstitions again."

"Their superstitions?" repeated King angrily. "What are you talking about?"

"It's what has made the work so slow," Wissler explained nervously. "The men have got more and more superstitious about tunneling into the Moon."

"Devil take them and their superstitions!" exploded the promoter. "What kind of nonsense have they got into their heads?"
"It's about the ancient Lunarians—you know, the race that lived on this world ages ago," his superintendent declared. "Some of the miners were over to look at that ruined city, a few miles from here on the floor of the chasm. They didn't like what they saw. It scared them, and they've been doing much talking among themselves ever since.

"They don't like to work their shifts down in the tunnel any more," Wissler went on. "A good many of them are muttering that there's a curse on this chasm, left here by the alien Lunarians who lived here long ago. They say that the deeper they go into the Moon, the greater is the danger from that curse."

ARSEN KING made a gesture of angry contempt.

"And you've let them slow down work because of that nonsense?"

Gil Strike, who had been peering down into the slanting tunnel, turned toward the other two.

"Here come the boring crews back up," he reported. "Their shift doesn't end for an hour yet. They've quit on the job."

Moon miners began pouring up out of the tunnel on the rattling trucks, hastily disembarking in the shaft-house, as though glad to be out of the shaft.

Last of the heterogeneous planetary group to emerge was a brawny green Jovian.

"It's Hok Kel, mine boss on this shift," Wissler told his employer as the Jovian approached. "What happened down there?" he cried.

The Jovian shook his head, looking disgustedly toward the miners, who were muttering excitedly together.

"They got in a panic," he rumbled. "All because they happened to run into this thing while they were boring."

He held out the object in his hand. It was a dry, shrunken fragment of bone—the arm of an ancient skeleton. But it was oddly curious in that instead of five fingers, the hand was a web of more than a dozen very slender bones.

Wissler's blinking eyes widened.

"Why, it must be the skeletal arm of an ancient Lunarian!"

"That's what the men said," rumbled Hok Kel. "They've been nervous all day, because this morning we turned up a few fragments of worked stone and a little metal implement. This put them in a panic."

"That little shred of bone?" cried Larsen King incredulously.

He turned and surveyed the muttering planetary miners, scathing scorn in his black eyes.

"I'm cursed if ever I heard of a tough bunch of interplanetary diggers going into a panic over a little thing like that!"

The motley group of Moon miners eyed him sullenly. Then a tall, hollow-eyed red Martian among them answered the promoter.

"It is not the bone alone—it is what it means," he said slowly. "It's presence in the debris of this ancient fissure proves that the ancient Lunarians went down through that fissure, ages ago when it was open."

"What if they did?" King demanded contemptuously. "What difference does it make now what those creatures of the dim past may have done?"

A gaunt gray Neptunian miner growled his answer.

"It makes a difference to us. We don't want to go where those Moon-
devils went. Maybe there's some of them still alive down there."
“Maybe you're a lot of fearful fools!” snorted Larsen King. “Afraid of men who've been dead for a thousand centuries!”
“They weren't men, they were devils,” muttered a Saturnian miner. “We saw what they looked like, over in that dead city.”
King's harsh voice rang dominantly.
“I'll have no more of this nonsense. You men signed on for this job and you're going to finish it. Now get back down into that tunnel!”
His whiplash voice silenced the muttering men. They looked uncertainly at one another. Then, driven by the powerful personality of their employer, they moved sullenly back into the metal trucks that rattled down into the shaft. But their reluctance was very apparent.
“Keep them boring,” rapped King to Hok Kel. “Don't give them any time to brood over that superstitious nonsense."

THE Jovian mine boss nodded a little doubtfully as he followed the men.
“Maybe they'll be better when we hole through into that cavern.”
“Moon-devils!” repeated Larsen King wrathfully. “The stupid fools!”
He turned toward Albert Wissler.
“What the devil was it over in that ruined city that put such crazy notions in their heads?”
Wissler answered nervously.
“There are stone figures over there that look like idols and are pretty ghastly. And other things—”
“I'm going over there and see for myself,” King said decisively. “It might be wise to have those ruins blown up, if they're affecting the men so much. Come along, Wissler. Strike, you stay here and see that they don't stop work again.”
Clad in space-suits and helmets, King and the thin scientist left the dome's airlock entrance.
They tramped westward, Wissler leading the way with a hand krypton light.
The darkness and cold outside the dome were intense. The thin starlight that sifted into the abyss only faintly illuminated the looming masses of rock amid which they picked their way.
Far, far overhead, the mouth of the chasm was but a narrow crack of starry black sky.
Presently a mass of white ruins loomed vaguely in the blackness. The two men walked on, the blue beam of the krypton light slicing the dark.
The Lunarian city was a tomb of cyclopean ruins. Its structures had been built of a hard white moon-rock, and had covered an area of a square mile.
In plan, the city had been spiral. One narrow street that unfolded in ever-widening circles could still be traced.
The architecture was disturbingly alien. Spiral fluted columns formed porticoes to low, windowless stone buildings of mausolean appearance. From atop many of the fluted spires gaped monstrous stone creatures—giant centipede worms with staring eyes, wolflike beasts and others.
“Those must represent lunar animals that once existed,” said Wissler. “It's believed the Moon Dogs descended from one of those forms—a species that managed to adapt itself to the vanishing of the lunar air.”
“They tell a lot of tall stories about those Moon Dogs,” sneered Larsen King. He stared about. “What the devil smashed this place up so?”
The Lunarian city looked as though it had been shattered by giant hands. Broken columns and masses of stone debris blocked many streets. At the center of the spiral city loomed a larger, roofless wreck.
“It's supposed,” Wissler explained, “that the impact of cosmic fragments which formed the lunar craters was the shock that shattered this city. Also, it must have caused the rock slide that closed the fissure leading downward.”
Clambering over masses of broken debris, Wissler led the way with his lamp toward the towering wreck at the center of the city.
“This seems to have been a Lunarian temple of some kind,” he mut-
tered. "Look and you'll see what scared the men."

They had entered a cyclopean, roofless temple whose floor was littered with fallen blocks. Its dimensions were so great that the blue beam of the krypton lamp barely reached its farther end. The beam, angling upward, illuminated four stone colossi.

These giant figures, sculptured in a stiffly sitting position, were oppressively alien despite their general resemblance to humanity. Their bodies were thick, short and neckless. The heads were round, the eyes saucerlike with queer shutter lids, the noses merely two gaping nostrils above the slitted mouth.

They had flat webbed paws for hands and feet.

LARSEN King's voice came scornfully.

"So these stone statues are the Lunarians the men are scared of!"

"It's not the stone figures alone," protested Wissler. "It's the fact that no one has ever found a single Lunarian's remains here in the city. What became of them all? Where did they all go?"

"Bah, you're as superstitious as the men," jeered his employer contemptuously. "No wonder that—"

Wissler's terrified exclamation interrupted.

"What's that?"

A dark figure was entering the wrecked building from behind them. The unsteadiness of Wissler's light as it flashed toward the intruder was evidence of the scientist's state of nerves.

He sighed with relief. It was a space-suited man who was approaching. They recognized Gil Strike's hawk face inside the helmet.

"What's wrong? More trouble with the men?" King asked sharply.

Strike's voice was excited and exultant.

"No, not that. We just got a flash from the Planet Patrol. They spotted Captain Future landing on the Moon. They've got him and the Futuremen trapped in the mountains southeast of here!"

CHAPTER VII

Moon Dog Gorge

Curt Newton had taken extreme precautions to avoid observation as the Comet approached the Moon. He kept on the dark side of the satellite, running up its space-shadow to increase his chance of slipping past vigilant, patrolling cruisers.

Curt believed that the hunt for him would have somewhat slackened by now. But there were always Planet Patrol cruisers near the Moon. The so-called Lunar Squadron, while it had no base on the satellite, used it as center of the sector in which they watched Earthbound shipping.

Luck seemed to favor the Futuremen. They followed the shadow right to the surface of the Moon without sighting a Patrol cruiser. Captain Future now steered around the satellite, toward the brilliant Sea of Glass that lay south of Great North Chasm. The Comet was soon out of the shadow, flying over white pumice desert glaring in the Sun.

"I'm heading for a certain gorge north of the Sea of Glass," Curt told his three comrades gathered in the control room. "If you remember, we explored a little of it two years ago. There was a fissure there that seemed to lead deeply down into the Moon."

The three nodded in recollection.

In no time at all, it seemed, the Comet had left the desert behind and was flying over tall, jagged mountains, the extreme northeastern spurs of the mighty Thompson Range. It was a wilderness of sharp white pinnacles that menaced the passing ship like bared fangs. Miles ahead glittered the blinding Sea of Glass, over which they must pass.

Suddenly out of the star-dusted black void, four grim cruisers screamed down like shooting stars toward the Comet.

"Patrol cruisers!" yelled Otho.
“They kept a telescopic check on the Moon—”

“Captain Future, ahoy!” rang a stentorian voice from the telesonor at the same instant, on an all-wave transmission. “Planet Patrol speaking! Land and surrender instantly or we’ll gun you down!”

“You’ll gun nobody down!” flared Otho, flame leaping into his eyes as he jumped for the proton-cannon breach. “By the Sun, I’ll—”

“No, get away from that gun!” Captain Future ordered sharply.

The stentorian command thundered from the telesonor.

“Unless you land instantly, we’ll open fire! You can’t possibly break free!”

“They’re right!” yelled Grag in alarm. “They’ve got us ‘pinned’ by their altitude, Chief. We’ll have to fight our way out this time!”

Curt had already recognized the discouraging nature of their predicament. They had been flying very low over the towering lunar mountains. The four Patrol cruisers had swiftly spread out to “pin” them. They could not rise from the satellite now without meeting murderous fire.

Realizing this in a flash, and resolved not to turn his own guns against the Patrol, Captain Future took the only chance open of escape. He jammed the cyclotron pedal down, flung the space stick to the right and a little forward.

The Comet screamed down between the lunar pinnacles as though bent on suicide. Curt flung it right between towering peaks and precipices at high speed. It took the split-second timing of a great pilot to brush so closely past the jagged stone scarps and ridges without fatal collision.

Captain Future swung the space stick sharply to the left, to hurl the Comet between two tall pinnacles of rock.

At that moment, more atom-shells exploded right in front of the fleeing ship. The terrific glare blinded Curt for an instant. There was a heart-stopping shock and crash that flung them violently about.

“We grazed one of those peaks!” came Grag’s yell.

The Comet’s left lateral rocket tubes had been crushed in by the grazing contact. The ship, temporarily unmanageable, spun crazily and then dived headlong toward the rocky valley between the two peaks.

Curt Newton glimpsed the glaring rock waste rushing up at them with frightful speed. Instinctively, he kicked in both the cyclotron and brake-blast pedals. The rocket tubes in the prow of the ship spit flame a moment before the Comet reached the ground.

The terrific brake-blast battered the ship dizzily back up for a few yards. It rolled crazily and then crashed down onto the rock, and lay still. The shock had snapped the fuel-feed line.

“Chief, are you hurt?” cried Grag.

The big robot had picked himself up with Otho, and he and Simon Wright were anxiously bending over Curt.

Captain Future shook his head to clear it. Then, as he took in their situation, he jumped unsteadily to his feet.

“Left lateral tubes gone—but we could take off again if that fuel line hadn’t snapped!” he exclaimed.

“It’ll only take us twenty minutes to put in a new feed line!” Otho cried.

“That’s more time than we’ve got!” Curt rapped. “Those cruisers will be down after us like hawks—”

“There they come now!” cried Grag, pointing.

Through the control-room window they could see the four grim Planet Patrol cruisers, coming back low over the white rock pinnacles that towered against the star-specked black sky. The cruisers passed close above the narrow, boulder-strewn valley in
which the *Comet* lay helpless. They've spotted us—they'll come down at the nearest possible landing place and rush here in space-suits to capture us!” Curt declared. “If we wait to fix that fuel line, they'll get us sure. We've got to abandon the ship.”

“Abandon the *Comet*?” Otho's voice was sharp with dismay. “We can't do that! If we did, how could we reach that gorge we're heading for?”


“It's two hundred miles!” cried Grag, appalled. “And across that devilish Sea of Glass—”

“It’s either that, or let ourselves be captured here and see the whole game go to Larsen King and his crowd!” rapped Captain Future.

His voice rang in sharp command. “Grag, get together those transformers and condensers and other equipment. Tie them on your back. They're fairly compact—you can carry them. Otho, get our space-suits. We'll need extra oxygen tanks, and an oxide converter. Hurry!”

**NEED** for haste was manifest. They had glimpsed the four Patrol cruisers slanting down to a landing farther along this lunar valley, where it was wider and clearer. Soon the Patrol men would be in hot pursuit.

Grag hastily strung together the compact electrical equipment that Curt had devised for his secret scheme. Curt had purposely designed the apparatus to be light and easily transported. Grag slung the whole mass onto his back, and also picked up a stout metal bar.

Captain Future and Otho had got into their space-suits. An extra aluminum oxygen tank and a compact oxide converter were attached to the belt of each suit, beside their proton pistols. The special inside pockets of their suits already held emergency rations of food tablets and water.

“Now out of the ship, quick!” Curt exclaimed. “They'll be coming up this valley in two minutes!”

They emerged from the airlock door of the *Comet*, into the terrific solar glare of the airless Moon.

Otho hesitated. “We can’t leave the *Comet* like this! Let’s stay and fight it out!”

Curt knew how the Futuremen felt. He himself felt sharp dismay at the thought of abandoning their splendid, faithful little ship to capture. But everything now depended on their own escape.

“We'll retrieve the *Comet* later, never fear,” Captain Future pledged. “For space's sake, hurry! Up over that ridge!”

They plunged forward in a hard run along the wild, rocky lunar valley toward the nearby ridge that promised temporary concealment.

The scene was wild and awesome. The two lunar peaks that towered on either side of them were giant, upflung masses of rock ten thousand feet high. Cruel, jagged scarps and buttresses glared blinding white in the unrelenting focus of the unsoftened Sun.

The Futuremen ran at top speed. Their weight, of course, was the same here as it would have been on Earth. The gravitation equalizers they and every other interplanetary traveler always wore took care of that. But they slipped and stumbled on the loose rock, all except the Brain, who glided swiftly and effortlessly on his beams.

They pitched onto the ridge and down over it. Curt Newson raised his head over its rim to look back for a moment.

“We just made it,” he muttered. “I don't think they saw us.”

Two score men in space-suits, carrying heavy hand atom-guns and wearing the emblem of the Planet Patrol on their chests, were hurrying into the valley from its further end. They were approaching the *Comet*.

“Curse them, it makes me mad to think of those heavy-handed space greenies getting hold of our *Comet*!” raged Otho.

Though they were now in an airless void, Curt and Otho could converse on the secret, untappable wave of their short-radius space-suit phones. The Brain had a similar short-range audio-phone built into his mechanical speech apparatus, as also did Grag.

“There's no help for that,” Curt answered shortly. “We've got to
move on. They'll soon find we're not in the ship, and then the hunt for us will really begin."

CAPTAIN FUTURE led the way rapidly to the spot where the valley ended in a tumbled wilderness of lower lunar peaks. Then he struck out through the mountains in a general northwesterly direction.

The gorge which Curt believed might furnish passage down to the interior caverns of the Moon and the deep radium deposit, lay two hundred miles northwest. They could save a tenth of that distance by cutting across the Sea of Glass, but at what peril they knew.

The Brain, gliding beside them, turned abruptly.

"Lad, ships are coming!" he warned.

They glimpsed two cruisers coming across the white peaks from behind them, climbing only enough to clear the mountains as they flew.

"The Patrol has discovered we're not in the Comet, and is quartering out to search for us!" Curt exclaimed. "Quick, under that overhang!"

 Barely in time, they jumped under the overhang of the neighboring cliff. The two Patrol cruisers scudde by close over their hiding place.

"They'll comb all these mountains for us," predicted Otho. "The Patrol may be dumb but it's thorough."

"I'm not used to being hunted around like this," complained Grag. "I guess I wasn't cast to be an outlaw, after all."

Curt Newton led the way rapidly on through the tumbled rocky hills, in a steady northwesterly direction. Once again they had to dart into the concealment of deep shadows as cruisers went by above them.

Then they came out of the last low foothills of the great chain of lunar mountains. Before them, the baking white pumice desert over which the Comet had flown stretched northward toward the blinding brilliance of the Sea of Glass. Blocked by the Patrol cruisers, they would have to chance the desert again.

"Here's our worst danger of discovery," Captain Future warned. "We've got to hurry now."

They quickened their pace as they slogged out across the glaring desert. The white pumice was as yielding and crunchy underfoot as sand. Its glare and heat were perceptible even through their insulated space-suits.

They had covered but a few miles before Curt uttered a sharp warning. A Patrol cruiser was swinging out from the peaks over the desert.

"Got us!" cried Otho furiously. "There's no place here to hide."

"Down in the pumice!" Curt ordered. "Throw it over yourselves!"

They caught his idea and flung themselves down. Swiftly they covered themselves with handfuls of the powdery white stuff.

The Patrol cruiser swung past at low altitude, a half mile to the west. The fugitives scrambled up and went on. The foothill peaks of the Thompson Range soon dropped from sight behind them. The small size of the Moon made its horizons always curiously close. Curt Newton kept looking anxiously back, for he knew the search for them would go on strenuously.

A thin line of intolerable brilliance lay on the horizon ahead. It grew into what seemed a dazzling lake of light, lying across their path. That curious area was so blindingly bright that they could not look at it. It was the Sea of Glass whose corner they must cross to reach the gorge that was their ultimate goal.

They nervied themselves for the ordeal as they approached. The Sea of Glass was a large, roughly square area in which the lunar rock had somehow been fused into a glassy green obsidian. It was generally believed that ancient volcanic action had caused the phenomenon, though some planetographers held other theories. Whatever its origin, the Sea of Glass was a vast, glittering sheet that flung back the solar radiance blindingly.

"Keep your eyes shut as much as possible," Curt warned the Futuremen as they approached. "Stay close together, so we won't get separated."

"I must have had my eyes shut all along into this mess," Otho declared. "Lead on, Chief—we might as well fry now as later."
Curt Newton had his own eyes almost closed as they stumbled forward onto the glassy, slippery surface of the great sheet. But the terrific reflection forced itself between his lids, and stabbed to his brain. And the heat was now so intense that even through the super-insulation of their space-suits, it became intolerable. Only Grag and Simon were unaffected by it, though their artificial sight-organs were dazzled and blinded. Their feet slipped drunkenly on the smooth obsidian as they struggled on. Curt dared open his eyes only a trifle every few minutes, trying to keep the northwestward course. But his eyes were soon so stunned and blearied by the glare that he could see nothing. He had to lead onward, trusting to instinct to follow the right direction.

The air inside his space-suit was like a furnace. His skin was parched, his mouth dry, his head aching. He was aware only of the slippery glass surface underfoot, the touch of his comrades as they all clung blindly together. Time became meaningless to his blurred brain, and he could not estimate how long they had been traversing this inferno.

"I—can't see a thing," came Otho's choking voice. "Aren't we near the end of it?"

"There should be only a few miles more," Curt answered quickly. "Keep together!"

Blinded, his head pounding from the heat, he stumbled on with the others. Suddenly he realized he was walking on crunchy pumice again.

"We're through!" Curt cried. "We've crossed the Sea of Glass!"

"I still can't see anything!" Otho exclaimed hoarsely.

It took many minutes for their blinded eyes to clear. They discovered themselves trudging over glaring white pumice desert again, a little off their northwestward course.

Captain Future took their bearings, from the dark, sunken plain of the Sea of Visions on their left. They slogged on, heading up the narrowing strait between that Sea and the Dragon Sea on their right.

By now, Curt knew, they were not many miles south of Great North Chasm. His eyes constantly scanned the horizon for the gorge he sought. Finally he descried it, a dark line across the desert horizon.

"There it is!" he exclaimed, his pulse leaping with renewed hope. "That's the gorge that has a fissure I think may lead us down through the caves to the radium. Our troubles are over for the time being!"

"You mean, our troubles are just beginning!" Otho retorted. "It's full day, remember. And the cursed Moon Dogs that haunt this gorge will be roaming through it hunting for food."

"Moon Dogs are nothing to be afraid of," said Grag patronizingly. "It's all in the way you handle them. Look how well I tamed little Eek."

The gorge was so deep that the blazing sunlight did not reach its bottom, which was a place of great boulders and shadows. There were cracks of yawning fissures in the precipitous walls. And bright streaks of metallic ores gleamed at many places in the rock.

It was these metal ores, Curt knew, that drew the Moon Dogs here. The strange, non-breathing creatures could ingest metallic elements as their food. They could sense the presence of such elements from afar. That was what made them dangerous to men wearing metal space-suits.

"The fissure I noticed when we formerly explored this place is near the west end of the gorge," Captain Future declared. "Come on!"

They clambered down into the shadowy bottom of the gorge, and started between the masses of jagged boulders toward its distant west end.

As they came around one looming mass of rock, they suddenly confronted two Moon Dogs. The creatures were big, wolflike beasts with gray silicate flesh, whose curiously filmed eyes glared at the Futuremen. Then they sprang, their chisel-like teeth and talons gleaming brightly.

Curt and Otho shot with their proton-pistols, though they knew it was useless. No proton beam could harm the inorganic silicate flesh of the Moon Dogs. The rays splashed off the creatures, without stopping them,
But Grag halted them. Swinging his heavy metal bar, the great robot knocked the two lunging beasts off their feet with one blow. The Moon Dogs scrambled up and hastily retreated ahead of the Futuremen.

"See what I told you? It's all in knowing how to handle them," Grag boasted.

"I hope you know how to handle a lot of them!" Otoh yelled. "There's a whole pack of the devils coming after us!"

CHAPTER VIII

Lunar Caves

Curt and the other Futuremen swung about, startled. Their encounter with the two Moon Dogs had prevented them from noticing that a huge pack of the weird gray beasts was racing along the shadowy gorge from behind. The uncanny silence in which the creatures charged was more nerve-chilling than if they had been able to howl.

Their chisel-like fangs gleamed brightly in the shadows. The Futuremen knew that if they were once swept from their feet by that horde, those formidable teeth and talons would rip the metal of their spacesuits and of Grag's body to shreds. It was the Moon Dogs' mysterious ability to sense the metal that had brought the pack after them.

"Make for that fissure!" Captain Future yelled. "It's our only chance. Once in it, we can hold them off!"

They plunged forward, sprinting through the shadows and boulders toward the western end of the gorge. The Brain, of course, could have glided up out of danger in a moment. But it was not Simon's way to desert.

Curt had spotted the fissure ahead, a narrow black crevasse in the northern rock wall of the gorge. But whether or not they could reach it seemed doubtful, for the Moon Dogs were rapidly overtaking them.

"Why don't you stay and show how you can handle 'em, Grag?" Otoh could not resist yelling as they ran. "Tame 'em, like you tamed Eek!"

Grag, lumbering forward like a ponderous metal engine, made no reply to the taunt. The Moon Dogs were closing on them by leaps and bounds. The fissure was still a hundred yards ahead. Curt felt desperately that they could never reach it in time. Then Simon made a diversion.

The Brain flew back right into the face of the charging Moon Dogs,jetting his shining tractor beams into their faces. The creatures recoiled in momentary terror. It gave Curt and the other two Futuremen time to reach the fissure. They tumbled into it, Simon flashing after them.

The Moon Dogs reached the mouth of the narrow fissure an instant later. The ravenous beasts jammed in the entrance, in their avid eagerness to get at the Futuremen. But Grag now stood in their way, and with his heavy metal bar the great robot labored the gray brutes.

The Moon Dogs retreated hastily from the robot's blows. Again they charged, but again they could not enter the narrow crevasse past him. Balked, the creatures crouched down outside the fissure to wait.

"Now what do we do?" Otoh asked anxiously. "If we start down the fissure, they'll be right after us."

Curt gestured to the loose masses of shattered rock that almost choked the passage.

"We can build up a wall that will hold them out."

They labored at that for almost an hour, carrying heavy masses of rock and placing them until they had a wall of eight feet high across the crevasse. The Moon Dogs could never pass it.

The Futuremen stopped then for breath. Wonderingly, Otoh looked down the fissure. It was a narrow split in the rock, angling steeply downward into impenetrable darkness.

"I hate the idea of worming down through a maze of fissures and caves," the android muttered. "I'd rather take my chance in free space."
“It’s our only possible way to the radium deposit,” Curt answered determinedly. “I brought along a radioscope, and with it for guidance we should be able to find a way down through the labyrinth.”

He took the compact radioscope from the mass of equipment that Grag carried on his back. The transformers, condensers and other apparatus appeared to have suffered no harm during the adventurous flight.

Captain Future took his little hand krypton lamp from his belt and turned on its blue beam. He flashed it into the dark fissure. “We’d better start,” he warned. “We’ve a long way to go, down to that radium deposit.”

The labyrinth they followed now was a mere split in the rock, so narrow they must move in single file. Ponderous masses of half-dislodged Moon-rock hung over them, ready to crush them. Curt moved with extreme care as he led the way. He knew well how fatally easy it was to start one of the terrible lunar rock slides.

The darkness became Stygian. Yet the intrepid quartet of man, robot, android and Brain continued to penetrate deeper. The crevasse debouched presently into a gloomy underground gallery with walls of black lunar basalt. A half-dozen new fissures branched from this gallery.

“Which one of ’em should we take?” Otho wondered. “There’s no way of telling which is the best to follow.”

“Then let’s guess,” said Grag.

He pointed his metal arm at the fissures in turn and recited an ancient phrase. “My mother told me to take this one.”

“Your mother?” Otho laughed at the robot. “Why, your mother was a machine shop, and if you had a father he was an old riveting machine.”

“That’s better than having a rack of chemical bottles for ancestors, like you!” Grag snapped.

“Shut up, you two,” Captain Future ordered impatiently. “We don’t have to guess—the radioscope will show us which way to follow.”

He consulted the little instrument. Its needle, swinging on its queer quadrant to point toward the radium ores deep below, swung downward now in a northeastern direction.

“The radium deposit is in that general direction,” Curt declared. “That second fissure leads most nearly that way. Come on.”

They entered the crevasse after him and again began squeezing through narrow places and clambering over fallen masses of rock. This new fissure slanted downward very steeply.

In the next few hours, the Futuremen moved ever deeper into the maze of branching fissures and galleries that rifted the Moon’s upper crust. Curt tried to steer a course by means of the radioscope. But many times they had toilsome work retracing their steps, when they found themselves in a crevasse with a blind ending.

The cold, darkness and utter absence of life were oppressive. The oxygen in the space-suit tanks of Curt and Otho ran low. They had to stop to replenish it. Their little oxide converters extracted the life-sustaining element from oxides in the rock.

The realization that they must find a way down to the radium ahead of Larsen King’s planetary miners was the spur that drove the Futuremen forward. Curt felt something like despair, when after following a long fissure for a half hour, they found that it ended in a blind wall.

Grag struck the rock wall angrily with his metal fist.

“We would have to waste all that time getting to this!”

“Listen!” exclaimed Curt Newton sharply. “That wall reverberated when you struck it. There’s a hollow space beyond it—another fissure or gallery. I believe we could dig our way through to it.”

Their only tool for heavy digging was Grag’s big metal bar. The robot applied it to the black basalt with its limitless strength, boring its pointed end gradually in and then prying loose great masses of the dark rock. The others cleared the debris.

It was slow, laborious work. And it was perilous, for ominous crackings warned that they might start a rock slide. Then an opening appeared in
the rock. Grag quickly enlarged it, and they squeezed through into a vast, dark space. "Why, there's air in here!" Grag exclaimed. "Look at the way that rock dust is floating."

"You're crazy!" jeered Otho. "You ought to know by now that there's no air on the Moon—"

He stopped, his jaw sagging in amazement. Curt had flashed his krypton beam in. And they were able to see that the finer rock dust was actually floating, sure evidence that there was at least some air here.

Captain Future ventured to unscrew his helmet for a moment to test the air. It was thin and cold. This was so tenuous an atmosphere that he could not long breathe it, but undoubtedly it contained oxygen.

"If there's thin air in these upper caves, there must be even denser air down in the deeper spaces of the Moon!" Curt exclaimed. "It would drain downward."

"I can't understand it," said Otho bewilderedly. "I'd have thought that any air down here would all have escaped long ago."

"How could it escape?" the Brain countered. "Air can only escape a planet by molecular dispersion. But this air, after it drained into the cavernous interior, couldn't escape that way. For it was trapped down here when ancient internal shocks closed the fissures leading from the surface."

They were all overwhelmed by the astounding discovery. They had lived upon the Moon for years, and like everyone else had thought it a completely dead and airless world. Now they had found the remnants of its ancient atmosphere still existed down in its honeycombed interior.

Their amazement increased when Captain Future explored the space they had entered with the blue beam of his krypton lamp. This was not merely another fissure or gallery they had entered. It was a giant cavern, fully a mile in length, whose interior was wrapped in unrelieved darkness. Black masses of rock much like huge stalactites hung from its jagged roof.

They moved forward uncertainly, flashing the beam about the awesome place. Then Grag cried out and pointed ahead. They broke into a run toward the object he had described. When they reached it, they stood peering up at it in awed silence.

The thing was a statue. It was a pale stone image such as they had seen before this in the dead city of the Lunarians, at the bottom of Great North Chasm. It represented a man-like creature, with thick, neckless body, shutter-lidded round eyes, and gaping nostril orifices in its face. And it had the same flat, webbed paws instead of hands or feet.

The alien stone figure stood in erect position. It was pointing with one webbed hand toward the farther end [Turn page]
of the dark cavern. There was something so strikingly meaningful about the pointing arm and the intent stare of the round eyes, that the statue seemed almost living.

"The Lunarians came down this far, then, long ago!" muttered the Brain. "They must have followed the air down into these caves."

Curt nodded thoughtfully.

"It explains why we never found any Lunarian remains in the dead city above. They all died down here."

He followed the direction of the statue's solemnly pointing arm. It led them to a crevasse that opened from the farther end of the cavern. A worn path was still traceable, leading across the cavern and into that downward fissure. Otho suddenly pointed.

"Chief, are we sure all the Lunarians died?" he cried.

There was fine rock dust lying on the path here. And in it, fresh as though just made, was the clear print of a webbed foot!

CHAPTER IX

Shapes in the Dark

In the glow of the krypton lamp that furnished the only illumination for this deep-buried cavern of the Moon, man and robot, android and Brain looked at each other in startled wonder.

It was quite clearly the imprint of a webbed, paw-like foot. Captain Future looked back at the solemn, looming statue. The paw of that statue would have perfectly fitted the print before him.

"If a Lunarian just made this footprint—" Otho began excitedly.

"Don't be foolish," Curt admonished. "This print must have been here for ages."

"But it's so fresh and new looking!" protested the android.

"Of course—what would disturb it?" retorted Captain Future. "It's merely more evidence that the Lunarians passed down this way thousands of years ago."

He glanced thoughtfully around the vast gloomy cavern whose jagged rock walls rose dimly into an obscurity beyond the reach of their lamp.

"When the dwindling atmosphere of the Moon drained into these interior caverns long ago," Curt reconstructed, "the Lunarians were forced to follow the air downward. There must have been a great migration down through these chasms and caves. I imagine they set up this statue so that all their race would know the way that must follow."

His grey eyes glowed amusingly.

"What a spectacle it must have been, that migration of a race down into this gloomy underworld! But it would soon end in death for them all. They couldn't exist long in these dark, sunless caves."

"I don't know," murmured Otho. "I'd swear that footprint was made only recently."

The android suddenly raised his head in a listening attitude.

"I thought I heard something—a kind of throbbing sound," he declared.

"Otho's getting nervous," grunted Grag scornfully. "He'll be seeing the Moon-men behind every rock."

