COSMIC SCIENCE-FICTION

15¢

MAY 1941

PHOENIX P[illegible]KET

Novel[illegible]te

by James B[illegible]sh

SICKNESS OR ACCIDENT

Every hour, day and night 4,080 people are disabled through sickness and accident. You never know when tragedy strikes. The Policy of the Century comes to your aid at the time of your most dire need—at a time when you are down, financially handicapped, unable to care for your loved ones.

THE POLICY OF THE CENTURY

WILL HELP PAY YOUR BILLS

YOU RECEIVE

$5,000.00

Accumulating to

$7,500.00

Benefits for stated **Accidental Death, Loss of Hands, Feet, or Eyes**

$25 PER WEEK FOR SICKNESS

$25 PER WEEK FOR ACCIDENT

$100 EMERGENCY ALLOWANCE

All subject to Century Policy provisions.

COST TO YOU $1 ONLY PER MONTH

The United Insurance Company of Chicago, a legal reserve insurance company, which has paid millions of dollars to policy-holders offers you the new "Century" Policy. This company is not an association or assessment company and is old and reliable. It is approved by state insurance departments. Rated "A" plus Excellent in Dunne's Insurance Report. Be safe! Costs only $1.00 per month. Pays big cash accumulated benefits for accidental death, besides financial protection during Sickness and Accidents. Act now, before it is too late. Just send coupon today for complete information. You are under no obligation and no agent will call.

INSURES MEN AND WOMEN

The new "Century" Sickness and Accident Policy insures both men and women with the benefits shown, plus many other liberal features outlined in the policy.

ANYONE BETWEEN THE AGES OF 16 AND 75 CAN APPLY

This policy protects you against such misfortunes that often occur in the home, in the streets, on farms, in factories, etc., subject to its provisions. Half benefits after age sixty.

NO MEDICAL EXAMINATION

No medical examination is required. No agent will call. Remember, in addition to the liberal accident features, the "Century" Policy covers SICKNESS as well—it provides liberal benefits in times of both Sickness AND Accident. This vital protection gives "Century" policy-holders a safeguard against the misery of lost income and increased expenses during times of adversity. Don't delay—Get this safe protection at once.

Send No Money–Just Mail Coupon

Remember, you do not send one cent—just mail coupon for complete information. The "Century" Policy covers both Sickness and Accidents. Get the facts without obligation at once. No agent will call—Rush the coupon today. Tomorrow may be too late. The time to act is NOW—before a terrible, unforeseen accident or sudden sickness tears at your heart.

YOU Get Cash Quick!

When emergencies arise, this remarkable policy provides quick cash payment of specified benefits for family aid. Get complete details at once. Send no money—just mail the coupon. No agent will call.

MILLIONS PAID To Policy-Holders

The United Insurance Company was founded in 1919 and has paid more than *Four Million Two Hundred Thousand Dollars* in claims. An old and reliable insurance company with more than $2.00 in assets for every $1.00 of liability. The company rating is "A" plus Excellent in Dunne's Insurance Report. For over 18 years has unfailingly made prompt and just claim payments. Covers both Sickness and Accident. Reliable, honest, stable.

MAIL COUPON NOW FOR COMPLETE DETAILS

UNITED INSURANCE COMPANY
ELGIN TOWER, Suite U-104
ELGIN, ILLINOIS

NO AGENT WILL CALL

Please mail me at once complete information and how to get the "Century" Policy for Free Inspection without obligation.

Name.....

Address.....

FEMALE BEAUTY ROUND the WORLD

World's Greatest Collection of Strange & Secret Photographs

NOW you can travel round the world with the most daring adventurers. You can see with your own eyes, the weirdest peoples on earth. You witness the strangest customs of the red, white, brown, black and yellow races. You attend their startling rites, their mysterious practices. They are all assembled for you in these five great volumes of THE SECRET MUSEUM OF MANKIND.

600 LARGE PAGES

Here is the World's Greatest Collection of Strange and Secret Photographs. Here are Exotic Photos from Europe, Primitive Photos from Africa, Torture Photos from Asia, Female Photos from Oceania and America, and hundreds of others. There are almost 600 LARGE PAGES of Strange & Secret Photographs, each page 57 square inches in size!

1,000 REVEALING PHOTOS

You see actual courtship practiced in every quarter of the world. You see magic and mystery in queer lands where the foot of a white man has rarely trod. You see Oriental modes of marriage and female slavery in China, Japan, India, etc. Through the intimacy of the camera you witness the exotic habits of every continent and the strangest customs of life and love in America, Europe, etc. You are bewildered by these large pages of ONE THOUSAND PHOTOGRAPHS including 130 full-page photos, and thrilled by the hundreds of short stories that describe them.

5 GREAT VOLUMES

The **SECRET MUSEUM OF MANKIND** consists of five picture-packed volumes (solidly bound together for convenient reading). Dip into any one of these volumes, and as you turn its pages, you find it difficult to tear yourself away. Here, in story and unusual photo, is the **WORLD'S GREATEST COLLECTION OF STRANGE AND SECRET PHOTOGRAPHS**, containing everything from Female Beauty Round the World to the most Mysterious Cults and Customs. These hundreds and hundreds of large pages will give you days and nights of thrilling instruction.

Contents of 5-Volume Set

Volume 1—The Secret Album of Africa
Volume 2—The Secret Album of Europe
Volume 3—The Secret Album of Asia
Volume 4—The Secret Album of America
Volume 5—The Secret Album of Oceania

Specimen Photos

Various Secret Societies—Civilized Love vs. Savage—Exotic Rites and Cults—Strange Crimes, Criminals—Omens, Totems & Taboos—Mysterious Customs—Dress & Undress Round the World.

1,000 Strange and Secret Photos

FORMERLY $10
NOW ONLY
$1.98

FOR THE COMPLETE 5 VOLUME SET

ALL FIVE VOLUMES BOUND TOGETHER

SEND NO MONEY

Simply sign & mail the coupon. Remember, each of the 5 volumes is 9¼ inches high, and opened over a foot wide! Remember also that this 5-Volume Set formerly sold for $10. And it is bound in expensive "life-time" cloth. Don't put this off. Fill out the coupon, drop it in the next mail, and receive this huge work at once.

METRO PUBLICATIONS,
70 Fifth Ave., Dept. 3205, New York

Send me "The Secret Museum of Mankind" (5 great volumes bound together). I will pay postman $1.98, plus postage on arrival. If in 5 days I am not delighted, I will return the book and you will refund my $1.98.

Address .....

Name .....

City ..... State .....

☐ CHECK HERE, if you are enclosing $1.98, thus saving the mailing costs.

COSMIC STORIES

VOLUME 1 MAY 1941 NUMBER 2

Ten Science-Fiction Stories

Articles and Features

Cover by Hannes Bok
Interior art work by Morey, Bok, Kyle, Thorp, Hunt, Dollens

DONALD A. WOLLHEIM, *Editor* JERRY ALBERT, *Man. Ed.*

Published bi-monthly by Albing Publications. Office of publication, 1 Appleton Street, Holyoke, Mass. Editorial and Executive offices, 19 East 48th Street, New York, N. Y. Entered as second-class matter January 4, 1941, at the post office at Holyoke, Massachusetts, under the act of March 3, 1879. Copyright 1941 by Albing Publications. Manuscripts should be accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelope, and are submitted at the author's risk. **Yearly Subscription, 90c; Single Copies, 15c.**

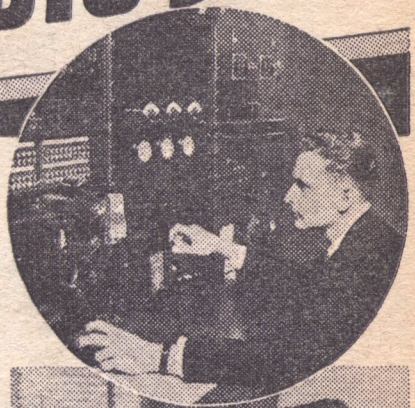
PRINTED IN U. S. A.

J. E. SMITH
President
National Radio Institute
Established 25 Years

I WILL SEND A SAMPLE LESSON FREE

to PROVE I can Train You at Home in Spare Time for

GOOD RADIO JOBS



I Trained These Men

Chief Operator Broadcasting Station

Before I completed your lessons, 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, Michigan.

Makes $50 to $60 a Week

I am making between $50 and $60 a week after all expenses are paid, and I am getting all the Radio work I can take care of, thanks to N. R. I. H. W. SPANGLER, 126½ S. Gay St., Knoxville, Tenn.

$10 to $25 a Week in Spare Time

I am now making from $10 to $25 a week in spare time while still holding my regular job as a machinist. I owe my success to N. R. I. WM. F. RUPP, 611 Green Street, Bridgeport, Pa.

Send for FREE Sample Lesson today! Examine it—read it—see how clear it is, how easy to understand. Find out how this lesson, and others in my Course make it easy for you to train at home to be a Radio Technician. Discover the many opportunities this training opens for you.

WHY MANY RADIO TECHNICIANS MAKE $30, $40, $50 A WEEK

Hundreds of millions of dollars in defense orders on top of a record business year are opening new opportunities for Radio Technicians. What's more—Radio Technicians, if selected for military service, can get in line quickly for better ratings with more pay, more prestige. Technicians in the Army and Navy earn up to 6 times a private's base pay. Radio Technicians are well paid because they use their minds as well as their hands. It takes both to repair a home or auto Radio set; to operate and maintain a Broadcast or Commercial transmitting station; to install, operate and repair Police, Aviation, Television and Public Address equipment. That's why so many beginners who become Radio Technicians jump their pay, get better jobs, steady work. That's why too many Radio Technicians operate their own profitable full time Radio Service businesses; and others make extra money fixing Radios in spare time while holding other jobs.

BEGINNERS QUICKLY LEARN TO EARN $5 TO $10 A WEEK IN SPARE TIME

When N. R. I. trains you to be a Radio Technician, you learn to make extra money quickly. Many students report making extra money in spare time within a few months; others tell how they paid for their entire Course with extra money made in spare time while learning.

MAIL THE COUPON BELOW

Mail the coupon today for SAMPLE LESSON and FREE copy of "Rich Rewards in Radio." You'll see letters from men who got into Radio this way, telling what knowing Radio means to them; what they are doing and earning. You'll see why the N. R. I. Course is easy to study, fascinating to learn, practical to use. You'll get facts on Television and other fast-growing branches of Radio. Act NOW. Write your name and address on the coupon below. Paste it on a penny postcard or mail it in an envelope—RIGHT NOW.

J. E. Smith, President,
Dept. 1ES3, National Radio Institute,
Washington, D. C.

BROADCASTING STATIONS (top illustrated) employ Radio Technicians as operators, installation, maintenance men and in other fascinating, steady, well-paying technical jobs. **FIXING RADIO SETS** (lower illustration) pays many Radio Technicians $30, $40, $50 a week. Others hold their regular jobs and make $5 to $10 extra a week in spare time.

Mail Coupon Now!

This FREE BOOK has Helped Hundreds of Men to Make More Money

Mr. J. S. Smith, President, Dept. 1ES3
NATIONAL RADIO INSTITUTE, Washington, D. C.

Mail me FREE, without obligation, your Sample Lesson and 64-page book "Rich Rewards in Radio." (No Salesman will call. Please write plainly.)

Name ..... Age .....

Address .....

City ..... State 2FR

DRAFT REGISTRANTS!

ATTENTION

Hundreds of men who know Radio when they enter military service are going to win specialist ratings in the Army, Navy and Marine Corps. These ratings pay up to 6 times a private's or Seaman's base pay, in addition to carrying extra rank and prestige! Whether you enlist or wait for conscription — IT'S SMART TO LEARN RADIO —NOW!

PHOENIX PLANET

by James Blish

(Author of "Callistan Cabal," "Citadel of Thought," etc.)

Marshall went into space to seek extra-terrestrial life; he returned to find that what he had sought had paid his home planet a visit. And had come to stay!

CHAPTER I

GREGORY MARSHALL paced a five-foot circle around the metal floor. Five feet was the maximum diameter of the circle the tiny control cabin of the *Icarus* allowed for pacing, and for a man of Marshall's size and state of mind it was a very inadequate size indeed.

For Gregory Marshall, first human being ever to leave the prisoning air of Earth, was going back to Earth again. Going home after ten of Earth's too-long years, ten years of eating vitamin concentrates, egg powder, milk powder, and the incredibly tough leaves of the Martian plants he called "spinage" or "cabbich" as the mood struck him. Ten years of gasping for air at the slightest exertion. Ten years of freezing almost solid at night, and being painfully sun-burned at forty degrees Fahrenheit by day. Ten years of searching, searching, searching.

Ten years it had taken him to assemble the metal for the device his landing had smashed. He caressed the crude thing, a cubical cage-work of wires placed just below the control window, and a little model of the *Icarus* which ran along the wires, and grinned ruefully to himself.

It was the nature of the man that he could grin at all, with any other feeling than that of cynicism, for that landing misfortune and its consequences would have killed any other man's sense of humor completely. How neatly everything had been figured out! The pressed-cast wood ship, held together with metal rings every few feet like barrel-hoops, with its single protective layer of heat-resistant plastic coated with a resin-base reflectant paint, had been so much lighter than a metal ship would have been, and the new fuel was so powerful—nothing but a miscalculation of orbit could have prevented his making the trip safely, and the return as well. And he had been picked from all the rest of the Society because of his cool head and his mathematical skill.

He had not miscalculated. He had made Mars. And then, then the twanging collapse of parachute shrouds, the wild plunge, the violent shock as the *Icarus* dropped twenty feet and buried its nose in soft sand—and he came to consciousness in the midst of the crumpled control cage. . . .

The metal had been very hard steel, and the fine wires had shivered and broken, cutting him badly. He didn't care about the cuts—they healed quickly in the sterile air of Mars—but that shivered metal, with its high molybdenum content, could never be reworked by any means at his disposal. He had plenty of fuel, yes. But the little space-flyer was useless without that control cage.

The nightmare was over now. The

new cage was of gold, pure, soft gold, obtained from the ruined city which lay buried in the "spinage" of the Mare Icarium. How he had longed to explore that incredibly ancient metropolis with the eyes of a scientist, as the Society had intended he should! But he had no time for anything but hasty pictures filmed as he passed by in his endless search for malleable metal. That gold had come, ounce by precious ounce, from ornaments and jewelry found in deserted chambers, dug with gasping breath from red sand or found discarded carelessly in once-dark corridors. The Martians, dead untold centuries before his birth, had used no gold in architectural decoration. Only in those ornaments.

And he had passed great frescoes, still brightly colored in the unmoving air of Mars; and strange, chilling statues; and buildings which were taller in the slighter gravitation of the planet than any imaginable Earth building; and he had made hurried films and gone on in despairing duplication of man's endless search for gold, now a symbol of life rather than mere greed.

And each month, if he was lucky, saw one more queerly wrought, alien gold ornament added to the tiny pile in the cabin of the *Icarus*. The search never ceased except from exhaustion. He had gasped, and lost precious perspiration in the arid air, and been burned black and peeled acres of skin (which he ate, as he ate his nail parings and anything else offering rare proteins), and grew a little mad; and the stars looked down coldly, even in the vicious weak light of the sun, and watched this human being, the only one on an entire world, grub for gold in the ground like his brothers on Earth, and doubtless they did not understand.

But that was all over now. Nine years' search for metal; one year drawing it into wire, making proper connections, and repairing the guilty parachute. And now behind him the roar of the rockets made the *Icarus* tremble, and Mars was a rusty ball dwindling behind it, illusory "canals" coming gradually into view, as it hurtled along Hohmann D toward the swelling blue star.

He stopped his constant pacing and pressed his nose for the hundredth time against the green glass of the control window, polishing impatiently with his ragged sleeve as his breath misted the view of the blue star. What would it be like, being there again? There were so many things that might be different. What had the Society thought when he had failed to return? Had they sent another ship, later, one that had been lost somewhere in space, or burst in terrible glory like poor Klaus? He thought not. The *Icarus* had devoured the Society's last pitiful pennies, for Klaus' death had been expensive as well as tragic; the *Daedelus* had been a much bigger ship than Marshall's. Probably they had waited in dying hopefulness for a few years or so, and then, when the Earth and Mars had moved away from each other, had gone back to the other walks of life whence they had been summoned.

And Anne. Had she, perhaps, forgotten too, in those years when the gulf of space had stretched between them? As ever the thought was a bright pain to him, and he felt a momentary twinge of the old madness of Mars. Ten years was a long time for a human woman to remain faithful. Pelleas and Melicent, yes—but they were but fiction.

If she had waited, he was bringing her a better lover than she had known before. He had been an eager, idealistic kid when he spurned his planet in fire, a kid of twenty-two; he looked perhaps four years older now, thanks to the preservative influence of that embalmed rusty planet, but he was hardened physically to perfection; underweight, of course, but perfectly proportioned; and those ten years of hell had forged the irresponsible Greg Marshall into something finer than he had promised. He knew it without egotism, but with grim pride, and was glad of it for her.

Yes, much might have changed upon the blue star, yet it was home, and paradise; return there was resurrection from the tomb which was Mars. Those years had at least been busy, too busy for him to develop the knack of solitaire or playing chess with himself, and now the inaction in the shining wooden box of the *Icarus* was tormenting. He could only pace in a five-foot circle, walk up and down the catwalk in a useless check of Kammerman's superb engines, make delicate adjustments of the little ship in the crude cage, and return again to smudge the port and lean on the walls as if to urge more speed.

But the days went by, and Mars dwindled, and the blue star grew. And with it grew visions of forests, and oceans, and Anne, and an enormous steak, and thick, rich air. . . .

ON THE two-hundred and fiftieth day the *Icarus* swept in close to the corpse-like moon, and shot by, while Marshall took the last foot of his film before turning on the forward engines. He had managed to fill four whole days taking these pictures, and the sun, which had been his enemy so long, had turned fair-weather friend and illuminated the "dark" side with slanting rays which brought out every detail in sharp contrast to its own shadow.

With a sigh he unpacked the magazine and stored it with the rest. Then he moved the little ship on the gold wires back a bit and up, and white, intense flame blotted out his vision. He wrote hasty calculations on the walls (since the Society had considered paper wasted weight).

The *Icarus,* a comet with two opposed tails, fell gradually into the Oberth braking orbit, so carefully calculated for it by the Society ten years ago. No, over twelve, now, thanks to the time the two trips had added to the stay on Mars. Marshall fidgeted and paced his five-foot circle and could not sleep, though it would be ten hours before the first brush with the atmosphere. Instead he stood at the port every few minutes and looked down at the great planet of his home, the world of blue seas and green-brown continents and masses of white mist obscuring both. He longed to see a city, but he was too high up, and their lights at night he found also invisible.