Captain Future paid little attention. He was following the broad, worn path in the rock that led along the cavern to the fissure at its farther end. The path led directly into the labyrinth. He flashed his blue beam into the crevasse. It illuminated a very narrow, winding chasm that angled steeply down into the bowels of the Moon.

And the path disappeared into that chasm. The worn trail was clearly discernible. That trail had been made unguessable centuries ago. It pointed the way that long before the dawn of history had been followed by a doom-driven alien race.

Curt felt a surge of hope.

"I believe that the path followed by the ancient Lunarians may lead down into the deeper caverns where the radium deposit lies!" he declared.

"Good! Then we won't have to do any more wandering around in blind passages," rumbled Grag.
The Brain, who had remained a little behind them in the big cavern, now called to Captain Future.

"Lad, look at this."

Curt found Simon hovering over the floor of the cavern, intently examining it. There was a thin, almost unnoticeable growth of pale white lichens here and there on the rock.

"Rudimentary plant life," murmured Curt Newton, with deep interest. "It's not surprising, since there's some air here."

"Yes, but look at that trail in the lichens," said the Brain.

The patches of thin white lichens had been crushed by something broad and heavy that traveled along a definite trail.

"It's obvious that was made recently," commented the Brain.

Curt knit his brows.

"That's puzzling. Still, I suppose if there's plant life here, there might also be primitive animal life."

"Maybe some Moon Dogs got down here and made that trail," Grag suggested.

Captain Future shook his head.

"They're non-breathing beasts, which wouldn't venture into this air-filled cave, even if there was a way."

During this colloquy, Otho had been standing a little apart from the others. The android had been staring intently back into the dark cavern, his slant green eyes troubled, his whole attitude one of concentrated attention.

Now he broke into the discussion.

"Chief, I do hear a throbbing sound somewhere here!" he exclaimed.

"Now Otho's got jumpy again," rumbled Grag disgustedly. "Ever since he saw that footprint, he's been hearing things."

"You dumb hunk of iron, will you keep quiet and listen?" stormed Otho.

They were all silent. And their ears now detected a dim, almost inaudible reverberation.

"Why, he really did hear something," said Grag in surprise.

"Of course I did," snapped the android. "Chief, it sounds like it's coming from the upper end of the cavern."

Captain Future was astounded. He led the way hastily back along the gloomy cavern. They soon determined that the throbbing was most loud near the upper or northern end of the cavern. Curt pressed his ear against the black rock wall, heard the reverberation much more clearly. The regularity of its rhythm gave him instantly the key to its nature.

"That's a machine we hear!" he exclaimed sharply. "An atomic boring mechanism, that's tunneling a way down toward this cavern!"

"Larsen King's miners!" ejaculated the Brain. "It can only be they!"

Captain Future nodded rapidly.

"I'm afraid so. I should have known it. We've been moving north and west all the time. This cavern can be only a mile or so under Great North Chasm. Albert Wissler would surely locate this space by sonic probing, and would drive his tunnel down toward it."

"Holy sun-imps, that's bad!" exclaimed Otho in dismay. "They'll be holing through to this cave before long. Hang it, I wish we could keep them from following us the way we did the Moon Dogs."

Captain Future's eyes kindled. He swung around to survey the narrow fissure of the ancient path, and then uttered a hopeful exclamation.

"Otho, I believe we can do that! Look how narrow that fissure is. If we could set off a blast in one of its walls and start a rock slide, it would completely block the passage. King's miners would need days to clear the way. That would give us a big advantage of time over them."

They stared, trying to get the full picture.

"There's only one thing wrong with your idea, Chief—and that's that we can't do it," Otho declared. "We've got no atomic explosives to blast with."

"Sure we have—in our proton-pistols!" Captain Future retorted.

They began to understand the expedient he proposed. The proton-pistols of the Futuremen had each in its hilt a magazine of "unstable" copper atoms. A grain of this unstable, highly explosive matter was detonated atomically each time the weapon was
fired, to produce an intense stream of protons.

The potential power of the combined atomic explosive in their pistol magazines was considerable. Its effect would be enhanced by the lower gravitation of the Moon. But the expedition was a gamble, and it had one serious drawback to which the Brain drew attention.

"If we did that, the pistols would be henceforth useless. We'd be entirely weaponless."

"What if we are?" Curt countered. "There's nothing down in the Moon to worry about. Come on—let's see if we can really do it."

He led the way running back along the cavern to the narrow fissure of the ancient Lunarian path. The steady *throb-throb-throb* of the atomic borers, in the north wall, was growing louder by the minute.

The dark, descending passage was only a dozen feet wide at its base. Curt flashed his blue beam upward. The walls of black basalt bulged toward each other, overhanging the chasm floor.

"We can start a slide that will block it tight!" Captain Future exclaimed, encouraged.

He examined the west wall of the narrow crack.

"A blast right here ought to bring it all down. The deeper we sink the charge, the more effect it will have. Grag, drill out a hole for the charge with your bar."

Grag nodded understandingly. The big robot set down on the fissure floor the burden of transformers, condensers and other apparatus he had carried on his back. Then, unencumbered, he attacked the jagged black rock, using his pointed metal bar as a drill.

Curt and Otho bent over the delicate task of pouring out the unstable atomic explosive in their proton-pistols. They encased the powder in an improvised cloth cartridge. As Captain Future started hastily to construct a makeshift atomic fuse, the throbbing reverberation from the upper end of the cavern was coming very much louder.

The Brain hurried up to that end of the cavern to listen. When he came gliding rapidly back, his report was alarming.

"They're within a few feet of holing through. They'll burst into this cavern in less than ten minutes."

In fact, the whole cavern now was vibrating to the powerful thrrob of the boring machines, with which Larsen King's crews were tunneling on.

"We daren't take any longer!" Curt exclaimed. "Got that cartridge ready, Otho? What about the drill hole, Grag?"

"I'm only two feet deep," rumbled Grag, between strokes of his improvised drill. "This rock is hard."

The big robot had been toiling furiously, driving the pointed metal bar deeper into the lunar basalt with all his tremendous strength.

"That will have to do," Captain Future said urgently. "Quick, give me the cartridge, Otho."

He took the innocent-looking little cloth cartridge and gently thrust it into the deep, slender aperture that Grag had sunk into the rock. Curt set his makeshift atomic fuse for a rough five-minute interval and thrust it in after the cartridge. Then he hastily tamped the aperture shut.

"Now—down the path away from here!" he exclaimed. "That fuse of mine was no precision job—it may let go any second."

Hastily they started down the ancient path, deeper along the descending fissure, to escape the imminent blast. Glancing back as he ran, Curt saw that light was showing through cracks in the cavern's north wall as Larsen King's miners broke down the final barrier.

Grag suddenly stopped short.

"Your transformers and other apparatus!" he cried, appalled. "I left them back there!"

Captain Future immediately understood the robot's ruinous oversight. Grag had put down the vital burden of scientific apparatus, while he worked with the drill. And he had forgot this precious equipment and left it up there on the floor of the passage, right where the rock slide would take place.
Without that apparatus, Curt's plan of protecting the radium deposit was useless. That crushing realization held him speechless for a moment. Then he realized that Grag was racing madly back up the fissure.

"I'll get the stuff, Chief!" the big robot yelled.

"Grag, come back!" Curt cried in sharp alarm, lunging forward to follow. "That blast is due to let go now—"

Things happened then so swiftly that he could hardly apprehend their sequence.

As he yelled and started after the robot, Curt Newton saw a big round section of the cavern's northern wall fall inward. Men and machines were revealed there in a blaze of light. King's miners had holed through!

The miners wore space-suits, for they had expected to burst into a completely airless cave. They surged excitedly forward as they glimpsed the dim spaces of the great cave, the solemn Lunarian statue, the robot running with great strides up the passage.

Grag reached the spot where he had dropped the equipment. He picked up the mass of scientific apparatus.

"Boom! The buried charge of atomic explosive let go at that moment, wildly shaking the rock walls. With ominous, terrifying sounds, the fissure walls bulged out over the robot.

"Grag—jump!" yelled Captain Future frantically.

Instead of doing so, Grag threw the mass of apparatus down toward Curt with all his strength.

"Catch it, Chief—I can't get clear!" he bellowed.

The miraculous strength of the robot was behind that toss. The mass of apparatus, tied together for easier carrying, hit Curt's chest and bore him to the floor.

With a thunderous roar, a massive fall of shattered black rock poured down from the sides of the narrow passage. Curt glimpsed Grag's great metal form knocked down and covered by the falling rock. Captain Future recoiled with the bundle of apparatus, as the area of the slide increased.

For a hundred seconds, dislodged masses of black basalt showered from above, along fifty feet of the fissure. Then the rock slide ceased.

"Chief, where are you?" came Otho's sharp cry from below. "Are you hurt?"

Captain Future picked himself up shakenly.

"I'm all right," he called. "But the slide caught Grag!"

The other two Futuremen reached his side. Curt turned his blue krypton beam upward along the passage.

The narrow chasm was completely blocked, as high as the beam could reach, by a mass of shattered rock. No light or sound from the cavern above came down through that barrier the Futuremen had effectually interposed.

"Is Grag under that?" cried Otho in dismay. "We've got to get him out."

"We can't now!" Curt replied worriedly. "He was at the far end of the slide. We'd have to dig through fifty feet of that rock to reach him, and we'd be putting ourselves right into the hands of that crooked Larsen King's outfit."

CURT continued more hopefully.

"I don't think Grag can have been hurt much. It would kill anybody else to be buried under falling rock, but Grag's metal body can stand a lot. And he won't smother, for he doesn't breathe. He'll be all right, and King's crews will soon dig him out."

"But they'll hold him a prisoner—he's an outlaw now like all of us!" Otho reminded Curt anxiously.

"We'll come back and take him away from them when we've assured the safety of the radium deposit," Captain Future promised. "He'll be all right till then."

"Of course he will," agreed the Brain. "The only way you could really harm Grag much would be to cut him up with an atomic torch."

Curt turned his beam down the fissure. The ancient path of the Lunarians wound into the narrow chasm, out of sight around a sharp bend.

He picked up the mass of apparatus.
"We'd better get started. We've a long, long way to go before we'll be anywhere near that radium deposit. I only hope this Lunarian path leads somewhere near it."

They started down the passage in silence. They all missed Grag, and were all anxiously thinking of the Futureman they had been forced to leave behind. Yet Curt knew it was the only possible course of action.

He stopped suddenly, his krypton beam pointing rigidly on down the fissure. He had vaguely glimpsed a movement, down there beyond his light.

"Something's coming this way!" he said in a low voice. "I don't know what—"

"Devils of space, what are they?" cried Otho, peering frozenly.

Dim shapes were coming slowly up out of the deeper darkness into the illumination of the krypton beam. They could still see those shapes only as vague figures, whose half-glimpsed outlines somehow suggested the monstrous.

Curt Newton realized the Futuremen were caught in the passage without chance of evading whatever creatures might be ahead. And, he remembered with sharp dismay, their proton-pistols were useless now.

CHAPTER X

Grag's Stratagem

Grag had realized, as the blast of atomic explosive let go, that he could not escape the rock slide which already was beginning to roar downward. But the big robot was determined to retrieve his ruinous mistake of leaving Curt's apparatus behind. So Grag, with all his great strength, had hurled the mass of apparatus down toward Captain Future.

"Catch it, Chief—I can't get clear!" he had bellowed.

Grag glimpsed Curt catching the burden of scientific equipment. Then a shower of shattered black rock poured down on the robot from above.

Grag flung his metal arm up to protect his photo-electric eyes, the most vulnerable part of his strange body. As the avalanche bore him from his feet, he threw himself in toward the fissure wall.

He felt masses of broken basalt raining down on him, burying him deeply. But by his last-minute lunge toward the wall, Grag avoided being hit by the huger chunks of rock that would have crushed even his metal body.

The robot lay, pinned down by the tremendous weight of fallen debris, the roar reverberating deafeningly in his ears. Finally, the thunder and quake of the falling rock ceased. The slide had blocked the passage.

Again and again Grag strained his great limbs in an effort to win free. Then he realized the utter uselessness of it. The weight of broken rock upon him held him in an immovable grip. So, with a simple philosophy that was part of his character, he gave up the vain attempt.

"I'll simply have to wait here till somebody digs me out," he thought.

Within a few minutes Grag heard faint sounds through the mass of rock over him. He guessed King's miners were already working to clear away the rock slide.

Grag chuckled grimly to himself.

"They'll get a surprise when they uncover me! I hope Larsen King and Albert Wissler are both around. I'd enjoy knocking their heads together."

He lay, expectantly waiting with this plan in mind, as the sounds of digging grew louder. Soon, he faintly heard Wissler's voice.

"Careful, now, men!" the superintendent was ordering. "We're getting near that robot. He was buried near this end of the slide."

"I've uncovered one of his feet!" a man shouted, a little later.

"Take it easy!" Wissler barked. "Uncover his legs first."

"Just wait till you get my arms free and see what happens to you, Mr. Wissler," Grag muttered to himself.

But the robot's grim plan suffered a sudden setback. He had felt the
broken rock being removed from over his legs, though his upper body was still pinned down by a great mass of it. But now Grag heard a rattle of chains. He swore as he realized they were chaining him tightly as they uncovered him. They were taking no chance of letting him get free.

By the time they had all the rock off Grag, he was bound hand and foot by heavy steelite chains. The robot was dragged away from the mass of rock that blocked the passage. He made furious attempts to break his bonds, but not even his strength could snap those massive chains.

The whole cavern was now brightly illuminated by powerful krypton lights that had been brought down here. Some forty of Larsen King’s planetary miners were present, wearing space-suits and helmets. Most of this motley collection of Martians, Saturnians, Earthmen and others were looking in uneasy awe around the gloomy cavern, and at the solemn Lunarian statue.

_**ALBERT WISSLER,**_ his thin face anxious inside his glassite helmet, stood superintending Grag’s removal. The scientist turned as Larsen King hastily entered the cavern from above. King’s hard face showed excitement, and his voice came sharply on the space-suit phone.

“So you holed through into this cave at last?” Larsen King exclaimed to Wissler.

Then his eye fell on the blocked fissure.

“What did that?” he demanded.

“Captain Future!” exclaimed Wissler. “He and his Futuremen were in this cave when we entered it. They escaped down that passage, setting off a blast to block it. One of them, this robot, was caught in the explosion.”

King uttered an angry curse.

“But the Planet Patrol said the Futuremen were trapped over in the Thompson Range, miles away!”

He swung angrily on Grag.

“How did you reach this cavern?”

“Why, we just wished we were here, and here we were,” Grag grunted sarcastically. “Isn’t it remarkable?”

King turned furiously from the jeering robot.

“They must have come through some other crack or fissure,” he muttered. “And they’ve gone on down that fissure they blocked. Captain Future must figure it will lead him down to the radium. Well, we can follow that way, too!”

“I don’t know that I want to follow that way,” Wissler said agitatedly. “There’s a lot of wrong about all this. There’s _air_ in this cavern. And look at that statue! It seems to indicate that the ancient Lunarians migrated into these depths long ago, to follow their dwindling atmosphere.”

“To the devil with the Lunarians!” snapped Larsen King.

His voice rang in sharp orders to the workmen.

“Get the boring machines down here and open that blocked fissure. Then we’ll have a clear way on down.”

The motley planetary miners hesitate uneasily. Then the lanky Saturnian who was their spokesman answered King sullenly.

“We don’t want to go any deeper in the Moon! That statue and the air here make us sure that some of those Moon-devils still exist.”

“Yes, there’s a footprint of one of the things here!” cried another.

“That’s right, men!” Grag shouted loudly. “These caves are full of Moon-devils. We saw a couple of them ourselves.”

“Silence that robot!” roared Larsen King furiously. “You men pay no attention to his lies. There’s nothing down there to hurt you.”

The miners still remained sulkily unmoving. King cursed in a low voice. Then he tried another tack.

“All right, men. If you’re afraid of shadows, I’ll see that you are protected,” he told the planetary workmen. “I’ll arrange for a full company of Planet Patrol officers to come here and accompany us as a guard in the deeper caves. That’s a guarantee of your safety, isn’t it?”

“We wouldn’t mind going deeper with a Patrol company to guard us,” the Saturnian miner conceded. “But we don’t go on till it gets here.”

King nodded impatiently.
inside the binding chains that his left hand touched his right wrist.
The steely fingers of Grag’s left hand began work upon his other wrist. They began to unlock the cunning hidden bolts that held his metal hand. For Grag’s hands, like all his limbs, were detachable, so that they could be repaired easily when necessary.
Gradually, Grag completely unfastened his right hand from the wrist. He made certain he was not observed. Wissler was earnestly directing the mining crews, who had now bored nearly through the mass of obstructing rock. No one was watching Grag. Quietly the robot drew his handleless right arm from under the binding chains.
It took Grag some minutes to get his dismembered right hand free also. Then, using the fingers of his still-bound left hand, he refastened his right hand to the wrist. He now had one arm and hand completely free of the chains.
“They’ll learn that it’s not so simple to tie me up!” Grag told himself grimly.
With the free hand, he soon untied his chains. Quickly he rearranged the chains around his body so that, although he was now really free of them, they looked as though they still bound him.
“Now I’ll wait till they get the passage open,” Grag decided coolly. “I might as well let them do all that hard work for me.”
He lay, apparently tightly chained, watching the planetary miners bore on into the fallen mass of rock. Before long, the powerful machines had penetrated completely through. The fissure was now open again.
At once, the miners drew back into the cavern. Grag saw their Saturnian spokesman anxiously report to Albert Wissler. Wissler nodded his head emphatically.
“All right. You men can go back up to the dome till the Patrol company gets here.”
His eye fell on Grag.
“Better haul that robot up with you. We’ll keep him up there till we can turn him over to the Patrol men.”
Grag, in the last few minutes, had evolved an improvement of his original scheme. He saw now a way, not only to escape, but to help Captain Future.

"Wissler, I've something to propose to you before you turn me over to the Patrol," Grag said in a low, urgent voice to the scientist.

Wissler looked down at him doubtfully.

"What is it?"

"You've been trying to find the Moon laboratory," Grag said earnestly. "I'd tell you where it is, if you gave me a chance to escape."

Wissler rose immediately to the bait.

"Wait a minute," he said in a low voice.

The planetary miners were approaching to haul Grag to the surface. Albert Wissler gestured impatiently.

"I've changed my mind. We can leave the robot safely down here, since he's chained," Wissler told the men. "You can go on up."

The motley crew needed no urging. They were eager to leave the gloomy lunar cavern that had so strongly aroused their superstitious fears. They poured into the tunnel leading to the surface.

Wissler came back to Grag. The scientist's blinking eyes were lit with avid excitement as he approached the prostrate robot.

"Now we're alone. You can tell me where the Moon laboratory is," he said eagerly. "If I find you've told the truth, I'll see you get away."

For answer, Grag suddenly flung away the heavy chains draped around him, and rose to his feet. The great robot's steeley hands gripped the neck of the thin scientist.

Wissler's eyes bulged in unbelieving horror at the massive metal giant standing over him. His knees buckled, his bony face was a pasty gray.

"Don't—don't kill me!" he choked, in terrified accents.

"I'm not going to kill you unless you make me," Grag boomed grimly. He had possessed himself of the atom-pistol which the man had been too terrified to use.

"You're going with me, Wissler."

"Going with you? Where?" gasped the panicky scientist.

"Down after the chief," Grag retorted. "You're going to be a hostage for us. And you'll be a dead hostage, if you try any tricks."

They started down the narrow fissure, Grag stalking grimly behind the stumbling scientist. The robot had picked up one of the hand krypton lamps left by the planetary miners. He kept its beam flashing ahead. The blue ray illuminated a few hundred feet of the way ahead.

The fissure was a mere narrow crack in the black Moon-rock, angling this way and that as it dropped ever deeper into the lunar depths.

A few minutes later, the two suddenly halted. There were signs of a recent struggle at this point. Grag flashed his beam on a little patch of red, glistening fluid on the jagged black rock wall.

"That's human blood!" the robot exclaimed anxiously. "The chief must have been in some kind of a fight here!"

CHAPTER XI

Moon Men

Captain Future, Otho and the Brain had remained frozen in suspense there in the narrow fissure, as they peered down at the dim shapes approaching them from below. Those vaguely monstrous figures were still just beyond the limits of the blue beam of Curt's lamp.

Then, as though cautious of the light, the two creatures came closer. They were now clearly outlined. And at the sight of these twin horrors of the lunar depths, gasps of amazement came from both Otho and Captain Future.

"Those things aren't real! They're a bad dream!" yelled Otho incredulously.
“Quick—get back!” shouted Curt Newton. “They’re coming up at us, and we haven’t a single weapon.”

The two advancing horrors were centipedal monsters. They looked like giant white worms, with thick bodies twenty feet long, borne upon a network of very short legs. The head of each was a blunt monstrosity split by a mouth of gaping fangs. The eyes were huge, round and phosphorescent.

Even as he realized their extreme danger, Curt’s scientifically trained mind apprehended the nature of these creatures. He had seen sculptures of just such monsters in the dead Lunarian cities above. These many-legged things were living relics of the Moon’s dead youth.

The centipedal horrors advanced more rapidly as the Futuremen backed up the passage. The creatures seemed to be making ready for a fierce rush. The glare of their phosphorescent eyes was hypnotic.

“And our proton-pistols are dead, and we’re trapped in this cursed fissure!” Otho groaned. “I knew we’d meet grief in these ancient holes inside the Moon.”

“Looks like it,” Captain Future admitted tersely. “Better save yourself, Simon,” he told the Brain. “You can get away, but we can’t.”

The centipedal monsters had now reared up their hideous bodies a little in the blue light. They seemed to tense themselves for the spring.

“Lad, there’s a niche up in the wall of the fissure here!” came Simon Wright’s sharp, metallic voice. “If you can get up to it, we could perhaps hold the creatures off.”

Curt turned his head for a swift glance. There was a shallow pocket in the black rock wall on their right, twenty feet over their heads.

“Try to jump for it, Otho,” he ordered the android quickly. “If you can make it, you can help haul me up.”

The android tensed himself, bunching like a rubber ball and then bounding upward with marvelous agility. Due to their gravitation equalizers, the Futuremen’s weight here was still normal. Yet even so, Otho’s wonderful muscles sent him hurrying upward. He caught the edge of the niche and clung to it with both hands.

Instantly, Otho whipped up into the pocket in the rock. The Brain was already hovering beside him. The android yelled down urgently.

“Jump quick, Chief — there they come!”

Curt Newton glimpsed the centipedal monsters, as though enraged by the possible escape of their prey, darting forward with lightning speed.

With a fast movement, Curt flung the hand lamp up into the niche. As its angling blue beam whirled and sliced the dark, Captain Future leaped upward with all the force of his own finely trained muscles.

His hands came several feet short of the niche’s edge. But Otho, hanging down over the edge, grabbed Curt’s wrists and started to pull him up.

“Hurry, Otho!” cried the Brain. “The creatures are following—”

The centipedal horrors had flung themselves up the side of the rock wall after Curt, by the impetus of their fierce rush. Curt felt a sharp pain as fangs grazed his lower leg.

Otho yanked him into the niche. As he scrambled up, Curt heard the android yelling in anger. He whipped around, found the giant centipedes had climbed up the vertical wall after him. Their hideous heads already protruded over the edge.

Their great jaws were gaping, the huge phosphorescent eyes luridly blazing. Otho promptly snatched out his empty proton-pistol. With its heavy butt he hammered on the top of the nearest monster’s skull. The creature, scrambling with its myriad feet to retain its precarious hold on the wall, recoiled from the tattoo of blows.

Captain Future found a loose chunk of jagged lunar basalt in the niche, promptly hurled it at the owner’s head. That creature lost its hold and fell in a hideous coiling heap to the fissure floor, where it and its mate remained for the moment, staring furiously upward.

"Just a scratch," Curt Newton answered tersely. "Those creatures will try to get up here again. Gather up some rocks—they're the only weapons we've got."

Otho hastily obeyed, prying loose split chunks of the black basalt, while the Brain kept watch over the monsters below.

"We're in a nice spot," the android murmured disgustedly to himself. "Trapped in a hole in a wall by a couple of overgrown insects."

"They are exceedingly interesting creatures," remarked the Brain, peering downward. "There can be no doubt they are survivors of the giant lunar anthropods of long ago, which made their way down here when the Moon's atmosphere drained into these interior spaces."

Captain Future was hastily bandaging his wound. The fangs of the giant centipede had slashed through the leg of his heavy space-suit. But that break in the suit had not been fatal, since there was air here.

Curt fastened an improvised pad over his wound. Then he sealed the break in his suit by one of the self-fusing patches, which he carried for such emergencies in an outer pocket of every space-suit. He finished this task just in time to hear the Brain call to them.

"The creatures are going away," Simon Wright reported.

Curt looked down. The two centipetal monsters were indeed moving away down the fissure. But suddenly they turned in the beam of light he was playing upon them. They came rushing back at high speed.

"They're trying to swarm up the wall again!" Curt yelled. "Fire those rocks at them quick!"

He and Otho unloosed a barrage of stones at the twin monsters as they rushed up the jagged wall. Again, the missiles were too bruising for the giant centipedes to endure. They scrambled back down to the floor, coiling and uncoiling in rage.

Finally the monsters turned and moved back down the crevasse in their scuttling run, to disappear from the range of Curt's krypton beam.

"They've gone to look for easier prey," Captain Future decided. "We can get going now."

"I don't know. I'm not crazy to follow those things," muttered Otho. "What if we find them waiting for us somewhere along the road?"

But he slid down to the floor of the passage with Curt. There Curt picked up the burden of apparatus he had been forced to drop when he leaped up to the niche. He examined the transformers, condensers and other equipment carefully. The centipetal monsters had not disturbed the apparatus.

Once more Captain Future and his two comrades started on down the descending fissure into the lunar depths. But now they kept tense watch for the creatures which stalked somewhere ahead of them.

"If lunar animals like that migrated down here into the interior and are still living, why not the Lunarians?" Otho wanted to know.

Curt shook his head, though with lessened conviction now.

"I can't believe that any humanoid race could ever live without light."

The passage descended into a long, vaulted space from which many other fissures radiated. But here stood another of the solemn Lunarian statues, pointing with its webbed hand toward one of the cracks.

"No doubt about it. The Lunarians came down this way ages ago," Curt muttered. "Their first exploring parties must have set up these statues to guide the rest of the race."

As they moved on down this new passage, ever going deeper, Curt Newton's mind was a fever of strange speculations. What would they find at the end of this ancient road?

Deeper and deeper, mile after mile, Captain Future and his two loyal comrades forged downward through a bewildering labyrinth of fissures, galleries and gloomy caves. The path led suddenly out of a narrow crack in the rock, along the edge of a deep abyss.

Their beam showed the jagged rock wall on their right, but on their left was an unplumbed darkness dropping to depths inconceivable, which their
krypton light could not penetrate.

Otho peered down into the abyss.

"I can see some kind of light down there," he muttered in awe. "Turn off the krypton, Chief, and look."

Curt obeyed. Snapping off the light, he gazed down into the dark void. And he described a faint, greenish glow that filtered from far beneath.

"I can't understand it," he murmured incredulously. "How could there be light down there?"

"Maybe the Lunarians had a way of making artificial sunlight?" Otho suggested excitedly.

Captain Future rejected the suggestion.

"The ancient Lunarians were not a scientific race. We know from the ruins of their cities on the surface that they were civilized in some respects, but quite unscientific. Besides—"

"Lad, I hear something coming up the path!" the Brain interrupted. "It sounds like one of those centipede creatures."

Curt hastily snapped his krypton beam on again and stabbed the light down the path. He uttered an exclamation of alarm. One of the hideous monsters was slowly advancing toward them.

"Now we are in for it!" Otho cried in dismay. "There's no niche in the wall here!"

"Wait, that thing's not going to attack us!" Captain Future said suddenly. "Look at it!"

The giant centipede was behaving queerly. It had stopped on the narrow path a hundred feet below them, and was clawing at its own body. Then, with a hissing cry they could clearly hear, now that they wore no helmets, in the denser air, the creature stopped its writhing.

Curt and his comrades slowly advanced toward the motionless monster. They discovered quickly that the thing was dead, its huge eyes closed. Two short metal spears bristled from its back, and thick, pale blood flowing from the wound.

"Those spears mean men down here—living men!" Otho yelled in high excitement.

"Get back at once!" Curt said sharply. "This thing was just wounded. Its hunters, whoever they are, must be close. We'll hide until—"

"Too late, lad!" rasped the brain. "There they come!"

CAPTAIN Future and Otho stood stock still. Their blue beam showed a dozen alien-looking men coming up the path.

"Lunarians!" whispered Otho "Men of the Moon's dead past!"

There could be no doubt of it. These men who were approaching with upraised weapons were exact replicas of the Lunarian statues.

Their bodies were short and stocky and oddly neckless, and their heads unusually round. The skin was white, not a pinkish white but a greenish pallor. They were white-haired, also, but their features were not unhuman except in two details. One was the fact that their noses were so flat as to consist merely of two gaping nostril orifices. The other was the queer, shutterlike lids above their dark—large-pupilled eyes.

The Lunarians' hands and feet were flat—and webbed. They wore short garments of pale, soft leather. Each man had at his belt a quiver of short metal spears. And each carried an unusual weapon much like an ancient crossbow, in the slot of which one of the short spears was ready for firing.

These Moon-men had burst into low cries of excitement or alarm as they came around the path in the glare of Captain Future's beam. Their queer eyelids almost completely closed their eyes against the beam as they slowly advanced, their strange weapons leveled at the Futuremen.

"Men of the Moon—men nobody has dreamed existed!" Otho was gasping.

"Don't make a move," Captain Future murmured tensely. "They can riddle us with those spears. Right now, they're too astonished to act."

Curt held up his hand, palm outward, in the instinctive sign of peace that is understood by every intelligent inhabitant of every world. But the Lunarians showed no signs of relaxing their threatening attitude.

"They don't seem very friendly,"
Otho blurted. "Shall we turn off the lamp and make a break to get away in the dark?"

"Don't try anything of the sort," Curt warned sharply. "They apparently can see in almost complete darkness. They'd have the advantage."

The Moon-men were conferring rapidly in excited voices. Their language was utterly strange to Captain Future. One of the Lunarians, a taller, grizzled fellow who seemed to be the leader, was pointing at Simon.

"Perhaps they don't understand think we'd better accept. It's the way we were going, anyway. And they might construe a refusal on our part as proof that we were enemies."

"What about the radium deposit?" the Brain asked anxiously. "We want to reach that without a single moment's delay, lad."

"I know, but it's still somewhere below us," Captain Future replied. "If we could learn a little of this Lunarian language, these people might be able to tell us the easiest way to the radium. They must know every cave."

Captain Future Battles to Save the Universe
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that I'm living," the Brain said.

The Lunarians recoiled a little in astonishment as they heard the Brain speak. They stared at the Futuremen in mingled fear and perplexity.

Captain Future repeated his friendly gesture, eyeing the Lunarian leader. That shrewd individual contemplated him thoughtfully. Then he pointed significantly down the narrow path, saying something as he did so.

"A clear command or invitation to go with them," Curt muttered. "I'd rather find my own way, myself," grunted Otho skeptically. "We may be walking into a nice little trap if we go with them."

Meanwhile, two of the Lunarians had been working with metal knives upon the dead centipetal monster.

They now rose with the prize of their toil—the creature's great, ivory-like fangs.

"So they hunt those monstrosities for their teeth," Otho mumbled. "Nice people!"

Curt Newton made a sign to the
Lunarian leader that they were willing to accompany the party. The tension of the Moon-men appeared to relax a little, and they lowered their spear-bows. But, Curt noticed, they kept the queer weapons ready for instant use.

The march began, the Lunarians keeping ahead and behind the Future-men. Curt kept his krypton beam shining, and their strange new escort made no objection. The Moon-men chattered in their soft, quick voices among themselves, as their grizzled leader led the way.

The path wound downward through narrow fissures, across great gloomy caves in which giant centipedes and other smaller arthropodal monsters scuttled away, and along the rim of gigantic crevasses, from deep in which the faint green glow of light came persistently.

Ever and again the party came to stone statues of ancient Lunarians, pointing the way. And always, the Lunarian escort solemnly saluted the statues.

Hours passed in the downward trek. Then, in a small cave, the grizzled Lunarian leader signaled a halt for rest. The Moon-men brought forth strips of pale dried meat and hide bottles of water. They apportioned some of this food and drink to Curt and Otho. They did not venture to approach the Brain, whom they seemed to regard with some awe.

Curt talked earnestly to the Lunarian leader, trying by gestures to obtain a rudimentary knowledge of the strange language. He learned but a few words.

"It's not going to be easy to learn their tongue," he said discouragely. "And if the plan I have in mind is to work, I must reach the radium deposit soon."

"I'd like to know whether we're pals or prisoners," Otho declared. "They seem friendly, yet they watch us pretty closely."

"Probably they're not sure whether or not we are enemies," Curt commented. "They can't ever have seen other men than themselves before."

After the meal the Lunarians sprawled in sleep. But four of them remained awake and watchful. Curt and Otho slept also, the dreamless slumber of exhaustion.

They awakened to find the Lunarians ready to resume the march. Hour upon hour, the steady progress down into the heart of the Moon went on, through endless labyrinths and caves. Curt estimated finally that they must be more than two score miles beneath the lunar surface.

The Lunarians quickened their pace. They were traveling down a very steeply slanting passage now. At its further end, there shone a strong glow of throbbing green light. The Moon-men were talking to each other in excited, cheerful accents.

"Looks like they're getting home," murmured Otho. "But where the devil does that light come from?"

They came to the end of the fissure. It debouched into a vast, greenlit space.

Captain Future, Otho and Simon Wright stopped short, uttering cries of amazement as they stared at the stupendous and incredible scene.

CHAPTER XII

Mountain of Light

They were looking out into an amazing world, deep inside the Moon. It was a cavernous space, so vast the eye could not perceive its roof or farther wall. Their first stunned impression was of an underworld illuminated by throbbing green radiance, whose weird landscape stretched for a score of miles and out of sight.

Captain Future, his two comrades and their alien escort stood at the east wall of this underworld. From their feet, the ground sloped gently downward in a dense, unearthly jungle. This towering forest was of grotesque, pale green fronded trees, interspersed with giant mosses and tangled, snaky vines.

The jungle ended two miles away,
at the shore of a great inland sea. This black, heaving body of water was of great extent. Its farther shore was only dimly visible. But, most wonderful of all, miles out upon the black sea there rose from its waters a towering mountain that shone with dazzling green radiance. And that shining mountain in the sea was the source of the quaking green light for this incredible world inside the Moon.

"That sea is water!" choked Otho wildly. "Water, here inside the dead Moon!"

"The water of the surface lunar oceans of long ago," muttered the Brain. "We might have guessed it. It drained down into the interior, just as did the lunar air."

But Captain Future was gazing neither at the grotesque jungle nor the black sea beyond it. His eyes were riveted to that radiant, shining mountain which rose from the dark waters far away.

"Don't you two understand what we're looking at?" he cried to his companions. "That shining mountain out there must be of radium ores. It's the great radium deposit itself!"

"A mountain of radium ore?" cried Otho incredulously. "But that's not possible!"

Then the inescapable reality crushed down their dazed doubt. Only radioactive matter could be self-luminous to such high degree as that radiant peak in the distance. Its quivering light illuminated the whole cavern-world with rays of unearthly splendor.

Curt Newton felt a surge of wild hope. They had reached the radium deposit at last. And if he had time to prepare his startling plan, he could harness the terrific potential energy of that shining mountain to forestall all Larsen King's schemes.

The Lunarian leader was pointing now, urging Curt and his comrades to move on. Slowly, rapt in the wonder of the magnificent spectacle, they accompanied the Lunarians down the slope into the pale green jungle.

The Moon-men followed a worn path through the weird forest. All around them towered the grotesque, fronded trees and great mosses. The air was warm and soft. Quivering green rays penetrated the foliage fronds like strange sunlight. Insects and small, batlike birds flashed in the branches.

The path led toward the black sea. The Lunarians shrank back as there came a crashing in the undergrowth ahead. With a loud, bellowing sound, a sluglike creature that resembled an enormous black seal lumbered across the path in frantic flight. After it flashed its pursuer, a writhing, tentacled monstrosity like a land-octopus. They disappeared in the jungle.

"Life within the Moon," murmured the Brain with intense interest. "Life that once inhabited the lunar surface, until the dying satellite drove it down here after the dwindling air and water."

"And these Lunarians live here, have been living here ever since their great migration ages ago!" Otho exclaimed. "Yet how can they exist? The light from that radium mountain isn't sunlight."

"No, but it seems that animal and plant life was able to adapt itself to the different radiation and live in it as we live in the open air," Captain Future declared. "Who would have dreamed it?"

THE Lunarian leader abruptly made a gesture that commanded him to silence. The Moon-men were standing, listening and looking back along the trail in obvious alarm.

Curt heard a dim, thudding sound as of monstrous, heavy feet in rapid tread. The Lunarian chief uttered a sharp whisper of warning. He and his men raised their spear-bows, facing back along the path.

"What kind of creature is this that's coming?" whispered Otho. "They're scared. But it can't be worse than those other monsters, surely."

The heavy tread came closer. Then around a bend in the trail came a towering, man-shaped metal figure, dragging a smaller figure along with him.

It was Grag! Curt was about to utter a joyful cry of recognition. But then he perceived that the Lunarians beside him were exhibiting astonish-
ment and terror at sight of the great metal robot. They were hastily aiming their queer weapons—

Captain Future yelled and sprang forward to stop them. They had already fired. Their short metal spears whizzed from the bows and struck Grag squarely. But they only rattled harmlessly off the robot's metal torso. Curt sprang in front of the Lunarians, motioning them not to shoot again.

"Put up your hand in sign of friendship, Grag!" he yelled.

"Chief, is that you?" boomed the robot joyfully. "I was hoping you had taken the ancient path, and I followed down all this way."

The Moon-men were lowering their spear-bows in bewilderment. It had apparently penetrated their minds that the strange metal newcomer was a friend of Captain Future's group; but they regarded Grag with some fear.

On his part, Grag stared perplexedly at the Moon-men.

"Why, they're Lunarians!" blurted the robot. "Real, live—"

Otho and Simon Wright were hurrying forward with Captain Future to greet the robot. Now they discovered that the figure Grag had been dragging along was an Earthman. All recognized him instantly.

"Albert Wissler!" exclaimed Otho. "How the devil did you get him down here, Grag?"

"Dragged him down, when his strength gave out," Grag retorted grimly. "He's a flabby little fellow for endurance."

Albert Wissler was an almost pitiful sight. He seemed near collapse, his thin face haggard with exhaustion, his blinking eyes dazed in their wildness as he looked drunkenly around the group and the incredible lunar underworld.

"I brought him down as a hostage," Grag explained. "We can threaten to take it out on him if King's men persist in following us."

Wissler choked in panic.

"Larsen King wouldn't pay any attention to such a threat! He wouldn't care whether you killed me or not."

"Don't worry—your worthless hide is safe," Curt Newton assured him sharply. "Grag, how did you come to find us?"

Grag rapidly told his story.

"When I saw that blood in the fissure," he concluded, "I was worried about you. I figured you'd stick to the ancient Lunarian path, so I followed that down here at top speed."

Then the robot remembered.

"I've bad news for you, Chief! King himself has gone back to Earth, to get the Government to send a full company of the Planet Patrol to the Moon. The Patrol company will guard the miners as they penetrate down here."

THO swore in dismay.

"That is bad! We can't fight a whole company of the Patrol."

"No, we'll have to put my plan into operation before they get here or we're lost," Captain Future agreed.

"Yet there may still be time—"

The Lunarians were approaching them now. The Moon-men still eyed Grag fearfully, and kept their heavy spear-bows ready for use. Their grizzled leader touched Curt's shoulder, pointed with peremptory urgency forward along the jungle trail.

Curt understood. There was danger from strange forms of life while they lingered here in the jungle. So, with Grag and the captive Wissler now added to their company, they resumed the hasty march through the pale green forest toward the sea.

Wissler, already drunken with fatigue, seemed stunned by everything in this underworld of throbbing green light. Grag had to lift him along at every step, the towering robot keeping a tight hold on the man's shoulder.

The anxious Lunarians soon led them out onto the beach of the black sea. Its waters, laden with sediment that gave them their dark hue, were swelling in an abnormally high tide. The Moon men went to two long heavy canoes of yellow wood that were pulled up on the sand. They pushed these out onto the swirling black waters, and gestured Captain Future and his companions to enter them.

There was a bad moment when Grag climbed into one of the big canoes,
for his weight threatened to capsize it. Hastily the passengers were rearranged. Then the grizzled Lunarian leader gave a signal, the Moon-men dug deep with broad-bladed paddles, and the two yellow crafts shot out on the surface of the heaving black sea.

The Lunarians steered toward the western shore of the black sea. Far to their left, they glimpsed great marshes on the north shore. Their course took them within a few miles of the shining mountain of radium ores. Grag, to whom Curt had explained the mountain’s nature, stared at it unbelievably as did the terrified Wissler.

“It can’t be radium ores, all that mountain!” Grag exclaimed. “If it were, wouldn’t its radiation be fatal even at this distance?”

“Not at this distance,” Curt denied. “You forget that ninety percent of the energy emitted from radium lies in its alpha rays. And alpha rays are quickly absorbed by air. So that more than nine-tenths of the powerful radiation from that mass can’t reach far through the air.”

“All the same, I wouldn’t want to get too near it,” Grag muttered.

Captain Future’s face was thoughtful.

“An unprotected man who approached that mass too closely would receive the full blast of its unsoftened alpha rays and would perish. But if we wore some kind of rayproof protection—”

“We?” yelped Otho. “You mean you’re going to try landing on that blazing mass?”

“We’ll have to,” Captain Future told him. “My plan depends on it. And we’ll have to do it as soon as we get this apparatus ready.”

Curt tried to get the Lunarians to stop paddling, so that he might make a longer inspection of the shining mountain. But though they seemed to understand his gestures, they shook their heads vigorously and resolutely paddled on away from the radiant peak.

CURT’S eyes clung to the great mass as they pulled away. Its value in monetary terms would be al-
and cultivating fields cleared near the town.

Fwar Aj, their grizzled guide, led them to a rambling black building, outside which were a small group of older Lunarians. One of these was a wrinkled, withered oldster who wore a curious metal emblem on his breast. "Reh Sel, di lao thur!" Fwar Aj said to Curt, at the same time bowing respectfully toward the oldster.

"Apparently this old Reh Sel is the chieftain of the Lunarians," Captain Future murmured to his companions. He made gestures of friendship. To his relief, old Reh Sel repeated them. Then the aged chieftain gave orders in a shrill voice.

Fwar Aj conducted Curt's group to a nearby dwelling, a low windowless stone vault. He gave them to understand it was their lodging. Then he departed, though a curious crowd of Moon people remained outside.

"So far, so good," muttered Curt. "They appear to be accepting us as friends, though I imagine they're keeping tabs on us."

"I've got to learn their language as soon as possible," he added determinedly. "We may need their help to put my scheme into effect before the Planet Patrol and King's men get here."

ALBERT WISSLER crouched fearfully in a corner of the dim room, watching as Captain Future keenly inspected the mass of transformers, condensers and other apparatus he had brought with him.

"We've got to build this equipment into a super-powered atomic generator and wave-transmitter," Curt declared. "We'll need metal for cables and other parts, and that's where we'll require Lunarian help."

Otho stared skeptically.

"You're going to build a big wave-transmitter of some kind? What for? How the devil will that protect the radium mountain out there from the forces King is mustering?"

"If my plan works, it will protect the radium from the biggest army that could be brought down into the Moon," Curt replied. "But we're short on time. We don't know how soon King's forces will get down here."

Curt went outside to find Reh Sel and Fwar Aj. But he found that the streets of the lunar town were now deserted, except for a small group of armed Lunarians loitering nearby, whom he guessed were watching them.

He came back ruefully.

"It seems that it's night here now."

"What do you mean, night?" exclaimed Grag. "It's light as ever. That radium mountain out there never quits shining, does it?"

"No, but apparently the Lunarians have a 'day' and 'night' period artificially defined," Captain Future surmised. "Probably it corresponds to the day and night of their ancient life on the Moon's surface, back ages ago before the Moon's diurnal period had lengthened to a fortnight."

He spent some hours starting to connect up parts of his intricate apparatus, in a circuit that would form the basis of a wave-transmitter of peculiar and unprecedentedly powerful design. It would need to be powerful, Curt thought grimly, to do the stupendous thing he meant it to accomplish.

Simon Wright watched keenly. Grag was standing guard, fingering the atom-pistol he had taken from Wissler. Wissler himself was sleeping exhaustedly, and so was Otho.

After some hours of work, Curt slept, too.

He awoke to find the city of the Moon-men stirring with life. It was "morning," it seemed. Lunarian men were setting off with tools of cultivation for the fields, with spear-bows for the jungles, or with nets and lines for the fishing boats on the beach.

Curt and Simon went through the town to find Reh Sel. A curious yet friendly Lunarian throng followed them, wonderingly eyeing the Brain. Captain Future found the old Lunarian chieftain and the grizzled Fwar Aj, earnestly conversing in the rambling building at the center of town. They greeted Curt and Simon with friendly gestures, and the two sat down.

"Now to see if I can't get the hang of their language," Curt murmured.
"They look like an intelligent people, so it shouldn't be hard.

Curt began the task. Captain Future had become expert in learning strange planetary tongues. He had perfected his own system of acquiring a working vocabulary of an alien language in brief time.

He worked with Reh Sel and Fwar Aj through the hours of that "day." By the time evening came, as evidenced by the return of the Lunarian workers, hunters and fishers, he was getting along fairly well.

LD Reh Sel's first question was tremulously eager.

"You came from the outer surface of our world? Fwar Aj told me he thought you did."

"We did. But we were amazed to find air, water and living men down in these spaces. We deduced that you Lunarians yourselves migrated here from the surface of this world."

"It is so," admitted Reh Sel. He gestured upward with his webbed hand. "Thousands of generations ago was our great migration. We had lived always upon the surface of this world. As its air and water failed, we had retreated to the deeper chasms.

"Then, when life even in these became almost intolerable, explorers of our people discovered that air and water had drained into these deep spaces underground, and that in this underworld the Shining Mountain gave light that would support life."

"So our race left the surface and came down here, and here we have lived ever since. We have nothing to fear except the bigger beasts that haunt the Marsh of Monsters, on the northern shore of this sea. They, like the smaller animals of our jungles, migrated down here as we did."

"We know there is no air now on the surface, for our adventurous young men who follow game upward in the caves report that the air grows thinner and thinner until there is none at all. How can you men live on the surface?"

Captain Future explained briefly.

"We are men from another planet, the Earth, of which this Moon is a satellite. We can live on the surface of your Moon because we dwell in airtight shelters."

"You are very welcome among us, strangers," Reh Sel said eagerly. "For you can tell us of that surface world our ancestors long ago left."

"We shall tell you all you wish to learn," Curt Newton agreed readily. "But that can be later. Now, we need help from you."

"We will help you in any way we can," promised Reh Sel earnestly. Captain Future nodded.

"We shall need metal of various kinds. And also we shall need a canoe, so that we can go to the Shining Mountain."

To Curt's surprise, the old Lunarian chieftain shook his head instantly in stern refusal.

"You cannot approach the Shining Mountain! It is death to go too near it, and it is forbidden by our laws. The mountain is sacred!"

"The devil!" muttered Curt to the Brain. "They've got some sort of superstitious religion centering on the radium peak. That's bad."

He tried another method with the old Lunarian.

"But we only wish to protect the mountain from other strangers, who are on their way down here at this very moment. They intend to possess it and to take it away piecemeal."

Both Reh Sel and the grizzled Fwar Aj showed excited alarm.

"Other strangers are coming to desecrate the mountain? How many of them?"

"They will be strong in numbers and weapons," Curt warned them."

"The captive whom my metal comrade brought down is one of their lot."

The reaction of old Reh Sel was fierce and instant.

"Then your captive shall die at once, for his wicked intention to desecrate the mountain. He shall suffer the death our laws decree for all such sacrilegious deeds. He shall perish in the blaze of the Shining Mountain itself!"

The old Lunarian chieftain snapped out a command.

"Fwar Aj, summon warriors and place the captive stranger, bound, in a canoe. Set him drifting toward the
mountain to perish, as is our custom.”

Fwar Aj, his eyes blazing, sprang out of the building to obey. Captain Future heard his strong voice summoning warriors.

“Good heavens, they’re going to execute Wissler in that hideous way!” exclaimed the Brain.

CHAPTER XIII

Battle in the Moon

Captain Future had no reason to love Albert Wissler. The sneaking scientist’s discovery of the radium inside the Moon had been responsible for all that had happened, for King’s plot and the outlawing of the Futuremen. Yet Wissler was an Earthman, and Curt could not see him die in the peculiarly horrible manner that was contemplated.

He pleaded earnestly with the old Lunarian chieftain, but Reh Sel was adamant. It was apparent that the Moon-men’s superstitious veneration for the Shining Mountain was such that no death was too horrible for one who meditated desecration of this supreme object of their worship.

“The man dies at once in the manner prescribed,” retorted the old Lunarian, rising and stalking out of the building. “Already the people come to witness.”

The Lunarian town was filled with excitement, throngs of the Moon people hastening down to the beach of the black sea. Curt hastened with Simon through the excited crowd toward their own lodging.

He found Grag and Otho coming to meet him.

“Fwar Aj and some of the Lunarians took Wissler away,” reported the big robot. “I gathered they were going to do something unpleasant to him, so I let them have him.”

“Why did you do that?” Curt flared. “They’re going to execute him by sending him to drift out to the radium mountain, to be burned alive.”

Grag shrugged.

“Well, it’s a nasty end, but he deserves it.”

“We can’t let an Earthman die that way!” Curt rapped. “Give me that atom-pistol you took from him.”

“Chief, be reasonable!” cried Otho. “You can’t save him. You’ll just get us massacred if you try to take him from the Lunarians.”

Curt, unheeding, handed the atom-pistol to the Brain.

“Take this and fly out over the radium mountain as quickly as you can, Simon. Keep high so the radiation won’t affect you. Drop the pistol on the peak.”

“It will explode and cause a minor atomic eruption in that radium!” the Brain protested, started.

“Exactly,” Curt clipped. “Get going—and don’t let yourself be seen by the Lunarians.”

The Brain, clutching the atom-pistol in one of his tractor beams, flashed up out of view in the throbbing green radiance, flying with all the swiftness of which he was capable toward the distant mountain.

Captain Future, with Grag and Otho at his heels, plunged down toward the beach of the black ocean. Thousands of the Lunarians were gathered there, watching in awed silence as Fwar Aj’s warriors bound Albert Wissler hand and foot and dumped him into a canoe.

Wissler was a pitiable spectacle, seeming more dead than alive with terror. He had evidently guessed the fate in store for him. Old Reh Sel was sternly watching as the sentence was carried out. Fwar Aj’s men were ready to start towing the canoe out toward the mountain.

“Wait!” exclaimed Captain Future in the Lunarian tongue. “You do wrong to kill this man. The Shining Mountain itself will be wroth at you.”

“It is our law!” rejoined Reh Sel inflexibly. “Carry out the sentence, Fwar Aj.”

Curt glanced anxiously toward the distant peak out there in the black sea. Then he saw what he had been hoping for.

“Look!” he cried, pointing drama-
tically. "The Shining Mountain itself shows its wrath at this thing you intend to do!"

A BURSTING blaze of dazzling white was exploding from one point on the radiant peak. It was the result of the minor atomic explosion caused by dropping the pistol there, and it lasted but briefly.

But its effect on the Lunarians was tremendous. They fell to their knees in superstitious panic.

"It is true—the Shining Mountain is angry!" gasped Reh Sel. "Set free the captive stranger!"

Wissler was hastily unbound and staggered ashore. The panic of the Lunarians gradually lessened as they perceived that the eruption of the radiant mountain had ceased.

"Thanks, Captain Future!" exclaimed Wissler hoarsely. "You saved me from a horrible death. I'll never forget it."

"I don't know why I did it," Curt retorted disgustingly. "You deserve it, for helping Larsen King murder the President."

"I had no part in the murder of President Carthew!" Albert Wissler exclaimed earnestly. "I didn't even know it was planned until after it occurred. I may have done some wrong things, but I'm no murderer."

"Who did help King with the murder, then?" Curt demanded.

"It was Gil Strike," Wissler replied nervously. "Strike operated the remote control of the telautomaton that killed Carthew. And he also substituted that faked Ear-record that placed the blame on you. King told him to do that and destroy the real Ear-record at once. I didn't know about it till later."

"I don't think even Strike wanted to do it," Wissler added. "But he was afraid that if he didn't, King would freeze him out of his share of the radium profits. Strike hasn't trusted King from the first. I wish I hadn't trusted him at all. Look what he's got me into!"

Captain Future had listened intently. He thought he saw in this information a gambling chance to clear himself of the murder. But he knew he could do nothing until the radium deposit was made safe.

Next morning, Curt found that his prestige among the superstitious Lunarians was greatly enhanced by the previous "night's" incident. He took advantage of this to outline to Reh Sel and Fwar Aj his urgent need of certain metals. Curt discovered that, as he had hoped, there were lead and copper deposits in this lunar underworld.

"I shall need a quantity of both metals," he told the Lunarian chiefman. "If I have them soon, they will help me achieve my plan of protecting the Shining Mountain from those who will be coming from above."

"I will send our young men forth for the metals at once," Reh Sel said promptly. "The deposits are in the cliff wall near the Marsh of Monsters, on the north side of our world. They can be back by evening."

By the end of the Lunarian day, the young Moon-men sent upon the mission had returned with the needed metallic ores. They already knew how to smelt them down, for they used the metals themselves for weapons, instruments and vessels. Curt set them to work smelting at once.

He assigned Grag a special task.

"Use that molten lead to coat our space-suits. It'll make them rayproof, so we can land on the mountain."

"I'd hoped you had given up the crazy idea of visiting that blazing peak," Grag groaned. "Why is it necessary?"

"We've got to have a mass of radium ore to power the big wave-transmitter I'm building," Curt retorted. "It's the heart of my plan."

"With a wave-transmitter, he's going to stop a whole armed company of the Planet Patrol!" Grag exclaimed incredulously. "Maybe I'm the crazy one."

Curt and the Brain labored on the construction of the enigmatic machine in their dwelling, through the hours of that "night." Copper sheets and bars, cast to Curt's order by his Lunarian smelters, were rapidly welded together into the frame of a large, round mechanism.

The heart of the big machine would
be an ordinary super-type atomic-power generator, designed to use radioactive ores for production of a terrific potential. Around this unit, Curt fastened the transformers, condensers and other apparatus he had brought down from above, so that the machine began to take form as a powerful wave-transmitter.

"I don't get it, Chief," declared Otho, watching. "You've built your atomic-power unit inside the wave-transmitter. How come?"

"That's vital," Curt told him. "It will prevent the power unit that operates the transmitter from being affected by the transmitter's waves, which will be radiated outward."

"But what kind of wave are you going to broadcast, that you have to take such precautions?" Otho demanded.

The Brain interrupted. Simon Wright's keen scientific mind had already gained a strong clue to Curt's intentions from the circuit of the transmitter as it took form. Now Simon uttered a sharp exclamation.

"Lad, now I see how you're planning to stop King and the others! But it's mad, fantastic——"

"It will work, if we get this transmitter finished in time," Captain Future declared determinedly. "But this transmitter's too powerful—it will broadcast a wave for nearly a million-mile radius!" the Brain declared. "It'll affect not only everything on the Moon, but everything on Earth as well!"

"Exactly what I want to do," rapped Curt Newton. His gray eyes gleamed. "Then Earth will find out that we Futuremen are not mere hunted outlaws, but that we can turn and strike for ourselves."

He labored far into the "night" upon the big, half-finished mechanism, before he lay down to snatch a few hours' sleep.

Curt was awakened by frantic, shouting voices. He leaped to his feet. There was a wild uproar of excitement all through the Lunarian town. He could hear voices yelling, the thud of hurrying feet, the clatter of a brazen gong from the house of the Lunarian chieftain.

"Something wrong!" Captain Future exclaimed. "We'll soon see——"

He and the others ran toward the center of the spiral town. Wissler was shoved along with them by Grag, who did not wish to stay behind.

Reh Sel, the old Lunarian chieftain, was addressing a throng of excited Moon-men in shrill tones. The old man saw Captain Future approach.

"The others from above have come, as you predicted!" he cried to Curt. "Those who plan to desecrate the Shining Mountain!"

Captain Future's sharp questions soon revealed the situation. Two hours before, a small group of young Lunarian hunters had started up the ancient path into the dark caves, to hunt for the giant centipedes whose ivory fangs were much esteemed as jewelry. And the two young men had seen a powerful force of strangers forging down through the caves along the path.

"There were hundreds of them!" cried the leader of the young hunters, in excited answer to Curt's queries. "They wore strange garments and carried unfamiliar weapons, and had many lights to illuminate their way."

"Larsen King's planetary miners, and the company of Planet Patrol officers that's come to guard them!" exclaimed the Brain.

"Yes—no doubt about it," rapped Captain Future. His tanned face was grim. "This is bad. They'll be down here soon. And it'll take at least a couple more days to complete the wave-transmitter."

F WAR AJ, the big, grizzled Lunarian leader, was brandishing a heavy spear-bow in the air. His face was flaming with passion.

"We will destroy these sacrilegious ones who covet the Shining Mountain!" cried the big Moon-man furiously. "We'll assemble every man and his weapon in the eastern jungle and strike them when they emerge from the caves."

"Go, and may the power of the Shining Mountain aid you!" exclaimed old Reh Sel.

Curt Newton leaped forward and turned to face the enraged throng, raising his voice in a desperate plea.
“Wait!” he cried. “You can’t meet those men in open fight. They have weapons a hundred times more powerful than your spear-bows. They’ll destroy you. You must wait until I have finished my work. Then they can be overcome without shedding a drop of blood.”

His plea had no effect on the outraged Lunarians. They poured down to the beach and shoved off in their canoes, Fwar Aj leading the force.

“They’ll be massacred—trying to fight a full company of the Patrol with those spear-bows!” exclaimed Otho.

“I’m going after them and stop it,” declared Captain Future. “Grag, you stay here with Simon and gather together the rest of the metals we need to finish the wave-transmitter. We may have to leave this place to gain time to finish the machine.”

“If you see that devil Larsen King in the fracas, finish him off for me!” cried Grag.

“King won’t be there—he believes in letting other men take the risks for him,” said Albert Wissler bitterly. “King will be back on Earth, waiting till everything here is cleaned up and he can reap the profits.”

Curt and Otho jumped into a canoe and paddled out onto the black sea. They steered toward the eastern shore, which Fwar Aj’s force of Lunarian fighters had already reached.

Across the dark, heaving ocean of the lunar underworld, through the ceaseless, throbbing green radiance of the distant radium peak, Curt and the Futuremen paddled on. By the time they reached the eastern shore, Fwar Aj and his fighters had disappeared into the towering jungle.

“They’ll head for the place where the path from above debouches, and seek to waylay the Patrol and King’s men there!” Curt exclaimed.

He and Otho lunged forward along the jungle trail. Before they had gone far, they heard a dim clamor of raging yells and whistling spears from ahead. It was quickly followed by the ominous blast of atom-guns.

“Too late—they’re fighting already!” Curt groaned. “Hurry!”

They came around a bend of the trail into sight of a dismaying spectacle. A solid band of dark-uniformed Planet Patrol men was emerging from the fissure that formed the mouth of the path to the surface. The Patrol men carried heavy atom-guns, and they were using them.

For Fwar Aj and his Lunarians, rashly advancing through the thick jungle to attack, were trying to get close enough to use their spear-bows. Most of their whizzing spears were falling short. And as the Lunarians tried to close the range, streaks of fire from the atom-guns were beginning to take a costly toll.

THE Moon-men seemed appalled by the power of the unfamiliar weapons opposed to them. Yet they were continuing to advance with unabated courage behind the raging Fwar Aj, until Captain Future leaped in front of them.

“You must retreat—you’ll all be killed if you try to face those atom-guns!” Curt yelled to the Lunarians. At the same moment, he heard a shout from the advancing Patrol men as they recognized his tall figure and red hair.

“That’s Captain Future! He’s leading these Moon-devils! Get him!”

“Unless we get out of here, we’re lost, Chief!” cried Otho urgently.

Curt pleaded with Fwar Aj.

“Order your men to give way, to retreat to the town. I promise to save the mountain from these invaders.”

Swayed by Captain Future’s earnest promise, Fwar Aj shouted the order to his fighters. The Moon-men hastily drew back from the advancing Patrol company, and began a retreat toward the sea.

They knew every bend of the jungle trails, and they soon left the Planet Patrol force out of sight behind. When they reached the beach, they at once shoved off in the yellow canoes.

Looking back, Curt Newton saw the Patrol squads reaching the beach. A full company, six hundred fighting men armed with heavy atom-guns, deployed there. Presently the Patrol squads started a determined march
along the southern shore of the black sea, toward the distant Lunarian town.

“They've seen our town and are marching for it!” exclaimed Fwar Aj smolderingly. “They'll reach it before evening.”

“We can be back there in less than an hour, if we hurry,” Curt rejoined. “Tell the men to paddle fast.”

The yellow canoes shot over the black sea at high speed. The Moonmen were badly upset, fearful of the ultimate outcome of events.

Crossing directly over the dark sea, they soon reached the town on the western shore. A great throng of excited, apprehensive Lunarians met them on the beach. Reh Sel was there, and also Grag and Simon and the captive Albert Wissler.

Captain Future hastily explained to old Reh Sel that the invaders were marching upon the town, and would reach it by late that afternoon.

“You said that you had a plan that would stop them!” Reh Sel exclaimed.

“I have, but I can't use it until my half-built machine is completed,” Curt explained urgently. “That will take many hours. The only thing we can do until then is to evacuate all your people from this town.”

“But where will we go?” cried the old Moon chieftain in dismay.

Curt pointed northward.

“Further around the shore, to those northern marshes you mentioned. We could hold back the invaders until my work is completed, from that marsh.”

“The Marsh of Monsters?” cried Reh Sel. “It would be dangerous to enter it. The huge beasts of prey that inhabit it are fierce and fearsome.”

“Better to take our chance on the beasts there, than to remain here and put up a useless fight that will only shed futile blood,” Captain Future retorted. “If you do this, I’ll be able to achieve my plan and then you can repel the invaders easily, without taking any lives at all.”

RINGING sincerity in Curt Newton’s voice convinced the Lunarian ruler as it had already convinced Fwar Aj.

“Then we will rely on your promise, and do as you ask,” he declared.

The old chieftain and Fwar Aj began giving orders for the wholesale evacuation. There followed intense excitement and confusion through the Lunarian town, as the people hastily made ready to depart.

Fwar Aj ordered that the old, the infirm and the children were to be transported along the shore in canoes. There were not enough canoes for all, so the rest of the Moon people must march through the jungle.

Captain Future found that Grag and Simon had gathered together the metals and materials necessary for completion of the wave-transmitter.

“We can’t possibly carry the transmitter. We’ll lash together two canoes to form a scow for its transportation,” Curt decided.