He filled the ten hours making nice adjustments on the gyroscope, compensating for the constant, nauseating shift in the *down* direction which occurred if the ship went through the orbit changing its relative position to Earth as inertia would have it do. Then the high thin screaming of the atmosphere, almost beyond the range of audibility, penetrated the *Icarus* and he charged up the catwalk to strap himself in and fire another burst through the forward tubes. The wood would not burn under ordinary conditions, protected as it was by the outside coatings, but it was not wise to take chances.

Even stone meteors burned if they fell free through such gloriously thick atmosphere.

During the next two hours the scream crept gradually down to a siren-like howl as he edged the ship toward the Earth a few hundred feet at a time. Once his fingers slipped and perspiration started out all over him as he had to apply rocket power. It would be ironic to be burned in the last lap. Then at last the sound, without changing pitch, died away to a whisper and the *Icarus* was back in space, speed greatly reduced, making the wide loop for the return. Seven hours now, decelerating all the time in a constant, sickening surge. . . .

This time the sound started as a howl and went down from there. In an hour he was but two miles up from home. Another hour, another mile down, while the dark mass of Europe slid below him and then the beautiful turquoise desert of the Atlantic. In half an hour he was making only two hundred miles an hour, so that an airplane could have paced him, and he slid out the retractable wings. . . . Five thousand feet from home. . . .

Evidently he was even more excited than he had imagined, for after finding a midge of a planet accurately in the eternal void, he missed New York and shot instead over an unfamiliar, heavily wooded section of the coast. Wooded. Real trees. But trees, for all their beauty and grateful familiarity, were not for now. He needed an airdrome. He swung north up the coast, shooting higher until he could see the Hudson; then, exultantly, he plunged the *Icarus* toward Manhattan.

He would land at LaGuardia Field, but first he would give the old town a thrill. Maybe they had rockets now, transatlantic rockets or something—but that was doubtful, because if they had they would also have space rockets. His own adventure the Society had kept secret, for fear of the laughter of the newspapers. Probably there were just much better airplanes now. Certainly no glittering meteors like the *Icarus*. In his imagination he could see the white expanse of startled, upturned faces in the streets of the city as he thundered deafeningly overhead. Conquering hero, returned from Mars. He chuckled. He had earned an ovation, by God. Also that steak and that soft bed and that air. . . .

The old thought-chain brought him back to Anne again and he blinked a little. If she were there to meet him, his life would have reached its peak. And if she were not . . . well, old Earth was home, just the same. . . . He kicked himself for a sniveling schoolboy and concentrated on the gold cage. Good little space-vessel, but somewhat tricky in normal flight. He braked as Manhattan loomed nearer and the silver thread of the Hudson expanded to a metal ribbon, and for a moment the flames obscured his forward vision. What a display the rockets made in air! Not quite such comet-like expansion as in space, but unparalleled brilliancy and even some smoke. How Kammerman would sputter when he told him about that smoke; it meant wasted power, and waste in a rocket engine was to Kammerman as leprosy in a man is to the normal woman.

The air-speed indicator registered eighty now. Any slower and the *Icarus* would fall of its own weight, despite the stubby wings. He shut off the ocean of fire and peered eagerly downward—

But on Manhattan Island and all

the land visible to Gregory Marshall, there was nothing but the dense, wild forest.

CHAPTER II

IN SICK TERROR he sent the *Icarus* in as tight spirals as he dared, scanning the ground below, almost skimming the treetops. What could have happened to a whole city in twelve years?

The forest was not as dense as it had looked from above; it was mostly scrub, and there were occasional thin spots and clearings. Nowhere, however, did he see any sign of a building or even a ruin. New York—vanished!

What could have been the cause? Some local epidemic, perhaps, which had caused the city to be abandoned? But the buildings would still be there, certainly—the great, familiar skyscrapers. . . .

Abruptly he got a clear look at a larger clearing. The ground in it looked wrong, somehow—it seemed to glisten in spots, like lava—

It was lava. Whole areas had been fused as if with tremendous heat. He thought of the teeming millions in the city, and felt suddenly ill. Had the city been evacuated before the cataclysm, whatever it had been, had struck? Had there been adequate warning? Or—had the upheaval been even more widespread? Perhaps the war, crawling to an exhausted close when he left, had flared again. But what war weapon could wipe out a city so cleanly, melt it to glassy puddles like this?

He thought for a moment of going on to Chicago, in what he strangely felt to be a hopeless quest for life, but his fuel meter warned him he could stay in the air only a few minutes longer. Desperately he swung the ship south and up, and moved the little metal oval almost halfway forward in the cage. The *Icarus* roared and he was forced into his seat.

Then the rear tubes began to cough. He searched the board for the valve of Keller's favorite and much-discussed emergency pump ("Only thirteen pounds," he could hear the little man pleading, "and *so* handy for accidents."), twisted it hard, and the reserve in the forward tubes was forced back. Again the *Icarus* bucked and bounded upward, but the coughing began again and black smoke began to pour from the Venturi orifices, wreathing the tail of the ship in a trailing dense pall. Oxygen gone. The fuel was useless now—might as well save it; without oxygen the tubes had no more thrust than a blowtorch. He cut the feed throttles.

The *Icarus* was falling now in a great arc, gliding on its truncated wings, losing speed rapidly. He searched the horizon, but if he were anywhere near Philadelphia, it must have been destroyed as well; there was nothing but the endless scrub forest. Bitterly he watched the speed, and when the ship could no longer stay in the air on momentum, he tripped the parachute lever.

He could hear its opening boom through the hull, and the shock almost cut him in two on the safety belt. Swaying like a pendulum, the *Icarus* settled after twelve years on the surface of its home planet—from sterile desert to empty wilderness. Abruptly Gregory Marshall felt very tired. Dully he watched the green roof rise to meet him.

Then he was rocked violently and branches crashed outside — another dull shock—and the *Icarus* swayed gently back and forth on the end of

the tangled shrouds, perhaps a yard from the ground.

"The Earth won't have me," he thought, smiling without humor. He unstrapped himself, and the entrance-port wheel squealed in his hands.

For a moment he stood beside his suspended flyer, breathing deeply of the heady air, wine-like after Mars and the canned stuff in the ship. The strange, subtle odor of green things was everywhere, and when he stamped his feet on the rich black sod he knew again a long-forgotten natural weight. Home. Home changed very terribly, but still life after living death.

He sighed and gave the *Icarus* a short inspection. There was a tiny fraction of gritty red sand wedged in a crack where the tubes joined the fuselage, and the knowledge that it was Martian gave him a greater sensation of awe than all the films stored in the cabin. Nothing seemed to be damaged; the lightness of the steel-strong wood composition had protected it from coming to grief among the small trees. He whistled softly to himself and ran his fingers along a long, deep burn. The paint and protective plastic had been seared away and charred wood showed underneath. That must have happened during that accidental two-thousand-foot drop. Any more and—well, the *Icarus* wouldn't be space-worthy again until he could have that spot repaired.

Repaired. If he could find anybody or anyplace to repair it. The madness of the Martian loneliness touched him again, briefly. What had happened to the world, anyhow? Cities destroyed, vegetation running wild over miles of deserted territory—

His ears, subconsciously sensitive for the slightest human sound, and attuned more delicately by Mars' thin air which made a boom into a squeak, caught a subdued whisper behind him.

"He's unarmed, looks like," it said, and with an exclamation of delight he spun around on his heel.

HE SAW NOTHING but a miniature open space, domed by branches, and the forest itself. "Where are you?" he called eagerly, his voice unnaturally loud in his ears.

For a long moment there was silence. Then a gruff voice said, "No funny stuff, Turny. You're surrounded."

"I've no weapons," he replied, puzzled. "I'm not a criminal. Come out where I can see you. I want to get some information."

Again the silence, and then finally the undergrowth rustled and two men stepped cautiously into view. They were dressed in tattered, faded clothing of no identifiable nature; they had heavy beards and carried crude, flint-tipped spears. One of them had a belt, into which was thrust a rusty hatchet; the other was beltless, and his clothing hung on him like sacking.

"What is this, anyhow, a masquerade?" said Marshall. "What's happened to everybody? I couldn't even find New York."

"He don't talk like a turny," said the beltless man doubtfully.

"Shut up," growled the other. "They're full o' tricks. Listen, mister, you picked a bad spot to have a forced landing in. We have special entertainments here regular for guys like you." He whistled shrilly and the open space suddenly held some ten more men, similarly dressed and ominously silent, spears ready

and narrow eyes watching Marshall with strange, vigilant hatred.

"I don't know what you're talking about," he snapped. "My name's Gregory Marshall, and I've just come back from ten years on Mars. What the hell has happened? What's a turny? Why is everybody gone?"

The man with the belt, who seemed by that mark of distinction to be leader of the band, laughed shortly. "That's one lousy story. You oughta be able to do better'n that. We know your kind. Every decent man died in the fight. Just rats like us, who ran when the others stayed, are left. But we're better for all that than you guys that ran in the other direction."

An angry murmur of affirmation ran around the ragged group.

"We got no use for bloodhounds, see," the belted man went on in a low, deadly voice. "We don't like guys that hunt us so they can wear good clothes and own planes like them and live in the cities—"

"Hey, boss," another voice cut in from directly behind Marshall. One of the men had circled cautiously around and was examining the suspended *Icarus*. "This ain't no invader's ship. Look here. It's made o' wood."

The belted man snorted.

"No kidding, boss. The shiny stuff's just paint. Look at this burnt spot. And here — this tube thing stickin' out the back—it's got 'Bethlehem Steel Co.' stamped on it."

The leader frowned and strode past Marshall to look at the space-flyer himself. "It's a trick," he said suspiciously. "What about that there name?" He pointed to the legend on the bow. "Ick-er-uss. That ain't no human name."

Marshall laughed. "That's the name of an old Greek, my friend—the first man to ever fly."

"Wright was the first man to fly," snapped the belted man, but more doubtfully.

"Naw, he wasn't," another one of the group said. "The guy's right, boss. This Greek and some wop named Davinky both flew before Wright. I read about it somewhere. The Greek had wax wings."

"That's true," Marshall smiled, nodding at the man. "I'm glad somebody here knows something."

The tense group seemed to relax a little.

"Well, mebbe so," the belted man said more graciously. "Let's hear the story, bud."

Marshall explained quickly the circumstances which had sent him to Mars and kept him there so long, taking the leader inside to show him the painfully-built gold cage, two ornaments left over, and the magazines of exposed film. When he finished there was awe on every face.

"So," said the leader, spitting reflectively. "Before all this happened—" he gestured at the wilderness and the ragged scarecrows of his men—"it would have been a great thing. Let's see: you left in forty-two, huh? You was lucky. You missed the party." He frowned and plucked a long piece of grass from the turf.

"Well, startin' from the beginning —this all happened early in February of forty-three. Invasion, from outside. We thought it was Martians, considering H. G. Wells and all, but I guess if you say Mars is dead, why then they musta been from somewhere else. They had big ships, like Zeppelins, only they moved as fast as planes, and they had some kind of a searchlight that killed people, zip, like that, without even leavin'

a mark on 'em. Everybody on Earth was fightin' with each other then, so we was what you might call prepared. We held 'em off for a month or so.

"They didn't have no guns or anything that blew up when it hit, only these ray things, but they was bad enough. Finally, just when it looked like maybe we was goin' to clean up on 'em, they thought up a bomb o' their own. It did what you saw in New York. Three of 'em, they dropped there. No noise. Just puffs o' fire, blue-white like flash powder, and nothin' left but slag. The air was settlin' fine white dust all over everything for days afterwards. They say they went all around the Earth like that. Didn't miss a major city anywhere. We got a lot of 'em, but not enough, and after that they mopped up."

The tragic recital had seemed to Gregory Marshall to become only a voice, a dead, empty voice threading dull pain through sightless night. The forest faded and the voice drifted as from far away across leagues of blackness deeper than space. Inside him the old bright agony was burning, and a meaningless word was going round and round in his brain; *Anne, Anne, Anne, Anne . . .* over and over again. Two sleepless, straining days flowed suddenly back over him. He passed a hand across his eyes and sat down on the cool, damp grass.

"Nobody left but us," he said *All dead . . . Anne, Anne!*

"A few," said the belted man "They's others. But none of 'em's worth a cent. The guys that live in the woods are the yellow-bellies like us, that ran and hid when the others was fighting." He spat again and chewed viciously on the end of the grass-stem.

Wake up, Marshall. She's dead, Marshall. You should have stayed on Mars, Marshall. She's dead, Marshall.

"How about these people in the cities—the 'turnies'?"

"They ain't fit to talk about," said the belted man. "They're the only things that lets us live with ourselves. We ran, but they went to the invaders and played stool-pigeon and bloodhound. These guys hunt us out, and get nice clothes and food and women for it."

"Rubbing you out. Why?" *Doesn't matter, Marshall. Dead, Marshall.*

"I dunno. We put up a hell of a fight for a while. I think they're afraid of us. I don't think they're much good as fighters; we panicked 'em half a dozen times. With stuff like they had we coulda held 'em off."

Gregory Marshall got up slowly. Anne was dead. Of course. He had come back to his home just in time for its final destruction. There were only two things to do, and suicide was not in Gregory Marshall's nature. He had fought a whole planet once for his own. Little sparks of hatred flared in his eyes.

"We aren't licked yet," he said.

CHAPTER III

A RELUCTANT COUNCIL of war sat in the rickety shack of Brains Barret, the man with the belt. It was made up of Barret, Gregory Marshall, a shabby aide of Barret's, and the leader of a neighboring community, Leland by name. Leland, despite his nondescript dress, reminded Marshall of that old story about the Britisher in the jungle; he had tried to battle his beard and keep as clean as possible. He had been an engineer at one time.

"You don't get the layout at all,"

this visiting potentate told Marshall flatly. "What you suggest is impossible. The invaders, whoever they are, live entirely within their own cities, surrounded by batteries of those death-ray projectors. Any movement on our part will be spotted instantly by the turnies. It's hard enough for us to keep alive as it is."

"Exactly," said Marshall. "As you are you're scurrying from rat-hole to rat-hole, and being rubbed out one by one. If this setup of Barret's is anything to go by, you've got about one woman for every six men; you're eating bark and bird's eggs; and eventually you're picked off. You're being exterminated. All right. The best defense, as somebody said long ago, is an offense."

"Have you seen the city to the west?" the aide asked softly.

A swift vision passed through Marshall's mind—the shining, dream-like pyramid of metal and glass rising from the endless wilderness, moving in smooth lines from the spire in the center to the dome-like, squat pillboxes at the periphery. An amazing, alien thing, rising evilly from the green Earth. For an instant his plans seemed transparent, ghost-like, futile, before the civilization which had raised that astounding metropolis in so short a time. Then he thought of Anne, and the hate-lightning blazed in his eyes.

"Yes," he said. "I've seen the city. And there are certain things about it that are very significant to me. According to your story, and from what I've seen it's all too true, all effective resistance to the invaders has been destroyed. Yet that city, built after the battle was all over, is fortified like it was expecting Attila the Hun any minute."

"I know what you mean," Barret agreed. "They're scared of us, sure. I told you our early counterattacks panicked 'em every time. The little suicide ships toward the end did it, too. But that ain't goin' t' help. Them forts just make it worse. They make bein' scared a luxury, and a safe one."

"Besides," Leland followed, "you don't realize just how few of us there are. Barret's eighteen men and three women make up the largest community in these parts. Mostly we think it too dangerous to collect together like that—too easy for the turnies to spot us. Most everybody picks their own spot and lives alone. There's ten people in my bunch."

"That's good," Marshall said instantly. "This is going to be guerilla warfare—striking at weaknesses and disappearing again."

"The invaders ain't got no weaknesses," Barret retorted.

"On the contrary. That fear psychosis is one. It's all out of proportion to our actual strength, and it was even when we were fully armed. That means one thing: the invaders are not a fighting race, as we are. A fighting race equipped with such weapons would have made short work of us, and cleanly and efficiently, without any panic. They came here of necessity—some plague on their world, perhaps, or another cataclysm approaching. They hoped to find this world unoccupied; they didn't, and they were equipped to fight for it; but they didn't want to. They didn't know how. And now they've another weakness; having erected that ring of forts around their city, they think they're safe, and we're licked. Well, they aren't, and we aren't, and that they think to the contrary is a big factor in our favor."

There was a moment's silence.

"I ran once," said Brains Barret slowly and carefully, "and I left a lot a people in the lurch I shoulda stayed by, to save my own skin. It prob'ly ain't goin' to do any good, but I won't run agin. Pick your plans, Marshall; I'm right behind you."

"Thanks," said Marshall seriously. "And you, Leland?"

Leland scratched his head. "I think it's futile, but I thought nobody'd ever reach Mars, too. Count me in. What are you going to do?"

"I want to find out first what equipment we have. On my side there's the *Icarus*, which needs fuel and is consequently not much good."

"Fuel?" asked Leland. "There's a smashed tank half buried near my place. One of the forty-ton jobs. The ray got it and it ran into a wall when the crew died. There's one tank of gas that didn't get burst."

"Gasoline isn't very good, but it's better than nothing. How much is there?"

"About twenty gallons."

"That won't keep me in the air much more than an hour," said Marshall, shaking his head.

"How much can you carry, for God's sake?"

"Not quite ten tons—my own fuel. I've got maybe two gallons of that left. Well, we'll put the gas in; maybe we can use it, or find some more. How about weapons?"

All three men grinned mirthlessly.

"Twenty-one flint-tipped spears," listed Barret. "One hatchet, rusty; one bread-knife, also rusty; one rifle, plus eight shells to fit and about thirty-five or forty that don't; one bayonet for the rifle; one automatic with one clip of shells; one clip of shells for an auto-rifle, but no auto-rifle."

"We've got an auto-rifle," Leland put in, astonished. "We used all the ammunition hunting. We've got a pile of nondescript stuff, too, some of which might fit your regular rifle. If it's a U. S. rifle, no good."

"It isn't," said Barret. "I don't know what it is, but the auto-rifle shells won't fit it."

"Any grenades?" said Marshall.

"Don't be funny," growled the aide.

"What else have you, Leland?"

"The usual spears and odd implements. Also an electro-magnetic machine gun, one that we salvaged from the tank; three belts of shells for it; and, grand anticlimax, no batteries to run it."

"Good batteries in the *Icarus*. That's good. What else?"

"I've got an automatic with one unspoiled clip of shells, like Barret's. Also another we filled partly from the scrap heap, and two that are empty, and probably rusted to the point of uselessness. Fetishes in the house of the chief." He grimaced.