This was hastily done. The massive, half-completed machine was carefully loaded upon the improvised scow. Fwar Aj’s men would tow it from other canoes.

“You and Simon go with it, Otho,” Curt ordered. “Nothing must happen to it, for everything now depends on completing the thing in time. Grag and I will march with the main body. You too, Wissler.”

The great evacuation of the Lunarians soon began, for canoe scouts coming in reported the invaders advancing steadily on the town. The people streamed out of town in two bodies, one in the canoes moving along the shore, the other marching north along the jungle trails.

Curt and Grag and the frightened Wissler were with Reh Sel at the head of the marching column. Strong Lunarian fighting men flanked the column, beating back the few land-octopi or other beasts who attempted to approach it.

The Lunarians seemed pathetically dazed at being forced to leave their homes. Added to their oppression was their superstitious anxiety that the sacred radiant mountain might be harmed by the invaders. And they looked forward with dread to taking refuge in the much-feared Marsh of Monsters.

Captain Future felt the weight of a heavier oppression. He knew these
people were relying on his promise to halt the invaders. To keep that promise, he must have time to complete his mechanism and secure fuel for its operation. And time was running out swiftly, now that the Planet Patrol had trapped them inescapably here in the heart of the Moon.

CHAPTER XIV
Marsh of Monsters

From the televisor receiver, a announcer's excited voice was speaking to the System.

"Flash Bulletin: Planet Police headquarters reports that the notorious outlaws, Captain Future and the Futuremen, have finally been trapped deep inside the Moon. The report states that a hitherto unsuspected underworld exists there, peopled by primitive native Lunarians.

"A full company of the Patrol division has penetrated into this underworld, in conjunction with miners of the corporation that was given a concession to exploit lunar radium.

"It is stated that Captain Future led the Lunarian natives in opposition to the Patrol company, but was forced to retreat. The Patrol forces have cut off the outlaw and his followers from all possible escape, so that it is only a matter of hours until the inevitable capture of the man who murdered President Carthew."

As the excited bulletin ended, Ezra Gurney furiously snapped off the instrument and leaped to his feet. The old marshal paced angrily to and fro in his little office here in Government Tower, on Earth.

"The cursed fools!" he exclaimed, his faded blue eyes bitter with rage.

"The idiots!"

The door of his office burst open and Joan Randall hurried in. The girl agent's dark, lovely face was flushed.

"Ezra, you heard that bulletin just now?" she cried. "The Futuremen trapped there inside the Moon—the Patrol closing in on them!"

"I heard, an' it makes me feel like killin' some of these space-struck imbeciles, who believe Cap'n Future is a murderer!" raged the old marshal.

"That wouldn't help Captain Future!" the girl exclaimed. Her dark eyes flashed. "We've got to do something!"

"I know what I'm goin' to do!" Ezra said violently. "I'm goin' to resign from the Patrol an' go out there to the Moon an' stand beside the Futuremen. I'd have done it before, if I'd known just where they were."

"I'll resign and go with you," Joan said promptly. Then her face fell.

"But what can just we two do to help against a full Patrol company?"

Ezra Gurney's faded blue eyes lighted.

"Listen, Joan, we two ain't the only friends Captain Future's got left in the System. There's plenty of other people in the nine worlds that he helped, who know he couldn't do anything like murder. If we could round up some of them people—"

"And form an interplanetary legion to go to Captain Future's rescue?" Joan cried, her eyes shining with excitement. "Ezra, could we do it?"

Let's quit the Patrol and start sending out the call right now!"

Soon thereafter, secret televistor messages began to stream out from Earth through the nine worlds. They were summons to men who in past times had owed their lives to the Futuremen, and who knew them incapable of murder.

The summons went to a hawk-eyed Martian living on the little moon Deimos, one whom few people suspected had once been the greatest space pirate of the void. It went to a group of Saturnian engineers whom Captain Future had years before saved from a hideous fate.

To Jupiter went the summons, to a people of South Equatoria, who still reverenced the very name of the red-haired adventurer who had lifted a dreadful atavistic blight from their midst. To Venus it went, to a hardy
band of swampmen who owed a debt no less. And to Mercury, where certain pilots of the famous Rocketeers leaped at the chance to repay the man who had once helped them.

From all quarters of the System, swift ships came racing toward the rendezvous in space near the Moon which the summons had given. The friends of the Futuremen were rallying to give aid, even though they felt they could not possibly be in time to save Captain Future and his comrades from the slowly closing trap.

At the rendezvous in space, Ezra Gurney and Joan were waiting in a cruiser of their own. The hastily summoned interplanetary legion flashed toward the Moon. They swept down into Great North Chasm to land beside the mining dome there. But as they landed, they intercepted the televistor message which spelled doom to their hopes of rescuing the Futuremen. It read:

**Planet Patrol Company Seven reporting to Earth GHQ. We have finally cornered Captain Future and his Lunarians down here and are about to rush them.**

Down in the greenlit underworld, deep within the Moon, the retreating Lunarians had reached a desperate temporary refuge in the Marsh of Monsters. Those on foot had floundered through muck and reeds, and those in canoes had pushed up narrow, winding waterways from the black sea, to reach this momentary haven.

It was a small island of muddy ground deep in the dreaded marsh. Giant reeds towered for twenty feet in the air around it, growing from the mud and mucky pools. The quivering radiance of the distant radium peak filtered through the reeds, in a strange green glow that wanly illuminated the throngs of weary, exhausted Moon people gathered here.

Old Reh Sel’s wrinkled face was foreboding as he looked around the throng of his people who sat or sprawled, worn out by the long retreat. He spoke vehemently to Captain Future.

“We can’t stay here long! My people could bring little food, and there is no shelter here, and the great beasts of this marsh will scent us out and attack us.”

Curt Newton did not stop work to answer. Curt was toiling desperately with Grag and Otho to haul his half-completed wave-transmitter off the improvised scow of canoes, and set it up amid the reeds.

“It will be only a matter of hours here, Reh Sel,” he pleaded. “Only long enough to complete this thing. Then your fighting men can turn and drive back the invaders, without loss of a single life.”

“Oh, Chief, it’s hopeless!” blurted Otho discouragingly. “That Patrol force is still following us and they’ll soon find us here. And even if you could finish this transmitter and get fuel for it before they find us, how are you going to stop a heavily armed force like that with just an immaterial broadcast wave?”

Toiling breathlessly, Curt made no answer. But the Futureman’s black pessimism found an echo in his own worried thoughts.

Scouts had reported that the strong Planet Patrol force which had invaded this lunar underworld had marched past the Lunarian town. The enemy was now advancing rapidly along the marsh trail. Only a few hours were left!

“Grag, start welding together those copper sheets to form the transmitter’s radiation sphere,” Curt ordered. “Otho, you and Simon help me with the frame work.”

“You’ve gambled everything on this wave-transmitter, lad,” rasped the Brain as they labored. “If it doesn’t work—”

“It will work, if we complete it and get radium fuel for it in time,” Captain Future muttered. “It’s only an enlarged application of the same damping-wave principle we developed in the Moon laboratory, years ago.”

ALBERT Wissler watched them with wide eyes. The captive scientist was trying to understand the purpose of their tense work, but could not.
A spherical copper radiation sphere grew slowly into being, enclosing the intricate apparatus of the wave-transmitter and the shielded atomic-power unit at its core. Yet progress seemed maddeningly slow to Curt.

A scream from a Lunarian woman suddenly ripped through the air, echoed by a score of terrified voices.

“The Patrol can’t have caught up to us yet!” cried Otho, jumping up from their work.

“Marsh monsters!” the Lunarian women were screaming. “They come—”

“Devils of space, look at those creatures!” yelled Grag, aghast.

Two enormous, oily black bulks were crashing through the giant reeds toward this recently crowded island of refuge.

The monsters giving this dredged marsh its name were semi-aquatic beasts of elephantine bulk, lumbering forward on massive flipper limbs, their snaky necks hideous with round heads split by great jaws of terrifying fangs.

Captain Future lunged through the frightened throng, grabbing up a spear-bow. Fwar Aj and other Lunarians had jumped fiercely forward with their own weapons. But already, with blood-chilling, hissing shrieks, the foremost of the two charging monsters had thrust out its long neck to seize a hapless Lunarian in its jaws. Red eyes glaring, the creature raised its victim aloft, towering over the comparative pygmies at its feet.

“Shoot at their heads!” Fwar Aj was roaring. “Only at that point is a marsh monster vulnerable!”

A blur of flying spears filled the air as the Lunarians loosed their shafts. Curt’s shoulder jarred to the recoil of the unfamiliar weapon, and he saw that the spear he shot went wide of its mark.

But Fwar Aj and the others had hit the nearest marsh monster in the neck. The creature dropped its dead prey and reared up, snarling and hissing. More spears flew toward it, feathering its head now.

“Got it!” yelled Fwar Aj. “Aim at the other!”

The nearest monster had keeled over with a crash that threw muddy water in their faces. The other creature hastily retreated.

Curt Newton heard a wailing begin as the kin of the dead Lunarian gathered over his body. Fwar Aj was gazing grimly at the slain monster.

“There will be others,” predicted the grizzled Moon-man. “They will keep scenting us out, and attacking.”

Captain Future, sickened by the tragedy, hurried back with Grag and Otho to their work.

“Hurry!” he urged. “These Lunarians can’t stay here for long.”

Hours passed — hours of maddeningly tedious labor to the Futuremen, hours of peril and alarm for the huddled Lunarians. Twice again, marsh monsters came crashing through the reeds, to be driven back by concentrated fire from scores of spear-bows.

Still more alarming, Lunarian scouts slipping back through the swamp, breathlessly reported that the main Patrol force had reached the marsh, and was starting to beat through it in search of the fugitives.

At long last Captain Future straightened unsteadily.

“Done!” he exclaimed. “That was the last connection.”

The wave-transmitter was complete, a complexity of apparatus cased within the spherical copper shell that was to radiate its force. The thing towered like a great metal ball over the heads of the Futuremen.

“Now all we need is the fuel to operate the atomic-power unit inside the transmitter,” Curt reminded them. “It’s got to be radioactive fuel — nothing else will produce the super-power required.”

He turned to Otho.

“You and I are going to take a canoe and go out to the shining peak for the radium we need. Grag, get the space-suits you coated with lead, and the lead crucible.”

But when the Lunarians understood the purpose for which Curt was preparing a canoe, they put up a strong protest.

“You cannot land on the Shining Mountain and bring back a part of its
sacred mass!” cried old Reh Sel. “It would be the blackest blasphemy!”

Curt struggled against their superstitious objections.

“Would you rather see the mountain desecrated by the invaders?”

He finally overcame their protests. He and Otho donned the space-suits which had been coated with lead. With the improvised ledge crucible Greg had made, they entered one of the canoes and poled and paddled out through the reeds toward the open sea.

They finally won through the labyrinthine waterways of the marsh to the open water. At once, Curt and Otho bent to their paddles. The canoe flew out over the dark waves toward the radiant peak.

The Shining Mountain was an appalling spectacle as they approached it from offshore. Its great mass, shelving up from the waters and soaring into a lofty two-pronged crag, emitted such blinding green radiance at close hand that it dazzled even through the glare-proof helmets they wore.

Its wild, shaking emerald radiance lanced around the two Futuremen like flashes of green lightning as they paddled nearer. It was like approaching a sun. Captain Future realized that they were now within the blast of alpha radiation from the giant mass of radium ores. Only the protective coating of their suits and helmets saved them from perishing.

The canoe grounded upon the shining rock ledge on the mountain’s northern side. Curt and Otho clambered ashore with the crucible.

“Gods of space, it’s like standing on the Sun itself!” muttered Otho, appalled.

“Hurry—the insulation on our suits may break down!” Captain Future warned. “We’ve got to fill this crucible and get out of here.”

With a metal bar he had brought for the purpose, he began digging out a quantity of the blazing rock. Otho used his lead-gloved hands to shovel the ore into the big crucible.

Curt felt his skin itching and burning ominously. He realized that even through the super-insulation of their suits, the deadly radiation was beginning to penetrate. He dug furiously.

“That’s enough!” he cried finally.

“Back to the canoe!”

They tumbled into the craft and urgently shoved off from the lethal mountain. With convulsive strokes, they paddled away.

They were more than halfway back to the Marsh of Monsters on the northern shore before they ventured to remove the suits. Then Otho uttered a cry.

“Listen to that!”

Across the water from the recesses of the marsh, there came to their ears a dim babel of fierce yells and crackling atom-guns.

“We’re too late!” Otho cried despairingly. “The Patrol has rushed the Lunarians.”

“We’re not too late if we can get the wave-transmitter going, even now!” Captain Future blazed. “Paddle hard!”

The yellow canoe almost flew over the waters toward the marsh. They forced it furiously up the winding waterways between the giant reeds.

Dark-uniformed men of the Planet Patrol, plunging through the reeds toward the battle ahead, glimpsed their canoe and lunged in front of it, up to their waists in water.

“It’s Future—get him!” rang the yell.

Curt sprang up, and as Otho paddled fiercely, he knocked aside the clutching Patrol men with his own paddle.

They shot on through the reeds, bending low as atom-guns blasted behind them and streaks of white fire cut through the long grasses. A few moments later they reached the island where the Lunarians had taken refuge.

The desperate haven was almost surrounded by squads of Planet Patrol officers approaching through the reeds! Fwar Aj and his Lunarian fighters were yelling defiance to the oncoming men, waiting till they got within range of the spear-bows.

The Patrol force fired another warning volley from their atom-guns over the heads of the crowded Lu-
narians. The voice of the Patrol captain rang through the din.

“Captain Future! You and the Futuremen surrender and these other people won’t be harmed. Otherwise, we’re coming in shooting!”

Curt had plunged ashore with the crucible of blazing radioactive matter, toward the towering copper ball on the wave-transmitter.

“We’ve got to do it—we’ve got to surrender!” Grag groaned. “Your machine can’t stop these Patrol men now. We can’t see a lot of these Moon folk slaughtered, when they try to use spear-bows against atom-guns.”

But Captain Future, paying no heed to the despairing words, was hastily pouring the glowing mass of radium ore into the hopper at the base of the towering spherical transmitter. He slammed a starting switch. The atomic-power unit at the heart of the machine began tothrob.

“Last warning, Future!” came the shout of the Patrol captain. “Surrender—or we start firing!”

The Patrol squads were determinedly advancing. Still Curt Newton gave them no attention. His eyes were fixed on the potential gauge set into the instrument panel of his big wave-transmitter.

He waited till the power output had swiftly climbed to a tremendous figure.

Then quickly he closed the circuit that sent that power racing into the wave-transmitter itself. The apparatus began a loud drone.

But nothing happened—

Grag and Otho, breathlessly waiting for a scientific miracle, felt their hopes fade away.

“It doesn’t work!” Grag exclaimed bitterly.

Captain Future’s eyes were brilliant with excitement.

“It’s working now!” he cried to them. “It’s broadcasting a vibratory force, high in an octave of the electromagnetic spectrum that only Simon and I have ever explored.”

“But it hasn’t any effect! Nothing’s happened!” cried Otho.

“Look at that!” Curt shouted, pointing at the advancing Patrol company.

The Patrol officers had leveled their atom-guns to fire as Curt ignored their final warning. They had pulled the triggers. But the atom-guns were dead and useless. The uniformed men were bewilderedly examining their harmless weapons.

“Holy sun-imps!” shouted Otho, jumping with excitement. “You mean that this machine’s invisible wave has put their atom-guns out of commission?”

“Not only their atom-guns but all sources of atomic power within its radius!” Curt told him.

“Atomic power,” he went on happily, “is produced by using certain forces to disrupt the atom by accelerateing its electron movements. This force that Simon and I once investigated, which I’m broadcasting now in a powerful wave, inhibits electronic movement. Thus the production of atomic power is halted everywhere in its radius. And it has a million miles’ radius!”

“A million miles?” yelled Otho. “Then the effective scope of this transmitter includes all the Moon and Earth! Gods of space, you don’t mean—”

“Yes!” Curt Newton exclaimed. “Atomic power, on which all modern industries, weapons and ships now depend, can’t exist within the radius of this wave. I’ve blacked out all power on the Moon and Earth!”

CHAPTER XV

World Without Power

The astounding revelation of the truly stupendous magnitude of Captain Future’s stratagem left the Futuremen speechless. Meanwhile, a radical transformation had taken place in the tense scene around them.

The Patrol men had stopped advancing, were frantically trying to make their useless atom-guns work. The Lunarians, sensing the disaster to
their enemies, were starting to plunge forward with Fwar Aj at their head. But Curt Newton sprang to the fore.

"Your guns are useless!" he shouted to the Patrol captain. "Unless you surrender now, these Lunarians will massacre you. They outnumber you many times, and they have their spear-bows while you're now weaponless."

"The Patrol doesn't surrender, Future!" came back the defiant answer. "Especially to murderers and outlaws!"

"I'm no murderer and we Future-men won't be outlaws long—if I can fix the guilt for that crime where it belongs!" Curt cried. "If I succeed in doing that, this whole nasty mess will soon be cleared up. And you won't have the responsibility for useless bloodshed on your head."

The young Patrol captain hesitated. He perceived clearly that resistance of his defenseless men to the swarming Lunarians would be hopeless.

Albert Wissler jumped forward and raised his voice as the Patrol officer waved.

"Captain Future is telling the truth!" he cried thinly. "He didn't murder the President. Larsen King and Gil Strike did it!"

The shouted testimony of Wissler, King's chief lieutenant in the Moon project, went far to convince the Patrol officer.

"Drop your guns, men," he ordered his followers. "March up to the Lunarians with hands raised."

Captain Future breathed a long sigh of relief. His paramount desire had been to avoid loss of life. Now he rapidly explained to old Reh Sel and Fwar Aj that the invaders were surrendering.

The Lunarians were no bloodthirsty race. Their reaction was one of intense joy and relief, mixed with bewilderment at the sudden reversal of the situation.

Old Reh Sel found a superstitious explanation for it.

"The Shining Mountain has protected itself!" he shrilled. "Through this remarkable stranger and his device, it has stricken powerless those who would have desecrated it!"

Curt turned to Albert Wissler.

"Thanks, fellow!" he said feelingly. The thin scientist blinked.

"I owed you that much," he replied hoarsely. "You saved me from a hideous death."

"The radium deposit is safe again!" Captain Future declared exultantly. "There's no force on the Moon that the Lunarians can't handle now. No Patrol reinforcements can get to the Moon, for spaceships depend on atomic power for their rockets. Hence no rocket-ship can come here from the Earth."

"Gods of space!" muttered Otho, a little appalled. "We've isolated the Earth and Moon from the rest of the Solar System!"

The Brain commented sharply.

"What now, lad? We can't keep the Moon and Earth isolated like this indefinitely. We can't keep all power blanked out. Think of what the power-stoppage must be doing to Earth! What are we going to do?"

"We're going to Earth," Captain Future said decisively. "We're going to have a final showdown, prove that Larsen King was behind that murder plot. Then King's mining concession will be revoked, and the radium here will be safe from exploitation."

He swung back to Albert Wissler.

"Will you testify on Earth that King and Gil Strike planned the murder, Wissler?"

Wissler nodded instantly.

"I will, Captain Future."

"Even so, King can deny Wissler's charge," muttered the Brain. "Without proof, we may not be able to fix the guilt on him."

"Chief, you're forgetting so mething!" Grag cried. "We can't go to Earth! You said yourself no rocket-ship can operate within a million miles of here, now that wave-transmitter is blanking out all atomic power."

Curt turned to the Patrol captain who had just surrendered.

"Our ship, the Comet, is still on the Moon, isn't it?" he asked quickly.

"You didn't take it to Earth when you captured it?"

The officer shook his head.
“No, we didn’t. We took it to King’s base in Great North Chasm and left it there under strong guard. You see, we figured you Futuremen would try to repossess your ship. So we planned to use it as the bait of a trap to catch you, if all other methods failed.”

“They failed, all right,” Captain Future said dryly. “Well, we’re going to Earth in the Comet, at once.”

“You’re surely space-struck!” Grag protested. “The Comet’s rocket tubes operate from atomic power, like those of any other space vessel. They won’t work in this power blackout.”

“We won’t use the rocket tubes,” Captain Future grinned. “We’ll use the vibration drive, which doesn’t depend on atomic power.”

“Holy sun-imps, you’re joking!” gasped Otho. “The lowest speed of the vibration drive is a twentieth the velocity of light! You said yourself that to use such speeds inside the System would be suicidal!”

“We’re going to risk suicide, Otho,” Curt answered determinedly. “It’s our only way to get back to Earth without lifting the power blackout.”

Within a few minutes, the Lunarians were joyfully starting the march back to their town with their captives. Reh Sel promised Captain Future that they would hold the Patrol men unharmed until Curt ordered them released.

Curt and the Futuremen, with Albert Wissler, struck out across the black sea in one of the canoes. They headed with all the speed they could make for the eastern shore. Soon they landed there. After rapidly traversing the trail through the jungle, they entered the dark fissure that led up to the surface of the Moon. They pushed up the labyrinthine path, using krypton lights taken from the Patrol officers.

Curt Newton was only human, and a very human desire for vengeance drove him almost feverishly forward. He was burning to settle accounts with Larsen King, whose covetous, cunning schemes had driven the Futuremen forth as outlaws.

He chafed at every stop they made for rest in the caverns. Each hour of their toilsome upward march seemed interminable to him. When Wissler tired and faltered, Curt ordered Grag to help him along.

“We daren’t keep this power blackout smothering Earth a moment longer than necessary,” he reminded them. “Think what mischief it must be causing there! Everything depends on atomic power now. Not a wheel can turn, not a ship can leave or reach Earth till the blackout is lifted.”

At last they approached the uppermost cavern beneath Great North Chasm. The Brain uttered a sharp exclamation of alarm.

“Look ahead, lad! There’s a powerful force coming down through the fissures!”

Lights were growing stronger ahead—the krypton beams of hundreds of men, marching determinedly down toward them.

“The devil!” cried Otho in dismay.

“A new Patrol force must have landed on the Moon just before we slammed on the power blackout.”

“No, these aren’t Patrol men,” muttered Captain Future. His gray eyes suddenly lit. “That’s Joan Randall and Ezra Gurney in front! And there’s Rok Olor from Deimos, and Ka Kardak from Mercury, and a lot of others.”

Joan came running forward with eager relief as the two parties met. Her dark eyes were shining.

“Captain Future! Then we’re in time! We heard you were trapped, and we called all your friends to help us rescue you.”

“But we were ‘fraid we were too late,” drawled old Ezra Gurney, grinning with pleasure. “Then just as we landed on the Moon, all power went dead. So we didn’t have any trouble gettin’ inside the minin’ dome an’ startin’ down here.”

Members of the relief expedition—Jovians, Venusians, Saturnians, Martians—hard-bitten men from every planet, were crowding excitedly around the Futuremen.

Curt Newton felt sharp emotion. These friends he had made throughout the System were displaying un-
expected loyalty. He might be thought a murderer by the rest of the nine worlds, he might be an outlaw, but these men had ignored all that.

"Where's the Patrol? We're ready to fight!" they were shouting.

"There's no need of fighting, thank heaven," Captain Future told them. He outlined rapidly what had happened down below.

"Blaze me down, I might have known you Futuremen caused this crazy power stoppage!" murmured Ezra.

"We're going to Earth with you in the Comet!" Joan cried to Curt.

"It'll be terribly dangerous—a trip at that speed," he demurred. "I'd rather you stayed with the others."

She and Ezra overruled his protests. Presently they had started making their way back up through the uppermost cavern, and up the tunnel into the blue-lit mining dome. Larsen King's officials and miners were already under guard of a detachment of Ezra's legion. Without lingering, Curt Newton led the way rapidly toward the airlock entrance of the big dome.

"How come you can keep goin' in this power blackout, Grag?" Ezra Gurney was asking the robot as they hurried along. "Doesn't that iron body of yours have a little atomic-power plant in it that gives you your strength?"

"It does, but it's shielded by a case of neutronic matter that no force can penetrate," Grag told him. "No power blackout can stop me!"

They paused briefly to don space suits. Then Captain Future led the Futuremen and Wissler, with Joan and Ezra from the dome.

They hurried amid the ships parked on the floor of Great North Chasm until they found the Comet. Once in the ship, Curt hastily tossed aside his space suit and began preparation for the unparalleled traverse as such a flight was called.

SEATED in the pilot's chair in the control room, with the others watching tensely, he flicked switches expertly. Generators began to throb and a dim blue force rose around them in a highly protective stasis.

"The generators of the vibration drive draw their own power from charged condensers, so as to be independent of the cyclotrons in case of emergency," Curt explained rapidly over his shoulder, as he worked. "There should be more than enough charge to hurl us to Earth."

"And hurl us right through Earth, too," muttered Otho forebodingly. "We'll never make a safe landing at that awful speed."

"Ready to go!" Curt warned sharply. "Strap in, everybody. The protective stasis will cushion us against most of the acceleration shock, but you'll still feel it."

He had computed the direction of Earth carefully. He knew just what he must do, and do rapidly, if they were to make the traverse in safety.

The big switch of the vibration drive closed under his fingers, throwing the powerful vibrations into the drive-ring at the ship's tail.

Click! With the snap of the switch, the dark interior of Great North Chasm that lay outside suddenly vanished. The Comet had been hurled up out of the great canyon into the open vault of space, with a breathtaking velocity that seemed faster than thought.

They were being hurled through space at a speed that was merely a fraction of the velocity of light! The gleaming surface of the rugged Moon dropped from below with dizzy rapidity. Almost as soon as their eyes noticed it, the shining satellite receded to a great ball behind them.

The hanging green globe of Earth was expanding outward ahead of the space travelers like a swelling balloon. They were now traversing thousands of miles through the void with each ticking second. The Comet was being flung from Moon to Earth at a speed that had been designed, not for the cramped spaces of the Solar System, but for the vast reaches of the interstellar abyss.

Curt Newton was attempting the most perilous feat of space flight any pilot had ever undertaken. He must brake their speed at exactly the right moment, by throwing the force of the
propulsion vibrations forward. A split second of difference either way meant disaster.

Superhumanly tense as he crouched, he eyed the ballooning green sphere of Earth. He had computed that New York was now on the planet's sunlit side. The Comet was already screaming toward the sunward face of the rolling, cloud-screened ball.

Click! Captain Future had slammed the vibration drive into reverse. Friction alarms exploded in frantic clamor, simultaneous with an intolerable, knife-edged wail of parting air. The ship was sickeningly checking speed, only the protective stasis saving its shell from collapse.

"We've still too much velocity!" Otho cried thinly above the screeching dive. "We're going to crash—"

Sunlit green continent and blue ocean were rushing madly up toward them. They glimpsed the clustered, gleaming towers of New York. The spaceport's central field slammed up at them.

Ezra Gurney closed his eyes. Joan Randall flung her arm across her face. The falling Comet was slowing in stunningly swift deceleration—

Click! Click! Click! Curt was alternating the direction of the drive with frantic speed. The ship bounced back and down again toward the spaceport. There was a jarring shock. Then silence.

"We—made it," Curt Newton said unsteadily, stumbling to his feet. His whole body was trembling, his throat dry with tension.

"Captain Future!" Ezra's faded eyes were agleam with hero worship. "The greatest feat of space-pilotin' in history! No one else in the universe would even have tried it!"

Curt was helping Albert Wissler to his feet. The thin scientist's eyes were still bulging glassily from the dazzling shock of that wild traverse. Curt shook him back to normality.

"Wissler, we've got to get to Larsen King at once, before we're stopped. You know where he would be?"

Wissler gulped, and nodded weakly. "His—his home and offices are in one of those sky-castles atop a big tower not far from here."

"Lead the way!" Curt exclaimed. "There's not a moment to lose."

They emerged onto the sunlit spaceport. It was a scene of frozen inactivity. No spaceships were taking off or landing. No repair machines were whirring in the great reconditioning docks. Everything was silent, dead. The men about the place looked dazed and bewildered.

And all New York was frozen and silent around them. No swift taxi flyers came and went, no atom-cars dashed through the streets. The blinking "ion-signs" were dark. Knots of confused, anxious people were wandering or standing about helplessly.

Earth was a world without power, all its industries and utilities frozen, its transport inoperative, its space-ships pinned down, unable to take off into space. Earth—isolated from the entire Solar System.

Then quickly a cry of discovery went up as Curt Newton and his little band started from the spaceport through the streets under Wissler's guidance.

"Captain Future! The Futuremen! The outlaws have come back to Earth!"

"The Futuremen are back!" echoed down the broad avenues.

The bewildered throngs shrank back in alarm from the determined group that Curt Newton was leading rapidly through the streets.

"There come some of the Planet Police!" yelled Otho warningly.

A squad of the dark-uniformed officers was charging out from a side street toward Captain Future's hurrying little band.

"Their atom-guns won't work now—we can smash through them with our fists!" Curt cried to his comrades. "But hurry!"

The Planet Police squad was not even trying to use its atom-guns, evidently having already discovered that they were as dead as everything else that depended on atomic power. Instead, the men ran forward to seize the Futuremen bodily.

Curt and his followers waded into their opponents with fists flying. They battered a way through the line that
tried desperately to halt them. "King's tower is only two more blocks away!" Wissler exclaimed.

"But more police are coming!" Joan cried, pointing ahead.

The alarm that had raced through the streets by word of mouth had rapidly brought more officers. Several squads now barred the way.

"Let me handle those fellows!" Grag boomed loudly.

The big robot was in the forefront as Curt's band fought their way through. The Planet Police officers showered Grag with blows from their gun butts, blows that fell without effect on his metal figure. He swept a path through their ranks, great arms flailing and scattering them like straw.

Captain Future's band was now at the entrance of the big tower, atop which loomed Larsen King's citadel in the sky. The elevators were dead. They started up the winding stairway, the battered Planet Police seeking to follow them.

"Hold those officers back, Grag!" Curt yelled to the robot.

Grag planted himself on the narrow stairs, facing downward. The police surged up at him, hitting him with gun barrels, metal bars and numerous other heavy objects, but without the slightest effect. Grag disdainfully extended his mighty arms and almost boulderly pushed his attackers back down the stairs.

"Go on, Chief—I can hold 'em here forever!" he yelled up.

A rising clamor of alarm showed that the audacious return of the Futuremen was galvanizing New York. And when Curt and his band raced up the last stair toward the sunlit terrace of Larsen King's sky-castle, they found that news of their arrival had preceded them.

For Gil Strike stood at the top of the stairs, his hard, hawklike face dark and dangerous, as he tipped a massive metal table with the intention of sending it crashing down upon their heads.

"Look out, Chief!" yelled Otho in frantic warning.

But Curt Newton was lunging up the stairs in a tremendous sprint. It brought him to Strike before the criminal could set free the murderous object.

Captain Future tore Strike around. They grappled, Strike furiously seeking to hammer in Curt's skull with the butt of a useless atom-pistol. Curt ripped the gun from his hand, sent the man spinning back across the terrace toward the stairs.

Strike screamed as he caromed off the massive upended table and tumbled backward down the steps. His head struck a metal step twenty feet below with a cracking thud, and he sprawled motionless.

Curt hastened down and bent over Strike's unmoving form for a few moments. He finally straightened.

"He's dead," Captain Future said grimly.

He plunged back up and across the terrace, into the luxurious interior of the tower-top citadel. Then he and his band halted.

Larsen King stood confronting them with folded arms, his brusque, harsh face and cold black eyes defiant. "You can't get away with whatever you're planning, Captain Future!" King snapped. "You're already outlawed for murder. You can't escape from this building, no matter what you may do to me."

Otho's slant green eyes flamed at King.

"We'll make you confess that you and Strike murdered the President!" hissed the android. "Wissler is going to testify in our behalf."