"It sounds funny," said Marshall slowly, "but I think we have the nucleus of a very useful arsenal there. Now, one question; do the invaders fly the big ships any more?"

"Never for scouting. For communication with the other cities, yes, since they haven't built any roads, but the turnies use ordinary planes. We never did develop the rocket to where it could be used for anything but a suicide torpedo, and the big ships don't use rockets at all. We don't know what makes them fly. But they never bother us. Just the planes."

"That's all I want to know," said Marshall, and the hate-lightnings were hot in his eyes.

HE STOOD at the western edge of the forest, the cool morning breeze playing capriciously around him, rustling the leaves over him

and the shining *Icarus*. The recently arisen sun sent molten gold across the tops of the trees and transformed the distant city into a thing of impossible splendor.

In the tanks of the ship, resting hidden at the far end of a newly-made aisle reaching back from the forest's edge, were twenty-three gallons of gasoline, with two and one-half gallons of Marshall's fuel added. His compressor had been active for a week, charging the secondary tanks with liquid air—the closest he could come to liquid oxygen, since he had no equipment for fractional distillation. He remembered how long that compressor had had to strain to liquify enough of the thin Martian atmosphere, and how many times he'd had to charge the batteries to keep it going . . .

But the *Icarus* was no longer a space-vessel. The protective plastic had been knocked away in an irregular small patch just below the center of the forward port, and a hole burned through the wood with a white-hot metal bar (there were no drills available, and the composition could not be drilled by ordinary methods, anyhow). Protruding through the opening was the muzzle of Leland's auto-rifle, fully loaded, and on the control board two more clips collected from the scrap heaps of nearby communities lay ready. When asked why he chose the auto-rifle instead of the far more dangerous electro, he merely said "Noisier," and let his associates puzzle it out. Barret's women had repaired and repacked the ship's parachute.

Behind Marshall, hidden watchfully in the undergrowth, were the twenty-one individuals of Barret's tribe; Barret himself was in a tree-top directly above.

"See anything?" Marshall called guardedly.

"Not yet," Barret's voice drifted back from the matted leaves. "They get breakfast in bed, the slobs. Wup—wait a minute—yeah, there's one. Coming this way, too." As if in confirmation, a dull droning became audible from the direction of the city.

Marshall jumped quickly into the ship, slammed the port; then his head bobbed out of the emergency at the top.

"Your men out of the way of my exhaust, Brains?" he asked.

"Yup," said Barret cheerfully. "Here comes your lamb to the slaughter. He'll pass a little to the right, I think. He is the lousiest pilot I ever saw. Slipping and sliding all over the place."

"That helps," said Marshall. "Okay. You know what to do." There was a tightening of the tension among the men as the emergency port banged to. From the west the roar of the powerful scout plane grew momentarily. Then it was blotted out in a deeper thunder and a lightning-bolt launched itself from the cleared aisle and swooped up.

"Grab that!" Barret screamed from his tree-top, and his men scurried briefly with pails of dirt to put out the small blazes which the *Icarus* had started. Then they refilled the pails and slipped back into hiding, indistinguishable from the shadows.

But from what Barret could see, hiding was unnecessary, for the enemy scout was paying no attention to the ground. The *Icarus* had shot up past him so fast that the trim little plane was yawing and rolling madly in a cyclone of disrupted air. Abruptly its pilot made a hasty, sloppy turn and headed back for the city. There was an unaccustomed hand on that stick.

Barret grinned in exultant admiration as the *Icarus* plunged by again, screaming, and then zoomed in front of it. Again the plane struggled with the warped air currents, losing altitude, and making frantic efforts to keep out of Marshall's way. It was fast, but not fast enough. In a moment the silver meteor was cutting across its path again, and the auto-rifle fired a short warning burst.

At the sound of the gun the pilot seemed to lose what little courage he had. He dived frantically under the *Icarus* as it passed and roared for home. With each attack, however, he had lost altitude, and now he was forced to climb to stay in the air. Instantly the auto-rifle barked and the silver ship plunged in to what seemed to Barret to be collision. Then it was swooping up again, and the enemy was fluttering down out of a stall.

"Good boy!" Barret screamed, utterly unheard even by himself in the noise of the two fighters. "He's headin' this way! Git ready!" The warning was inaudible, but unnecessary; the men below were tense and rigid, waiting for the plane to ground. One more burst from the auto-rifle, one more terrible screaming swoop of the *Icarus*, and the turncoat's plane did a ridiculous little flip-flop and lost flying speed. It struck nose first in the earth about two hundred feet from the edge of the forest and turned gently over. Something began to crackle, and Barret howled incoherent commands. The men pounded from concealment and out across the open, the tall grass reaching almost to their shoulders, their heavy pails slowing them. Before the first tongue of flame had gained much headway, however, the incipient fire had been stifled in sand and dirt, and they were stamping at the grass around the plane.

As Marshall's parachute boomed behind them over the woods, something struggled free of the overturned fighter and arose into view: it was the pilot, holding up his hands. There was no question but that the defeated pilot wanted to surrender. He stood as high as he could on shrunken, bowed legs, and held up *four hands*. Barret heard a deadly growl from his men, and then two shots in quick succession. He shrugged his shoulders fatalistically at the waste of ammunition.

CHAPTER IV

THE COUNCIL MET underground now, for Marshall's army numbered three hundred, recruited from many miles around, and they had dug in under the site of Leland's old community. With every new clan that arrived, Marshall scanned the faces of the women, and when he turned away the hate-lightnings raged more powerfully than ever in his eyes. Hidden in the earth also was the *Icarus*, fully fueled, four airplanes patched together from ten wrecks and also fully fueled and a cache containing perhaps thirty gallons of reserve gasoline. Each plane had its own electromagnetic machine gun, supplied by the enemy, and slung beneath the wings crude bombs made of gallon tins or bottles and the powder of misfit shells. The latest addition, a two-seater, bore a huge oil-drum similarly loaded. It also mounted a miniature of the death-ray projector, but nobody knew how to use it.

"We have an easy dozen pilots in the 'army' now," Marshall told the assembled chieftains, "and we'll use only those who have flown these par-

ticular types of planes before. It's unfortunate that the one invader we caught trying to fly a plane was killed before we had a chance to get some information out of him; however, his behavior and the ear-pads he was wearing tell us something very important—another weakness—"

"What's that?" interrupted a brawny Pennsylvania miner.

"They're afraid of noise."

"What!"

"That's right. I imagined that might be the case when I noticed that their own weapons are all silent, even the atomic bombs. It's my theory that they lived originally on a world where the air was thin, like Mars, and didn't carry sound as well. I had a hard time getting used to the added volume of sounds when I came back, and I'll bet that if you've lived on a world like that all your life, your ears would be abnormally sensitive, and any weapon that made an impressive roar would be terrifying beyond all considerations of its actual military effect."

There was a brief silence.

"I've got every confidence in you, seeing what you've done," Leland said finally, "and I suppose that is as significant as every other little weakness you've spotted and used to advantage. But I don't see now how it's going to help us."

"You will," Marshall assured him.

"That's beside the point anyhow," the miner broke in again. "We got a trial on," and he waved a filthy hand at the pale young man sitting on the platform between Barret and Leland, now Marshall's chief advisors. "We don't want no turnies here. What they did once they'll do again. We got enough mouths t' feed."

"I've heard his story," said Marshall, "and it's my opinion that he's a welcome addition. We need every man we can get, especially those with intimate knowledge of the invaders. Suppose we let him speak for himself."

"Well," the young man began uncertainly. He was unpleasantly aware of all the eyes upon him, and obviously expected to be eaten when he finished. "First off, Mr. Marshall, you're right about that noise business. They hate it. They seldom fly the planes at all, and when they do they wear those ear pads for fear of the engines. What noisy machines they do have they make us run. Their own ships fly on a gravity mechanism; none of us understand it."

"Let's hear what you got to say for yaself," the miner growled.

The young man looked even more frightened. "I'm a turny, right enough. But I was just married when the fight began, and I—my wife—" he paused and swallowed. "When I found out that the invaders did want men for their—own uses, I took her and went. I didn't want her to die for humanity when—when humanity was doomed anyhow."

"I wish I'd done that," Barret said very bitterly, and all eyes turned in astonishment to the key man. The turncoat gained confidence.

"All of us know now that the invaders plan to kill us, too, when they're finished with the—the outsiders," he said. "There's no safety inside or out of the cities. A lot of the turnies wanted to come over to you, but they're afraid to. The invaders have a regular little propaganda machine—it's entirely unconscious because they believe it as much as we do—a sort of legend about the ferocious cannibals that live outside the cities. I knew there was no more safety for my wife with the invaders, and I preferred to take my chances with you. When I was

assigned to scouting, I took a small bomber instead—the one you shot down—and tried to get us both out —" He paused a moment, lines of pain around his eyes. "I don't know how they caught on, but they did. They killed her as we were trying to get off—with one of those little hand rays. I escaped. . . And by the way, they're beginning to get worried about this constant disappearance of planes."

Again there was a pregnant silence, then someone arose to ask a question. He never got it out of his mouth. There was a pounding on the wooden stairs and a scared lookout poked his head in.

"They're coming!" he cried. "One of the big ships, the spaceships. Raying the forest to the northwest."

What followed was apparently pandemonium, but there was system in it. "Duclo, man the electro at point three," Marshall directed crisply above the uproar. "Henderson, you too. Dennison, Anders, point five. No planes up this time—too easy targets for the ray. Brains, Paul, this way."

The room was miraculously empty except for the turncoat. He looked around, frightened, then went down the stairs at the back of the room. They led to the hangers.

Marshall and Barret, leaving Leland with a small force to guard against a possible surprise from the ground, ran a specified distance to the north from the entrance tunnel and clambered like sailors up a dangling rope-ladder to a platform in the tree-tops. An electro, with attendant battery and belts of blown-steel ammunition, was bolted to a plank on a branch which ran in front of the platform. Cautiously Marshall pushed the leaves aside, Barret peering beside him.

IT WAS THE FIRST of the monstrous craft of the invaders that he had seen, and again he felt the old chill of helplessness. The *Icarus*, though cramped, was no baby for size, and the *Daedelus* had been fully twice as large; but these things, as Barret had once suggested, reminded one of the long-lost airship *von Hindenburg*. The wingless metal cigar was flying low, and slowly, and there was a peculiar distortion about it which suggested that space itself was being warped to keep its huge bulk in the air. Before it two broad white beams, intense even in full sunlight, were methodically sweeping the forest, and where they touched, the green summer forest took on the withered brown of late autumn.

"You can see they're no fighters," Barret whispered, as if afraid the aliens might hear him. "They ought to be about two thousand feet up, out of range, and they ought t' have attacked at night."

"Good for us that they didn't," Marshall answered in similarly low tones, attaching a belt to the breech of the gun. "I have a hunch that the range of those rays is limited. These damn cartridges are rusty."

"Martin brought them," Barret said. "They must be eight years old. Prob'ly a lot of 'em dead. I oiled 'em."

"Never mind about the dead ones. The gun doesn't fire by percussion anyhow, and as long as the magnets hold out we're okay. The deaders just won't go off when they hit, that's all." He slipped a red-stained six-inch shell from the belt and examined it cursorily. "Just pray they don't stick in the barrel."

There was a sudden muffled roar and then a crashing as a camouflage curtain rushed back, and a winged shape zoomed up from the forest.

"I thought I said no planes," Marshall snapped. "Who is that fool?"

"Dunno. But we'll have to get the big baby now. He's seen the location of the hide-out."

Sure enough, the metal monster had swung slowly and was moving with unnecessary caution in their direction. A long white beam lashed out at the frantically climbing ship, but was a little short. Another ray searched the ground deliberately before the advance of the ship, and the forest crackled and sighed and withered.

"Ready," whispered Marshall. Barret held the belt loosely in his hands, alert to start feeding it when the firing began. Already Duclo's gun was going, sending a little silver stream into the air toward the invader. A line of small explosions, about the size of hand grenade explosions, stitched its way redly along the metal hull. Suddenly it found a port and the explosions disappeared inside. The great thing jerked spasmodically, then righted, and the deadly white beam swept over toward point three. The stream of slugs swung directly upward and continued to flow, aimlessly, and a gaping hole was pounded among the trees to the north.

Marshall ground his teeth at the waste of precious shells, and thought also of cheerful Duclo and his keen gunner's eye. Then his own gun was also within range. It trembled silently and little *whooshes* came from it as the air rushed in at the back of the barrel. Barret fed the belt steadily into the breech.

Marshall's eye was as good as anyone's in the "army," and in a moment he had found the broken port where Duclo's gun had been firing. Again the big ship floundered uncertainly.

"I don't think we're hurting anything," Marshall muttered over the roar of dinitron. "But they're scared, right enough."

The aliens did seem to be confused. Dennison's gun had begun firing from point five, directly below it, pounding unwaveringly at a trap-door which was blown away almost immediately. The long white beam jerked downward, but could not point at a small enough angle to reach the imperturbable gunner. He was protected by the backward curve of the ship itself. There was no smoke from the electros and the aliens seemed uncertain as to the source of Marshall's miniature barrage. He moved the gun a little, seeking a port farther forward.

A smaller ray leaped abruptly at him, falling slightly short, but he could feel a little of its effect. A wave of terrible nausea swept him. Then he swung the gun upon the white disc of the projector.

Nothing happened.

He moved the muzzle out of line and the explosions dotted the hull. Again he shifted to the ray orifice.

Nothing happened.

The giant craft was moving ever closer, and in the growing glare of the unwinking white eye the two men could barely continue firing. The sickness was unbearable . . . his brain whirled . . .

Then he was gratefully conscious that the horrible light was no longer playing on him; there was a roaring in his ears, and someone's voice—

"Marshall! Are you okay? We got him! Wake up, man!"

Barret. Yes. He opened his eyes and struggled to his feet, still weak from sickness.

"What—how—"

"The plane. The turny was flying it—it was the one with the ray-tube,

and he knew how to use it. How do you feel?"

He shook his head to clear it. "I'm all right now. Come on, let's go down —I want to look it over. Is it all right?"

"Perfect condition, except for one part where Duclo and us were shootin'. Dennison was just blowin' out the bottom of the cargo-hold—didn't harm it otherwise. All the damn' monsters inside it are dead."

They clambered down the ladder.

CHAPTER V

THEY EXPECTED ANOTHER attack from the city, but apparently the invaders were too impressed by the fall of their first battleship to risk sending another. A full four days later one plane was sent out, but by that time everything had been moved underground and painted dark green to boot against further contingencies. After the plane was out of sight of the city they sent two of their own up after it.

As soon as the attackers were within sight, the scout headed for a clearing and landed!

Suspiciously, the two pilots circled over the spot. There was but one man in the enemy ship, and he was standing, hands upraised, obviously surrendering. They remembered the roasting Marshall had given the clan at the beginning of the career for shooting the invader when it had surrendered. One landed, the other circled watchfully overhead just in case.

Subsequently they brought the man to Marshall, flying his own ship under the vigilant guns of the others. Marshall was still a little sick from the after-affects of the ray, and he was puzzling out plans to send to another rebel group which had contacted him from Atlanta, and he was annoyed.

"Turny, boss," said one of his men. "Landed his ship when we jumped him. Says he wants to come over."

The turncoat burst into rapid speech, as if afraid he would not be allowed to finish his story before being shot. "There's a revolt movement among the few of us in the city," he jerked out as if reading. "I was sent out to scout, and I'm supposed to bring back details of your position to the invaders. I'm also supposed to tell the rest of the humans whether or not you'll support the revolt from outside."

Marshall looked at him. He was confused and tired; he had been under a constant strain for 48 hours, and the message from Atlanta had forced him to reorganize his plans on a large scale; and he was still a little sick from the ray. What should he do?

Young Taylor was all right, but he agreed with the general blanket opinion concerning turnies. They were the scum of the earth, and not to be trusted. This one was typical: fat and soft, and crow's feet under his beady eyes, and all out of breath from unwonted action. But a few more planes as a gift wouldn't be at all harmful, and any confusion the turnies might cause inside the city would be all to the good.

He closed his eyes for a moment. Perhaps he could set a night for their uprising, and then stay right here while they uprose. If they didn't, then he wouldn't have flown all his equipment into a trap. If they did he'd have plenty of time to mobilize and attack while there was still confusion.

He opened his eyes again and looked at the turny. The man's own eyes were glittering with fright.

"How many planes can you get us?"

"Ten, maybe."

Marshall was conscious that Barret and Leland were watching him nervously.

"We need twenty-five at least, and no maybes. Tell your pilots not to worry. Every man that brings a plane here will be taken care of properly." By which he meant execution, although the turny thought otherwise. "We don't trust you bloodhounds, of course. We want the equipment before we believe anything. Now get. No, not in the plane. You can walk back to the city. Tell them you were shot down and escaped."

"But, boss," put in Barret without thinking.

"Shut up," snapped Marshall. Then, "I'm sorry, Brains. I'm tired, that's all. Beat it, you."

The turny obviously did not like the prospect of walking such a distance, but every eye in the room was on him, and there was no sympathy in any of them, only hatred—hatred which seemed to find a focus in the eyes of this giant Marshall. He turned hastily and left at a comical half-trot.

There was a brief silence.

"I never saw you make a mistake before, boss," Barret said slowly and carefully. "Don't you know that swine'll bring every big ship in the place back here, now that he knows where we are?"

Again silence, tense, everybody looking at Marshall. He closed his eyes, then opened them again and smiled tiredly.

"Yes. Yes, you're right, Brains. I've forced my own hand." He sat still for a moment, trying to think. He saw dimly what was to be done. "Never mind stopping him. Let him go. We have five planes in perfect condition; one rocket ship that smokes badly but otherwise is okay; and an invader's ship nobody knows how to run. Did anybody ask Taylor about that?"

"He can't, either," said Leland. "But he showed us how to use the ray-tubes, and we've mounted three of the small ones on the other planes in the same way it was on the bomber."

"Good. Are there any more?"

"Half a dozen, besides the big ones."

"Have one put on this new buggy. Did you plant the big ones at the defense points?"

"All there were."

"How many?"

"Three. There's one more that's busted. Taylor's repairing it, but he says we've got just enough powder to run the three we have, and no more, so we'll have to keep it for a reserve. We put 'em all on the city side and the electros were transferred to the other spots."

"Keep the electros scattered—we don't want them all put out of action at once."

"I thought of that, or rather, Martin did."

"That's what I like to hear. Well, we're not going to wait for the turny to bring the big ships back here. It'll be night in half an hour, and we'll leave promptly at eight."

There was another tense hush.

"We're attacking the city?"

"We are."

And by this move Gregory Marshall saved his bacon as a leader of the battle for the Earth. There was no doubt of its wisdom, no thought of the insufficiency of their weapons, only a fierce exultation at the prospect of at last striking a direct blow at the invaders. Every one of these

men had lost family and friends in the invasion, and the prospect of revenge reinforced the confidence in their leader two-fold. "Only God and Gregory Marshall know what's flying, and God doesn't know much," Barret had said once, and everybody agreed with him. The underground retreat was once more a place of ordered, feverish preparation.

THE CITY GLITTERED in the cool night air, demonstrating the invaders' ignorance of blackout technique. But then, perhaps they thought darkening the city too extreme a measure for the danger. In the squat pillboxes looking east, men and monsters crouched vigilantly over searchlight-like mechanisms, waiting as they had waited for many months for sudden attack they knew would never come. As soon as the sun had set three of the great spaceships had left for the hide-out of the annoying guerillas, the returned turncoat guiding them. As yet there was little sign of activity; only an occasional distant flash of a ray, and a dull droning as if planes were flying somewhere far off. Probably beating a hasty retreat. The invaders were nervous, but exultant. Those sounds meant the final destruction of this dangerous colony of men . . .

From the darkness two miles above, two strange objects came twisting and tumbling. Had anybody seen them, they would have identified them as glass jugs which had probably contained cider in that remote era eleven years ago. Now they held a grey, granular substance, and they dropped silently toward the center of the city. A few seconds later two more followed, then an enormous oil drum, and finally a perfect hail of blown-steel cylinders about six inches long, a little rusty, but glistening with a thin film of oil. It was as if a junkman's truck had been overturned in the troposphere. Gravity clutched at the objects, and they fell faster through the dark, cold air.

They dropped abruptly out of the night into the center of a broad square, landing in an area of about three hundred yards. The glass jugs went off immediately, sending deadly splinters hurtling in all directions. The gasoline drum buried itself deep in the ground and then burst with an astonishing scarlet concussion. The racking blast of dinitron smashed windows throughout the city.

A towering metal spire wavered unsteadily and began to topple like a vast ten-pin. It was brought up short by a smaller, sturdier building, and seemed to break over it in a rain of brittle shards. The smaller building buckled and a heavy decorative cornice plunged into the street below. A number of squat, four-armed forms ran for cover; a larger number ignored it and sat rocking or rolled on the ground, clutching their ears and screaming.

The electro shells began to patter down in a metallic hail. They fragmented easily and did little damage, being originally designed for use on infantry alone, but they made fully as much noise as the glass jugs. In the pillboxes, arcs flared and buzzed, and intense white shafts of light flared skyward, but nothing was visible as a target but the mocking stars. One of the beams brushed a roof-top, and a glass jug landing there failed to go off when it hit; the beam swung, caught another missile, followed it down. That one did not go off either, but the beam wiped a shaft of death along a packed street of terrorized aliens, and did more damage than the rest of the attack put to-

gether before other aliens caught the frantic operator and swung his weapon up again. There were no further attempts at neutralizing the bombs.

Another oil drum buried itself and blew up thunderously at the very base of the smaller damaged building, and again fragments roared into the streets. The white rays crisscrossed futilely through the empty sky, while the roar of plane engines gave the defenders visions of an immense armada far above.

The jugs and cans stopped falling, but the electro shells burst ceaselessly, and sticks of raw explosive began to follow them. In the distance one of the three spaceships lumbered hastily homeward; the other two had been felled mysteriously by beams like their own, which had leapt from the midst of the featureless dark woods. The survivor climbed, deadly beams sweeping the sky for the black-camouflaged attackers, but these rays had not the range of the projectors on the ground and served only to mark the position of the metal craft. A silver thunderbolt swept down out of the blackness on flaming wings and vanished again, and a heavy casting smashed through the nose and burst in the control room. The ship faltered, sank and was hidden by the trees, and men swarmed into it.

There was a last ear-splitting barrage of explosive bullets and then the raid was over. The screams of the defenders in the abrupt silence made dissonant counterpoint over the dying dreadful pedaltone of the retreating planes.

The attack had lasted barely fifteen minutes, and the actual military damage, except for the loss of the spaceships, had been slight. But nobody counted the damage. There was too much terror in the city. The blow had been too much bigger than had been expected; too quickly struck, and too mysteriously ended. This was nothing like mild guerilla warfare upon the planes of the turnies; it seemed like a revival of the bloody battles of eleven years before, when the sky had been darkened by planes over the strongholds of the invaders.

For none of them had seen the attacking force, and so they had no way of knowing that it consisted of four scout planes, one bomber, and a smoking one-man spaceship.

GREGORY MARSHALL stood in plain view on the eastern edge of the forest and watched the invaders' spaceship settle slowly and unsteadily to the ground. It lay quiescent for a moment, its green-painted sides seeming to blend with the surrounding grass; then there was a flash of metal in the sunlight as the entrance port moved on massive gimbels and young Taylor emerged.

"I've got it," he cried exultantly. "Little slow on the controls, but I can run it."

"Good," Marshall's deceptively soft voice answered. "Train three more men as quickly as you can. I got a message today from Pittsburg; they have one there as well, and in Atlanta there's two more. Send out the instructions as quickly as you can." He looked west, toward where the terrorized city was hidden by the green, quiet trees, and the hate seemed to leap from his eyes. "Brains."

The key man stepped out from behind him.

"Remember when you told me we could beat the invaders if we had their weapons?"

"Yeah," said Barrett in quiet glee. "We got 'em now, eh, boss?"

"We have. Send your own message with Taylor's. Tell the other groups to bring their ships here as soon as they can fly them well enough. We've four of the atomic bombs here, one on each ship, and they probably have one per ship as well. That seems to be a custom of the invaders' war office. One should be enough for this fancy collapsible city. I'll lead in the *Icarus;* I'll meet them all six miles above this spot on a date to be set by them. If they meet any enemy ships, tell them to keep away; the enemy knows the ships and right now can use them to better advantage than we can."

"Right, boss," said Barret. He stood for a moment, looking at his giant leader, something akin to worship in his eyes; then he grunted and melted into the forest.

Gregory Marshall remained where he was and looked at the captured vessel; and his thoughts were, strangely, on Mars. He was remembering those ten years, and those hopes of home, and he was pleased with the way he was winning his home back again. This was really but an extension of the Martian fight. He had come back across millions of miles of space to carry it on, but all in all it was still just the fight for home; and he was winning that home back, for himself and humanity . . .

But Gregory Marshall knew suddenly, with tired clarity, that humanity had not figured in this battle or in his considerations. It was only hatred. Revenge. And it seemed to Gregory Marshall an empty, sterile achievement, because there were certain things he could never win back . . .

The forest was gone. The rocket jets of the battered *Icarus* roared behind him, and below in the packed streets of New York a sea of people turned startled faces upward. La-Guardia Field loomed with the swiftness of a dream, and the parachute boomed—the shock of striking the Earth—his feet on the green turf for the first time in twelve years—and a woman's voice, crying "Greg, Greg! You're back! Darling, you came back!"—

The vision closed about him as a hand closes, and there was only the tall wild grass, and the whispering trees, and the alien bulk of a great spaceflyer. All hatred was washed from him, and the Earth was empty, for humanity would be saved, but home as Gregory Marshall knew it was dead forever. Perhaps he would not even see the final triumph.

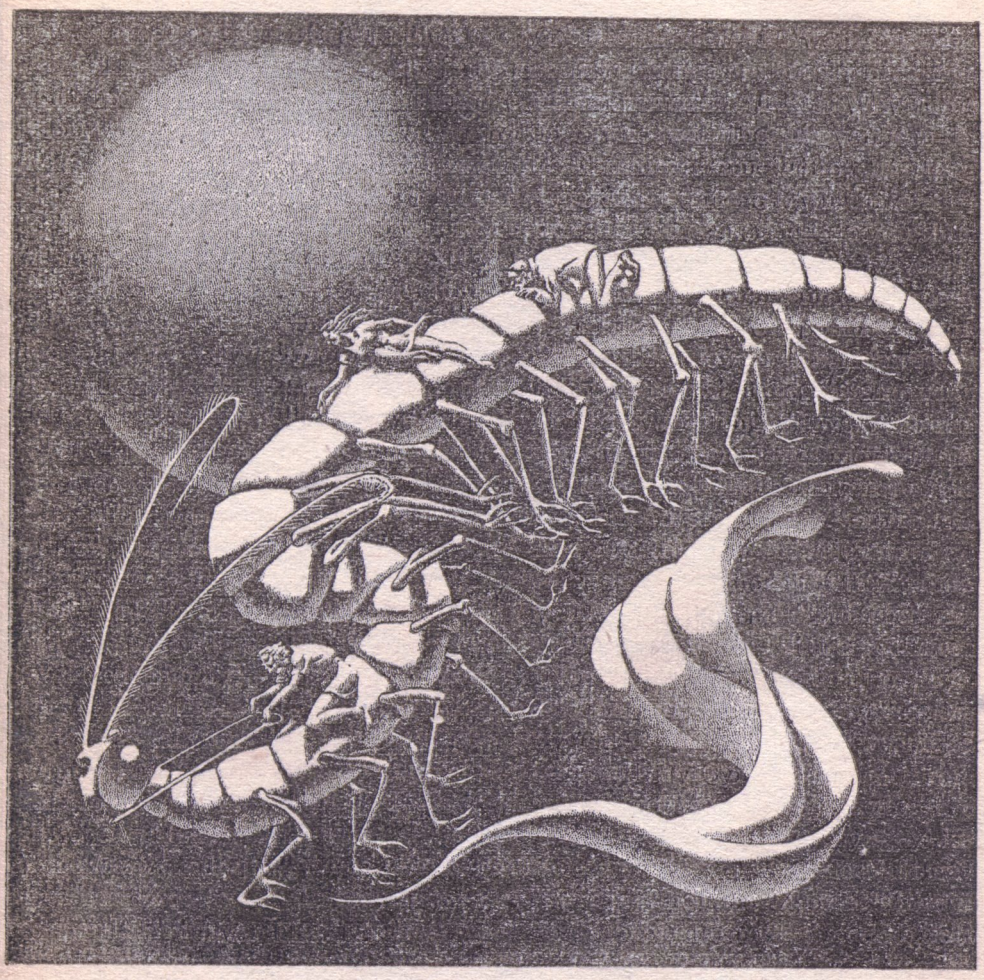
Still, man's chances were better now than they had been before Marshall's homecoming. How long would it be before the last monster was driven from the blue star? It did not matter, so long as they were all driven away; for, after all, in the midst of the greatest changes, old Earth was home. . . .

He turned and disappeared among the trees.

DIMENSION OF DARKNESS

by S. D. Gottesman

(Author of "Return From M-15," "Dead Center," etc.)



I was only going to bump him off when the Doc pulled that switch. So how'm I goin' to explain to Lucco what happened then?

"DON'T SHOOT," says Ellenbogan. "For the love of science, don't shoot!"

"Sorry, doc," I says, slipping the safety catch. "I got my orders. That's the way it goes. Got any last words?"

"Look, Mr.—what's your name?"

"Matt Reilly. Make it snappy, bud. I gotta be back in a few minute for a tote job."

"I see," he says slowly. "You don't know what you're doing, do you?"

"I don't see how that matters," I says, "but they tell me you welched

on a five grand pony bet. That right?"

"Yes," he says, breaking into a cold sweat. "But look—it's awfully important that I don't die for a few minutes at least. Someone told me that horse couldn't lose, and I needed the money. I took my chances, I know. But will you let me off for just ten minutes while I wind up my work?"

"Ten minutes," I brood. "Okay, doc. But no funny business. And you don't step out of this lab."

"Thank you, Mr. Reilly," he gasps, wiping his brow. "You can trust me." So then he goes puttering around his machinery, taping wires together, plugging light-cords in, tinkering up coils and connecting radio tubes and things. And I kept my eye on him and the clock. After a while I remind him. "Four minutes to go, Doc. How about it?"

"I'll be ready," he answers, not looking up, even. "I'll be ready. Just this one interphasometer reading—will you look at this, please—my eyes—it's a very small dial—"

"Waddya want? Be specific," I says.

He freezes up as he sees my gun again. "Just tell me what number this needle is resting on, please. That's all I have to know."

"Okay. This dial?" He nods, so I casually put my gun in his side and bend over to look. It was a seven. "Lucky seven, doc," I says. "And I think your time's up. Turn around, please."

"Seven," he broods, seeming to forget all about me. "So it checks. The number proves it." Then, quick like a fox, he spins around and throws himself at a switch. Startled, I blazes away with the roscoe and some glass breaks.

"Look out!" yells Doc Ellenbogan. "You'll be caught—" And then I sees that there's something awful solid and black turning and growing in the middle of a piece of machinery. "Gas!" I thinks, whipping out a handkerchief and clamping it over my nose. I aimed straight at the doc this time, before running. But then the black thing explodes in one big rush and I'm flat on my back.

"I'M SORRY I had to get you involved," says Ellenbogan. "How do you feel?" Then I see that I'm lying down inhaling smelling-salts that the doc is holding. Like a flash I reaches for my heater. But it's gone, of course. Then I guess I says some nasty things to the doc, on account of even the Frank V. Coviccio West Side Social and Athletic Club don't use gas. And you know what louses *they* are.

"Don't misunderstand, please," says the doc with remarkable self-control, considering the names I applied to him. "Don't misunderstand. I have your gun, and I'll give it back to you as soon as you understand clearly what has happened. Where, for instance, do you think you are?"

And there's something in his voice that makes me sit up and take notice. So help me, we ain't in his lab or anywhere near Columbia University that I can see. So I ask him what's cooking.

"The fourth dimension," he says, cold and quiet. So I look again. And this time I believe him. Because the sky, what there was of it, is the blackest black you could ever hope to see, and not a star in sight. The ground is kind of soft, and there's no grass to speak of, except a kind of hairy stuff in tufts. And I still don't know how we can see each other, the doc and me, because there isn't any light at all. He glows and

so do I, I guess—anyway, that's what it looks like. "Okay, doc," I says. "I'll take your word for it."

So what does he do? He hands me back my gun! I check the roscoe for condition and aim it. "Mr. Reilly!" he says sharply. "What are you intending to do now?"

"Plug you like I was supposed to do," I reply. And instead of looking worried he only smiles at me as if I'm a worm or something. "Surely," he says, gentle and sweet, "there wouldn't be any point to that, would there?"

"I donno about that, Doc. But Lucco would damage me real bad if I didn't do the job I'm supposed to. So that's the way it is, I guess. You ready?"

"Look, Mr. Reilly," he snaps. "I don't take you for an especially bright person, but surely you must realize that this is neither the time nor the place for carrying out your plans. I don't want to lose my temper, but if you ever want to get back to your own world you'd better not kill me just yet. While I appreciate your professional attitude, I assure you that it would be the height of folly to do anything except take my orders. I have no weapons, Mr. Reilly, but I have a skull full of highly specialized information and techniques which will be more valuable to you personally than my cadaver. Let's reach an understanding now, shall we?"

So I thinks it over. And Ellenbogan's right, of course. "Okay, doc," says little Matt. "I'm on your staff. Now tell me when do we eat —and what?"

"Try some of that grass," he says. "It looks nutritious." I picks a bunch of the grass and drop it in a hurry. The crazy stuff twists and screams like it was alive. "That was a bum steer, doc," I says. "Many more of those and we may part company abrupt-like. What about food and water?" And the minute I think of water I get thirsty. You know how it is.

"There should be people around," he mutters looking over his shoulder. "The preselector indicated protoplasm highly organized." I take him by the arm. "Look, doc," I says. "Suppose you begin at the beginning and tell me just where we are and how we get back home and why you brought us here. And anything else that comes into your head. Now talk!"

"Of course," he says, mild and a little hurt. "I just thought you wouldn't be interested in the details. Well, I said this is the fourth dimension. That is only approximately true. It is a cognate plane of some kind—only one of the very many which exist side-by-side with our own. And of course I didn't mean to take you here with me; that was an accident. I called to you to get out of the way while you could, but the pressure belt caught you while you were busily carrying out your orders, which were to shoot me dead.

"And incidentally, it would have been better for you if you had escaped the belt, for I would have stayed in this plane as long as possible, and would have been as good as dead to you and your Mr. Lucco."

"It ain't that," I interjects. "It's mostly the reputation we got to maintain. What if wise-guys like you—meaning no offense, doc—came in on us every day with heavy sugar to bet, and then welched? The business wouldn't be worth the upkeep in lead. Get me?"

"I—ah—think so," he says. "At any rate, the last-minute alterations I was making when you called on me

were intended to take me into a selected plane which would support life. It happens that the coefficient of environment which this calls for is either three, four, or seven. I was performing the final test with your kind assistance only a few minutes ago, if you remember. When you read 'seven' from the dial I realized that according to my calculations I would land in a plane already inhabited by protoplasmal forms. So, Mr. Reilly, here we are, and we'll have to make the best of it until I find equipment somehow or other to send you back into your world."

"That," I says, "is fair enough—hey, doc! What're them babies doing?" I am referring to certain ungainly things like centipedes, but very much bigger, which are mounted by several people each. They loom up on the horizon like bats out of hell, not exactly luminous but—well, I see them and there isn't any light from anywhere to see them by. They must be luminous, I think.

"Protoplasm," he says, turning white as a sheet. "But whether friendly or enemy protoplasm I don't know. Better get out your gun. But don't fire until you're positive—utterly, utterly positive—that they mean us harm. Not if I can help it do we make needless enemies."

Up scuttles one of the chief of the four centipedes. The driver of the awful brute looks down. He is dressed in a kind of buckskin shirt, and he wears a big brown beard. "Hello," he says, friendly-like. "Where did you chaps drop from?"

DOC ELLENBOGAN RALLIES quick. He says, "We just got here. My name's Ellenbogan and this is Mr. Reilly."

"Hmm—Irish," says the gent in the buckskins. I notice that he has an English accent.

"Wanta make sumpn of it?" I ask, patting the roscoe.

"No—sorry," he says with a bright smile. "Let me introduce myself. I'm Peter DeManning, hereditary Knight of the Cross of Britain and possibly a Viscount. Our heraldry and honors got very confused about the fourth generation. We're descended from Lord DeManning, who came over way back in 1938."

"But this is only 1941!" protests the doc. Then he hauls himself up short. "Foolish of me—time runs slower here, of course. Was it accidental—coming over?"

"Not at all," answers the gent. "Old Lord Peter always hated the world—thoroughly a misanthrope. So finally he gathered together his five favorite mistresses and a technical library and crossed the line into this plane. He's still alive, by the by. The climate of this place must be awfully salubrious. Something in the metabolism favors it."