"Bah! Wissler's charges will carry no weight," jeered the unscrupulous promoter. "That Ear-record proved that you killed President Carthew, Captain Future!"

"He's right, lad," muttered the Brain. "That faked Ear-record will outweigh Wissler's testimony."

"Not when I produce the real Ear-record of my conversation with the President!" Captain Future said grimly.

He SHOWED them a small object in his hand—a spool of steel tape, of the type used to record a sound-track.
"This is the true record, King! I just removed it from Strike's pocket!" Larsen King's eyes widened with mingled incredulity and alarm.

"You're lying!" he burst out. "I told Strike to destroy—"

He stopped, realizing what he was saying. His face grew deathly pale. Curt Newton finished the story.

"You told Strike to destroy the real Ear-record. I knew that, King. But I was gambling that Strike hadn't destroyed the real record. I was certain he would keep it to give him a hold over you!"

Curt's grim voice swept bleakly on.

control. But there is proof in that record that I didn't kill President Carthew; that Carthew and Larsen King had an angry argument. Strike could hold the thing over King's head, if he had to, without implicating himself directly."

Captain Future's hard accents raked the ruthless promoter who stood there now, his face livid, trembling with rage.

"This proves my innocence of the murder, King. This proves that the President was killed by a telautomaton. A thorough Planet Police investigation will trace that telauto-

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"Strike didn't trust you, King. I knew, from what Wissler told me, that Strike was afraid you'd cheat him out of his share of the Moon's radium profits. So I figured Strike would keep the bona fide Ear-record to hold over your head, in case you did try to cheat him. And I figured rightly!"

"Chief, I don't understand!" gasped Otho. "Why would Strike keep the real record? Wouldn't it prove that he himself killed the President, if anyone got hold of it?"

Curt shook his head.

"No, there's no proof in the record that Strike killed Carthew by remote-
whirring once more, spaceships found themselves able to take off, lights came on with a brilliant burst of splendor in darkened New York.

From high in Government Tower, Curt Newton saw the lights go on. He breathed a sigh of relief. Hours before, he had flashed a televistor message to Ezra Gurney's detachment guarding the dome in Great North Chasm. Curt had directed his loyal followers to make their way down to the lunar underworld, shut off the wave-transmitter that had blacked out all power.

Much had happened, in those crucial hours. Word had gone out to the System that the Futuremen had been cleared beyond all doubt of the crime ascribed to them. They were no longer outlaws. Larsen King himself was in prison, awaiting trial for the crime.

The System Council had swiftly revoked the lunar concession of King's company. The Council had unanimously adopted Captain Future's earnest suggestion that the lunar radium be preserved for future emergencies.

Looking out over New York's brilliant panorama now, Curt Newton felt himself relaxing at last.

"Well—it's all over," he said. "And I hope that we never see Earth blacked out again."

HALK ANDERS, chief of the Planet Police, and young North Bonnel, the late President Carthew's assistant, glanced miserably at the assembled Futuremen.

"I'd still feel better if you'd kick me," muttered the Police commander shamefacedly. "We ought to have known better, than to go out and make big fools of ourselves by what we did to you."

"Forget it," Otho said grandiloquently. "I—even I—can make mistakes!"

He turned to Captain Future with a satisfied air.

"Chief, can't we go home to the Moon laboratory now we're free?"

"You've had your fill of adventure for once, eh?" grinned Curt.

"I'll tell the starry universe I have!" swore Otho. "When I get back to the Moon laboratory, I'm going to sit down and not leave the place for five years. All I want is peace and quiet."

"Here, too!" rumbled Grag. "Anybody that tries to get me away from the old home will have a tough job. No more trouble-hunting for me!"

Ezra Gurney scoffed at the Futuremen.

"I've heard you talkin' that way before. But you always get bored an' start lookin' for adventure."

"Not this time!" vowed Otho. "Little Otho has had enough!"

But somewhere in his subconscious mind, he had his mental fingers crossed.

CHAPTER XVI

Epilogue

The vast Western Sea of the planet Jupiter glittered bluely under the light of the tiny Sun. At one point, there rose from the surface a small rocky island. Down through space, there shot with screaming roar of rockets a small space-flyer. Captain Future was alone in the little craft.

He brought it hastily down to a landing by the island shore. Nearby the Comet was already parked. Curt hastened toward the craft, and the Brain came gliding to meet him.

"I got your message, Simon!" Curt said hastily. "I used our little experimental flyer to come on at once. What's wrong?"

The Brain answered hurriedly.

"Otho and Grag and Joan Randall are trapped down there at the floor of the sea."

"How the devil did they get there?" Curt cried bewilderedly. "I thought you four made this trip to Jupiter, in order to arrange for the transfer of the Lunarian population to the moon Europa."

"Yes, that's what we came for," the Brain admitted. "And we arranged to
have most of that jungle moon off Jupiter set aside for the Lunarians. They'll have a fine home there and be able to live in the Sun again, just as they did ages ago. Everything's all ready for them to migrate."

"You still haven't explained how the others got down there!" Curt Newton interrupted, pointing at the heaving blue ocean.

"Well, it was Otho's idea—" Simon Wright began reluctantly.

"I'll bet it was!" Curt burst out. "Go on!"

"Otho said we'd never had an opportunity to explore the ancient Jovian ruins submerged under this sea, and that now was a good time," the Brain continued. "Grag approved the idea, and I was curious about the ruins myself. They improvised a diving bell from one of the Comet's air-tanks, and went down in it. Joan insisted on going along with them."

"They didn't come back up," Simon concluded. "Finally I got worried, for you know there's a fierce anthropoidal sub-sea race in these oceans. I didn't dare take the Comet down—couldn't risk it. So I decided to call you at once."

Captain Future exploded.

"That crazy android! I might have known he'd pull something like this! When I get my hands on him—"

Curt was already donning a space-suit. He screwed its helmet tight, grasped his proton-pistol, and strode into the water.

The lead soles of the suit held him on the sea floor as he marched down an oozy slope. Flame-fish and hydras swam past him in the green deeps. The space-suit was a perfect diving suit for his purpose. He strode deeper and deeper until he glimpsed a bright gleam of light ahead.

It came from the Futuremen's diving bell. The improvised bell was an upright cylinder of transparent metal, that stood now amid crumbling black ruins which were half covered by ooze. Curt glimpsed Otho, Grag and Joan clearly inside the bell, which had a makeshift rocket tube for ascending.

The diving bell had been fastened tightly to the ocean's slippery floor. Chains attached to the bell's underside had been securely pegged down. And around it were circling a dozen fiercely excited sub-sea men, of the race long known to inhabit the depths of Jupiter's waters.

The scaled, anthropoidal green monsters glimpsed Curt and rushed toward him, leveling their rude spears.

CAPTAIN FUTURE'S proton-pistol flashed streaks of flaming force through the water. The anthropoidal sea-men fell back in alarm. Curt fired again over their heads. The now terrified creatures darted away in a panic through the green depths.

"Now for that crack-brain android and robot!" Curt muttered, striding toward the prisoned diving bell.

He put his hand against it, so that sound would carry to him by conduction.

"Are you people all right?"

Otho, Grag and Joan all shouted at once.

"Sure, we're all right, Chief!" cried Otho. "But we're darned glad to see you come to release us!"

"What are you talking about?" Curt retorted coolly. "I'm not going to release you. You got yourselves into this pickle. Now get out of it."

"Aw, Chief, have a heart!" Grag pleaded. "We know we had no business poking around down here, but we'll never do it again."

"No, cross my heart!" vowed Otho. "Once I get out of this and back to the Moon laboratory, I'll never hunt trouble again. So help me!"

"You've always played that same tune," Captain Future said darkly.

"Yes, but this time I mean it!" the android pleaded.

"All right. I guess you've had your lesson," growled Curt Newton.

He dug loose the pegs with which the sea-men had pinned the bell to the ocean floor. Hastily, Otho operated the makeshift rocket-power of the diving bell. It rose swiftly to the surface of the sea.

When Captain Future tramped up out of the water onto the island shore, the others were already there awaiting him. Otho eagerly held out a tablet
of stone inscribed with a half-crumpled map.

"Look at this, Chief—we got hold of it down in those submerged ruins!" the android exclaimed excitedly. "It's a map of the ancient Jovian civilization. And it shows they had a big city west of the Fire Sea here—a city that might still be intact!"

"What about it?" Curt demanded, his eyes narrowing ominously.

"Well, I know the Fire Sea region is dangerous. But I thought as long as we were here, we might go over there and explore for the ancient city. And—"

He suddenly saw Captain Future's face. Otho turned and dived hastily for the Comet.
They seem to be developing an elementary language

GUINEA PIG

By ARTHUR K. BARNES

Author of "The Little Man Who Wasn't There" "Waters of Wrath," etc.

Bombarded by the Cosmic Rays of Space, Dr. Horace Bateson

Delves to the Bottom of Evolutionary Research

Though the editors of this publication have always frowned upon sensationalism, they are convinced that a matter of greatest urgency, perhaps cataclysmic in its possibilities, faces the world. Baldly we present the facts of the case as reported in the public press and elsewhere, that the reader may draw his own conclusions uninfluenced by hysterical alarmists' propaganda.

There has been no editorializing, save for the deleting of those parts of the following articles and messages which are not pertinent to the issue. We present, then, the case for the prosecution.

Excerpt from Mechanical Engineer for June, 1997. Preliminary tests of the newest creation from the mighty DuPont atom chambers,
artificial element X-125, have revealed unexpected results. A single sheet of this strange looking metal shows a tensile strength and strength-weight ratio greater by far than any hitherto-known alloy. More extraordinary still, when energized, X-125 becomes negatively geotropic. In other words, it partially nullifies the effect of gravity. It is presumed that additional power applied to X-125 would result in its flying from the Earth.

From *Journal of Applied Physics*, 904, 317-321 (Aug, 1997) ... by this process we have been able to utilize 94.71% of the theoretical maximum available power from atomic destruction, in contrast with 31.28% the best result hitherto obtained. It is believed that this discovery will revolutionize the budding art of space travel. No longer will it be held back by limitations of fuel. Lumbering rockets, too often death traps, will soon be superseded by swiftly arrowing cruisers. ...

From *Rocket Builders Gazette* for February, 1998. Trans-America Rocket Corporation announced today through an official spokesman that it had been informed that its bid for a new interstellar rocket, backed by the Morgan Foundation, was found to be lowest among those submitted.

The new venture, incorporating sensational new developments in metallurgy and atomic physics, is rumored to be the mightiest ever undertaken, utterly dwarfing in scope any rocket ships heretofore constructed for flights to the Moon or the inner planets. Construction on the new interstellar flyer is to be commenced within six months. Sub-contracts for units have already been awarded. Work has been held up by the usual labor disputes over union jurisdiction.


**Man to Reach Stars!**

At last the dream that has troubled man since Adam first looked up to the heavens is to come true. Due to the amazing new developments of science, the limitless reaches of all interstellar space are now flung open for Man to explore and conquer.

The battle of Mankind versus the Universe has already been more than half won in the laboratory. Hero of the battalion of scientists who wage relentless war against too-confining bonds of Nature is Professor Harold Curtiss, whose most recent and wonderful contribution is the process which squeezes almost the last drop of power out of Nature's storehouse—the atom. Perhaps only slightly less deserving of honor is that group of men whose combined efforts have produced the new beryl-X-125, super-alloy which actually defies in some measure the mighty power of gravity itself.

All that remains now is for Capital to accomplish the final step, and we shall have a vast transport capable of reaching to the farthest star. Daredevil pioneers to man this craft will not be hard to find. Indeed, the difficulty will be to pick and choose among them.

Already plans are being laid for a projected expedition to the nearest star which has a planetary system. When the first halting efforts were made to bridge the space between Earth and the inner planets, ethnographers and sociologists hoped fervently that an outlet would be found for our overcrowded populations, frequently warring among one another for "living space", and too often prey to epidemic despite the advance of medicine. Mars and Venus, as we all know, proved bitter disappointments in this regard. None but the hardest can long survive on those inhospitable worlds.

But new hope has now been born. It is well within the realm of possibility that a planet may be found closely resembling our own, revolving around some star that is now within our reach. With this in mind, the very first exploratory venture will be a veritable flying colony.

About thirty families will make this daring initial trip—wives and children of the crew members for the most part—in the belief that somewhere in
the void lies a new world to be opened up as a home for hardy pioneers and their descendants where a new civilization can be built.

The great transport, therefore, will be in truth a second Ark, carrying everything conceivable to insure the successful establishment of the new colony. Domestic animals, fowl, grains and vegetables, agricultural implements, pre-fabricated homes with all conveniences and scientific advancements of recent decades, weapons, vehicles—everything that one might consider essential to safe and comfortable living will make the tremendous journey.

It has tentatively been decided to travel to the great star Alpha Centauri. The Everest telescope assures us this star has an extensive planetary system. Instruments, to the best of their ability, indicate that at least two of the planets offer definitely hopeful possibilities for colonization.

Alpha Centauri is about 25,000,000 million miles away. Even if the proposed space vessel could achieve a speed equal to that of light (which is not possible, of course) it would take 4.3 years to reach its goal. At the calculated theoretical speed which the colonizing ship will attain, it is estimated that the journey will take about fifteen years.

The drawing above shows our artist's conception of the giant craft.

ARTICLE from N. Y. Times for April 5, 2006.

Bateson, Van Paassen to Lead Expedition

UP—The AC Developments, Inc., announced today that Dr. Horace Bateson and Dr. Hendrik Van Paassen have been selected as joint commanders of the great colonizing venture which has been the talk of the world since the day the building of the mighty space ship, recently christened the Ad Astra, was started.

Dr. Bateson is eminently well fitted for his post of honor, being a lineal descendant of the first great Bateson in the world of science who made his mark in, and named, the science of genetics, which is the study of evolution, heredity, variation, and development. Dr. Bateson is well known for his contributions to physics, astronomy, and biology.

Choice of Dr. Van Paassen as co-leader is regarded as a shrewd matching of personalities. Dr. Bateson is famous for the radical theories he often outlines and the boldness with which he undertakes to prove them. Like the sluger in the ring who willingly takes two punches in order to land one good one, Dr. Bateson will cheerfully suffer many experimental failures if they eventually bring him to one of his sensational successes.

Dr. Van Paassen, on the other hand, is strongly conservative in his scientific approach. His age and caution will serve to break any possible over-enthusiasm.

When interviewed by reporters today, Dr. Bateson was visibly thrilled. "Am I happy about the appointment?" he cried. "You bet I am! This is an adventure, the most terrific adventure the world has ever known since Eve was made from Adam's rib! Think of the infinite possibilities for new discoveries, for experimentation under alien conditions to acquire new knowledge—" Here Bateson waved his hands helplessly, unable to express in words his excitement.

"Heretofore Alpha Centauri has just been a name unknown to many outside the world of astronomy. We'll make it a symbol—a symbol of the determined, directed struggle to triumphant achievement which has always typified and glorified Mankind's history!"

Characteristically, Dr. Van Paassen's comment was made with typical scholarly reserve. "I am naturally overwhelmed by this undeserved honor," he said. "I shall do my utmost to be worthy of the trust placed in me by the Developments Corporation and by those whose lives will be in our hands."

He further went on to describe the means by which Ad Astra will keep in contact with Earth upon her epic voyage. After the first million miles or so, short-wave radio communica-
tion will become impossible. Hence, miniature rockets have been developed which are automatically operated and which are attuned precisely to Earth’s magnetism.

At regular intervals a full report will be sealed within one of these “mini-rockets,” and its course carefully plotted to intersect that of the home planet; then it will be released. If it manages to come unharmed to within anywhere near the earth, it will be trapped by Earth’s fields of magnetic force, and its message will be carried to its destination safely. Automatic signals will lead searchers to the rocket.

“But naturally there are some hazards that may take toll of the tiny message rockets,” continued Dr. Van Paassen, “but doubtless many will get through. No other heavenly body’s magnetism is exactly like that of Earth, so there is no danger of the mini-rockets being diverted except by a head-on collision. And they will be built so heat- and projectile-resistant that no ordinary stresses can destroy them.”

From page 3 of the same issue of the N. Y. Times.

**Noble Guinea Pigs Ride to Glory**

From time immemorial man’s best and most patiently long-suffering friend has been, not the dog, but the guinea pig. By the thousands these little animals have been vivisected, injected with strange compounds, fed with weird diets, and generally maltreated in the name of experimentation. Guinea pigs have become a synonym for experimental subjects. They have died that science might live and progress to its present heights, that man could achieve the fuller, more abundant life.

And now the guinea pig gets his just reward. Eight pairs have been given the much-coveted role of passengers aboard the **Ad Astra**. Their descendants will be the first to step onto the soil of the new world which, it is hoped, will be found at the end of the voyage.

True, they face possible death, as usual. Their part is to test the atmosphere of alien planets. It is feared that Earth-made instruments may not detect poisonous elements alien to our knowledge, so the final check will be, as so many times in the past, up to our pal the guinea pig. And if it kills them, we feel the heroic animals will do their job uncomplainingly.

After all, the name of Guinea Pig will be made immortal. Centuries hence, no record of the first flight to the stars will be complete without the name of that mighty atom, the indispensable guinea pig. Legend and song will affirm that not even all-conquering Man dared step upon that distant planet before receiving the final okay from his lowly ally.

And what more could a guinea pig ask than that?


**Ad Astra Takes Off for Alpha Centauri After Monster Ceremony!**

From the report of Dr. Horace Bateson aboard the space ship **AD ASTRA** in mid-space, via mini-rocket. Sent January 1, 2008; received January 7, 2009.

One full year of our new life in space has passed, and all is well. That line carries almost our entire message. There have been no deaths, and two successful births among our little group. Our health, despite many forebodings before this journey was undertaken, remains excellent. No ill effects have been noticed from exposure to the full force of cosmic rays, doubtless because the builders of the **Ad Astra** have ingeniously shielded practically all parts of the vessel wherein we live our daily life.

Some of the ray particles get through beyond question. Already the men are beginning to lose the hair on all parts of their bodies. Oddly, the women seem unaffected, giving substance to the theory that woman’s “crowning glory” is a secondary sex characteristic, so strongly rooted as to be impervious even to cosmic rays. The men are philosophic; in another year or two the beastly bother of shav-
ing will be a thing of the past.

One other thing remains to be reported. Our guinea pigs, housed in a remote part of the ship without CR shields, are undergoing highly interesting and unforeseen development. Notoriously prolific, they are turning out litter after litter of extraordinary mutants. By selective breeding we have already produced a vastly superior strain of guinea pig. They are more intelligent, have increased in size until they approach the dimensions of a dog, and they have opposed thumbs like their distant cousin, the opossum.

This mutation is simply explained. A mutation is caused by a cosmic ray particle striking a particular gene in a chromosome. On Earth, where the atmosphere blocks off most of the cosmic rays, the odds against a CR particle hitting an infinitesimal gene which is subsequently fated to be involved in reproduction are literally billions to one. But out here in space it goes on constantly where there is no shielding against cosmic rays.

A single pair of guinea pigs may in a single year be the parent stock of a thousand progeny. We expect to be fifteen years in space. These two facts spell an unequalled opportunity for prolonged experiment. It may well be we shall make scientific history in more ways than one.

From the report of Dr. Horace Bateson aboard the AD ASTRA, via mini-rocket. Sent January 1, 2010; received January 14, 2013.

. . . . during these last four years the language of the guinea pigs, who learn now with great rapidity, has approached the flexibility of some of the early Oriental tongues. Stevenson, our etymologist, is compiling a dictionary with the aid of one of the more intelligent animals. He is confident that in time he will be able to communicate fluently with them, perhaps even teach them English.

The rapid increase in size is tapering off gradually in a smooth curve as they evolve. Van Paassen, plotting this curve, predicts that in time the guinea pigs will attain an upright stature of about five feet six inches. This point should mark the peak of their physical evolution. What limits their mental evolution will achieve no one can even begin to hazard.

As for Van Paassen, who has not been well lately, even he has forgotten his ominous warnings in the thrill of this exciting experiment which has overshadowed to a great extent even our momentous journey and its significance, probably because it breaks the ennui of an otherwise uneventful and monotonous life.

The guinea pigs are extraordinarily good-natured. Their emotions seem to be confined to a sense of well being,
curiosity, and only rarely flashes of annoyance or anger. No hate, love, worry—none of the passions that man acquired during his long evolution. The guinea pigs have evolved too rapidly for that. It is quite possible that we can propagate here something very nearly approaching pure intellect unhampered by emotion. We shall see.

From the report of Dr. Horace Bateson aboard the AD ASTRA, via mini-rocket. Sent January 1, 2018; received March 8, 2029.

There is reason to suspect that the amazing news carried by the rockets of the last four years may have missed the mark, in which case I recapitulate somewhat. Stevenson, in a remarkable scientific tour de force, taught several of the guinea pigs to speak English. Beginning with simple nouns and a few active verbs, he has now given them an excellent vocabulary.

Their voices are high-pitched and too rapid to understand at first, like a sound-track run off at high speed, but a little practice enables one to converse with them. The teaching is done hypnotically, for the most part, with an advanced hypnobioscope, which can cram great amounts of knowledge into a brain in a relatively short time. The guinea pigs still retain their characteristic rapid maturity, despite their enormously increased life-span so that learning begins only a week or so after birth.

We are working hard on a newly developed strain which seems to have pronounced mathematical ability. GP2-344 (we commenced “naming” our charges some time ago for the sake of our voluminous notes) will soon, we feel, be able to handle elementary astronomical observations and perhaps even carry out the routine computations necessary to astrogation of the AD Astra. . . .

From the report of Dr. Horace Bateson aboard the AD ASTRA, via mini-rocket. Sent January 1, 2022; received March 15, 2037.

Our journey nears its inevitable end. In one short year, or perhaps a bit longer, we shall enter the planetary system of the star Alpha Centauri. Paradoxically, it is almost with regret that I announce this, because it means the closing of our remarkable experiments with our now invaluable assistants, the guinea pigs.

Perhaps it is just as well, however, for we seem to be approaching the upper limits of what may be done in an evolutionary way, although the absolute end has not yet been reached. The entire handling of the manual duties aboard the AD ASTRA has been placed temporarily in the hands of the guinea pigs, directed by our most recent genius, GP6-8905. This will be excellent discipline and training for our animal friends, whom we expect to serve us importantly if and when we establish our colony.

Van Paassen, though not at all well, has been making observations from the point of view of the psychologist, and finds the guinea pigs extraordinary indeed, as might be expected. Though extremely intelligent and highly organized by our direction, they are completely lacking in any moral or cultural background. They have no such thing as racial history to give point and meaning to their lives.

We have not even bothered to instruct them as to their own past, so whatever they may know of their evolution is very sketchy. In order that they can perform their allotted functions intelligently, of course, it has been necessary to tell them of the purpose of this odyssey.

They know we intend to explore the planetary system of Alpha Centauri with an eye to establishing a colony if we can find a world which, by our tests, shows itself to be favorable. But on the whole our guinea pigs, save for a few basic emotions and a strongly developed instinct of self-preservation, are nearly robots in their perfection as calculating machines.

When not at work, practically all their idle conversation revolves about our great mission. There is little else for them to talk about; it is their reason for existence and understandably dominates all their thinking. Even if all of us were to die, I believe the guinea pigs would find some way to carry out our colonization plan just the same.
Van Paassen is worried about this lack of "character"—for want of a better word. He feels obscurely that it may lead to unexpected complications. But this is nonsense.

Later, Van Paassen died. It was not unexpected, though we feel his loss keenly. In a sense, though, his death frees me from uncomfortable restraints. There are several avenues of experimental investigation, in regard to the guinea pigs, which I have refrained from exploring out of respect to Van Paassen's over-cautious fears of physical danger.

I intended to probe these channels boldly during our short remaining time. The experiment is approaching its climax, and I hope to have something truly sensational to report when I dispatch this message to you on Earth a few months hence.

STILL later: 12-29-2021. Recorded for sending by GP9-133. The environment of this world, as with all the others of this planetary system, has been proven unsuitable to support life. We must therefore return. The last of the hairless bipeds was used today in testing this planet's atmosphere, according to historic plan.

FLASH! Everest Observatory reports sighting the Ad Astra. The mighty ship doubtless commenced its return to Earth shortly after releasing the last mini-rocket message. "They" have had an additional fifteen years in which to continue their amazing evolution, and by now may well be soulless intellectual giants beyond our ability to conceive of or cope with.

Will their attitude toward us be benign? Do they bring a storehouse of scientific knowledge and a vast mental potentiality which will be of incalculable value in the advancement of civilization?

Or will they look upon us as inferior beings, suitable only for such treatment as they have dealt to the crew of the Ad Astra?

Perhaps, having studied their history in the space ship's library, they may be intent upon revenge with fearful weapons for the suffering their race has been subjected to on this planet.

People of Earth, what are we to do?
EROS, the little world which is one of the great family of asteroids or midget planets that lie between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter, is famous as one of the strangest worlds in the Solar System.

In the first place, Eros is almost the only planetary body that is not spherical in shape. The tiny planet is shaped roughly like a brick, twenty-two miles long and seven miles in diameter. This extraordinary fact was discovered by astronomers back in 1936, long before space travel had begun.

Secondly, Eros comes closer to the Earth than any other planetary body except the Moon. This is because of the high degree of eccentricity of the little asteroid’s orbit.

The Slow-Motion World

But it is not either of these facts which has made Eros the talk of all interplanetary travelers. What has made it famous is the peculiar condition upon it which has caused it to be called The Slow-Motion World.

That condition is due to the strange quality of its gravitational field. Ordinarily, a mass so small as Eros would have only the weakest kind of gravitation. It would not be able to retain any atmosphere or water-vapor whatever.

But Eros does have a small atmosphere, and does also possess a scanty hydrosphere. Its weak gravitation is supplemented by its strong magnetic field. Eros has a high ferrous content, and this and its peculiar brick-like shape causes the tiny planet to act as a great bar-magnet moving through space. The powerful influence of its magnetic field is sufficient to hold its atmosphere molecules.

But this super-powerful magnetic field has a peculiar effect upon all life on the surface of the little world. The field so affects the electrical nerve-currents of any living creature to “slow down” the nervous and mental processes of that creature, to a tempo a hundred times slower than normal.

This, in turn, automatically slows down the metabolism of the creature’s tissues at the same rate.

The result is, that a man on Eros lives slower than on any other world—a hundred times slower. He seems to himself to be living at the same rate, but actually his movements are one hundred times slower. The fact that the weak gravitation of Eros makes falling bodies move almost as many times slower than on Earth, makes the physical background of life on the little planet compatible with this decelerated tempo.

A Year Passes Swiftly

For this reason, Eros is scrupulously avoided by interplanetary travelers—even the most curious. For when a man lands on Eros, it is but a short time before the magnetic field begins to affect the tempo of his living. Then he will spend three or four days on the little planet, and will go away to find that he has really spent a year there!

Yet Eros has a small native population. These Erosians, it is assumed, are descendants of explorers who came from other worlds long ago in the dim past of the System. They all live what seems to be hundreds of years of age, to the rest of the System. But, the Erosians to themselves seem only to live an ordinary seventy or eighty years, so natural does their vastly slower tempo of life feel to them.

The number of the Erosians is not large, and their civilization is not greatly advanced, due to their isolation. They have several small towns upon their curious worldlet, the largest of which is their capital of Lotene.

A few other of the natural wonders of this curiosity of the System merit description. The forests of towering fungi which clothe much of the surface of Eros are worthy of note. These fungus forests are extreme developments of parasitic forms, which suck nutriment from the simple moses which are the other chief variety of plant life.

Scanty Fauna

The fauna of Eros are very scanty in variety. There are a few of the familiar asteroid-rats, also a large number of the beautiful flame-birds. But the little asteroid is lacking in the rich profusion of grotesque animals found on some of the larger planetoids.

The Magnet Mountains are almost unique, however. These are hilly outcrops of pure iron which, in the strong magnetic field, exert an unbelievable pull upon any ferrous metal that comes near them. The Erosians, indeed, are able to walk up perpendicular cliffs of these mountains like so many houseflies, by wearing sandals with thin soles of iron.

The small body of water called Lake Orr by the Erosians has a peculiar feature. It contains both the source and the mouth of the same river—the stream known as the Reversing River. This is due to the
fact that the motion of Eros on its own axes as it glides through space is extremely irregular. It has no regular period of rotation, due to its unspherical shape. It turns over and over, much like a flying brick.

This fact makes its periods of day and night extremely irregular. And also this causes such sudden variations in direction of the solar tidal pull on the lake, that its waters now flow in one direction in the river-bed around the worldlet, and now in another.

The Satellite of Eros
There is one more feature of interest about Eros that has an extreme appeal.

On November 29, 1969, Robbins and Swain attempted a take-off from an Adirondack plateau. But the erratic Wellston cyclotrons lived up to the predictions of the pessimists, and let go with a blast of power that destroyed the whole tail of the rocket and sent the main mass of the ship flying out into space with terrific impetus. Robbins and Swain were undoubtedly killed instantly.

The wrecked craft was hurled roughly toward the asteroid Eros, and took up a loose orbit around that little world as a tiny satellite. This early tragedy was soon forgotten, for two years later in 1971, Gorham Johnson made his epochal first great space-pioneering voyages. And Johnson’s immortal voyages were followed by the hurlburl of planetary exploration.

The Forgotten First
Not until a century later, when space voyages were commonplace, were Robbins and Swain brought back into the public eye by a curious chance. Meteor-sweeping operations designed to clear the ship lanes of debris had by that time begun. It was (Concluded on page 129)
By JACK WILLIAMSON

The Alien Intelligence

An American Physician Is Plunged into Weird Australian Adventure with Fearful Entities Which Antedate Man!

CHAPTER I
The Mountain of the Moon

BEFORE me, not half a mile away, rose the nearest ramparts of the Mountain of the Moon. It was afternoon, and the red sun blazed down on the bare, undulating sandy waste with fearful intensity. The air was still and intolerably hot. Heat waves danced ceaselessly over the uneven sand. I felt the utter loneliness, the wild mystery, and the overwhelming power of the desert.

The black cliffs rose cold and solid in the east—a barrier of dark menace. Pillars of black basalt, of dark hornblende, and of black obsidian rose in a precipitous wall of sharp and jagged peaks that curved back to meet the horizon. Needlelike spires rose a thousand feet, and nowhere was the escarpment awe less than half that high. It was with mingled awe and incipient fear that I first looked upon the Mountain of the Moon.

It was a year since I had left medical college in America to begin practice in Perth, Australia, where I had an uncle, my sole surviving relative. My companion on the voyage had been Dr. Horace Austen, the well-known radiologist, archeologist and explorer. He had been my dearest friend. That he was thirty years my senior, had never interfered with our comraderie.

It was he who had paid most of my expenses in school.

He had left me at Perth, going on to investigate some curious ruined columns that a traveler had reported in the western part of the Great Victoria Desert. There Austen had simply vanished. He had left Kanowna, and the desert had swallowed him up.

But it was his way, when working on a problem, to go into utter seclusion for months at a time.

My uncle was an ardent radio enthusiast, and it was over one of his experimental short-wave sets that we picked up the remarkable message from my lost friend that led me to abandon my practice and heed the call of adventure that has always been strong in those of my blood. I sought the half-mythical Mountain of the Moon, in the heart of the unexplored region of the Great Victoria Desert of Western Australia.