"How many of youse guys are there?" I ask, so as not to seem dumb. He looks at me coldly. "About three hundred," he says. "A few more due shortly. Would you two care to join us? We're back from a kind of raid—tell you all about it if you're interested."

"Of course," says the doc. And without hesitation he climbs up the side of that scaly, leggy horror and perches next to the guy. Sir Peter looks down at me and says, "I think, Mr. Reilly, that you'd better ride on the other bug. This one's heavily burdened already. Do you mind?"

"Not atall," I says viciously. And so I went back to the next thing, which looked at me, curling its awful head around, as I passed.

"Right here, Mr. Reilly," someone calls down.

"Thanks, Lady," I says, accepting the helping hand reached down. Settled in the back of the centipede I shivered at the clammy feeling.

"Feels strange?" asks someone. I turned around to see who was the person who would call riding a hundred-foot bug strange and let it go at that. I stayed turned around, just staring.

"Is something wrong, Mr. Reilly?" she asks anxiously. "I hope you're not ill?"

"No," I gulps at last. "Not atall. Only we just haven't got anything back home that stacks up to you. What do they call you?"

She turns a sweet, blushing pink and looks down. "Lady Cynthia Ashton," she says. "Only of course the title is by courtesy. My ancestress Miss Ashton and Lord DeManning weren't married. None of his consorts were married to him. Do you approve of polygamy?"

"I'm sure I don't know, Lady Cynthia," I assure her. "I never got further than elementary algebra." At which she looks at me queerly while I study her. She's wearing the kind of clothes you sometimes dream about on the woman you love—a barbaric kind of outfit of soft doeskin, fitted to her waist and falling to her knees, where there was an inch of fringe. Red and blue squares and circles were painted here and there on the outfit, and she wore a necklace of something's teeth—just what, I don't like to think.

And her blond hair fell to her shoulders, loosely waved. No make up, of course—except for the patches of bright blue on her cheeks and forehead. "What's that for?" I asks her, pointing.

She shrugs prettily. "I don't know. The Old Man—that's Sir Peter—insists on it. Something about woad, he says."

I gets a sudden fright. "You wouldn't be married, would you?" I ask, breaking into a cold sweat.

"Why, no, not yet," she answers. "I've been proposed to by most of the eligible men and I don't know which to accept. Tell me, Mr. Reilly—do you think a man with more than four wives is a better risk than a man with less? That's about the midpoint—four, I mean."

She sees the look in my eyes and gets alarmed. "You *must* be ill," she says. "It's the way this horrid bug is moving. Alfred!" she calls to the driver. "Slow down—Mr. Reilly doesn't feel well."

"Certainly, Cynthia," says Alfred.

"He's a dear boy," she confides. "But he married too young—my three-quarter sister, Harriet, and my aunt Beverly. You were saying, Mr. Reilly?"

"I wasn't saying, but I will. To be on the up an' up, Lady Cynthia, I'm shocked. I don't like the idea of every guy keepin' a harem." And little Matt says to himself that while he likes the idea in the abstract, he don't like to think of Lady Cynthia as just another wife. And then I get another shock. "Raill-ly!" says Lady Cynthia, freezing cold as an icicle.

Alfred, the driver, looks back. "What did the beast say, darling?" he asks nastily.

She shudders. "I'm sorry, Alfred. I—I couldn't repeat it. It was *obscene!*"

"Indeed?" asks Alfred. He looks at me coldly. "I think," he says, "that you'd better not talk with Lady Cynthia any more. Mr. Reilly, I fear you are no gentleman." And right then and there little Matt would have slugged him if he didn't send the bug

on the double-quick so all I could do is hang on and swear.

THINGS GREW brighter ahead. There seems to actually be real light of some kind. And then a sun heaves over the horizon. Not a real sun; that would be asking for too much, but a pretty good sun, though tarnished and black in spots.

There is a little kind of house with stables big enough for whales in sight, so the bugs stop and everybody gets down. I hunt out Doc Ellenbogan right away. "Doc," I complains. "What's the matter with me? Am I poison? I was chatting away with Lady Cynthia and I happens to say that I believe in the family as a permanent institution. And after that she won't speak to me!"

He gets thoughtful. "I must remember that, Matt," he says. "Such an introverted community would have many tabus. But they are a fascinating people. Did they tell you the purpose of their raid—from where they were returning?"

"Nope. She didn't mention it."

"All I got was a vague kind of hint. They have an enemy, it seems."

"Probably some bird who believes in the sanctity of the home," I suggests nastily. "Or a tribe of ministers."

"Nothing so mild, I fear," said the doc shaking his head. "In the most roundabout way Sir Peter told me that they had lost five men. And five men, to a community of three hundred, is a terrible loss indeed."

"That's fine," I says. "The sooner they're wiped out the better I will like it. And while they go under will you please get to work so I can get back into a decent world?"

"I'll do my best, Matt. Come on—they're leaving." The bugs get bedded down at the stables, it seems, and they go the rest of the way on foot. Sir Peter joins us, giving me the double-o.

"I expect you'll want to meet the Old Man," he says. "And I'm sure he'll want to meet you. Interesting coot, rather. Do you mind?"

"Not at all," the doc assures him. "There are some things I want to find out." He gives Sir Peter a chilly look with that, and that gent looks away hastily.

"Is that the city?" I ask, pointing. Sir Peter casts a pained eye at my extended finger.

"Yes," he says. "What do you think of it?"

So I look again. Just a bunch of huts, of course. They're neat and clean, some of them bigger than you'd expect, but huts just the same. "Don't you believe in steel-frame construction?" I ask, and Sir Peter looks at me with downright horror. "Excuse me!" he nearly shouts and runs away from us—I said *runs*—and begins to talk with some of the others.

"I'm afraid," said the doc, "that you did it again, Matt."

"Cripes almighty—how do I know what'll offend them and what won't? Am I a magician?" I complain.

"I guess you aren't," he says snappily. "Otherwise you'd watch your tongue. Now here comes Sir Peter again. You'd better not say anything at all this time."

The gent approaches, keeping a nervous eye on me, and says in one burst, "Please follow me to see the Old Man. And I hope you'll excuse him any errors he may make—he has a rather foul tongue. Senile, you know—older than the hills." So we follow him heel and toe to one of the largest of the cottages. Respectfully Sir Peter tapped on the door.

"Come in, ye bleedin' sturgeon!" thunders a voice.

"Tut!" says Sir Peter. "He's cursing again. You'd better go in alone—good luck!" And in sheer blue terror he walks off looking greatly relieved.

"Come in and be blowed, ye fish-faced octogenarian pack of truffle-snouted shovel-headed beagle-mice!" roars the voice.

Says the doc, "That means us." So he pushes open the door and walks in.

AN OLD MAN with savage white whiskers stares us in the face. "Who the devil are you?" he bellows. "And where are my nitwit offspring gone?"

Without hedging the doc introduces himself: "I am Doctor Ellenbogan and this is Mr. Reilly. We have came from Earth, year 1941. You must be Lord Peter DeManning?"

The old man stares at him, breathing heavily. "I am," he says at last. "And what the devil may you be doing in my world?"

"Fleeing from an assassin," says the doc. "And this is the assassin. We are here by accident, but I had expected a greater degree of courtesy than you seem to see fit to bestow on us. Will you explain, please?"

"And that goes double for me," I snap, feeling plenty tough.

"Pah!" grunts the old man. "Muscling in, that's what you're doing! Who invited you? This is my experiment and I'm not going to see it ruined by any blundering outsider. You a physicist?"

"Specializing in electronics," says the doc coldly.

"Thought so! Poppycock! I used a physicist to get me here—*used* him, mark you—for my own purposes. I'm a scientist myself. The only real scientist—the only real science there is!"

"And what might that be?" I ask.

"Humanity, you—assassin. The science of human relationships. Conditioned reflexes from head to toe. Give me the child and I'll give you the man! I proved it—proved it here with my own brains and hands. Make what you like of that. I won't tell you another word. Scientist—physicist—pah!"

"He's nuts!" I whisper to the doc.

"Possibly. Possibly," he whispers back. "But I doubt it. And there are too many mysteries here." So he turns to the old man again. "Lord DeManning," he says smoothly, "there are things I want to find out."

"Well," snarls the old thing, "you won't from me. Now get out!" And he raises his hand—and in that hand is a huge Colt .45 automatic—the meanest hand weapon this side of perdition. I dive for the roscoe, but the doc turns on me quickly. "Cut it out, Matt," he hisses. "None of that. Let's go out and look around."

Once we are outside I complain, "Why didn't you let me plug him? He can't be that fast on the trigger. You practically need a crowbar to fire one of those things he had."

"Not that cunning old monster," broods the doc. "Not him. He knows a lot—probably has a hair-trigger on the gun. He's that kind of mind—I know the type. Academic run wild. Let's split up here and scout around." So he wanders off vaguely, polishing his glasses.

A passing figure attracts my eye. "Lady Cynthia!" I yell.

The incredibly beautiful blonde turns and looks at me coldly. "Mr. Reilly," she says, "you were informed of my sentiments towards you. I hope you will make no further attempts at—"

"Hold it!" I says. "Stop right then and there. What I want to know is

what did I do that I shouldn't have done? Lady Cynthia, I—I like you an awful lot, and I don't think we should—" I'm studying her eyes like an eagle. The second I see them soften I know that I'm in.

"Mr. Reilly," she says with great agitation, "follow me. They'd kill me if they found out, but—" She walks off slowly, and I follow her into a hut.

"Now," she says, facing me fair and square. "I don't know why I should foul my mouth with things that I should rather die than utter, but there's something about you—" She brings herself to rights with a determined toss of her head. "What do you want to know?"

"First," I says, "tell me where you were coming back from this afternoon, or whatever it was."

She winces, actually winces, and turns red down to her neck, not with the pretty kind of pink blush that a dame can turn on and off, but with the real hot, red blush of shame that hurts like sunburn. Before answering she turns so she doesn't have to look at me. "It was a counter-raid," she says. "Against—" and here I feel actual nausea in her voice— "against the Whites." Defiantly she faces me again.

Bewildered I says, "Whites?" and she loses her temper. Almost hoarsely she cries, "Don't say that filthy name! Isn't it enough that you made me speak it?" And she hurries from the hut almost in a dead run.

But this time little Matt doesn't follow her. He's beginning to suspect that everybody's crazy except him or maybe vice versa.

THEN there are sudden yells outside the hut, and Little Matt runs out to see what's up. And bedad if there aren't centipedes by the score pouring down on the little village! Centipedes mounted by men with weapons—axes, knives and bows. A passing woman yells at me, "Get to the walls—fight the bloody rotters! Kill them all!" She is small and pretty; the kind of gal that should never get angry. But her face was puffed with rage, and she was gnashing her small, even teeth.

As I see it the centipedes form a ring around the village, at full gallop like Indians attacking a wagon-train. And, like Indians, firing arrows into the thick of the crowd. So I take out the roscoe on account of the people on the centipedes are getting off and rushing the village.

I find myself engaged with a big, savage guy dreamin' homicidal visions in which I took a big part. He has a stone axe with a fine, sharp blade, and I have to fend it off as well as I can by dodging, inasmuch as if I tried to roll it off my shoulder or arm, like a prize-fighter would, I would find that I did not have any longer a shoulder or arm.

Little Matt gets in a clean one to the jaw, nearly breaking his hand, and works the guy around to one of the huts, through other knots of fighting men. Then the big guy lands one with the handle of the axe on my left forearm, nearly paralyzing it. And to my great surprise he says, "Take that, you rotten Black!"

Not wishing to argue I keeps on playing with him until he is ready to split my skull with one blow. At which point I dodge, and the axe is stuck firm in the side of the hut. Taking my time to aim it I crack his skull open with the roscoe's butt and procede to my next encounter.

This gent I trip up with the old soji as taught in the New York Police Department and elsewhere, and while he is lying there I kick him in the right place on the side of his head,

which causes him to lose interest.

"Matt! For God's sake!" yells someone. It is Doc Ellenbogan, seriously involved with two persons, both using clubs with more enthusiasm than skill. I pick up a rock from the ground and demonstrate in rapid succession just what you can do with a blunt instrument once you learn how. There's a certain spot behind the ear—

I drag the doc into the nearest hut. "Why do they call us Blacks?" I demand. "And who are they anyway?"

"Matt," he says quietly, "let me have your gun."

Without questions I fork over the roscoe. "What plans you got, chief?" I say, feeling very good after the free-for-all.

"Things begin to fall into place," he says. "Sir Peter, the chap we met, broke down and told me his viewpoint. It wasn't much, but I can tell there's something horrible going on." He actually shudders. "I'm going to see the Old Man. You please stay outside the hut and see that none of the Whites interrupt us."

"I don't think they will," I inform him, peeking out. "The battle's over and—awk!—they ain't taking prisoners." I had just seen that pretty little woman bashing in the head of an unconscious White on the ground. "So the Whites are those people that just came and—left?" I asks. "And we're the Blacks?"

"That's right, Matt."

"Sorry, chief," I says mournfully. "I don't get it."

So we leave for the hut of the Old Man.

WHILE I stand guard outside there is a long conversation in muffled tones; then, so quick they almost sounded like one shot, the roar of the Old Man's .45 and the crack of the roscoe. I bust through the door, and see the doc bleeding from his shoulder and the Old Man lying very dead on his floor.

I tape up the doc as well as I can, but a .45 leaves a terrible cavity in a man. As soon as he is able to talk I warn him: "You better get a doctor to see after that thing. It'll infect sure as fate."

"It probably will," says the doc weakly. Then he mutters, "That old monster! That horrible old—" And the rest is words that seem all the worse coming as they do from the doc, who is a mild-mannered person in appearance.

"You mean his late nibs?" I ask.

"Yes. That fiend! Listen: I don't know what set him off on that train of thought, but he had a pet theory of some kind. He told me all about it, with his gun trained on me. He was going to kill me when he was quite finished. I had your gun in my pocket, my hand on the trigger.

"He actually was a noble of Britain, and he used every cent he had on lecherous pursuits and the proof of his doctrine—a kind of superman-cum - troglodyte - cum - Mendel - cum - Mills - cum - Wells - cum - Pav - lov social theory. Fantastic, of course. Couldn't work except in a case like this.

"So he financed research along lines much like mine and brought himself and mistresses and library and equipment into this plane. And then he proceeded with his scheme. It was his aim to propagandize a race with such thoroughness that his will would be instinct to his descendants! And he succeeded, in a limited way.

"Arbitrarily, he divided his offspring into two camps, about the third generation, and ingrained in

each a hatred of the other. To further the terrible joke he named them arbitrarily Black and White, after the innocent war-games of his youth. His aim was — ultimately — to have both camps exterminate the other. For him to be the only survivor. Madman! Hideous madman!"

"That all?" I ask, not wanting to tire him.

"No. He has the equipment to get back into our own plane. I'm going to use it now to send you back, Matt. You can say with *almost* perfect veracity that you bumped me off as per orders."

"But why don't you send these people back?" I ask, being real bright.

"They wouldn't like it, Matt. It would be too great a strain on them. Besides, in the month or so that I'll last here, with this wound in my shoulder, I can throw a perfectly effective monkeywrench into the Old Man's plans. I think that in a few years the Blacks and Whites will be friends."

"I got a better idea," I says with authority. "You go back to Earth and I stay here. You can get patched up by any good medico. And I won't mind it much." And that's what little Matt says, thinking of a golden-haired lady who might be taught that monogamy ain't necessarily a deadly sin.

SO JUDY, YOU be a good little sister and open that safe-deposit box of mine—doc will give you the key—and give doc five thousand to square himself with Lucco. And you take the rest and quit that chain-store job and start yourself the swellest beauty parlor in town, just like you always wanted to.

And keep in touch with doc. He's a great guy, but he needs somebody around to see that he don't hurt himself.

POWER

by Hugh Raymond

(Author of "The Last Viking," "Rebirth of Tomorrow," etc.)

Anna Campbell knew the answer to the chaos that was sweeping the nation. The problem was: how could it be applied?

THE WINDOW opposite our table in the main dining room of the Hotel Astor misted slowly. Outside it was beginning to snow. The street noises came distorted through the solid walls.

I held Anna's hands between my own.

"They're getting noisier," she said, paling a little as a burst of rifle fire sounded from somewhere near the south end of Times Square.

"Don't worry, darling, please. Nothing can harm us here. At least, until it gets in. Are you cold?"

She nodded, responding to my

smile with one of her own, a stubby chub of a smile that reminded me of low hills and fleecy clouds. I threw my heavy scarf about her shoulders, protected only by dainty decolletage. It was difficult, then, to imagine her working with test tubes and wires and screw drivers and pliers and collecting dirt on her hands and under her fingernails.

When I first met Anna Campbell she had been flat on her back under an old Ford truck that had broken down in the hills outside of Bear Mountain. She wielded a heavy Stillson wrench as though it were a nail buffer. When I offered to help she declined with thanks—and a smile.

Decolletage became her, more than rough slacks and a heavy shirt, though I loved her that way. And lipstick judiciously applied was quite as entrancing as a smear of grease across her cheek. The double brandy she had consumed only a moment before lit her cheeks like the glow of a spring sunset.

Spring? I laughed. Outside there was cold and turmoil and upheaval. Outside, the people of New York and everywhere in the United States were showing their dissatisfaction with a social system that had brought them to the verge of starvation. I had only to lean forward a few inches to see the swarms being herded in all directions by desperate mounted police. Things like this were going on all over the nation. In Chicago. In San Francisco. In tiny villages in the Sierra Nevadas. In Mexico. And in the vast reaches of Canada. Clearly, a change was in the air. But what? It was the great question of the day, posed by newspapers and radio commentators who spoke clipped and precise English, and television actors who gave short and uproarious skits at the expense of a weary and uninterested government.

The upheaval was reaching into every phase of the country's national life. Latent political forces long dormant under the force of repression began to appear. Many and varied were the appeals to this or that platform. Long and winded were the speeches of this and that demagogue and zealot. Power was in the process of dissolution in the hands of those who had hitherto controlled it, and more power was needed to direct it into channels propounded by a dozen political parties and a thousand ideologies.

I looked at Anna as she nibbled on a cheese cracker. Power! That was the crux of the matter. Someone—many men—needed inexorable, unconquerable power to impose their will. And in the brain of the woman sitting opposite me at a small table was the secret of that power.

"Darling," I said suddenly, "sometimes I wish it hadn't been you who discovered the secret of atomic power. It makes you seem utterly precious and above men — and so much like a goddess."

"Hush, Karl," she admonished. "You know as well as I that the secret of my discovery must remain *secret*. These walls undoubtedly develop ears in times like these. And seriously," she continued, "do you really think those things matter to me? I fell in love with Karl Brecker, not a cold mass of machinery. All my life I've had a drive to do something—to create. I wanted to work with my hands as a little girl. Remember how your father always tells about my escapades when our families were neighbors for a while and you were at military school? Homemade wagons and electric motors and then college and then more and more of that drive to some end—and sud-

denly that end came—and you came too."

I slipped a cordial slowly.

"But you're always in danger as long as the possibility exists of the discovery becoming public knowledge."

"It must become public knowledge," she cried, her eyes wide and frightened, "but only when I am sure that it can be entrusted to safe hands." A sudden practical look gleamed in her eyes. "But don't worry. For the past quarter-century, at least one claim has been made for the discovery of atomic power per year. I think I'm safe. The newspaper boys think I'm a crackpot. Remember the article in the *Times:* 'Pulchritudinous Scientist Claims Discovery of Pulverizing Power'?" She laughed heartily at the memory. "I came in for quite a beating there. Lucky I didn't make a comeback. They might have believed me."

ACROSS THE crowded room a televisor began to blare.

"It is reported by officials in the State of California that riots have broken out in a dozen cities. Power lines are down and San Francisco is in the hands of a self-appointed Citizens Committee for Public Safety." The smooth, honeyed voice went on to relate the details of endlessly similar occurrences throughout the country.

I almost enjoyed it, watching the dancers and diners writhe. Most of them were rich wastrels whose whole livelihood depended upon the pacification of just the people who were conducting the rioting. Heavily upholstered dowagers sniffed uneasily as the voice continued to flow into the great room. Young things in slinky evening dress glanced apprehensively toward the windows where the noises of the street fighting were rising in a slow but steady crescendo.

The voice ceased. An orchestra from New Orleans began playing to us three thousand miles away. Faces brightened. Bravado mounted. Soon the wholesale quaffing of champagne continued.

A waiter approached.

"Will you have dinner now, sir?" he asked timidly. He was used to Anna's and my own idiosyncrasies, such as omitting the cocktail before dinner and substituting for it a sweet cordial.

I gave the waiter my order. He was about to go, when suddenly he turned again to us and said apologetically, "I'd almost forgotten, sir. There's a Mr. Bittsworth who would like to see you. He's over at the door, sir." And Tiffins pointed across the dimly lit room to a tall and portly figure leaning against the door leading to the hotel lobby.

"Expecting anybody?" I asked Anna.

She shook her head in the negative.

"Don't know anybody," she said archly, and we both laughed.

I looked up at Tiffins.

"Send him over. But be sure that you call us both to the telephone if he stays more than ten minutes."

Presently, the figure began to move in our direction. Although he was wearing a dinner jacket, he had obviously been heavily clad and but recently, as thick snow still clustered in the nooks and crannies of his heavy shoes.

"I'm Bittsworth," he announced, looming up beside our table. "You're Miss Anna Campbell. And you're Karl Brecker. Good evening. May I sit down?"

Slightly startled at this sudden access of information, I reached over

to an unoccupied table and yanked a chair closer.

He had a business-like face with a small moustache and a ruddy complexion. I guessed him to be habitually well-to-do. He wore his clothes like a veteran.

"And now that we've been introduced, Mr. Bittsworth, before we go into business—whatever it is—will you join us at supper? We were just about to eat." Turning my head, I winked at Tiffins who was watching anxiously from the kitchen doorway. That meant that he was to disregard all previous instructions.

Bittsworth declined. He asked if we might permit a cigar.

Anna smiled at him sweetly.

"Oh, do, Mr. Bittsworth, I just *love* the smell of a good cigar."

Behind my face, I laughed outright. Anna, for all her being a good sport, couldn't even stand my pipe.

He folded his hands on the table and drew his face into a serious mien.

"I suppose you know who I am? No? Well, I'd better begin by telling you that I am George Bittsworth, *the* Bittsworth, head of the Conservative Party. Now don't get frightened. I'm not here to solicit votes. I'm here for something infinitely more important." He paused a bit and shifted his cigar. "I suppose," he continued, "that you're both patriotic citizens. I take that for granted. And you want to see your country at peace. You want to see the people happy and well-fed. You want to see *that*," he looked significantly to the window, "stopped. Do you not?"

We both waggled our heads in assent.

Just then, Tiffins came up with dinner. Bittsworth leaned back while we partook of the food.

"I'M A POLITICIAN Miss Campbell," he began, "I know things. I control a large party—the largest in the country. It's a good solid party and it knows what it is doing. But things are getting a little out of hand," again he indicated the window, "we'd like to stop all that. We'd like to put food into the mouths of those hungry people and take murder out of their hearts. But we can't do it now. We're not in power. Most of us were turned out at the last election." He paused.

"But what has that to do with Karl and me?" Anna asked. "Certainly we are as helpless as you. We cannot stop that rioting just as you have no power to stop it."

"Bittsworth interrupted her with a gesture.

"*You* have that power, Miss Campbell. I think you know what I mean. Possibly I'm wrong, but I believed you when you claimed to have discovered the control of atomic energy. The newspaper ridiculed our claim, but certain information I possess leads me to believe that you had something. I know, furthermore, that this new power of yours is cheap, portable and infinite. . . ."

Anna put her fork down with a bang. "How do you know?" she interrupted sharply.

"I'm not at liberty to divulge that information. You may depend upon it, however, that dishonesty on the part of certain individuals had a part in my knowing what I do know."

Both Anna's and my eyes swung into line immediately. "De Saynter, of course!" A rascally assistant who had disappeared after having been discovered going through some extremely important notes Anna had made on the final aspects of the invention.

"You have never," she said, "been

in touch with a certain August De Saynter, I suppose."

Bittsworth shrugged.

"Whether I have or not is of no importance whatsoever. The point is that I know that you, Miss Campbell, hold it within your power to turn this country back to the path of peace and plenty."

"What, precisely, do you want?" she said.

He relaxed a little before replying and crushed out his cigar, although it was but half smoked.

"The plans and specifications of the entire Campbell process for the release and control of atomic power."

I looked at Anna.

"But you can't have them," she answered swiftly, as I knew she would, and then reached for her wine glass. "*No one* is going to get this invention but the entire people, and if you imagine for a moment that I don't know the use to which *you* would put it, you're daft."

Bittsworth smiled blandly.

"Of course. But isn't it better that we get this power than, say, Gunther Westhoff, for instance?"

"What makes you think anyone is going to get it?" I broke in brusquely.

"Because they need it," he replied quietly. "I repeat. The balance of power rests with only two parties, my own and Westhoff's. All other parties are either appendages or unimportant. They cannot affect the situation. We can and will. But we need immediate and limitless power to do so. A country such as this with its complicated social and economic system cannot be controlled except by a power greater than itself. That power is atomic power. A dictatorship, yes. I grant you that is true. But only for a while until we can turn events into the proper democratic path."

I watched Anna's mouth and knew that neither Bittsworth nor any other politician would find out anything more from her.

"Well?" he asked, folding his hands before him.

"Sorry!" she snapped. "It's no good. I'm afraid politics loses this time."

Bittsworth got to his feet. "I won't waste any more of your time," he said softly. "Good night. I hope you do not regret your decision."

He turned and started across the floor.

Anna looked sternly at me. "Darling, did you ever vote Conservative?" she asked tautly. "*Or* for the Westhoff crowd?"

"Do I look like a banker or a Nazi?" I asked, laughing.

"Let's finish eating and go home," she said.

"How about dessert?"

"I've got some apple strudel in the pantry. That is, if your father hasn't eaten it all." We both smiled.

Tiffins brought our coats.

"Come on, darling."

We had reached the middle of the room when suddenly a terrific explosion shook the building and the lights went out. Simultaneously, a small figure darted past me and grabbed Anna by the forearm and pulled.

I swung with my right fist. It contacted solid flesh. The little figure grunted and fell and Anna screamed. Then immediately we were surrounded by many figures and the last thing I saw in the glow from the Wrigley sign across Broadway was the room crowded with a great screaming mob, fighting to reach the doors.

CONSCIOUSNESS CAME back painfully and suddenly.

Anna's cool hand was on my forehead. She smiled wanly down at me.

"They wouldn't give me any water to bathe your head with, sweetheart."

"Who wouldn't?" I demanded.

She squatted against the wall and held her chin between her hands.

"The people who brought us here."

"Where are we?"

"I don't know," she replied pensively. "My head was covered with something for about fifteen minutes, I should judge, and we were taken here in a car. Along with him." She pointed to a body huddled in a corner.

"Who is he?" I asked, struggling to get up.

"Don't, darling. It's Bittsworth."

"My God!" The leader of the Conservative Party slugged, unconscious! A little trickle of blood ran down his forehead. Anna tried to stanch it with his handkerchief. I got up and shook him.

"Wake up, man!"

He stirred presently and returned to the land of the living.

"Where am I?" he asked, with great originality.

"Don't try to put anything over on us," I said coldly.

"You did all this."

"And had myself slugged, I suppose," he grunted, sarcastically.

Well, that sounded reasonable.

I looked about the room. It was small, miserable, old-fashioned. We listened. No sounds came through the one boarded-up window.

"Well, who did it?" I shouted.

"I think I know," he said in low tones, patting his pate with a handkerchief, "Gunther Westhoff."

"The Nazi?"

"Yes. Apparently, he got the same information as I did. And went after it. I'm afraid we won't get out of here without some trouble. In some ways he's after my hide more than he's after yours. Anyway, all he wants from you two is the energy secret. I'll probably be killed."

"Let's not think about getting killed—at least not now," I grumbled. "Let's find out where we are."

"That's easy," remarked Bittsworth, exploring his clothes for a cigar. "We're undoubtedly in Westhoff's headquarters in Yorkville."

Anna pulled me down on the floor and cradled my head in her lap. She ignored Bittsworth.

About an hour passed. Then, the door at one end of the room opened. It swung back with a crash.

A tall, compact figure in military uniform strode into the room and saluted Nazi fashion.

"Don't bother," I said, from the depths of Anna's lap. "We don't stand on dignity."

"Stand up!" barked the figure.

Bittsworth and I stood up. Anna also rose.

"Good evening, Westhoff," remarked Bittsworth cheerfully.

The Nazi grunted something. His smooth-shaven face remained impassive.

"I will get to the point immediately," he spat in his Germanic English. "I want the plans and all information relative to your atomic power discovery, Miss Campbell. If this information is not forthcoming immediately, I shall be forced to take extreme measures—extreme measures."

"Just what do you intend to do with us?" I asked.

"If the girl refuses you will find out," he said quietly.

"I wouldn't be so direct if I were you, Gunther," said a voice from behind Westhoff, suddenly.

A small, rotund man walked into the room between the uniformed guards. Anna gasped.

Westhoff grunted again.

"Please do not interrupt, De Saynter."

"Good evening to you all," said the little man in pleasant tones. "And especially to you, Miss Campbell." He reached into a side pocket and produced a pistol with which he played suggestively. "Gunther, we must be all friends here. Good friends. Isn't that so, Mr. Bittsworth?"

"I'll not be a friend to a stinking would-be dictator!" stated the other bluntly.

"Then you will have to be an enemy. Gunther, please have this man taken away. He is useless."

Westhoff gestured to several of his guards, who led the unprotesting Bittsworth away.

"And now, if you please, I will take charge. I am so much more the expert about such matters. Am I not, Gunther?"

The other nodded grimly, if reluctantly.

"First," continued De Saynter, "we shall continue this interrogation at Miss Campbell's laboratory. It is much more comfortable there and everything which might refresh her memory is close at hand. "Second, while in transit to the laboratory, the both of you will make no disturbance or a break for liberty. I may as well speak frankly. Any such act will simply result in death. We are playing for high stakes tonight. And anything goes."

They left us alone for a minute. Westhoff, De Saynter and the guards clanked out.

I held Anna close.

"Don't worry," I said, comfortingly, "everything will be all right."

"How do you know?" she asked.

"I know. I know."

ON THE WAY out I had to support Anna when she fainted at the sight of Bittsworth's dead body lying on the floor of a short corridor leading to the lower floors.

Anna's laboratory, which occupied a whole building, was located just north of West 4th Street. From the outside, it was a very ordinary appearing house of the type found usually in the Village. Certainly no one would have suspected it of containing machinery capable of laying waste the whole continent.

The garage was empty. Seeking to secure as much secrecy as possible, Westhoff ordered the cars parked in the shadowed drive. Then, at pistol point, he drove us into the house.

It was empty. My father, who assisted Anna in completing her experiments, was not home. We snapped on the lights. My garish choice of furniture, Bohemian and loud, became embarrassingly obvious. Westhoff and De Saynter sneered.

"Decadence," remarked the former. "Useless luxury. The people must be made to do without. We need strong men and strong women, simple men and women. The old virtues of self-denial and fortitude must come back. This barbaric comfort must go."

"Somehow, that doesn't fit into my conception of an age of atomic power," I remarked off-handedly.

"Not too hasty, not too rash, Gunther," breathed De Saynter. "These people are friends. They must be treated as friends. Please do not begin by criticising their tastes in furniture. Or betraying the program of the party," he said suddenly and viciously.

Westhoff winced.

"Let us proceed," continued De Saynter. "Up those stairs and

through the door. I know about this house. I once worked here, did I not, Miss Campbell?"

Anna, who was staggering wearily up the steps, nodded. Her eyes, hopeless, saw nothing.

We passed through the door to the big laboratory.

EVERY TIME I'd been there in the past, I was amazed at the power of the machinery Anna put together with her two capable hands. I had seen it many times before. But now, the scene took on added significance. Westhoff was affected visibly. The array of metal, glass and insulation puzzled him. And the guards glanced uneasily about. Out of their party uniforms, they were not so brave or assured.

De Saynter made an exclamation of pleasure.

"Ah, I see that you have completed the magnetic reflector, Miss Campbell. I was about to suggest that particular method when you discharged me. The wiring is very workmanlike."

His eyes wandered caressingly over the apparatus. In them now was something more than the greed for power. But it did not last very long. Presently he turned to us again.

"Perhaps you have been wondering why I have not built this machine myself. I bow, Anna Campbell, to your superior technical knowledge. Even the best of the European experts—or the American, for that matter, have not gone a tenth as far as have you, here. You have the ability to foresee difficulties and overcome them before they arise. I, in my stumbling way, could, perhaps do as well in time. But there is no time now."

Westhoff seated himself at a switch-board, uneasily. His hands wandered idly over switches and levers.

"Verboten, fuehrer," said De Saynter, gently. Westhoff snatched his hands away, abashed.

De Saynter gestured to the two guards who had followed us upstairs. Side arms drawn, they stood against the door.

"Well, shall we get on?" grumbled the tall Nazi.

"Patience, fuehrer. Nothing can be accomplished by sheer haste. Do you imagine that this girl is going to give us the knowledge we seek without a corresponding value being placed in her hands? No, she will not. Anna," he said suddenly, "I think we both understand each other. *We* need information *you* possess. I am aware that only the most extreme torture could force you to reveal what we want to know. Such a procedure would be distasteful to me. I am not a barbarian. I am prepared, therefore, to offer you a cold business deal. Here," he said, indicating, with a sweep of his arm, the atom-smashing apparatus, "we have power. *Dead* power. It has little meaning once it has accomplished its task. In human relations, only personal power has any meaning. All other power is merely a means to that end."

Anna sneered.

"What are you going to offer me? The queenship of the American Empire? Sorry, De Saynter, but it's a bit old-fashioned."

"It *is* a bit thick, you know," I said, chuckling. "Why don't you stop being so damned old-hat?"

Westhoff snarled, but De Saynter merely smiled.

"Dear me," he said, throwing up his arms in a gesture of defeat. "You are going to be difficult. So we are

going to take at one jump the sublime to the ridiculous?" He regarded Anna with an amused, baffled glint in his eyes.

I decided then that it was about time to act. They hadn't bound me and the guards paid no attention to my occasional sallies about the room. So I maneuvered myself to a spot well-known to me and leaned heavily and nonchalantly on a metal shelf for support. Behind me, a signal switch closed softly, without a sound.

"I SUPPOSE THERE is no possibility of your reconsidering your decision?" asked De Saynter, lighting a cigarette. He blew the smoke ceilingward, where it collected about the brilliant light globes in swirling ropes.

Anna's face was grimly uncompromising.

"I see no reason for putting this secret into the hands of a stupid fool."

De Saynter's eyes narrowed. He pulled his revolver from his coat pocket and brandished it.

"Enough! I see now that direct action is the only course to take. To think I could have been so wrong about feminine psychology!"

They jumped me as soon as De Saynter stopped talking because I was getting all ready to spring on the little man. Tying me to a chair with some copper wire, they stepped back and grabbed Anna roughly.

Westhoff licked his lips. He stood up abruptly and fondled his revolver holster.

De Saynter directed the guards to tie Anna to another chair. Then they stepped back out of the way. The former assistant stepped to a small, projector-like contrivance bolted to the floor, looking very much like a car-headlight before they began putting them into the fenders, and swung the business end of it around. I recognized it immediately. It threw a powerful stream of electrons past its magnetic regulator into the secondary stages of the amplifiers, and was extremely dangerous. With full power, it could have burned to a cinder anything that got in its path. Ordinarily, a heavy metal safety shield surrounded it, but the shield and its heavy bolts lay on the floor beside the machine. Evidently my father had been repairing it, I thought.

Anna's eyes widened with horror as she saw De Saynter walk to the control panel and throw several small levers. Instantly, the lights dimmed as the powerful transformers began eating up tremendous amounts of house-current. The stolid guards blinked uncomfortably as the lights flickered.

De Saynter crushed out his cigarette carelessly against the base of the projector.

"The stream of electrons passing through this tube, with sufficient power, is capable of eating through steel almost instantaneously," he remarked absently, to no one in particular.

Westhoff shivered.

"In three minutes, the accumulated energy building up in the primary stage will leap through this projector and destroy anything in its path. Observe, Anna Campbell, how I bring this tube directly in line with your head. Observe how I disconnect the safety switch and adjust the timers. It is a beautiful piece of machinery and it is a pity that it should be used to such purpose. I want your answer as to the location of the plans for this entire apparatus within three minutes. I do

not propose to tear the house down to find them."

One minute passed. I gulped.

Anna's nervous reserve was giving out. Her eyes, already wide and staring into the mouth of the electron projector, grew luminous with sheer horror.

"Anna!" I cried, suddenly. "Tell him! Anna, please! Please! It doesn't matter now whether he knows or not. Anna!"

Her lips trembled. De Saynter smiled queerly. He patted his stomach.

And then Westhoff bellowed.