AUSTEN'S message had been tantalizingly brief and hard to interpret. We picked it up five times over a period of two weeks, always just after sunset. Evidently it was sent by one who had not recently practiced his knowledge of code, and it seemed that the sender was always in a great hurry, or under a considerable nervous tension, for minor errors and omissions...
Crouched down in the shrubbery, Fowler saw a line of marching men in silvery chain mail (Chap. III).
were frequent. The words were invariably the same.
To Winfield Fowler, physician, Perth, Aus-
tralia:—Horace Austin, as I, lived in an un-
known new world, where alien terrors reign,
that lies in a crater in the Mountain of the
Moon. I implore you to come to my aid, for
the sake of mankind. Bring arms, and my
equipment—the Rontgen tubes and coils, and
the spectrometer. Ascend ladder at west pin-
nacle. Pay my tributes to the crys-
tal city, whom I left beyond the Silver
Lake. Come, for the sake of civilization, and
may who ever hears this forward it with all
dispatch.

My uncle was inclined to suspect a hoax.
But after the message had come twice I
received another, then from several radia-
tio amateurs who had heard it, and were
forwarding it to me. We took the direction
of the third call and had amateurs in Ade-
laide do the same. The lines intersected in
the Great Victoria Desert, at a point very
near that at which Wellington located the
Mountain of the Moon, sighting and nam-
ing it in 1887.

Knowing Austin to be intensely human
as a man, but grave and serious as a sci-
tist, it was impossible for me to take the
message as a practical joke. It was equally
impossible for me to devote myself to pro-
saic business when so attractive a mystery
was beckoning me away. I could never, in
any case, hesitate to go to Austin’s aid.

I got together the apparatus he had men-
tioned—equipment he had left with me as
he went on—as well as my emergency med-
icine kit, a heavy rifle, two .45 Colt auto-
matic, and a good supply of ammunition.

I bade my uncle farewell and got on the
train.

I left the railway at Kanowna, where I
bought three ponies, two of them for pack
animals. Nothing need be said of the per-
ils of the journey, during which I lost one
pony. Three weeks later I came in sight
of the mountain.

Wellington had christened it as he did
because of an apparent similarity to the
strange cliff-rimmed craters of the Moon,
and the appellation was an apt one. The
crews rose almost perpendicularly from the
sand to the jagged rim. To climb them was
out of the question. The rock was polished
slick by wind-blown sands for many feet,
but rough and sharp above.

To my left, at the extreme west point of
the great curve, was a dark needle spire
that towered three hundred feet above its
fellow. I knew that this must be Austin’s
“west pinnacle.” What sort of ladder I
was to ascend, I had little idea.

As the sun sank back of the rolling sea
of sand, dark purple shadows rose about
the barrier, and I was struck with deep
forebodings of the evil mystery that lay
beyond it. The gold of the desert changed
to silver gray, and the gray faded swiftly as
a deep purple mantle swept up the peaks,
displacing even the deep-red crews that
lay like splashes of blood upon the sum-
mits. Oddly I felt that a strange spirit of
terror lurked behind the mountain.

Quickly I made camp. I hobbled the
two gaunted ponies on a little patch of
grass and brush that grew where water had
run from the cliff, pitched my little tent,
and found brush to start a tiny fire. I ate
supper, using but a scanty cup of water.
Then, oppressed by the vast mysterious
peaks that loomed so portentously in the
east to shut out the starlight, I went in the
tent and sought my blanket.

Pondering my next move in this desert
wilderness, and wondering where and how
I could contact Dr. Austin, I finally fell
asleep.

CHAPTER II
The Abyss of the Terror-light

First I heard a faint whispering sound,
rather a hiss, infinitely far away, and, up,
I thought, over the cliffs. I started
awake to find the cloth of the tent
lighted by a faint red glow thrown on it
from above. I shivered and the strange
spell of the mountain and the desert fell
heavier upon me. I gripped my automatic tensely as the scar-
let radiance shone ever brighter through the cloth.

The sound turned to a hissing, shrieking
scream. It was deafening, and it seemed
to plunge straight down from overhead. The
red glare was almost blinding. Abruptly
the tent was blown down by a sudden tem-
pest of wind.

For perhaps a minute the terror hung
about me. I lay there in a strange para-
sis of fear, while a hurricane of wind tore
at the canvas upon me. I heard upon the
tempest, above that awful whistling, a wild,
mad laugh that rang against the cliff,
weirdly appalling. It was utterly inhuman,
not even the laugh of a madman. Just
once it rang out, then the light and the
sound swept up and away.

With belated courage I tore my way
from under the cloth. The stars were like
jewels in the westward sky, but the omi-
nous blackness of the mountain blotted out
the eastern stars. The peaks were lighted
by a vague and flickering radiance of scar-
let, like the reflection of unpleasant fires
beyond. Strange pulsing, exploring fingers
of red seemed to thrust themselves up from
behind the cliff. Somehow they gave me
the feeling that an incredibly great, in-
credibly evil personality lurked beyond,
bathed in the crimson light which shone
weirdly on the wild summits of the moun-
tain, as if they were smeared with blood.

I threw more brush on the fire and
crouched over it, feeling terribly alone and
troubled. When the flames flared up I
looked about for the ponies, seeking com-
panionship even in them. They were gone!
At first I thought they had broken their
hobbles and strayed off, but I could neither
see nor hear them. They had been in no
condition to run far. I walked about a little, fruitlessly seeking them, and then went back to the fire. I sat there and watched the eerie, unwholesome glare that shone over mountain. No longer did I doubt the existence of Austen’s “world where alien terrors reign.” I knew, even as I had felt when I first saw the mountain, that some strange life and power lurked beyond it.

Presently I stretched the tent again and lay down, but I did not sleep.

At dawn I got up and went to look for my horses. I climbed one of the low dunes and gazed over the gray infinity of sand, but not a sign of them rewarded my look. I tried to trail them. I found where they had been bobbled, and followed the tracks to a place where the hoofs had cut deep in the sandy turf. Beyond there was no trace. Then I was certain of what I had already known. The Thing had carried them away.

Then I found something stranger still—the prints of bare human feet, half-erased by the wind that had blown while the terror had hung there! That unearthly laugh, and now barefootprints! Was there a land of madmen behind the mountain? And what was the thing that had come and gone in the night? These were questions I could not answer, but daylight dulled my wondering fear.

THE sun would not strike my side of the mountain until nearly noon, and the cold, dark shadow of the cliff was upon me when the desert all to the west was a shimmering white in the heat of the sun. Austen’s message had mentioned a ladder. I set out to find it. Just north of the peak I came upon it, running straight up like a silver ribbon to the top of the cliff.

It was not the clumsy affair of ropes that I expected. In fact, I at once abandoned any idea that Austen had made it at all. It was of an odd-looking white metal, and it seemed very old, although it was corroded but little. The rungs were short white bars riveted to long straps which were fastened on the rock by spikes of the same silvery metal.

I have said that the mountain rose straight from the sand. And the ladder went on into the ground. That suggested that the sand has piled in on the base of the mountain since the ladder had been put there. At any rate, I was sure it was incredibly old.

I went back to camp, packed together my guns, a little food, Austen’s equipment, and started up the ladder. Although it was no more than six hundred feet to the top, heavily laden as I was, I got very tired before I reached it. I stopped several times to rest. Once, looking down on the illimitable sea of rolling sand where the tiny tent and the sharp shadow of the mountain were the only definite features, I had a terrible attack of vertigo, and I almost wished I had never started up the ladder. But I knew that if I were suddenly back in Perth I would be more eager than ever to set out again.

At last I reached the top of the queer ladder and crawled up in the mouth of a narrow canyon, with black stone walls rising straight to the peaks on either side. Along the crevice ran a smooth, curving pathway, worn more by time than by human feet. It was not yet noon. I waited a few minutes to rest; then I walked along the path with a very keen curiosity as to where it led. It grew so deep that the sky overhead became a dark blue ribbon in which I saw Venus gleaming whitely. Suddenly it widened, and I walked out on a broad stone platform. Below me lay—the abyss.

I stood on the brink of a great chasm whose bottom must have been miles, even, below sea level. The farther walls of the circular pit, fully forty miles away, were still black in the shadow of the morning. Clouds of red and purple mist hung in the infinity of space the chasm contained, completely hiding the farther half of the floor. Beneath me, so far away that it was as if I looked on another world, was a deep-red plain weird as the deserts of Mars.

To what it owed its color I could not tell. In the midst of the red, rose a mountain whose summit was a strange crown of scintillating fire. It looked as though it were capped, but with snow, but with an immense heap of precious jewels, set on fire with the glory of the sun, and blazing with a splendid shifting flame of prismatic light. And the crimson upland sloped down—to “the Silver Lake.”

It was a lake shaped like a crescent moon, the horns reaching to the ring of mountains on the north and the south. In the hollow of the crescent beyond, low hills rose, impenetrable banks of purple mist lying back of them to the dark wall in the distance.

The lake gleamed like quicksilver and light waves ran upon it, reflecting the sunlight in cold blue fire. It seemed that faint purple vapor were floating up from the surface. Set like a picture in the dark-red landscape, with the black cliffs about, the argent lake was very white and bright.

CHAPTER III

Down the Silver Ladder

For a long time I gazed into the abyss, lost in the wonder and the mystery of it. Meanwhile the sun climbed over and lit the farther rim, revealing it as black or dully red, due to the dark colors of the volcanic rocks of which it is composed. The scene was so vast, so strange and wild, that it seemed almost a dream instead of an ominous reality.

It was hard to realize that somewhere upon the red plain, or along the shores of
the Silver Lake, or perhaps beneath the banks of mist beyond, Dr. Austen was in distress. I wondered from what part of this strange world had come the thing of whistling sound and red light which had taken the ponies.

It was well after noon before I ate a little lunch and took thought of the matter of descent. I found a second ladder which led down in a fine line of silver until it disappeared above the crimson upland, miles below. I climbed over the brink and started down. Descending was easier than climbing had been, but I had infinitely farther to go. The soles of my shoes were cut through, and my hands became red and blistered on the rungs before I reached halfway. Sometimes, when I was too tired to go on, I tied myself to the ladder with a piece of rope from my pack, while I rested. Steadily the black walls rose higher about me. The red plateau beneath, the mountain with its crown of flaming gems, and the strange white lake beyond, came slowly nearer.

The hill was half a mile above the scarlet plain when the shadow of the western wall was flung far over the valley floor, and the light purple mists beyond the argent lake deepened their hue to a dark and ominous purple-red.

But the Silver Lake did not darken. It seemed luminous, gleaming with a bright, metallic, silvery luster, even when the shadow had fallen upon it. Whenever I rested I searched keenly the whole visible floor but nowhere was any life or motion to be seen.

With a growing apprehension, I realized that I would not have time to reach the ground before dark. I had no desire to be sticking like a fly to the face of the cliff when the Thing that had made the red light was moving about. Disregarding my fatigue and pain, I clambered down as fast as I could for my wearied limbs to move. The process of motion had become almost automatic. Hands and feet moved regularly, rhythmically, without orders from the brain. But sometimes they fumbled or slipped. Then I had to grasp frenziedly at the rungs to save my life.

Night fell like a black curtain rolled quickly over the top of the pit, but the half-moon of the Silver Lake still shone with its white metallic light. And strange, moving shapes of red appeared in the mist in the hollow of the crescent. The light that fell upon the rock was faint, but still enough to help, so I hurried, forcing hands and feet to follow down and find the rungs. And fearfully I looked over my shoulder at the bank of mist.

SUDDENLY a long, pale finger of red — a delicate rosy ray — shot high out of it. Up the vague pathway it sped, a slender pencil of crimson light that rose high into the night, and over and around in a long, arching curve. Down it plunged, back into the mist. Presently I heard its sound, that strange whistling sigh that rolled majestically and rose and fell, vast as the roar of an erupting volcano. Other things sprang out of the purple bank, slender, searching needles of brilliant scarlet that swept over the valley and high into the starlit sky above.

Following paths that were smooth and arched, with incredible speed they swept about like a swarm of strange insects, always with amazing ease, and always shooting back into the cloud, leaving faint purple tracks behind them. And the great rushing sounds rose and fell. Those lights were incredible entities, intelligent — and evil.

They flew most often over the crown of lights upon the hill, the gems that still shone with a faint, beautiful glow of mingled colors. Whenever one swept near the mountain, a pale blue ray shot toward it from the cap of jewels. And the red things fled from the ray. More and more the flying things of crimson were drawn to the mountain top, wheeling swiftly and ceaselessly, ever evading the feeble beams of blue. Their persistence was inhuman, terrible. They were like insects wheeling about a light.

All this while I climbed down as fast as I could, disregarding my worn-out limbs beyond the limit of endurance while I prayed that the things might not observe me. Then one passed within a half-mile with a deep, awful, whistling roar, flinging ahead its dusky red pathway and hurrying along with a velocity that was inconceivable. I saw that it was a great red cylindrical body with tapering ends and a bright green light shining on the forward part.

It did not stop, but swept on along its comet-like path and down behind the Silver Lake. Behind it was left a vague purple phosphorescent track, like the path of a meteor, that lasted several minutes.

After it was gone, I hurried on for a few minutes, breathing easier. Then another went by, so close that a hot wind laden with the purple mist of its track blew against my face. I was gripped with deathly, unutterable terror. I let myself down in the haste of desperation.

Then the third one came. As it approached it paused in its path, and drifted slowly and deliberately toward me. The very cliff trembled with the roaring blast of its sound. The green light in the forward end stared at me like an animat evil eye.

Exactly how it happened I never knew. I suppose my foot slipped, or my bleeding hands failed to grasp a rung. I have a vague recollection of the nightmare sensation of falling headlong, of the air whistling briefly about my ears, of the dark earth looming up below. I think I fell on my back and that my head struck a rock.

THE next I knew it was day, and the sun was shining in my eyes. I struggled awkwardly and painfully to my feet. My whole body was bruised and sore, and the back of my head was soaked with blood. My exhausted muscles had stiffened during the night, and to stand upon my
cut and blistered feet was torturing. But I had something to be thankful for. I had been within a few feet of the ground when I fell. The red thing had departed and left me lying there, perhaps thinking me dead.

I leaned against the base of the metal ladder and looked about. I had fallen into a thicket of low, red bushes which covered the slightly rolling plain. The plants were scarcely knee-high, bearing narrow, feathered leaves of red. The delicate, fernlike sprays of crimson rippled in the breeze like waves on a sea of blood. The leaves had a peculiar bright and greasy appearance and a strange, pungent odor. The shrubs bore innumerable tiny snow-white flowers that gleamed like stars against the deep red background.

I think the red vegetation evolved from a species of cycad. Undoubtedly the great crater had been isolated from the outer world when the great tree-ferns were reigning throughout Earth. And, as I was presently to find, the order of evolution in the deep, warm pit had been vastly different from that which had produced man as its highest form of life.

No living thing, nor hear any sound of life. In fact, one of the strange things of the place was the complete absence of the lower forms of life, even of the smaller insects. The silence hung oppressively.

Far away to the right and left the walls of the pit rose straight and black to the azure infinity that arched the top. To the left of me, five or six miles away, towered the gem-crowned hill, its summit a blaze of ever-changing polychromatic flame. Beyond, all along the east, the red plateau fell away to the Silver Lake, which lay like a curved scimitar of polished steel, with the faint bank of purple mist shrouding the low, red hills that rose inside the curve beyond. The sun was just above the eastern peaks, shining purple through the mist.

After a time I limped slowly down the nearest of the little valleys. As I went my roving eye caught the bright glitter of brass on the ground at my feet. Searching in the red shrubs, I picked up three fired cartridges from a .45-caliber automatic. I held them in my hand and gazed over the weird scene before me, lost in wonder. They were concrete proof that Austen had passed this way, had here fought off some danger. He must yet be somewhere in this strange crater. But where was I to find "Melvar, maiden of the crystal city," and what was she to do for me?

Presently I went on. I wanted water to bathe my cuts and bruises. I was thirsty as well as hungry. My pack was an irksome burden, but I dared not discard anything.

I carried the heavy rifle ready in my hand. After a painful half-mile I came to a tiny pool in a thicket of the red scrub. I drank the clear, cool water until I was half-sick. I threw away the remnants of my shoes and bathed my feet.
towered a full thousand feet to the crown of blazing crystal. As I drew nearer, I saw indeed that the gems were buildings of a massive, fantastic architecture. A city of crystal! Prismatic fires of emerald-green, and ruby-red, and sapphire-blue poured out in a mingled flood of iridescence from its slender spires and great towers, its central ruby dome and the circling battlements of a hundred flashing hues.

CHAPTER IV

Melvar of Astrap

Just before noon I staggered into a little dell that was covered with unusually profuse growths of the crimson plants. Along a little prickling stream of water they were waist-high, bearing abundantly the star-shaped flowers and small golden-brown fruits.

Suddenly there was a rustling in the thicket and the head and shoulders of a young woman rose abruptly out of the red brush. In her hand she held a woven basket, half-full of the fruits. In my alarm I jerked up the rifle. I lowered it and grinned in confusion when I realized that it was a girl, by far the most beautiful one I had ever seen. I could only stand there and stare at her, while her quizzical dark-blue eyes inscrutably returned my look.

She was clad in a slight garment, green in color, that seemed to be woven of a fine-spun metal. Her hair was long and golden, fastened behind her shapely head with a jeweled circlet. Her features were fine and delicate, and she had a surpassing grace of figure.

That her slender arms were stained to the elbows with the red juice of the plants—she had been picking the golden fruits—did not detract from her beauty.

I was struck—conquered by her face. For a little space she stood very erect, looking at me with an odd expression, and then she spoke, enunciating the words very carefully in a rich, golden voice.

The language was English!

"Are you—an American?" she asked.

"Yes," I told her. "Winfield Fowler, of White Deer, Texas, and New York City, not to mention other points. But I'm amazed at finding a knowledge of the idiom in a denizen of so remote a locality."

"I can understand," she smiled. "But I think you could talk—more simply. So you are the Winfield who came with Austen across the great—ocean from America? Doctor Austen told me about you, his friend. And he gave me two books, Ten-nyson's poems, and 'The Pathfinder.'"

"So you have seen Austen?" I cried.

"Are you Melvar? Are you the maiden of the crystal city?"

"I am Melvar," she told me. "Austen stopped in Astrap one sutar—thirty-six days."

"Where is he now?" I eagerly demanded.

"He was a strange man," the golden voice replied. "He did not fear the Krimlu, as do the men of Astrap. He departed toward the pass in the north that leads around the Silver Lake, he called it. He had been watching the Krimlu as they came at night, and doing strange things with some stuff he took from the Silver Lake. While he was here, the hunters brought in one of the—" Again she hesitated, at a loss for a word. "The Purple Ones," she concluded. "He took that to examine it."

"What are the Krimlu?" I demanded.

"What are the Purple Ones? What is the Silver Lake?"

"You are a man of many questions." She laughed. "For a moment she hesitated, her blue eyes resting on my face.

"The Krimlu, so say the old men of Astrap, are the spirits of the dead who come back from the land beyond the Silver Lake to watch the living, and to carry off the evil for their food. So the priests taught us, and so I believed until Austen came and told me of the world that is beyond.

"He told the Elders of the outer world, but they put upon him the curse of the sun, and drove him away. And indeed it is well that he was ready to go so willingly beyond the Silver Lake, for Iorak would have offered him to the Purple Sun had he remained in the city another night."

Suddenly she must have become conscious of the intensity of my unthinking gaze, for she abruptly dropped her eyes, and flushed a little.

"Go on," I urged her. "What about the Purple Ones and the Silver Lake? Your account is certainly entertaining, if somewhat more mystifying than illuminating. At this rate you will have me a raving maniac in an hour, but the process is not unpleasant. Proceed."

She looked up at me, smiled, glanced away and then let her eyes return to mine with curious speculation in them. "What is the Silver Lake?" she went on. "You know as well as I, though, Austen tried to find its secret. The touch of its water is death—a death that is terrible. The Purple Ones you meet see soon enough! They are strange beings who come, no one knows whence, into the land of Astrap. The priests tell us that they are the Avengers of the Purple Sun. Did you come down the ladder as Austen did?"

"Yes," I told her.

"Is there really," she asked, "a broad world beyond, with fields and forests that are green, seas of clear blue water, and a sun that is not purple, but white? Such Austen told me, but the elder say that the ladder is the path to Purple Sun, and beyond is nothing. Is it true that there is a great nation of the men of your race, a nation of men who know the art of fire
CHAPTER V

Astran, the Crystal City

The sun dropped behind the rim, and the purple dusk began to thicken and to creep over the valley floor. I took up my precious equipment and followed Melvar off through the red brush in the direction of the mountain. The strange buildings of the city of gems were still glowing with soft color, and the cold, bright surface of the Silver Lake flashed often into sight beyond the rolling eminences.

Presently we came to a well-worn path through the crimson scrub, but I saw nothing to indicate that anyone had thought of paving or improving it. The Astranians did not seem to have much energy for any kind of public work. Their material civilization appeared to be on a rather low scale. In fact, they supplied their wants in the way of food entirely with the abundant fruit of the red bushes. As I had guessed from the girl’s remarks, they did not even have the use of fire. The physical and mental development of the race and the splendid city in which it lived was strangely contrasted with their absolute lack of scientific knowledge.

“Our pace was hastened by thoughts of the terrors that night would bring. We walked nearer one another, and presently we were hurrying along, hand in hand. About us the purple night deepened, and beyond the argent brilliance of the Silver Sea the strange evil of the night gathered itself for the attack.

At last we came to the narrow path that wound up the side of the mountain to the splendid palaces that crowned it. Ascending, we came to a great arched gate in the emerald wall, and entered. The huge, incredibly magnificent buildings were scattered irregularly about the summit, with broad spaces between them. Here and there were paved courts of the silvery metal, which must have been an aluminum bronze, but the open ground was for the most part grown up in rank thickets of the red brush.

The great buildings showed the wear and breakage of ages. Here and there were great heaps of gleaming crystal, where wonderful edifices had fallen, with the brush grown up around them. Incredible as it seemed, I deduced that the old civilization of Astran had possessed a science able to synthetize diamonds and other precious stones in quantities sufficient even for use as building stone.

Towering above all, on the very peak of the mountain, was a great ruby dome. Mounted upon the center of the dome was a huge machine that resembled nothing so much as a great naval gun, though it was
made of crystal and white metal. A little
group of men were gathered about it. As
I watched, they swung the great tube about,
and a narrow ray of pale blue light poured
out of it. And down on the plain below,
where the practice beam struck, a great
boulder flashed into sudden incandescence.
Later I was to meet a far more terrible ray
worse than that slender blue beam.
"With that," explained Melvar, "our peo-
ple fight off the Krimlu at night. But the
Krimlu are so many that sometimes they
are able to land and take prisoners. If only
we had more of the beams! But there is
no man in all Atran who knows how the
light is made, or anything save that the
blue light shines out to destroy when rock
of a certain kind is put into the tube.
Austen wished to examine it, and spoke of
something he called 'radium one,' but the
priests forbade."

STANDING about the ill-kept streets
were a few of the people of the crystal
city. All were of magnificent physique, in-
telligent looking, white-skinned, and fair-
haired. All wore garments of spun metal
and gleaming crystal weapons. Most of
them were hurrying along, intent on affairs
of their own, but a few gathered around us
almost as soon as we stepped in the gate.
I felt that they were hostile to me. They
questioned Melvar in a tongue that was
strange to my ears, then engaging in a
noisy debate among themselves. Their
glances toward me were furtive and sullen;
their eyes had the look of men crazed by
fear.

Melvar was saying something in a con-
ciliatory tone. Nevertheless, I was swing-
ing my rifle into position for use, when
there was a sudden shout from the gate of
the city, and the clashing of crystal
weapons. The interruption caused the
group to turn anxiously toward the new
arrivals.
I saw that they were a band of soldiers,
possibly the same that had passed me in the
morning. Slung to a pole carried between
the foremost two was a strange thing.
Weirdly colored and fearfully mutilated
as it was, I saw it was the naked body of a
human being. The head was cut half-off,
and dangling at a grotesque angle. The
hair was long and very white, flying in
loose disorder. The features were with-
ered and wrinkled, the whole form incredi-
ibly emaciated. It was the corpse of a
woman. The flesh was deep purple!

As I stood staring at the thing in horror,
there was laughter and cheering in the
crowd, and a little child ran up to stab at
the thing with a miniature diamond sword.
Melvar touched my arm.
"Come," she whispered. "Quickly! The
people do not like your coming. They did
not like the things Austen told of the world
outside, for the priests teach that there is
no such world. It is well that the hunters
came when they did with the Purple One.
Let us hope that the priests of the Purple
Sun do not hear of you."

As she spoke she led me rapidly away
across a tangle of the red brush and
through a colonnade of polished sapphire.
I followed her docilely down a deserted
alley, across another patch of the red shrub-
bery, and down a short flight of steps into
a chamber that was dark.
"Wait here," she commanded. "I must
leave you. I think that Jorak has spies
upon me. If we're too long absent he might
grow suspicious. He was the friend of my
father, and some day my brother will slay
him. But sometimes I am afraid of the
way he looks at me. However, there is
no danger now. If the priests learn of you,
I will somehow get you out of Atran. My
brother will bring the message from
Austen, and food and drink. May you rest
well, and have faith in me!"

She ran up the steps, leaving me stand-
ing in the darkness in a state of uncomfor-
able indecision. I did not like the turn that
affairs had taken. I would have much pre-
ferred to take my chances out on the open
plain, with nothing but the moving lights
to fear. Terrible as they were, it was bet-
ter than here in this strange city full of ill-
disposed savages. A diamond knife could
kill a man just as effectively as the weirdest
dearth that ever roamed the night.

For a time I stood waiting tensely, my
rifle in hand, but I was very tired and weak.
Presently I got out my flashlight and ex-
amined the place. It was a little cell, ap-
parently hewn in the living rock of the
mountain. There was nothing in the way
of furniture except a sort of padded shelf,
or bed, at the back. I sat down upon it.
Exhaustion claimed me before I knew it,
and I went to sleep there.

THE next I knew, someone was shaking
my arm, and shouting strange words in
my ear. I opened my eyes to see a young
man standing before me. In one hand he
held a crystal globe filled with a glowing,
phosphorescent stuff that faintly lighted
the little apartment. I sat up slowly, stiffly,
gun still in my hand.

Without saying more, the young fellow
pointed to a tray that he had set by me on
the shelf. It contained a crystal pitcher of
aromatic liquid, and a dish of the yellow
fruit. I gulped down some of the drink
and ate a few of the fruits, feeling re-
freshed almost immediately. Then the boy
—he was not more than sixteen years of
age—thrust into my hand an envelope ad-
dressed in the familiar handwriting of Dr.
Austen.

With feeling that well may be imagined,
I tore open the envelope and read, in the
faint light of the glowing bulb, the words
of my old friend.

Astran, in the Mountain of the Moon.
June 16, 1927

To whomsoever of my own race this may be
delivered:
Since you must so far have traveled the
mysterious dangers of this strange world, it
it needless for me to dwell upon them. I
write this brief missive for the information
of anyone who shall happen to find their way
here after me, and in order that the riddle of
my own disappearance may be cleared up, if
I fail to return. For I intend of explore the

(Continued on page 127)
No. 8 CAPTAIN FUTURE's BOYHOOD

GRAG, the robot, was angry. He stood in one of the big supply-rooms of the Moon-laboratory, looking indignantly up at a redheaded boy who peered down impishly from atop a pile of metal cases.

"Come down, Curtis—have I not told you it is time for Simon Wright to give you your lesson?" boomed the angry robot.

"I'm tired of lessons," announced fourteen-year old Curtis Newton with exasperating calmness. "Every day, one lesson after another. I want to go outside and explore."

"If you won't come down, I'll come up after you," Grag menaced.

He started clambering up the pile of cases. But the huge weight of his great metal figure brought the stack down, and the robot fell to the floor amid a shower of boxes with a reverberating clangor.

Otho is Fast

Young Curt Newton rocked with laughter atop his perch. But into the supply-room, like a flying white shadow, came the lithe figure of Otho, the android. He surveyed big Grag's predicament with disdain.

"Of course, you couldn't catch him," Otho snapped. "Watch me."

Curt Newton saw what was coming. The boy darted across the stacks of cases to escape. But, fast as he was, Otho was too fast for him and he was ignominiously hauled down and marched into the laboratory.

Simon Wright, the Brain, turned his glittering lens-eyes toward the boy.

"It is past time for your lesson in plane-
tary botany, Curtis," he reproved.

"He would not come," boomed Grag indignantly. "He wanted to go outside."

Curt hung his red head. "It's fun to explore the craters and plains," he muttered, half-ashamedly. "I'd like to go out by myself."

Then the boy cried eagerly, "And I want to go farther, to the Earth, to Mars, to Venus, to all the planets you've taught me about! I want to know all space, not to live here on the dead Moon all my life. I want to meet other men!"

"You shall meet other men, when the time comes," promised the Brain. "You shall see every one of these worlds of which we have been teaching you. But it is not yet time. Grag and Otho and I have reared you here, since your parents were killed here years ago, and have educated you in preparation. In a few years, your education will be complete, you will reach manhood, and then you can meet other men. But until then, it is too dangerous. Your dead father had many enemies!"

"There was a little silence, the red-haired boy staring puzzledly into the lens-eyes of the Brain. Then Simon spoke again.

"We will begin your lesson on planetary botany. Define the phyla and subphyla of plant life on Venus."

In his clear, high voice, young Curt Newton began reciting. "Phylum One—deciduate plants—"

Super-Education

For minutes he spoke, systematically cataloging the flora of Venus. Only super-education could have produced that knowledge—the education that for fourteen years had been carried on by the three unhuman beings who had made themselves the guardians of Curt Newton.

Yet when Curt had finished the long catalogue, the Brain declared. "You must restudy your Venusian botany until you discover them for yourself."

Silently, Curt took the book and retired with it into his own small chamber at the side of the Moon-laboratory. He sat down
and dutifully tried to locate his errors.

But he could not concentrate today. His thoughts kept wandering to what lay outside the laboratory, the lovely, luring surface of the Moon. He loved that, the wild lunar landscape where no one else had lived: the stupendous peaks and blazing sunlight and deep shadows. He was always happiest when outside there in his space-suit, exploring.

Lure of the Outside

He laid down the book. His gray eyes were snapping with excitement and resolution. He was not going to study Venusian botany any longer today. He was going to do what he had long wanted to do —go outside, all by himself!

Silently, Curt slipped out of his little chamber. The Brain was reading absorbendly and did not see him. Otho and Grag could be heard arguing loudly back in the supply room as they re-stacked the fallen cases.

Curt's small, lithe figure flew up the stairs into the air-lock chamber. He got into his space-suit and screwed on the glassite helmet, then touched the stud that opened the outer door of the lock.

He emerged on the rock surface of Tycho crater, into blinding sunlight. Then he hurried in long strides across the crater, toward the cunningly concealed underground shelter nearby.

Rocket Flyers

In that camouflaged hangar rested the two small, swift rocket-fliers which Grag and Otho had built. Curt knew their operation thoroughly from Otho's instructions. The boy entered one, switched on the compact cyclotrons. The craft rose rapidly up above the lunar surface.

Curt steered up in a steep slant to cross Tycho's stupendous ring of peaks and then headed northeastward. Over the wild, lifeless lunar plains and mountains he flew at high speed, through the blazing sunlight. In the black vault overhead loomed the great green bulk of Earth.

A high-pitched, ringing laugh of utter happiness broke from the boy's lips as he flew on. For the first time he was adventuring by himself, and he tasted his freedom like a young eagle spreading its wings for the initial flight. The wild pulse of long-repressed adventure throbbed strongly in his veins.

He flew over the southern foothills of the looming Riphanae Mountains and then glimpsed a long, torpedo-like metal shape on the plain.

"A ship!" young Curt Newton exclaimed wonderingly to himself.

Men Like Himself

Near the ship a little knot of figures wearing space-suits and glassite helmets were engaged in hurried activity.

"Why, they're men!" Curt told himself excitedly. "Men like myself—the first I've ever seen!"