"LOOK OUT!" he cried to the guards as the door behind them was thrust open and a searing blast of energy shot across the room, catching De Saynter below the neck and blowing most of his head into nothingness. Westhoff pulled desperately at his pistol, raised it, fired point-blank at the doorway and succeeded in killing one of his own men. The other toppled over as another searing blast caught him in the middle.

"Good boys!" I yelled and threw myself, chair and all, at Anna. She went over with a crash and a few seconds later the faintly luminous power surge poured through the empty air and crashed into the back wall where it volatilized the lead lining of the wall before a final blast from the doorway cut off the power supply as it hit the main cable.

Anna had fainted.

We revived her several minutes later. She blinked uncomprehendingly as she saw me standing over her, surrounded by two dozen men attired in ordinary grey business suits, each holding tightly to what appeared to be a small pistol-grip flashlight with wires leading from the butt to a large flat package in one pocket of their jackets.

For a woman weakened by a terrific shock she showed astonishing comprehension.

"Hand-rays?" she murmured, and I nodded.

She took a cigarette and some brandy downstairs, later.

"What the devil is it all about, darling?" she asked. Sitting opposite her, in the library, in my favorite overstuffed, I sprang it on her whimsically, feeling a little melodramatic.

"You are looking, my dear, at the head of the New York Section of the new Scientific Government of the United States."

"Whatever that is, I don't believe you," she said, crossing one knee over the other.

"You'd better. I haven't told you anything up to now because I didn't want you going off half-cocked. You've been in a hell of a nervous state the past few months from your work on that junk upstairs, and—"

"Don't talk nonsense. I still don't believe you," she interrupted.

I laughed out loud.

"All right. Who's the second best chemical engineer and general electrical genius in this country next to yourself?"

"Why—why—why you are. So what?"

I gazed at her in amazement.

"So the woman I love and spend most of my time with goes and invents atomic power and I'm supposed to do nothing but play the tired technician who's too rusty to help around stuff like this any more, and take you out to dinner and golf and boat-rides and hikes?"

"You've been doing all right," she said seductively.

"Our little organization has been in existence for quite a while. Oh,

I beg your pardon; Anna, meet the boys. Boys meet Anna." The "boys" inclined their heads, "We haven't been blind to the economic and social breakdown in this country. Your invention was a godsend. I don't know what we'd have done without it. I filched the plans you hid in the old safe behind the furnace — they're back, now, though—and gave them to a bunch of our boys down at headquarters—most of 'em are good mechanics, with some geniuses and a few research men thrown in. They turned out hand guns patterned after the principle of that projector. . . . By the way, remind me to have that wall fixed, like a good little girl. . . . And tiny automobiles that run for years and years on a thimbleful of fuel, and airplanes that don't need winds or propellers, and a lot of other useful gadgets. Add everything up and you've got all the necessary props for a scientific state. No nonsense, no baloney. Just science."

"Where were *they* hiding?" she asked, indicating my bravos.

"They weren't hiding. They were downtown at General Headquarters. You don't know it yet, but the city is full of them, all set to go. I managed to get through an alarm signal I rigged up. You don't know anything about that, either. I seldom forget a possibility."

"I know," she remarked somewhat sarcastically, then smiled. "But where are they going now?"

"We're taking over," I stated definitely and looked to the squad leader for confirmation. He nodded vigorously. "You just be content to be the human being responsible for all this and collect the glory."

She stretched luxuriously and took another slug of brandy.

"What'll that be? Some gold statues in public parks?"

I grinned.

"Say," she said suddenly, struck by a thought, "where's your father?"

I reached into my pocket and pulled out a small machine resembling a wrist watch. Only it was flat and rectangular and had no crystal in it.

"This is a small receiver-transmitter. One of the gadgets the boys thought up. You can talk to pop by simply pressing that little white stud. He's down at GHQ now."

"Wait a minute, darling. One hour ago we got a free ride downtown. New York was a howling mess. And so was the rest of the country. What are you going to do about that?"

I stood up and accepted a proffered hand-ray-gun.

"That's what we're going to take care of now. Everything has been arranged for a direct assault on the population with the most beautiful information machine you ever saw. Sound trucks, picture slides, television movies and free ice-cream. By midnight tomorrow, the country—the whole continent—will be out of the danger zone. Politics is through once and for all. It'll be democracy, all right. Democracy with a nice clean shirt on and lipstick and bobbed hair and nylon stockings. Only this time the nylon won't ever wear out."

I stopped and kissed her.

Presently one of the men lifted his wrist receiver to his ear.

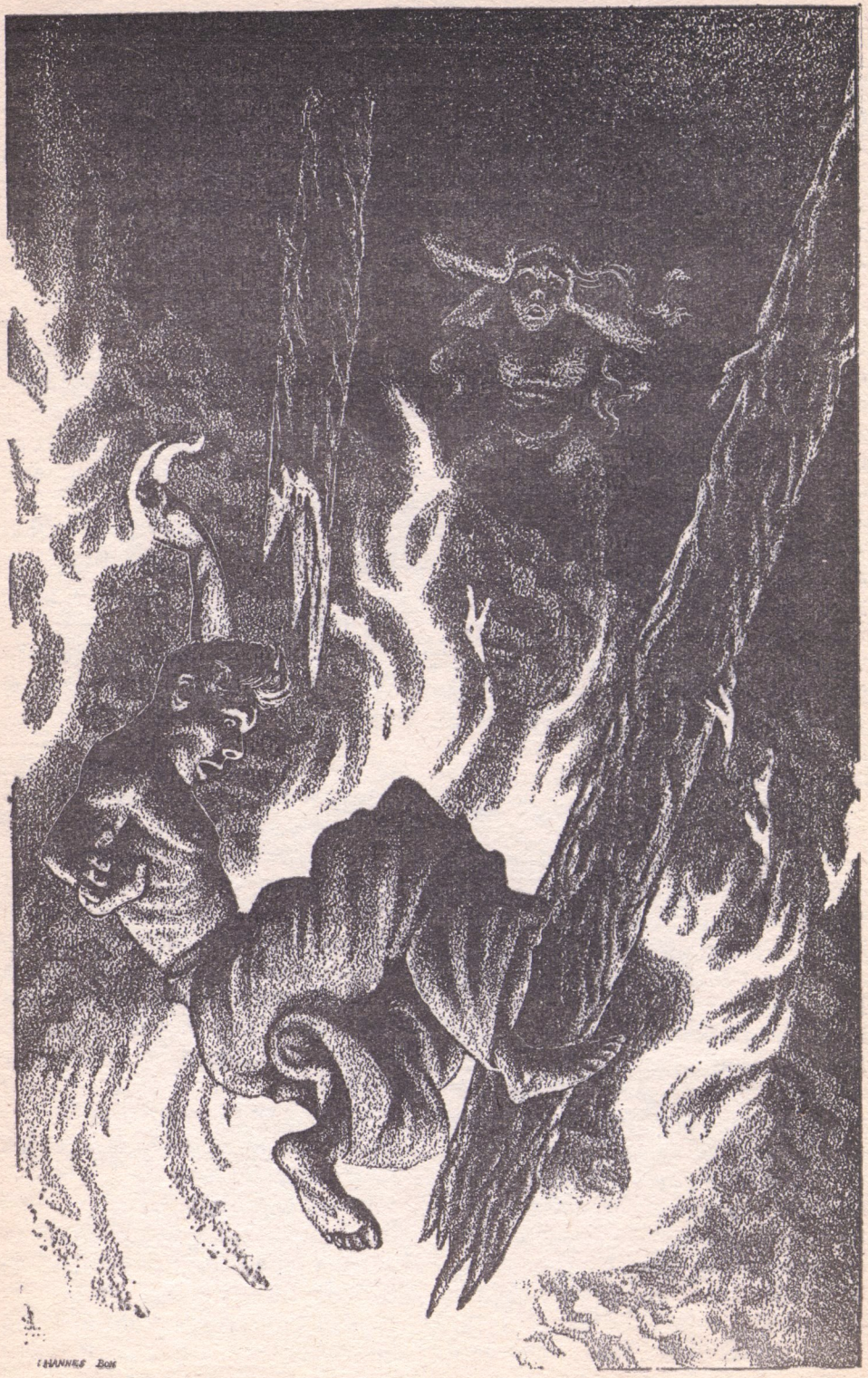
"All set, sir," he said.

"O.K., let's get going."

Anne was still unconvinced. She called after me from the couch.

"I still think it's a deuce of a big job. What's the magic trick that'll put it over? What wand are you planning to use?"

"Power," I said, and walked out.


HANNES BOK

THE RIDDLE OF TANYE

by W. P. Cockroft

(Author of "The Alien Room," "The Thing in the Ice," etc.)

How real are dreams? Tate's experiment started out as psychological, but the four lives of Hoffman were just a little more than mere brain-figments. A novelette you will remember.

CHAPTER I

THE RAIN CAME down in a deluge over the windswept Yorkshire moors. One lone figure fought his way, staggering, along the rough path, cursing as the rain and wind smote him, preventing him from going as quickly as he wished, and drenching him to the skin. At last there loomed before him, out of the mist, a large gateway, strangely out of place in this deserted spot. The gates were open; he passed through them, clutching tightly to him with one hand his raincoat, and with the other gripping the heavy case he carried.

Stunted bushes lined the neglected drive he followed and the wind moaned ceaselessly.

"What an infernal place to have a home!" The traveler grunted.

Through the driving mist there showed before him a large house. It bore a dilapidated appearance and promised no comfort to the dispirited traveler. He staggered to the door and used the iron knocker with such force that it echoed and reechoed throughout the building. Impatiently he knocked again as no answer was forthcoming. Then there was the sound of footsteps, bolts were withdrawn, and the door was flung open.

"Hoffman!" exclaimed the man inside. "I am glad you've come."

Hoffman pushed his way into the house and dropped his case while the other shut the door. Then they turned to look at each other.

"You haven't changed much," remarked the host as they shook hands.

Hoffman smiled. "Nor have you, Tate," he returned. "Five years ago, and you do not look a day different."

"We'll discuss things later," Tate said, briskly. "First of all you want a change. I'll take you to your room."

"Yes. Why on earth do you live in a place like this? I couldn't even get a taxi from the station."

"Good reasons," the other grinned. "We'll talk after you have changed and had something to eat."

IT WAS half an hour later when Hoffman faced his host at the front of a roaring fire.

"Now let's get down to it," he said. "If you knew how curious I was, you would not keep me in suspense."

Tate lighted his pipe before speaking. "You are impatient," he grunted. "All right. You will remember that eight years ago, when I used to talk about other dimensions, you often said that if you tired of this life I ought to propel you into another life. That was because I thought I could make a machine to do so."

"Correct," murmured the other man.

"Yes. Well, it is five years ago that you married. I did not like

your wife and she didn't like me. Your marriage to her meant the breaking of our friendship. But still you wrote to me, perhaps in defiance of her wishes. Yet you never came to visit me. So things went until I received news from you that you were getting a divorce. I had expected that. I had also expected the bitterness which characterized your letter. It was obvious that you were at a loose end. And so I asked you to visit me, knowing the mood you would be in. I want to make an experiment, and if you are ready to take a few chances, you can take part in it."

"What is this experiment?"

"Patience, Hoffman. You recall that in your schooldays—days when we really did enjoy ourselves—you often bemoaned the fact that time seemed to fly," observed Tate.

"I did," confessed Hoffman. "You cannot deny that it seems to fly, especially our happier days. There seems to be no method of preventing time's flight."

"I wonder!"

"What do you mean? Do you think we can find a method of stopping it?"

"My dear friend, only Change is existent. Time never was a reality."

"Tell me what you are getting at."

"I will," replied Tate. "You have dreamed, and you know the fact that has been a never-ending source of wonder to you: that you can dream hours in a few seconds. Is that not so?"

"That's true. Concentrated life," Hoffman ventured.

"Exactly." Tate was pleased. "I am glad you used that term. Within the space of a few seconds you live several hours. If your life was a very happy one, you would want it to last an unlimited length of time, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, but—"

"Let me put it in another way. Some of your dreams are more pleasant than life. Is that correct?"

Hoffman smiled wryly. "Quite a lot of them. No financial worries, no matrimonial troubles. . . . No hatred. . . ."

"HOW WOULD YOU like to live continuously for four hours in dreams? Would you care to risk some of them being abnormal?"

"I would risk it for four hours, even if the experience was ghastly. Nothing terrible could really happen to me, could it? My physical body could undergo no hardship, not being in the dream with me?"

"That is true. It is a matter of bringing the thing we call time into touch with dreams. I can put you into the dream-state for hours at a time. In that dream-state there will be no such thing as time, because time is man-created and is not even an actual thing. Do you understand me?"

"Not exactly."

Tate shook his head. "My dear young friend, you seem in a dense mood, if I may say so. I remember that in the old days you would have gathered what I meant immediately."

"A lot has happened since then," returned Hoffman. He thought a minute. "Do you mean to say that in the dream-state I can live in any period?" he said at last.

"Yes."

"But how shall I pass from this period into another period? How is the transition effected?"

"That is easily done. While you are dreaming, I shall create the arti-

ficial atmosphere of the period I wish you to be in."

"It sounds crazy to me."

"Hoffman! You are such a doubter!"

"I like to see proof of things before I believe."

"Er—do you believe in God?"

"Yes, but there is plenty of proof."

Tate held up his hand. "Not so fast, my friend. These things about you which you attribute to the work of a God may have come by chance."

"What of—"

"Stop! I have no wish to enter into a metaphysical argument with you. I am quite prepared to offer you proof of this concentrated existence."

"Proof? What proof can you offer me?"

Tate glanced at his watch. "It is a quarter to eight. I will give you four hours from eight till midnight. All is prepared. If you are ready for your long period of life, I am ready to give it to you."

"Right."

Tate rose to his feet and, Hoffman following, went along a passage to one solitary door at the end. This he unlocked and they passed in.

Hoffman whistled. "Fine place you have here," he said, taking in the well-filled laboratory.

"Not bad," Tate remarked, absently. "However, it is not as complete as I would have it. That case in the center of the room is your dreaming-chamber."

Hoffman crossed to the large glass case and stared at it. There flashed across his brain the thought that it looked like a coffin. He stared up to see Tate eyeing him, inscrutably.

"How do you create the effects?" Hoffman asked.

"As yet that is my secret. I shall elucidate to you at a later period. When you are ready, we will begin."

Hoffman crawled into the case, lying down on the soft cloth which covered the floor of it. Tate carefully closed the glass panel. The other man lay still, filled with a sudden fear of this confinement. He stared at the top of the case, in which was a row of holes and from which rose a welter of tubes. He laughed shortly, thinking what a quaint experiment it was. What was he reminded of? An insect prepared for dissection, perhaps. . . . He shivered at that thought, and glanced out for Tate. The inventor was busy moving before a large panel on the wall. He did not look back at Hoffman. Apparently something was troubling him, for there was a frown on his face. Suddenly his brow cleared, and he crossed to another panel in the wall. A row of bulbs flickered into light, and Hoffman heard a purring noise. Somehow that noise seemed like a lullaby to Hoffman, for he felt himself drifting, drifting, drifting. . . .

CHAPTER II

WITH A START Hoffman became conscious. He felt as if a sudden shock had just prevented him from slipping into an abyss of sleep. He blinked in the intense darkness and wondered idly why the lights in the laboratory had been put out. The windows were all shuttered, he had noticed before, so that would account for no light stealing in from outside. But why had Tate put the laboratory lights out? It was pitch-dark and he could neither see Tate nor anything else.

But after a while a kind of glow seemed to emanate from somewhere, as if either it was slowly coming

into being or his eyes were just getting used to the darkness and it was not as deep as he had thought. And then it seemed to him that it was rather an extraordinary sort of light. For instance, it made things look different from what they had looked when he climbed into the case. The case itself had shrunk, so that, lying down inside it, it looked like a coffin. He could see that the sides turned in above the shoulder level, a thing he had not noticed before. Until then he had felt no fear. Perhaps that was because he could see through the coffin. He had been so intent on studying the strange change that had taken place in the thing he was imprisoned in, he had not thought to look just outside.

At last, however, he bethought himself to do so. There was a rhythmical play of *something* all about him; this seemed to him to be ghastly. He had not anticipated such a horrible sensation as he felt. For the whole thing in which the coffin rested was moving. It looked like nothing else than if the whole earth round it was falling away from him. It was horrible, so he looked above him and found a more cheerful sight. Directly overhead he could see the moon. And yet, as he stared up at it, it struck him that there was something queer about the moon. Still, he was glad that he was able to see it; he knew then that he was not buried alive.

He began to hear noises. It sounded as if someone was talking, or rather mouthing dull sounds which had no real meaning. Then he saw them.

They were strange creatures, without shape or form. Or rather they had form, but it was a flowing form that constantly changed. They were all round the coffin, battering on it with little weak hands. In a little while Hoffman began to feel sorry for them, for they seemed so anxious to get into the coffin. He thought if he got out it would help them, so he did so, with such ease that he was surprised. Then he stared back at the coffin, which had gone opaque. The queer creatures had disappeared. He did think he saw one of them just disappearing into the coffin, but felt too lazy to try to puzzle out why they wanted to go there.

The first thing Hoffman noticed when he climbed out of the pit where the coffin lay was his own physical comfort. But as he reached the ground and stared back he was filled with sudden fear. For the ground had sealed up and he could not see the coffin. Then he laughed out loud. What did he want to see it for? He had no need of it. The world was his. So he stood on a little knoll and stared out across the spaces before him.

Away to the left of him was a great stretch of water, lined with banks of sombre-colored vegetation. To the right was an unbroken expanse of flat plain, bare and desolate. Directly before him, apparently about two miles away, was a hill. At the top of it was what appeared to him to be a large stone temple. It was square and somehow conveyed an impression of brutality.

AND THEN there came to Hoffman a great loneliness. He was aware of a strong yearning for companionship and, with this in mind, he set off towards the temple, thinking that there he should find some life. The idea that there would be a priest there if no one else ran through his mind. He reflected that if the place was deserted he would at least be able to look about him,

perhaps see something indicating civilization.

It seemed to take him an extraordinary length of time to reach the temple, but at last he reached the bottom of the flight of broad steps which led up to what was obviously the entrance. From the top of the steps, square stone pillars rose to a great height, giving an impression of awesome grandeur and solemn magnificence that startled him. The pillars sloped inwards as they rose, and were crowned by a flat platform.

Slowly Hoffman climbed the steps, thinking what a good view of the surrounding country he would be able to get from that vantage point. The entrance was open, he found, when he reached it. He went inside and paused, bewildered.

For from a room directly before him was coming singing, but such singing as he had never imagined in his life. Its beauty made him think irresistibly of a country glade, peaceful except for the sound of water bubbling over a fall. Every so often there was a cadenced syllable which the voices fell over.