Immensely excitement gripped him. He had never known anyone but Grag and Otho and the Brain, had never seen or talked with men like himself. They had seen him, were pointing up at his rushing little flier.

He swooped down toward them, without the slightest thought of danger. At last, the boy thought eagerly, he was to have his first meeting with other men like himself!

He landed near the ship and strode eagerly toward the men, his grey eyes shining in anticipation. There were eight of the men. They had been digging ores out of the lunar rock, to be used as fuel in the cyclotrons of their ship. The ship itself was a small two-man cruiser that looked like a private yacht, but the men were a hard-bitten, evil-faced lot.

Their leader was a burly, beady-eyed giant who kept his hand on the hilt of his atom-pistol as he watched Curt Newton approach. Curt heard the giant's voice speaking to his men on the universal space-suit phone.

"It's only a boy, men. But where in the devil's name did a boy come from in this cursed Moon-desert?"

"Maybe he lives here somewhere," suggested one of the men.

"Maybe you're a fool!" retorted the giant. "Nobody lives on the Moon—nobody ever visits it unless they run out of fuel as we did."

Savage Faces

Curt Newton had stopped a few feet from the men and was looking at them eagerly. The first men he had ever seen! He felt a little disappointed as he surveyed their brutal faces. Somehow, he had not expected them to look so coarse, so savage.

"Who are you, lad, and what are you doing here?" rapped the giant leader suspiciously. "Spying on us?"

"Spying on you?" Curt repeated bewilderedly. "Why should I spy on you? Are you running away from someone?"

One of the group snickered. "Well, Earth isn't exactly a healthy place when you've mutinied and murdered—"

"Shut up, you!" roared the giant. His savage eyes swept Curt's small figure. "Where'd you come from, boy—and who are you?"

"I'm Curtis Newton and I live here—over in Tycho crater," he answered frankly.

The big man's eyes slitted and he stepped forward and grabbed Curt's wrist. "You live here? Don't lie to me, you little space-rat!"

Curt's wrist hurt and his surprise and amazement at being so received by the fellow-men he had been eager to see made him react swiftly.

Ju-Jitsu

He ducked and spun around with a lightning movement and thrust of shoulder muscles that Otho had taught. The super-ju-jitsu trick sent the giant flying back to sprawl on his back ten feet away.

Curt could have escaped, then. But he was still too startled and bewildered by the unfriendly reception to think of himself. He was grabbed by the other men before he could retreat.
The giant leader was livid with fury.
"You cocky brat, I'll—"

"Boss, wait!" cried one of his men excitedly. "This boy said his name was Newton, didn't he? And he looks just like that famous scientist who disappeared fifteen years ago in space. His name was Newton, too."

"What of it?" roared the furious giant.
"The Newton who disappeared had scientific secrets supposed to be worth billions!" cried the other. "If this brat is his son—"

"By heaven!" swore the giant, his eyes lighting with avarice. He demanded of Curt, "Where's this place in Tycho crater you live at?"

Curt had had time to get over his amazement. The boy had never seen men before. But he knew instinctively that these men were evil.

Curt Senses Peril

He sensed peril to the Brain and Grag and Otho, if he told these men where the Moon-laboratory lay. He decided swiftly to tell nothing. With calm gray eyes, he stared at his captors through his helmet.

"Won't tell, eh?" said the big leader. His lips twisted in an ugly smile. "I've made tougher men than a striping kid talk. Hold him tight, men—this won't take long."

He reached and turned the tap on the oxygen-tank of Curt's space-suit, shutting off the flow of air into the boy's suit.

"When you want bad enough to breathe, you can start talking," he told the boy complacently.

Curt made no answer. The boy, held by a dozen hands, knew an attempt to break free was useless.

He remained silent, looking with level eyes into the brutal, helmeted faces of his captors.

His head began to spin dizzyly as the air inside his helmet became hot and foul. There was a roaring in his ears—

Yet Curt Newton's purpling face did not change a line in its expression, his glazing eyes still stared levelly at his captors. Even though his body was sagging limp, the boy's stony face moved no muscle.

The men holding him stirred uneasily, their brutal pleasure in cruelty changing gradually to an uneasy wonder.

"The kid ain't human!" muttered one of them. "He's dyin'—and he keeps looking at us the same way—"

A Soul of Steel

Curt Newton felt that he was, indeed, dying. He could only dimly see, the roar in his ears was deafening. But he would not show weakness or cry out, even now. The rigid training of the Brain and the robot and the android had put steel into his soul.

Then dimly, Curt heard a startled cry from one of his captors. He felt himself released, saw the men clawing out their atom-pistols and whirling frantically to meet two charging figures.

The two were Grag and Otho. The android in his space-suit and the robot, who needed none, held heavy metal bars raised aloft and their eyes were blazing with deadly purpose.

The bars crashed down on one glassite helmet after another as Otho moved with incredible speed and Grag stalked like an avenging metal giant.

Men, suddenly suffocated by the shattering of their helmets, fell clawing at their throats.

Curt Newton saw this much—and then for the first time in his life lost consciousness. When he came to, he found himself supported in Grag's mighty metal arms. The robot had turned on his oxygen supply.

Beyond him and Otho, the boy saw the still figures of the men.

"They are dead." came Otho's fierce, hissing voice. "It is too bad there were no more of them to kill."

"You have been very bad," Grag boomed to Curt. "Had not Simon Wright used the view-scope to locate you, when we missed you, you might now be dead. You go back now to Simon for punishment."

A very silent and chastened boy entered the Moon-laboratory with his two guards.

"I am ready to be punished, Simon," he said in a subdued voice.

"There will be no punishment," the Brain said metallically. "Sit down, Curtis."

The Revelation

Astonished, the boy seated himself. "The time has come," said the Brain slowly, "when you must be told who you are and how you came here on this lonely Moon with us three."

"Those men said something about a Newton who had discovered great scientific secrets!" Curt interrupted eagerly. "Was that my father?"

"That was your father," answered Simon solemnly. "He and your mother died long ago—soon after you were born. Listen, and you shall hear how they died."

The metallic voice rasped on, telling the story of that long-dead day when Roger Newton and his young wife had met their deaths at the hands of covetous men.

And as the tale went on, young Curt Newton's boyish face became strained and strange.

"So you see," concluded the Brain, "that there are many evil men in the System who still would kill you for the secrets in this laboratory. That is why we have not let you go forth yet among other men. You are not yet able to cope with the deadly enemies you would meet."

The boy slowly nodded his red head. "I understand, Simon. But I still want to go, out there among the other worlds. I can go some day, can't I?"

"Yes, lad," answered the Brain thoughtfully. "Someday you can go, someday you can know all those worlds. And I think that all the worlds will know you someday—"

That was the first meeting with other men of the boy whom the System was one day to know as Captain Future.
A seven-fingered hand closed about Harry's neck

The Dummy That Saved Earth

By GRAPH WALDEYER

Author of "Cosmic Cube," etc.

Harry Parks Builds His Mechanical Conception of a Man of Mars—and Finds It Anything but a Model of Deportment!

The statue that the bronzed man surveyed still had scaffolding about it. Apparently it had just been completed. It was a marble figure of a frail youth, yet the posture was somehow heroic. The thin, youthful face was turned skyward, as though peering at something high in the cloudless blue. Not far off rose the spire of the Washington Monument.

"The statue came very near not being erected, didn't it?"

The bronzed man turned, appraised the speaker with a keen glance. He saw a frail, white-haired old man, whose deeply lined cheeks were mounted by clear, blue eyes that twin-
kled with an undying light. The bronzed man was pleased with what he read in the face.

“It seems strange,” he said, “that a monument should be built to the man who instigated the Great Hoax of Nineteen-fifty-three, forty years ago. How did it happen? I’ve been out of touch with news of this country for a couple of years. Medical missionary work in the African interior. Just got in yesterday.”

“I’ve... been away, too,” said the old man gently, “but I know quite a lot about Harry Parks and his ‘hoax.’ Last year they found evidence that his story of forty years ago was true.”

The younger man’s brows shot up. “Incredible! That absurd story true? What kind of proof?”

“One of the new rocket planes found the proof during a test flight above atmosphere. Two thousand miles out, it found the object—a space ship that had been touched only glancingly by a ray—floating in an orbit about Earth. It established Harry Parks’ story conclusively.”

“And Parks,” asked the bronzed man, his interest thoroughly aroused, “what became of him?”

The white-haired man looked up at the statue of the youthful figure. His reply came softly. “Few men have monuments built to their memory while they still live. I never expected to step from an insane asylum into world-wide fame.”

* * * * *

An unsuspecting guest, entering Harry Parks’ home laboratory, ordinarily would have whirled around and dashed out again. If, however, the visitor found himself rooted to the spot with terror, Harry Parks would have hastened to explain that the fantastic monstrosity at the opposite wall was only a Martian dummy. Actually it was a guesswork model of the intelligent life-form Harry reasoned must have developed on Mars.

At the moment, strange to say, Harry was himself having an attack of nerves as he warily circled the seven-foot figure. It was absurd, of course, yet there was an amazingly lifelike glint in those huge black eyes that had seemed to appear just as he made the final connections of the dummy’s internal mechanism.

“A reflection from the window,” muttered Harry.

Of course there was no intelligence, no awareness peering from those huge eyes. But what would happen when he pulled the switch in the side of the dummy, which would send electric current flowing through the intricate synthetic body?

The dummy would move and talk mechanically. Harry knew that. It would repeat the words impressed on the sound track. But Harry had the strangest premonition that, when he pulled the switch, the dummy might do more than was provided for in the automatic speech and muscle reaction tracks... .

Harry was employed by the Greyson Anatomical Laboratories, which made artificial limbs for cripples and replicas of human bodies for medical colleges. The material used was close to living tissue in composition. Nerve ganglia, muscles, organs were reproduced in exact detail.

But Harry Parks’ invention went even further. As soon as he pulled the switch, an electric current, similar to human mental impulses, would course through the dummy organism. It would alternately contract and relax the artificial muscles, causing the dummy to move and talk. It was all purely mechanical, of course. The thing couldn’t actually become alive. Or couldn’t it?

“I’m crazy,” muttered Harry fiercely.

He grasped the switch, gulped, and jammed it into contact position. For a long moment nothing happened. Then Harry jumped back. The thing was moving. The red lips behind the beaked nose fluttered. Bass tones issued forth.

“I am a highly evolved being of the planet Mars.”

Harry relaxed, grinning sheepishly.

“It’s only the sound track,” he murmured. “The current is coursing through the synthetic nerves, activating the muscles just as human muscles are activated by brain currents.”

A seven-fingered hand came up,
pointed to the massive head.

"My head is necessarily large to accommodate my vast brain. My eyes have huge black irises like an owl's, due to the faint amount of sunlight reaching my planet." The arm came down jerkily toward the chest. "My thorax is large, owing to the thin air of Mars . . ."

The bass tones droned on mechanically, synchronized with the movements of the body. Harry rushed about triumphantly. This electric activation principle would make artificial limbs practically an extension of the living body!

Strangely, Harry wasn't quite clear why he had used a Martian dummy, rather than a human one, in which to develop his invention—assuming that it was a Martian form. There was no positive evidence of that. Harry had only developed his own ideas from his studies of Mars.

He had made the dummy in spare hours during the past year. The jeers and jibes of his fellow-workers had soon caused him to remove the partially completed figure to his home laboratory. Jack Gates, Harry's immediate superior, had pretended to believe that the Martian was alive and that Harry was a human dummy it had created for experimental purposes. But they would sing a different tune when he demonstrated his invention before scientific congresses—Harry came to with a start. The dummy was going through its "lecture" for the fourth time. He reached over, snapped off the switch. Immediately the huge figure became motionless.

Harry stretched and yawned. He had been up early this Sunday, working to complete the thing, and he was weary.

"Con-grat-u-lations!" said a deep voice.

"Thanks," said Harry absently, starting another yawn. He shut his jaws with a click, whirled around. "Wh—what did you s-say?"

The dummy had spoken after he disconnected the switch—spoken words not on the sound tracks!

The huge black eyes were gazing at him with the fixed stare of an owl. Below the hooked nose, the lips moved again. Deep, urbane tones issued.

"You see, I am a-live."

Harry swallowed. It couldn't be. Jack Gates or someone must have entered during his absence, changed the sound tracks as a joke.

"Do not be fright-en-ed," the dummy continued.

A hand came up in a reassuring gesture, not provided in the muscle-reaction tracks.

"You—you are only Buk Wux, my Martian dummy," Harry squeezed out. It seemed like telling a ghost it wasn't there.

"You are par-tially cor-rect," came the stilted reply.

The seven-foot figure stiffly took a step toward Harry, who retreated hastily.

"I, Gyrak Zomb of Mars," said the creature, "have acti-vated your dummy. You have so faithfully re-pro-danced our ana-tom-ical struc-ture that I was able to enter and take control. The brain and spine are almost iden-tical with those of us Martians. Hence I can send my own force impulses through the nerve and muscle con-nections to ac- tivate the body. See?"

Uncertainly the figure raised and flexed its huge arms, then stepped stiffly about the laboratory. Harry stared wildly, his jaw hanging slack.

"But—but I don't understand," he stammered. "I didn't see you—any-thing—enter my dummy."

"I will explain," said the dummy. "You see, I helped you create this life-less body which I now ac-ti-vate."

Harry's jaw fell farther.

"But I did it all myself—"

"So you would naturally believe," agreed the dummy. "And you are enti-tled to every credit. Without your inventive skill and creative genius, it could not have been accomplished. But I guided you telepathically in vital details."

Harry stared speechlessly.

The dummy went on more fluently as he seemed to gain better control of the larynx apparatus.

"We Martians have developed psy-chologically, at the expense of mate-
rial advancement. Some of us are able to exteriorize our consciousness, project it across space at the speed of thought, while our material body remains on Mars in coma. We who can do this have learned much of your Earth and its languages, while roaming its surface in our invisible, though partially material force-bodies.

"Over a year ago we learned of a terrible menace approaching the Solar System from outer space. We had a year to find some way to warn you, before these beings could swoop into our planetary system. That year is up tonight. Within a few hours these inimical beings will be rushing down upon earth!"

Harry pinched himself. It hurt. One moment there was just the workaday world. The next, space was full of unknown menace and darting intelligences.

"For weeks I roamed Earth, seeking a means of conveying my presence to human beings. I found I could influence a few of you telepathically, but could not actually make you aware of my existence. I had to seek some other way. When I learned of your Earth science of making synthetic body parts, the idea occurred to me to influence telepathically some human being to construct a synthetic Martian body, through which I could manifest.

"I tried in many different laboratories, until I chanced upon the one in which you, Harry Parks, are employed. Fortunately you were already interested in Mars. I was able to suggest to your mind the idea of creating a Martian body. Meanwhile I guided you in its construction. Our collaboration has been highly successful. Activating this dummy is not much more difficult than returning to Mars and activating my own unconscious body. But enough of idle chatter."

The Martian paused, the enormous irises faintly glowing, as though illuminated by the life-thing that peered from them.

"There is no time to lose. You and I must act!"

"What is this danger?" gulped Harry.

"Tenuous, evil gas-beings from cosmic space itself," replied Zomb, a shudder in the artificial voice. "They are approaching with great velocity from the constellation of Lyra, which hangs over your western horizon at dusk. Unless destroyed, they will enter your atmosphere, expelling deadly poison gases that will quickly kill all life on Earth. Then they will pass on to my beloved Mars."

The Martian raised its many-jointed arms appealingly.

"We have no weapons of warfare on Mars. Our development has been in things of the mind. Unless you of Earth can destroy the invaders, the Solar System is doomed."

"Our disintegrator rays!" cried Harry. "We used them in the last war to destroy enemy strato-craft. They are a permanent part of America's defense."

The effective range of the disintegrator rays, Harry knew, extended two thousand miles beyond the atmosphere. There were dozens of projectors in every large city, all controlled centrally from Washington. They could instantly form a protective ray barrage of two thousand cubic miles over the United States.

The Martian nodded somberly. "All of the ray weapons must be turned toward Lyra as dusk descends tonight. The gas beings will just then be swirling down to Earth. Plunging head-on into this ray barrage, they will be destroyed and the Solar System saved."

Harry rushed around the laboratory. "I'll round up everyone I can find and bring them here to meet you. It would need more than just my unsupported word to make the military authorities turn on the rays! Once they're aimed, it takes quite a time to shift them."

He dashed for the door.

"Wait!" The Martian held up a seven-fingered hand. "I fear your friends will not believe in the actuality of the story, nor in my reality —"

"But they have to! When they see you move and talk, they'll know you're not just an animated dummy. They'll have to believe!"

It was mid-afternoon when Harry burst back into the laboratory. In
more dignified fashion, several men filed in after him, skepticism written strongly on the face of each. Harry had rounded up Greyson, his employer, Ormsby, a psychiatrist and nerve specialist who had been a guest at Greyson's home, the local chief of police, Edwards, and Jack Gates, Harry's immediate superior and chief tormentor. Gates was snickering audibly.

"There it—he is, gentlemen," said Harry, pointing to the fantastic figure standing impassively where he had left it. He rushed up, tugged at a huge arm. "Come to life, Gyra. I have brought these men to listen to your story."

Chief Edwards gawked at the figure, dropped a hand to his holster.

"You mean to say," he demanded of the psychiatrist, "that that thing is alive?"

"I certainly don't mean to say it," retorted Ormsby. "If it were, it would quickly die of its horrible disfiguring ailments."

"Hey!" Harry was yelling at the dummy, jerking at its triple-jointed arms. "Talk, Gyra! These men want to know about the poison gas things attacking Earth!"

"Which one is the dummy?" taunted Jack Gates.

"What does this mean, Parks?" rapped Greyson.

"It—it really talked before," bleated Harry. "I swear it told me that Earth is menaced by gas things."

"Ridiculous!" Greyson turned as the psychiatrist tugged at his coat.

"Careful," warned Ormsby under his breath. "The boy is obviously suffering from hallucinations. He may be dangerous. We'd best humor him until we can get him under restraint."

Chief Edwards' thick, black brows shot up.

"Nuts, eh?" he said in a loud whisper. "I'll handle this."

Edwards hunched his broad shoulders, moved toward Harry, who was still tugging at the arms of the dummy and appealing to it.

"So it talks, eh?" drawled the police chief soothingly. The long arm of the law shot out, fastened on the scruff of Harry's neck. "You're under arrest! Don't struggle, or—"

"Let me go!" cried Harry, struggling fiercely. "Earth is in danger. Can't you understand? I have to arouse Gyra."

"The officious fool," muttered Ormsby to Greyson. "He'll make the youth violent. Why, I believe the dummy is moving!"


Harry and the policeman were still struggling in front of the figure.

"I am a highly evolved being of the planet Mars," boomed its deep tones. A seven-fingered hand came up, pointed to the massive head. "My head is necessarily large to accommodate my vast brain—"

The policeman, still holding onto Harry, gagged at the thing.

"My chest is large—"

The hand came down jerkily, thudded solidly against the chief's upturned forehead. He collapsed to the floor, his grasp torn from Harry. Impassively the dummy continued the words and motions of the sound tracks.

DAZEDLY, as the others hurried up, the chief rose, rubbing his head. Angry and mortified, he shook off the helping hands, looked around.

"Where's that maniac?" he growled.

"Here!" yelled Harry. At the other end of the laboratory he stood, holding in one upraised hand a small bottle. "I'll throw down this nitro-glycerine unless you all leave at once!"

The men recoiled, their faces looking as though they had been plunged into a flour barrel.

"For heaven's sake, humor him!" gasped the psychiatrist. "He's become violent. He'll surely blow us all to bits."

"We—we'll beat it now," faltered Chief Edwards. "I'll send a riot squad with unconsciousness gas bombs. Then it's the nut house for Parks!" He straightened, tried to smile placatingly. "Sure, Mr. Parks, we're leavin' right now. Come on, gents."

With frantic unconcern, the four men tiptoed toward the door.

"Hurry up!" shouted Harry, waving the bottle.
The gesture precipitated a dash, all four men trying to crowd through the narrow doorway at once. Breathing fast, Harry flung aside the bottle of white enamel, rushed over and bolted the door. He had to arouse Gyrak Zomb before the police returned in force with riot bombs, which they would shoot through the windows.

He looked out, watched his recent visitors pull into the traffic in Greyson's car. He thanked his stars for the accident that had caused Chief Edwards to be standing under the dummy when its huge arm had descended in the automatic gesture.

But why hadn't the Martian entity manifested while the men were present? Harry was too distracted to heed a little warning voice that spoke in some recess of his mind, seeming to say:

"Beware! There is something wrong with this picture. . . ."

"I am sorry." The deep voice of the Martian jolted him to attention. "It was as I feared. You see, we Martians are extremely sensitive to psychic influences. The skepticism of your friends was like a solid psychic barrier through which I could not break. It was only your half-believing attitude that enabled me to activate the dummy in the first place.

"I fear you and I alone must work out the salvation of the Solar System and particularly of our two planets. There is so little time. Within two hours the gas-beings will have plunged into Earth's atmosphere. Then it will be too late."

The Martian paused, his eyes following Harry's aimless ruminates about the laboratory.

"And as I cannot manifest in the presence of skepticism," he went on, "we cannot hope to convince the officials. Therefore we must convince the populace."

Harry stopped short.

"That's it!" he cried. "We'll pull an Orson Welles on them!"

Gyrak Zomb smiled tolerantly. "I recall the fictional invasion from my own planet. Ridiculous as it was, the populace believed it. For a few short hours there was mass hysteria, panic, caused by intense mass-belief. We must create a similar, even more widespread panic. When we have done that, the populace will demand that the ray barrage be sent up to destroy the invaders. Indirectly we shall have accomplished our purpose."

Harry's face fell. "You won't be allowed to go on the air."

"But I shall go on the air. We Martians are not entirely without some small accomplishments in the material sciences. With these excellent hands you have given this body, I can quickly build a simple device that will supplant all the tele-radio programs with my image and voice."

He stalked about, picking up pieces of apparatus here and there as Harry watched breathlessly. Then he stopped at the machine lathe, worked feverishly at what appeared to be a heavy duty condenser. When he finished, he put everything into a small lead container Harry used for X-ray work.

He brought the apparatus over to the visiphone on the wall, spliced two cables from the lead container to the visiphone wires. Then he snapped a switch in the box and withdrew his hands rather hurriedly.

Harry jumped back as furious light and heat blasted out from slits in the lead box. There seemed to be a miniature sun inside, which sputtered and flared fiercely.

"That's our power," explained Zomb. "Cosmic rays, created by atomic rupture of matter inside the box. Surging through the cables into the visiphone, they replace electric carrier waves as activators of the electrons which will carry my image and voice through the wires. They will surge throughout the entire communication system of the land, overload it."

"Then they will jump the wires and cables to build up my image and voice on all the tele-radios in the United States. We must work fast. The metal of the apparatus will not last long under the strain."

He stepped before the visiphone scanner, reached for the switch. Harry quickly turned on the tele-radio to see what would happen when Gyrak Zomb began the broadcast.

"The Sunday Afternoon Charm
Hour is just coming on,” he said. “It’s nationally broadcast.”

“That is well,” muttered Zomb, watching the screen. “The populace will be mentally relaxed, receptive. At the appropriate moment I shall shock them out of it.”

The figure of the announcer appeared on the tele-radio screen.”

“In just a moment,” he was saying, “you will hear the symphony. But first, a few words from Mr. Bancroft.”

The announcer stepped aside, to be replaced by a tall, staid figure.

“Friends of the Charm Hour,” came Mr. Bancroft’s oily voice, “my message to you this Sabbath is—”

At that moment the Martian pulled the switch. Instantly Mr. Bancroft vanished from the screen, to be supplanted by the fantastic figure of the Martian.

Harry could imagine the gasps of amazement rising from the lips of millions of radio listeners everywhere. The huge eyes gazed out hypnotically from millions of tele-radio screens. The tones were deep and compelling.

“I am a visitor to Earth from your neighboring planet, Mars. I have come to Earth to warn you of your peril. Inimical beings are approaching Earth from outer space. They will destroy all human life, then pass on to attack my own planet, Mars. We of Mars do not have the weapons to combat them. But you of Earth do have such weapons—your long-range disintegrator rays.

“I have fortunately been befriended by an Earthman, Harry Parks,” he went on, beckoning to Harry. The youth stepped up and his image appeared beside that of the Martian. “Tell our listeners of our efforts to arouse the authorities to the deadly danger confronting the people—and of their refusal to take any action!”

AGAIN that warning voice spoke in Harry’s mind, but he shrugged it aside.

“The Martian is right,” he said. “He appeared in my laboratory a short time ago and told me of the danger. I couldn’t get anyone to believe it. They said the Martian was just an animated—”

“So you see,” cut in Zomb, shoulder- ing Harry away. “We were forced to appeal directly to you. Are you to be sacrificed to the stupidity, the blindness of your authorities? There is but a short hour left to save Earth. Even as you listen, the evil beings descend. Once they reach the atmosphere it will be too late. All of you will die in agony. Arise, storm the seats of government!

“Force your officials to focus all of your defensive weapons, your disintegrator rays, in the direction from which the invaders approach. They come from the bright star Vega, in the constellation of Lyra above your western horizon at dusk. Your scientists will know where to direct the rays. Do not delay further. Go now!”

The Martian switched off the apparatus. Immediately the pale, harried face of Mr. Bancroft flashed back on the tele-radio. He had cast a glance at his own image on the screen in the control room and seen the substitution. The tele-radio control engineer burst out of the door, stared wildly at Mr. Bancroft.

“It must be true!” he yelled. “It took apparatus we don’t have to jazz up our program that way. That Martian must have been the real thing!”

From millions of tele-radios the man’s words blared forth to feed the fires of panic already searing the minds of a hundred millions. A roar came from outside. The odd pair in the laboratory glanced out the window.

“The police!” gasped Harry. “They’re back with riot guns. They’ll shoot bombs through the window, overpower us!”

“You will not be bothered, I think,” the Martian said quietly.

Indeed, the police car occupants seemed to be in difficulties. A frenzied mob surrounded the car, swarmed over it, threatening to overturn it. They were yelling hysterically. Harry caught some of the words.

“We demand protection! You heard what the Martian said on the tele-radio. Turn on the anti-stratocraft rays. Turn ‘em on! Hurry up, do it now! We pay taxes. . . .”

(Turn to page 116)
A THOUSAND YEARS OLD AND STILL LIVING!

A strange method of mind and body control that often leads to immense powers never before experienced is announced by Edwin J. Dingle, well-known explorer and geographer. It is said to bring about almost unbelievable improvement in power of mind. Many report improvement in health. Others acquire superb bodily strength, secure better positions, turn failure into success. Often with surprising speed, talents, ability and a more magnetic personality are developed.

The method was found in remote and mysterious Tibet, formerly a forbidden country rarely visited by outsiders and often called the land of miracles in the astounding books written about it. Here, behind the highest mountains in the world, Mr. Dingle learned the extraordinary system he is now disclosing to the Western World.

He maintains that all of us are giants in strength and mind power, capable of surprising feats, from the delay of old age to the prolonging of youth and the achievement of dazzling business and professional success. From childhood, however, we are hypnotized, our powers put to sleep by the suggestions of associates, by what we read and by various experiences.

To realize their really marvelous powers, men and women must escape from this hypnotism. The method found by Mr. Dingle in Tibet is said to be remarkably instrumental in freeing the mind of the hypnotizing ideas that paralyze the giant powers within us.

Our accepted ideas of old age and death, he claims, would prove utterly wrong if we could escape from their hypnotizing influence. He points to the exotic Joshua Trees of the California Desert, many of which are over a thousand years old and still living. Some are thought to be two and three thousand years old. Life and youth, he says, can persist several times longer than people think. In Tibet this is believed and certain methods, based on this belief, are employed. Incredible ages are often ascribed to sages there. "The methods are too new in the Western World," he says, "for us to have authoritative data. But they may be instrumental, meantime, in prolonging our youth and increasing our mental, physical and spiritual powers."

"The time has come," he declares, "for every enlightened man and woman to achieve the greater health, success and happiness possible through this ancient but remarkable method of mastery." His amazing 9,000-word treatise is now being offered by The Institute of Mentalphysics, 213 South Hobart Blvd., Dept. 96-L, Los Angeles, Calif. They offer to send it free to any readers of this paper who quickly send their names and addresses. Readers are urged to write promptly for the free treatise.
The Martian smiled. "Every uniformed person in the land will be stormed by mobs. Only when the mob sees the ray barrage shining toward the western horizon will its panic become controllable. The officials will soon realize that."

"Look, the one in the city square is on already!" cried Harry. It lanced upward, visible in the falling dusk, and ever so slowly swung over toward the western horizon. "They're centrally controlled. That means all the thousands of ray units in the country are now forming a barrage in the western skies, through which nothing can attack."

Zomb turned.

"Now I must rearrange this apparatus slightly for communication with my native planet, to tell them I have succeeded in enlisting Earth's aid. I trust you will excuse my using the Martian tongue."

Harry nodded absently as the great figure bent over the apparatus. Zomb seemed to be disconnecting the vocal parts of the visiphone from outside wiring, making it a unit with the apparatus in the lead box. The sunthing in the box was still blazing fiercely.

Harry felt useless, now that he had nothing to do. At any rate he had been instrumental in saving the Earth, all because he had made a Martian dummy, enabling Gyrrak Zomb to manifest through it and warn him.

Unseeingly he watched the Martian work. For no particular reason, his eyes focused on the switch in the side of the figure. The switch was off. Of course it would be. Harry had turned it off just before the Martian entity had first taken control of the dummy. Ever since that time, the switch had been off...

That little voice of warning now burst into a loud shout in Harry's brain.

The switch, activating the dummy, had been off while his employer and the others had been in the laboratory. Then how had the dummy gone through the automatic actions, spoken the words on the sound tracks?

In a flash Harry remembered some-thing else he had been too distracted to notice before. When the dummy had recited the sound track words, it had skipped the sentence describing its huge eyes!

It had not been the automatic mechanism reciting the words, but the Martian entity doing so from memory. The story that the visitors' skepticism had prevented Zomb from manifesting was a complete fabrication that could have had but one purpose—to convince Harry of the uselessness of trying to get assistance from the authorities.

The Martian did not want official help. At the same time he needed the assistance Harry could give. So, in imitation of the dummy's automatic motions, Zomb had contrived to strike the chief on the head, giving Harry the opportunity to break away.

Had they secured official help, Harry reasoned quickly, defense measures would have gone ahead quietly. There would have been no panic. But the Martian wanted more than belief. He had deliberately created widespread panic.

Why? Because only in that way could he turn the eyes of the populace, as well as the ray barrage, on one area of the skies and away from some other. While all weapons and all eyes were fixed in the direction of an imaginary menace, the real assault upon Earth would swoop down from some other direction.

By producing panic and diverting attention, Zomb had softened up the United States for attack by the Martians!

Without Harry's help, Zomb could not have accomplished all this. Ruefully Harry realized there had been truth in Jack Gates' accusation that he was the Martian's dummy. He had been just that—a dupe of the Martian. Even now the invasion craft might be swirling down through the dusk.

Grimly Harry eyed the monstrous figure tinkering with the apparatus. The owlish eyes flicked once toward him, then back. A faint buzzing came from the apparatus.

He could not risk actual combat. The dummy had mighty tendons. Again his eyes fell on the switch in
the dummy’s side. Holding his breath, he reached over and clicked it on. Instantly the figure straightened, alarm flashing from the black eyes. Then the mechanism took hold. The familiar words of the sound track were accompanied by the automatic gestures. The mechanism had wrested control from the Martian entity.

Harry gave the stiffly moving dummy a shove, sent it toppling with a crash. From its reclining position it continued its lecture ludicrously.

A WEIRD, thin voice drew Harry’s attention back to the Martian’s converted radio apparatus. Harry listened a moment, then decided to play a hunch. He hoped other Martians besides Zomb understood English.

“This is Gyrak Zomb,” said Harry into the mouthpiece. “You must speak the English language of Earth. The vocal apparatus of this artificial body I inhabit is unable to frame the Martian syllables.”

He waited tensely, hoping he hadn’t said anything that would give away his trick.

“Very well, Gyrak Zomb,” came the reply in stilted English. “It is I, Vandus Dos, commander of the invasion fleet. Since we received your telepathic message, informing us you had finally succeeded in activating the artificial replica, our fleet has closed in upon Earth. We are now only three thousand miles out.

“We await your word that you have succeeded in diverting the ray barrage and the attentions of the populace away from the eastern skies over North America. It you have done so, I shall now give the order to descend, cutting under the ray barrage from the east . . .”

Harry whirled at a sound. The dummy was lashing about, as though a struggle were in progress for control between the entity and the automatic machinery. Evidently, while the power was on, the entity was unable to break loose to convey a telepathic warning to Vandus Dos. While Harry had been out of the laboratory, rounding up the men, Zomb must have taken the opportunity for a last telepathic message, informing the space fleet that he had taken control of the dummy.

“Hello, hello!” came the impatient voice from the receiver.

Harry turned back, one eye on the flailing dummy.

“A final check-up,” said the weird voice. “Are we to make our assault from the east? Have the disintegrator rays been diverted to the west?”

Abruptly the way to outwit the Martians occurred to Harry. He leaned toward the mouthpiece. A crushing steel grip bit into his shoulders and he was jerked from the chair.

“I will take over!”

It was Gyrak Zomb. The switch was off again, Harry saw with dismay. During the dummy’s lashing about, it had somehow been thrown. Zomb was again in control.

As Harry struggled futilely, one seven-fingered hand came up to close about his neck. The grip tightened, a strangling pressure that promised quick death. Through a red haze, Harry could hear the apparatus clicking impatiently. With a last contortive effort, he lifted his feet from the ground, felt one shoe scrape against the switch on his assailant’s side. Immediately the pressure on his neck lessened as again the electric current fought with Zomb for control of the dummy.

After falling to the floor, Harry rose dazedly, shaking his head to clear it. The entity was about to reach the switch again. Harry grabbed a long iron rod, brought it down viciously on the massive head, again and again. When his sight cleared, the machine he had created with so much toil was smashed and mangled junk on the floor.

Breathing hard, Harry sprang to the still-clicking instrument.

“Hello!” he panted.

“What was that disturbance?” demanded the cold voice.

“Rocks came through the window,” lied Harry. “Rioting outside.”

“Good. We are now a little more than two thousand miles from the surface of Earth, spiraling down from the east—”

“Wait!” gasped Harry. “I meant to [Turn page]
Tell you before the disturbance. I made an error in calculating the—the time element. As a result I caused the ray barrage to be diverted to the east, instead of the west. You must approach no closer from the east, or your armada will run head-on into the ray barrage. Turn sharply and approach from the west.”

“What?” barked the cold voice. “You erred in this vital matter, Gyrak Zomb? Wait.”

Harry heard shouted orders echoing down vast corridors as the commander gave the change of instructions. “Carelessness is unpardonable, Gyrak Zomb,” the commander said. “Fortunately you made correction in time. For your clever work, you will be rewarded as promised with rule of a human slave area. But for your miscalculation, you will first be subjected to ten hours of corrective torture. You will await my call until we have landed safely. In a moment we shall have reached the position in the west from which our armada will swoop down.”

Would it work? Would the space fleet plunge into the ray curtain before discovering his trick? The rays, of course, became invisible the moment they emerged from the outskirts of Earth’s atmosphere.

The radio buzzed. Eagerly Harry leaned forward.

“Something has gone wrong!” the cold voice shouted. “We are plunging straight into the ray curtain. I will give the order to swerve!”

Strange voices echoed back and forth, came faintly to Harry’s ear. “Steen! Oxydar vadimox dee grahemong! Steen!”

“Too late!” the commander’s voice screamed. “Half the armada has vanished before our eyes. You have betrayed us, Gyrak Zomb, and betrayed Mars. Unless some of us can divert our ships in time, Mars will be stripped of warcraft. They are vanishing rapidly...”

The words ceased. The radio went dead, silent as space. And space itself was now empty, save for a cloud of disrupted atomic particles of what had been a mighty interplanetary battle fleet.

HAVING testified to the homicidal tendencies of the defendant,
Ormsby, the psychiatrist, sat down. The judge turned gravely to the defendant.

"Harry Parks, you are a danger to society. Using a device worthy of a better cause, you did perpetrate a monstrous hoax, creating a disastrous panic throughout the land. By causing an artificial monstrosity, alleged by you to be a Martian, to appear on all tele-radios and to talk and act as though alive, you did compel the Government to wage a costly and dangerous mock war against a nonexistent extra-planetary menace, such action being necessary to calm the frenzied populace."

The judge shuffled some papers on his desk, looked severely at the prisoner.

"Harry Parks, in view of your demonstrated mental irresponsibility, I hereby sentence you to the State Institution for the criminally insane."

Some of the more intelligent spectators wondered at the placid, almost beauteous expression on the face of the "madman" as he was led out. They couldn't know what it felt like to be the "dummy" who had saved Earth. No, for forty years nobody would know, until that time when the whole world would do him homage.

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UNDER OBSERVATION

(Continued from page 13)

have to chart a course across the starry void, you can dig down into the old Xeno jug and find plenty of comets and astral bodies to dodge.

Came now an ether flash from Illinois.

A NEW NOVA FORMING

By Edward C. Connor

I really enjoy your letter department. The way you shake off the brick-bats and stuff is too, too good. It’s very refreshing. I’m not in a mood to get into a Correspondence war. I just go on dry socks and let the things go.

Well, Sarge, old boy, you can get the Xeno Jug ready because this letter is meant to give you a breathing space in the next edition of "Under Observation."

Here is the idea: I’m asking all PEORIA & CENTRAL ILLINOIS readers, who are interested in forming a SCIENCE-FICTION FAN CLUB, to write me a short letter. With the cooperation of all who read this, we ought to have a real club in no time.

Thanks, Sarge—922 Butler St., Peoria, Ill.

Which reminds me, Pee-lot Connor, if you have as much trouble organizing a new club as Old Sarge is having to get the established Science Fiction League chapters to report in, you’re going to look mighty conspicuous holding a forum meeting. But best of luck to you and the other sensible folks in your general vicinity.

I have here a report from a lad in the Sarge’s old home state. Take it away, Donald, and all the other kiwis Duck. (What’s this? A pun on the corny side? Excuse me; I thought we were in Nebraska.)

SWELL MAGAZINES

By Donald Gililand

I am only sixteen, but I have read four issues of CAPTAIN FUTURE and so far the stories have all been swell. Your best serial number was “Human Termite,” one of the most unusual stories I have ever read.

If you could have a love scene occasionally between Captain Future and Joan Randall the stories would be more interesting. In my opinion the stories are good, your departments are fair, and your short stories are unusually good. The Worlds of Tomorrow is the best of your departments.

I also read your companion magazines, THRILLING WONDERS, STORIES and STARTLING STORIES. About the only brickbat I have to throw is that you don’t publish CAPTAIN FUTURE issues. Otherwise, all your magazines are swell. Keep up the good work.—Hawk Point, Mo.

Thank’e, Don Donald. They is kind blasts from your rocket jets. All right, pipe down, you disgruntled swabs! Sure, Don’s letter reads like one of those mash notes some magazine editors write to themselves, but that’s one thing you can put in your firing chamber and blast out about the old space dog. Sarge Saturn never composes pretty letters to himself. He hasn’t time, and then some of you space harpies don’t think he has enough intelligence to fake things.

Speaking of intelligence to you space monkeys reminds me mildly of the story about the lad whose daddy was so drunk when the boy was fifteen. At twenty, the
young squirt came home from college, and he was amazed at how much the old man had learned in five years. Catch wise? Sure, that's an old joke—but it isn't corny. Wait until you've been ragged around the System as long as the Sarge.

Mulling over the idea of education, all sorts and with no holds barred, he comes to an erudite calamus that practical blasting the old space dog clear out of space. You space pups start gnawing on the assortment of bones and cut your own astro-physics teeth. I'm reeling over for a swig from the Xeno jug.

SPACE BLASTS

By Sylvester Brown, Jr.

Having read the last three CF novels in the past week, I am now rendering my decisions on these. Here they are:

"Star Trail to Glory": B+. It is interesting to see how Hamilton works many old plot ideas into one story; in this story the time-and-space principle is round-trip and easily worth a B+. The Cosmic Crystal was a very intriguing idea.

The Rides of Time, A-. The super-time-travel tale to end ALL super-time-travel tales, and I'm not being sarcastic when I say it deserves an A-. However, this is on the strength of the descriptions of the Birth of the Solar System, the Katalinan Calamity, etc., rather than the science itself of which I shall speak later. I prefer this type of novel to the det-mystant slant you gave the first few CF novels, through which I will admit, "The Triumph of CF" was darned good.

Regarding the letters in this last issue:

1. I agree with Mr. Foster. Apparently you did too, as there seems to be a lessening of the godliness of Future in this issue. b. Pry: We-like Blakeships with an atom torch for me, Sarge. You're just as much a part of the mag now as CF himself. c. Now we come to Little Boy Buchtel's letter. If he doesn't like to read "dissing" letters, why does he read them? And I can just see the big boys coming because of the couple of sizzling letters—as long as the mag keeps selling, that is.

2. I bet he get that "... and the majority is always right?" Ain't he ever read Iser's "An Enemy of the People"? If so, he probably knew that it's nothing but a "... say, if he wants me to clarify some matters for him through "Under Observation," I'll do it. I don't believe he can stump me, and personally I'd like to see him try!

Now for some blasts that I will send you scooting to the outermost depths of the outermost depths, Space Dog Reader? OK, here they come:

1. On page 94 of the novel, "Star Trail to Glory," I came across a section showing you've produced exactly as many ships as you have been stolen. Now, when Newton says "Ara, I am a Dummier," I am led to understand that it really produces no space ships. If that is the truth, then here's the ruby ruble: if you have any ships at all, then Garson would have produced the number of ships stolen LESS the number of "inert" ships—is this hard to understand? Even a Lunar moon-pup could see the logic in that.

2. This in regards to "The Magician of Mars." Why isn't the time-accelerator of the previous ship used in interplanetary commerce? Cargo would then be transported in infinitely faster with the aid of this device. Since this story is supposed occurring some two years after the previous one (seen from the fact that Gray Garson had been imprisoned).
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ONED for two years) this could have been by now a widely used device for the help of commercial travel. Have I or have I not something there?

5. Also in the above issue, why didn't CF and Greg reveal the dimensions of the Space Emperor Case and float right down through the rock caverns to the cavern of Ul Quorn? I'll admit that the idea they used made for better reading; but, Holy Sun-lamps, what are Future's previous inventions and discoveries if not brought in for future cases as well?

4. In 'The Lost World of Time' why didn't Curt use the super-sensitive electroscope the man had used on Earth? Then, in 'The Mars Rocket Ship'—well the Mars Rocket Ship?

5. In 'The Last World of Time' why didn't Curt see the ultra-sensitive electroscope the man had used on Earth? Then, in 'The Mars Rocket Ship'—well the Mars Rocket Ship?

6. Here we come to the only apparent paradox in the whole time-travel novel, although not the only error. On page 80 Hamilton says that "... a yawning pit lay where the ship had been deposited." Now, the Katanians discovered the large Ur depe before Curt had journeyed back in time. Well, if he had hurled all the Ur across an abyss of time from long before the Katanians had discovered the deposits until after they had discovered them, how could they have discovered them when, theoretically, they wouldn't have discovered them until the time Curt had sent them ahead to.

7. Let's see you explain that paradox away, Sarge. This alone would be more than enough for me to make a case for Pilot Smith's hands because I don't think I can't have built a time-projector; although he could have at the time.

8. And now comes the last depth charge. On page 28 of this same issue we see this sentence: "... accelerate the time and speed and you accelerate its movement down the time dimension." Am I wrong or could Hamilton mean 'let himself be accelerated' rather than "of the time"? Only two issues ago on page 80 he says: "Every electron in my body will be revolving faster—revolution should take place in the time... body being faster than ordinary time."

Which does he do now, Author Hamilton, go into the future if his electrons move faster or merely live at a faster rate than ordinary? If the last, far from going into the future, he would live 60 or more seconds to the ordinary individual's one. Which is certainly not going into the future very fast, is it? It seems to me, Sergeant, that Hamilton sort of stumbled over his words—possibly a vital time; or am I overlooking some vital factor?

Well, I guess that ends up the space-blazing for the moment. In general may seem to think, CF isn't such a bad mag; and if the stories remain on the same level as the last two, you may count on my continued support.

Wesso is slipping. These last two issues, he has maintained a consistent odor. Have him snap out of it. Covers are OK. Worlds of Tomorrow and The Futuremen Deps. are swell, as is the Serial Dept. I'm hoping for the "Time Stream" next—UNCUT.

Even though your phenomenal patience must by all rights strained the last fiber, I hope you still have enough left to answer my numerical questions; meaning, of course, I'm only saying "the two" you've heard so much about who are simply crazy to get their letters printed.—7 Arlington St., Cambridge, Mass.

Well! I'd say, Pee-lot Brown, you practically jettisoned all your cargo from the starboard hold and maybe ran a donkey engine and winch overtime on the port side. And, furthermore, if you think the old Sarge is going to leave the control-room long enough to check back on all the stuff you're clearing someone to clear, you're space-drunk. But don't you worry.

Author Hamilton will see this visual effect of your broadside—below the as-
terpodial belt—and if he is sufficiently good to firing a responsive rocket, I promise you that you'll get the full charge for a quarter for the middle of your—department next issue.

To think you kiaus have gotta remember that the old space dog is just a practical astroagator who learned his space (and Xeno) tricks the hard way, and now tries to beat some practical sense into your spatial craniums with the business end of a rocket wrench. But I warn you, you are going to keep heckling the old Sarge long enough and hard enough to force him into acquiring some of the book learning you kiaus have already studied.

One of these days I'll know almost as much of the text books as you space harpies, and then won't I play you a six-box composition of rocket blasts on every bank and manual of firing keys! Backed up by some forty years of spacing experience. And fortified with a couple of gallons of Xeno. I'll take the Fitzgerald Contraction the Quandam Theory and Relativity in my stride, and a ride along on a rap-billy and space-drunk readers. And I'll exhale proton gun colored rings with every snort.

But Kiwi Brown fires a good opening gun for an argument, debate or discussion. The rest of you pee-lots go ahead and kick it around until dark. The old Sarge has to rocket along with the mail.

AN AMAZING FUTURE
By Rodney Palmer

Captain Future is a comparatively young magazine compared to some of the veterans in the field, yet the Captain, Ohio, the synthetic man, Grag, the robot—all are actually bursting into fame with the scienfictainment world. The feud between Ohio and Grag concerning which is the most human should be emphasized. They are interesting, and Edmond Hamilton in some ingenious way of phrasing his slurs—"... Well, of course, you have to be HUMAN to enjoy a pet..." and "You walking machine shop...".

Captain Future, taking it from a reader who feels it all up, think I know how Hamilton does it one story after another. Is it a sort of outline that Hamilton follows, with different settings and characters for variety? Captain Future will soon go bi-monthly, I've no doubt, and if Edmond Hamilton can work like a dog at the typewriter... or dietation, which he probably won't stoop to, fine.

My newspaper friend tells me they come panting into the drugstore about the time the various detective magazines are dropped off the truck. Well, yours truly would not stop short of murder for the last issue of Captain Future, Wizard of Science. CAPTURE FUTURE could go bi-monthly... Tell it up to bi-monthly in time. There's something interesting in Curt Newton's style and his varying adventures with seemingly unlimited settings is appealing. I wouldn't bet entirely of a longer novel. Not necessarily more chapters, just longer chapters.

Cut out the short stories, they're very insignificant compared with CAPTAIN FUTURE. Fill in what's left over with novel. But don't let CAPTAIN FUTURE get trashy. The addict following you would undoubtedly build up would be almost equalized, if not entirely insignificant, compared to the amount of juvenile readers that would drop off. Keep Joan Randall out of the picture as much as possible. Her guts doesn't really fit in there, even though it does lengthen the novel.

[Turn page]
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No more Futuremen, either. Curt's friends the present, Joan, Eddy and the other characters woven into the plot fill up too much already.—226 Vier.

St., Chicago, Ill.

Well, thanks, Pee-lot Palmer, for your predictions, and you are not alone in wait-

ing for Captain Future to appear more frequently. Just glance through your observa-

tion post at this.

BI-MONTHLY BUY

By Bo Blair

Dear Sarge:
The story, "Quest Beyond the Stars," is the best story we've read in a magazine. Let's keep Captain Future and his friends busy in places out of the known system. Please if possible, don't have that one more time. I've put stories, as I have to wait too long for the fol-

lowing installment.

Don't do it. Try to make CAPTAIN FUTURE at least a bi-monthly magazine, and also keep Eddy and Oog with the Futuremen on their adventures—121 Beilair Ave.
Springfield, Ohio.

Short and to the point, kiwi. I see you are captain of Space Cruiser 237, by your signature. That's two points ahead of U-235. Heavy stuff, ain't it? But there's one thing you pee-lots don't take into consideration. Do you think Captain Future can stand to be caged up with you mad junior and star-galacticians any oftener than he is? I come now to a single spaced ethergram from a landing port in the daddies of all the states—yeah, Texas! Take it away, Tex!

MAKE A NOTE OF THIS

By Wallace Riley

Like D. W. Boggs, I also would like to know where Grag, Otho, Oog and Eek got their names. Ask Newton personally. Also ask Curt Newton if he is a remote descendant of his (the) equal-rank scientist of three or four centuries ago—by name, Isaac Newton.

It slipped my mind to write after the fall issue. Please warn a guy that you've printed his letter. I was reading "Under Observation" and generally agreeing with the letter when I discovered my name attached to it. I fell out of my chair. Why don't you print letters the issue after they are written? I had to go look up in my file of CAPTAIN FUTURE mags to see what I was writing about. You skipped two issues before you printed it.

The winter novel is pretty good. Is terribilus of the drive ring an element discovered after 1947? It can't seem to remember hearing of it.

And tell your artist that he left off the Drive Ring in the illustrations on both pages 39 and 49.

I don't quite understand "The End of His Service." I suppose George-L had been Law-

ton inside and the time? When Fought Destiny—super duper double da luxe, second only to "The Quest Beyond the Stars," which it did equal except for the taste of horror in it. About "The Man Who Awoke"—

you should have added a couple of install-

ments so I could learn what happened to Winter in—let me think—941, A.D. I

Suppose next issue Captain Future doesn't get back from the Birthplace soon enough to keep out the Outlaws of the Moon. Or is he the Outlaw? Anyway, whoever took it.

So that is what the rear of the Moon looks like? I've often wondered. Sometime put in a picture of the Moon the size as seen from Earth, with an X on it to show just where Captain Future's home is. You see, I'm not familiar with the location of Tycho.

Say, is Captain Future's home nearly all lab? He get plenty tired of living in a laboratory all his life.

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By the mystic nebulae of super-Sci this department just isn't long enou to crowd everything in. (I know, you spacecruises think it's too long, old space dog's tail has got to be too or too short. There is no middle gro with you monkeys.) And so the old Sat bound to make mistakes now and then. I made one the first day I stayed cried for milk when the house was full of whiskey.

Yes, I know this is an old wheeze—but it isn't corny. It was rye whiskey.

Lay off the Sarge now and clamp down your headphones to hear what this kiwi says who fires the stern rocket.

QUEST IS BEST

By Edward Vace

Just finished the winter issue of C.F. I think "Quest Beyond the Stars" is about the best S.F. story I've read, and I've read some. This is the first time I've written a letter to any mag for about a year. (Ever since I started reading C.F.) I've said to myself, "Go ahead, Eddy, drop that old space dog, Sarge Saturn, a few!" Here it comes, so catch hold.

I think Ed Hamilton has a real swell idea of having "Deneb" as the "Birthplace" of many stellar races. By the bye, what star did men in "Star Trail to Glory" come from? Who does that guy Steffen think he is, wanting Hamilton to put "love" in his stories? If I wanted love I'd read a love magazine, so, Sarge, please tell Ed not to put love in his stories.

I have but one complaint about your mag. Why, don't your covers have some relation to a story in the mag? From what I read in "The Future of Capt. Future," what Garg said in the last chapter of the feature novel, "you can create a cosmos full of trouble on one little moon all by yourself," may prove very true.

Just a few more strands to my line. What is that affair on Otho's back? When are you going to run out of Future Men and worlds of tomorrow for the articles? I also read your companion magazines, THRILLING WONDER STORIES and THRILLING STORIES, but I like CAPTAIN FUTURE better than either.—545 West 16th St., New York City.

Pee-lot, you have me smack-dab on the point of your ray gun with a couple of your questions. We suggest scenes for cover paintings and set the various artists down to read the stories—and the covers come out like you see them. And there's a heck of a lot of other considerations which enter into the matter that you and Horatio wouldn't even dream of.

As for the contraption on Otho's back—well, believe it or not, but the old Sarge has pointed out that to the art editor before, but the artist who draws Otho thinks the Android is in direct communication with the plastic Necrodactyls of Arcturus, and that an amended affair is his short-wave communicator.

A great many queer things come out of a Xeno jug.

SERGEANT SATURN,
The Old Space Dog.
THE ALIEN INTELLIGENCE (Continued from page 104)

region beyond the Silver Lake—or to lose my life in the attempt.

My name is Horace Austen. I came to the Great Victoria Desert to investigate the sculptured columns reported by Hamilton, far to the west of home and the ruins and, I fancied, incredibly ancient they are. They must date from fifty thousand years ago, at the latest. Among them was an amazing pictographic record of a race of men driven by the drying up of their country to emigrate to the crater of a vast meteorite nearby. There was no mistaking the meaning. I was, of course, intensely interested, for nothing of the kind had then been reported in Australia, and certainly the reports in Building and Architecture.

It happened that I remembered Wellington's account of the Mountain of the Moon, whose northern cliff was followed for a few miles by his route of 1881. That appeared to be the best chance for the great crater described on the columns. It was but natural for me to decide to investigate it. There is no use for me to dwell upon my hardships, but the last of my water was drunk when I found the ladder, located just as the inscriptions indicated.

I reached the red plain without accident, and found strange vegetable life. There was a palatable and nourishing food, so far I have escaped the red lights that haunt the night. It is their mystery I am determined to solve. I investigated the metallic lake. I confess myself quite unable to account either for the nature or for the incredible origin of the fluid. With proper equipment it can be studied without great difficulty, but since I am almost entirely without apparatus, I have learned little enough about it.

I was in the crater a week before I decided to approach the city of jewels on the mountain. I was an astronomer, but on account of the savagery and ignorance of the people, and the oppressive rule of the priests, there was no chance of friendly relations with them—with the exception of the girl, Melvar, who seems far above the others of her race, and who has been my friend from the first. I have been able to learn but little from them, although I have acquired a fair knowledge of the language. My instructor in it, the beautiful Melvar, is showing a keen desire to learn English, of which she is gaining a command with remarkable alacrity, as well as an insatiable curiosity about the outer world.

The sentiment against me is running higher, and tomorrow I shall leave the crystal city and endeavor to round the sea in the north to reach the mist-veiled land beyond. My only regret in leaving is that I shall not see Melvar no more. I wish there were some way to secure her the advantages of a civilized education.

These may be my last words to the world, if, indeed, they ever come into the hands of a civilized man. I know that sooner or later the crater will be discovered and entered. My chief purpose in writing this, aside from the satisfaction of leaving an account of my own doings, is to clear my brain of that strange things to be observed here, supernatural or incredible as they may appear, result from perfect natural causes, and forever the centre of these power that may not be much above our own advancements.

Horace Austen.

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What befalls Dr. Austen after he leaves the crystal city? Does Fowler succeed in establishing contact with the intrepid scientist, or is he too late? Don't miss the next installment of this amazing experience in the heart of Australia—Coming in the next issue of CAPTAIN FUTURE!
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A Forecast for Next Issue

CHICKENS come home to roost! After flashing all over the Solar System in the Comet—even going on interspatial voyages and into other dimensions and into the time stream—Captain Future faces a brand new experience. A comet comes into the Solar System!

Once more Halley's Comet returns on its periodic three-quarters-of-a-century ellipse, and this time it brings terrible mystery and disaster to the family of planets. But nobody knows what is happening as space ships mysteriously disappear—wiped out—obliterated. And then when Curt Newton and his right little, tight little band of Futuremen learn that Joan Randall and Ezra Gurney have disappeared, things begin to happen—fast!

To the amazement of the scientific world, Captain Future proves that the disappearing space ships are being absorbed by Halley's Comet. Thus, facing a deadly peril to interplanetary shipping, and having a tremendous personal interest in the vital problem, Curt Newton plunges headlong into one of the most amazing and perilous adventures of his entire career.

Setting forth in the Comet, he heads for the huge ball of celestial gas known as Halley's Comet. To their unbounded surprise, the band of Futuremen learn that there is a central core to the fiery mass, a world of electrical splendor and terror, ruled by a queerly human race of glowing beings known as the Cometae.

Mad Adventure

One mad adventure follows another as Captain Future and his intrepid henchmen penetrate the mystery and battle against their almost superhuman foes. And a greater mystery begins to loom up behind the Cometae. Who and what are the Alurians? What alien life form from what far-flung universe is this that has invaded the Solar System via Halley's Comet? What is their cause or their plan or their nemesis? What is their awful purpose?

The answers are in THE COMET KINGS—Edmond Hamilton's complete book-length novel for the next issue!

Solving one mystery at a time as he goes forward, Captain Future discovers to his horror that Joan Randall has somehow become one of the glowing Cometae. A ter-
rible set of tangled problems await his solution. But things are not utterly hopeless. Zarn, one of the leaders of the Cometae, joins scientific forces with the Brain, and—but why should we spoil a splendid story for you by revealing all.

The answer is, we shouldn’t. So you readers pick up a copy of next issue’s CAPTAIN FUTURE and follow Curt Newton into the very jaws of complete annihilation as he finally comes to grips with the greater mystery in his titanic battle to wrest an entire world from the clutch of these weird alien entities.

As Halley’s Comet speeds along at its tremendous rate, emitting a new tail of gas as it approaches the Sun, Captain Future dives into the colossal problem at a like rate of speed, to carry you, breathless, to the astounding answer at the end. And here’s a note for you amateur astronomers. Halley’s Comet, whose mean synodical period is 70.9 years, is a member of Neptune’s family of nine comets.

So, come tie yourself to the tail of a comet next issue and follow the Futuramen as they unlock yet another one of the myriad secrets of the Universe.

And in addition will be another stirring installment of Jack Williamson’s ALIEN INTELLIGENCE, and the usual selection of outstanding short stories and departments.

You are headed for a real sky ride.

—THE EDITOR

THE WORLDS OF TOMORROW

(Concluded from page 95)

noted casually in an Earth newspaper that the wreck of the old Space Blazer, containing the bodies of Robbins and Swain, would be removed from space also in the sweeping operations.

This casual notice attracted the attention of Oliver Owen, the Earth poet. It inspired him to write that burning poem, "The Forgotten First," beginning with:

"Dreamers who first flew spaceward
On wings of death and flame—"

The poem aroused the public interest. There was a growing cry that the Space Blazer should not be removed from space but should be allowed to continue on its endless voyage through space, as a monument to the two dead pioneers whose bodies it contained.

The outcry was so great that government acceded. By special ordinance, the Space Blazer was exempted from all sweeping operations. So that to this day it continues on its silent, ceaseless patrol as a satellite of the little astroid.

The great liners of the shipplanes often pass near Eros and its strange satellite. And it is unbreakable space tradition that they and any other craft that pass the wreck must break out full "salute" signals—salute to the two dead men in it who wanted to be first in space and who will continue their endless space voyage while System lasts.
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With VACUMATIC

195 MILES

Car Owners: You are invited to make a gas saving road test with the Vacumatic on your own car, with the absolute understanding that unless it proves to you that it will save you up to 30% on gas and improve your car performance, the test will cost you nothing. Investigate this remarkable discovery that trims dollars off gasoline bills—gives you worthwhile gas savings—more power—greater speed—quicker pickup—faster acceleration.

Automatic Supercharge Principle

Vacu-matic is entirely different! It operates on the supercharge principle by automatically adding a charge of extra oxygen, drawn free from the outer air, into the heart of the gas mixture. It is entirely automatic and allows the motor to "breathe" at the correct time, opening and closing automatically to save dollars on gas costs.

Proven By Test

In addition to establishing new mileage records on cars in all sections of the country, the Vacumatic has proven itself on thousands of road tests and on dynamometer tests which duplicate road conditions and record accurate mileage and horse power increases.

Fits All Cars—Easy to Install

Vacu-matic is constructed of six parts assembled and fused into one unit, adjusted and sealed at the factory. Nothing to regulate. Any motorist can install in a few minutes. The free offer coupon will bring all the facts. Mail it today!

The Vacumatic Co., Wauwatosa, Wis.
Genuine-Late
UNDERWOOD
NOISELESS
Now
$85
CASH
OR
EASY TERMS—70¢ A WEEK
Truly the most outstanding offer I have given my customers in years! Only because of an exceptional purchase can I sell these completely reconditioned machines at the sensation-ally low price of $85.00 (cash) or on easy terms of 70¢ a week. Each one carefully gone over and reconditioned so that it is better than new. It is offered at a price of $85.00 which is the original selling price of this Underwood machine.

It's sent to you in Underwood shipping box with Underwood book of instructions on care and operation.

A NOISELESS MACHINE
Latest achievement in typewriters! Provides writing perfection with SILENCE. For those who want the advantages of a quiet home or office, this Underwood's Noiseless mechanism eliminates the noise altogether common to many models. An aid to better work because it allows clear thinking, reduces fatigue, improves accuracy. This typewriter carries no noise, for it is almost impossible to hear it operate a few feet away. You get all the features of an Underwood PLUS Noiseless typing.

FIRST CHOICE OF TYPISTERS
Over 5,000,000 UNDERWOODS NOW IN USE! Recognized as the finest, strongest built! Here is an office size Underwood with late modern features that give you SILENT TYPING. Has all standard equipment—keyboard, 2 colors, back spacer, automatic reverse, tabulator, etc. THERNO IS NO RISK! SEE BEFORE YOU BUY ON MY 10 DAY NO OBLIGA-

TION TRIAL PLAN. If you wish send the machine back at my expense.

WIDE 14" CARRIAGES
Wide carriage machines for government reports, large office forms, billing, etc., only $3.00 extra with order. Takes paper 14" wide, has 10" writing area. A Real Buy in a Reconditioned Underwood Noiseless!

International Typewriter Exchange
231 W. Monroe St., Dept. 388
Chicago, Ill.

Touch Typing Course
A complete home study course of famous Van Sant Touch Typing system. Learn to type quickly and easily. Carefully illustrated. Written expressly for home use.

MAIL COUPON NOW: Limited Quantity on Sale

International Typewriter Exchange, Dept. 388, 231 W. Monroe St., Chicago, Ill.

Send Underwood Noiseless (F.O.B. Chicago) for ten days trial. If I keep it, I will pay 15.00 per month until easy term price of $85.00 is paid. If I am not satisfied I can return it in same condition for same price. I understand 10" carriage (from extra) check for typewriter stand ($3.50 extra-payable 25¢ a month). Stand sent on receipt of first payment on Underwood.

Name: ____________________________ Age: ________
Address: ____________________________
City: ____________________________

CAUTION: For quick shipment give occupation and reference.