Hoffman entered the room from which the singing came. He stood on the threshold, swaying slightly, staring at the faces which were in turn staring to the other end of the room. They did not appear to see him, and he studied their faces with feelings of disgust and revulsion. They were flat and almost featureless; the noses were small protuberances on the white masses which were their faces. And presently Hoffman's eyes were drawn to what they were looking at. He gasped with astonishment, for the accompaniment to the singing was not of sound, as one would expect. It was visual! At the far end of the room was a vague swaying as of vapor. The movements of this vapor coincided exactly with the cadences of the singing in such a fitting and beautiful manner that Hoffman knew it was no coincidence. He watched for a long time; then there came an interruption. A dull booming sound which filled the air with reverberations; it seemed to be a signal of some kind, for all the people made ready to go. Hoffman, not wishing to face them all at once, went out, and began climbing a flight of steps. After what seemed hours he reached the platform which was at the top of the building. He stood there, staring at the moon, vaguely aware of some annoying detail. It was one of those little things which plague one when everything seems all right. At last it came to him what it was. The moon had been behind him when he had entered the temple. He was now staring opposite to the entrance and it was before him. It was larger, too. He stared at it, then swung around, and the mystery was solved. There were two moons!

Reflecting that this was probably due to some refraction of light, he turned to a survey of the horizon, and gasped. For across the plain before him was rushing a great wall of water. At terrific speed it swept onwards. Soon it was washing at the foot of the hill. Higher and higher climbed the angry waves, surging round the very foot of the temple itself. And above, inscrutable, the two moons passed each other. Sick and dizzy, Hoffman clung to the platform, staring down on the sea. He heard the thunder of feet on the stairs, knew that the people were coming. Suddenly he felt afraid of them, and looked for a way of escape. Above him was circling a large bird, of such a size that he thought it would be well able to bear his

weight. He leapt from the platform as it circled nearer. . . To miss . . . He was falling . . . below him the hungry waves waited. Then blackness . . .

WHEN HOFFMAN recovered consciousness he was lying on a grass bank, clutching the thick and abundant grass with both hands. It was a beautiful green bank that bordered a slow-moving stream. Wisps of steam curled leisurely from the surface of the stream; the ground, Hoffman noticed, was very hot. The earth trembled continually. All these things were subservient to what he really looked at.

At his side was standing the most beautiful girl he had ever seen in his life. He thought to himself as he lay looking at her that if he had ever had an ideal at all in his mind, she filled it. Her dark eyes looked back at him as she said, in a voice that was soft and fitting to her appearance: "You have come, my lord. I have waited for you so long. You must never leave me again."

For a long time Hoffman was content to lie there, looking at her. But presently he began to take notice of other things. One was the sky, which was a heavy grey in colour, without trace of sun. This greyness shrouded the hill-tops and was only just above them. From out of it a forest ran down to the bank of the stream; a thick forest unlike any he had seen before. The trees in it were thick and contorted, as if living things that had once been animate and had frozen into immobility while they writhed. Hoffman turned his attention to the girl again.

"Where am I?"

"In the forest of Ardu."

"The forest—never heard of it."

"Have you not?"

"No."

"That is strange," she replied, non-committally.

"What country is this?"

"Avina."

Hoffman shook his head. "I thought I knew every country there was, but I have never heard of that."

She smiled in a carefree manner. "Never mind."

"Where are the people?" the man asked.

She looked puzzled. "Which people? No people live here."

"Then what are you doing here?"

"I came alone, to find you."

"Then how did you know I was coming?"

This time she laughed in such a strange and mysterious manner that for a moment Hoffman thought her mad.

"My lord," she said, "I knew you were coming. Was it not written that you should come? Did not the authorities of Tanye inform me that my mate was to be found here in so many days? Have I not come and found you? Have I not passed through the jungle unharmed, as was prophesied? The immutable laws said that I would come safely here and find you, and the immutable laws can not be wrong. I am here and you are here. It is enough."

"It seems to be," Hoffman remarked. He was taken aback by the information. "And do we go back to Tanye?"

She shook her dark-haired head. "The laws of Tanye are that the newly-mated must remain away from Tanye for a period of one year. For that time they must live where they first met. Then they may go to the city."

"Oh! It seems as if someone has been planning my fate for me."

Hoffman ventured what he thought was a cruel thrust. "How will it be

if I do not agree to this and tell you that I do not wish to mate with you?"

The girl laughed outright. "You can not go against your own self, nor against your own destiny. The laws of Tanye are never wrong. They knew that you would love me and that I would love you, so the meeting was made. The only thing we have to do is to get accustomed to each other in the period of time allowed us. That is so we go back to Tanye balanced. It is all arranged."

"And do the immutable laws of Tanye say that I shall stay?"

She turned mystical eyes on him.

"That is unknown to me. Only the Ruling Ones know whether our mating will last or end. May it endure as Tanye endures."

"So be it," answered Hoffman. "What is your name?"

"Lulla," was the answer.

DAYS CAME and went. To Hoffman it was the happiest time he had ever known. There were strange beasts and creatures in the jungle, but these did not furnish Hoffman and the girl with food, for they lived entirely off vegetables and fruit. But if they were vegetarians, the animals were not; often the two would have to flee from the wrath of some malignant brute whose path they had chanced to cross.

Until there came a day when the smile was missing from the face of Lulla.

"What is the matter?" Hoffman asked, taking her in his arms.

"We must part, I do not know for how long. Tomorrow we should have gone to Tanye. But I shall wait for your return."

"Who says we must part?" asked the man.

The girl smiled sadly. "The laws of Tanye," she murmured, softly. "A messenger has been."

The afternoon of that day was hot; Hoffman thought it the hottest day in this so-hot land. He fell asleep on the grass bank where he and Lulla had first met . . .

There came to him the touch of her lips on his mouth, filling his sleep with sweetness, and he awoke to find her gone. The sun had sunk below the horizon, for the sky was dark, hanging like a pall. Hoffman felt that it was choking him.

"Lulla! Lulla!" he cried, raising himself. The echo seemed to come back mockingly from the jungle.

He staggered across the clearing; as he did so, it seemed the ground itself opened. It shook and from it rose great flames. And then his whole self was blotted out in the death that came upon him; the torturing agony of death by fire. Abruptly it was over, and he was thrown into the blackness of nothing . . . . .

CHAPTER III

HOFFMAN'S EYES, almost against his will, forced themselves open. He lay on a couch in a small room; the walls rose around him, translucent and glowing. He rose, and crossed to the window of the room. He saw that he was in a very high building and that all around him rose other high buildings. Overhead, aeroplanes made transit. Hoffman turned, and passed through the door. In the passage outside, people were crowding into an elevator. He joined them, and was borne downward at a terrific rate. Then he found himself standing alone, while all the other people rushed headlong in one direction. More leisurely he followed, but once outside the building he found himself

being borne along in a great throng of people. At last he succeeded in forcing his way out of the crush, to stare at a great dancing sign on a wall. In great red letters the flickering sign shouted: *"Telenews. Danger! Danger! Buy the Telenews! Enemy's new electric death-ray! Buy the Telenews!"*

Instantly the letters shouted danger, repeated the news over and over again like a mad refrain. At the other side of the road, a man had climbed on to a low roof and was standing staring down on the throng. His hands were crossed on his breast but his eyes flashed fire. "Mad city!" he screamed suddenly at the top of his voice. "Repent! Repent! The Kingdom is at hand!"

What kingdom he meant Hoffman never knew, for at that moment some men in uniform ran on to the roof, and the man, still gesticulating wildly, disappeared from view. So Hoffman turned, followed the throng into a large building close by. The room they entered was a bedlam of noise, for a thousand bells seemed to be ringing. On a dais in the center stood a man, loudly reciting what to Hoffman was a meaningless string of figures. He was dressed in a loose robe and the sweat dripped continuously from his face. He never paused to wipe it off, but recited, rapidly: "War Loans 496 . . 496 . . Death Ray Trust 795 . . 795 . . Electric Ray Co. 697 . . 697 . . Amalgamated Chemicals 777 . . 777 . ."

And on the wall behind him, making his crying seem useless, a large screen was portraying every figure he cried, flashing them across, one after the other. The people were as if intoxicated, drinking in the figures which apparently meant either ruin or triumph for them; head aching with the noise, Hoffman staggered out into the street. Tranquil a moment, he breathed deeply. The sign was still active: *"Battle of death-rays! Buy the Telenews! Our rays checking the enemy's!"*

Abruptly it flickered out, and the one word rose in enormous letters of red: *"Danger!"* As that happened, there came the sound of a hundred sirens, shrilly rending the air to atoms, breaking the peace that had held it. The voice of the sirens screamed "Danger!"

Pell-mell, people began pouring out of the building from which Hoffman had just emerged. Their faces were drawn and haggard, as if at one moment everything was lost. Panic seized them; they rushed headlong, as if aware of some destination that promised safety. And then there came, seemingly from far away, a long-drawn out screaming. Louder it roared, then was within the city. With its coming, came a wave of intense heat. In the distance the buildings seemed to sway, melt, and fall. Onward the destruction raced, lapping everything in its path. . . Again nothingness claimed Hoffman . . .

GRADUALLY the blackness turned to grey, then that too dissolved. Hoffman found himself lying on a stone slab. In direct contrast to the roar of noise that had last held his ears, everything was still and silent. He slid from the slab to the ground and stared about him. Around rose great stone arches, or rather great upright stones that had other stones laid across the top of them. The scene was crude, yet imposing; a certain rugged grandeur was suggested. A cold wind was driving between them, bringing with it sleet and rain. Hoffman felt miserable, wished himself far from the ill-chosen place. He was about to

set out across the moor which stretched in every direction when he observed a group of men approaching. Quickly he concealed himself behind one of the great stones and watched as a row of men in long white robes marched slowly to the center where the great slab stood on which he had first found himself. They bore with them a bound captive whom they placed on the slab. Curious, Hoffman went nearer. A knife was brandished by one of the men, one who seemed to be the leader. Hoffman stood rooted in horror. And as he stood there, it seemed that the man assumed the features of the inventor, Tate—his friend—and the knife became a syringe. The robe he wore became a long white coat. The rough stone arches around him fell away; the walls of the laboratory came into being and hardened beneath the glare of electric lights. In the center of the room stood the glass case, with the side open. The slab was no longer there. Hoffman leaned forward and saw that his own form lay there.

"Stop!" he cried, as Tate prepared to thrust the syringe in. Incontinently, he leaped and fell heavily across himself, his arms outstretched to protect himself. "Stop!" he cried again. Then he felt the stab of the thing in Tate's hand and knew no more.

HOFFMAN DRANK the whisky-and-soda at one gulp. His friend stared at him over the glasses.

"Well, did you enjoy yourself?"

Hoffman nodded. "An interesting experience. And all in four hours!"

"Three and a half, to be precise," returned the other.

"The time was not evened out, was it?"

"How do you mean?"

"As far as I see, there were four periods. They were quite distinct from each other, and they did not occupy the same length of time. I suppose you were responsible for that?"

"Yes, I must confess that that was my work. They were not even, as you surmise. The first period ran from eight o'clock until ten o'clock, the second from ten o'clock until 11.05, the third from 11:05 until 11:20, and the last from 11:20 to 11:30."

"What was your reason for doing that?"

"It depended upon the effects. In the first and second period, I had better effects to use."

"Could you tell me what you represented?"

"Yes. But first let me hear your adventures."

Hoffman recounted to him all that had happened. "And the next time," he said, "I want to go back to the second life. I want to see what the outcome of that life is."

Tate was strangely excited. "I wonder? Is it not strange that such a working of mind should be created? Could you almost believe in the existence of those worlds you dreamed, even now?"

"They are the clearest dreams I ever had," Hoffman confessed, frankly. "So much so that I can hardly believe they are dreams but fragments of some other lives."

"And you would like to return to them?"

"To the second," his friend corrected. "For after all that was the most interesting life. It was full of the promise of things to come, too. The first one was not, nor were the third and fourth."

"I will now tell you what I did to cause you to have such dreams,"

Tate said. "I put you into a trance-like state through the use of Ni-gas."

"Ni-gas?"

"Yes, I have called it 'Ni-gas' for want of a better name. It is somewhat similar to chloroform, in that it creates strange fancies . . . I put you in that state, and then you were ready. In the first dream I forced upon you the conception of life on Mars."

"So that's why there were two moons?"

"Yes," retorted his friend, laughing. "I concentrated on what I knew of Mars, which was not really much. The idea of lashing tides of Mars is entirely my own idea. I do not know whether it is a false theory or not. If the Martian moons have as much effect on the Martian seas as Earth's moon has upon ours, there is bound to be a stormy sea, because of the different position of the moons. The rest you yourself were responsible for."

" . . . You concentrated on what you knew of Mars. Yes, but how did you communicate that to me?"

"Your ears are open even while you are unconscious. Through them I sent what noises I made. On that bench is a microphone. It is connected to your—er—coffin. Through that microphone I sent the sound which you interpreted as the tides of Mars."

"Yes," Hoffman persisted, "but that does not explain your transmission of thought."

"That was not difficult. Telepathy. You know that telepathic communication is possible between two people who are awake. When one lies under the influence of Ni-gas and the other is aware of that, the thing is easy . . . From the bounds of impracticability it becomes a thing of normality; sensible, easy; and lo! the thing was done . . ."

"BUT THE SECOND dream?" Hoffman interrupted, breathlessly.

"Venus. I have always imagined a cloud-wrapped planet, although I have never studied astronomy. Also abundant plant life. Get that?"

"Hoffman nodded. "In plenty. Animals, too. No, Tate, it won't do; that world was not a dream."

Tate shook his head. "It was only a dream, Hoffman."

Hoffman insisted, "I know there is such a place as entered into the second dream."

"If you allow the truth of the second dream, then you must be prepared to allow the truth of them all."

"Then I am."

Tate sighed. "Have it your own way. I have just told you that they were created artificially. If you cannot believe that, I cannot compel you to do so."

"But, Tate," Hoffman interrupted, trying to explain his point of view, "I am not denying that you compelled the effects. I will agree that you did. But still those worlds were true."

"How could they be?"

"Don't you see? You propelled me into some other world. That is, what you tried to do, and that is what you succeeded in doing."

"You mean to say that there are real substantial worlds in these dream worlds we know?"

"That is right. It is not substantial, to *our* ideas; that I will not for a moment presume to say, but that it is substantial in its own way I know. I mean, you know very well that when you are dreaming that dream is very lifelike. Is that not so? Yes. That dream, if it is not lifelike, is very real. You know noth-

ing of your real life in it; you live in it just as fully as you do in real life. Or such is my experience, at any rate."

"I begin to follow your argument."

"Good. I maintain that there are other worlds—call them shadow worlds if you wish—but they are just as real as this is, and they are just as ephemeral as this is."

"I understand what you mean."

"I am glad . . . What of the third and fourth dreams?"

"The third dream was an attempt to send you into the future. Hell! What if you have really been there?"

"Maybe. I can imagine the end of the world coming via man's own folly."

"The last dream was an attempt to send you into the past. It was short because I did not like the way you were breathing. Very heavily."

"I do not want to go back into the past again. It was dreadful. Let me live in the present in the world of Tanye."

"I will admit that the second dream had the greatest effect upon me of the four," Tate said. "I received from you some thought of the world; towards the latter end I was almost with you. But for the alarm going I might have been."

"The alarm?"

"Yes. Because I had no alarm the first dream overran its proper boundary. So I fixed an alarm for the second dream."

Hoffman yawned.

"Yes," said Tate, rising, "I think we will get some rest. We could both do with some."

"I may even dream of the world without your help," laughed Hoffman.

"I don't think you will. At least, not without the help of Ni-gas."

CHAPTER IV

IT SEEMED to Hoffman the next day that Tate was a different man. He spoke very little, as if he had no wish to talk to his friend.

"Take a walk this afternoon," he remarked in response to something Hoffman had said. "It is beautiful over the moors." And he added, pointedly: "I wish to be alone for a while."

Hoffman, thinking it best to humor him, did as he ordered. But he found nothing beautiful about the moors. They may have been so in the summer, he thought; certainly they were not in the winter.

It was twilight when he made his way back to the home of Tate, aware of a strange quickening of his pulse. Grey and somehow threatening, the house lay athwart a small rise, a bulk that in the dusk of day seemed full of evil. At least it seemed so to Hoffman, and he shook his head as if to dispel the illusion.

He knocked and the door opened immediately. Tate stood on the threshold, staring at him. "Come in," he said, curtly.

Hoffman did as he ordered. "What's the matter?" he asked. "You do not seem as if you wanted me to come back."

"Perhaps I didn't," was the startling answer. "You see, Hoffman, I am afraid."

"Afraid? Of what?"

"I am afraid because I do not like how this thing is going. It is going too far for me. Why must you return to this dream-world of Venus? The thought of going again to Venus is the predominant thought in your mind, and has been all day."

"I must know this Tanye," the other said, quietly.

"Tanye? Tanye? A dream city, you fool!"

"Tate!"

Tate shook his head slowly. "I am sorry. My nerves are in shreds. I have had a bad night . . . Tanye . . . It is a dream; there never was and never will be such a place."

"There is a city of Tanye. I know there is. I must go and see it. I shall give you facts about it; tell you what it is like and how life is governed, and tell you how the rulers of Tanye can see into the future."

"See into the future! A gipsy's dream, my dear Hoffman. Your senses are warped; you are not normal. Leave it for tonight. Remember I have a strain to bear in this work . . ."

"I understand that. But cannot you see that it is absolutely necessary for me to go back to Tanye? I must, *I must!*"

The last word was almost shrieked out. Tate stared up, bitterly, at his friend.

"Really, there is no need to shout at me. This thing seems to be driving us apart. If you are going to carry on in this way I shall refuse to take part in another experiment."

"You—you would not do that?"

"Don't tempt me to back out. I have signed no contract to go ahead with it, anyway."

Hoffman clasped his hands to his face. "What is this life coming to? To-day what has it been? It has been like a nightmare to me. How I have hated it, longing as I was for that Avina landscape. I am afraid, Tate; afraid! I am afraid of these worlds that cross each other as they do; I am afraid of this shadow world we live in; for pity's sake let me go to that world where Lulla waits!"

"Lulla," said the other man, sourly. "I think that is the only reason why you wish to go back there. It is your dream-ideal—creation that appeals to you; that is all. Lulla! You madman, you are in love with a dream and nothing more. You talk like a fool."

Hoffman stared at his friend, his hands clenched. "How you have changed! Is this a dream? Only yesterday and you were as full of eagerness for the experiment as I am, and now . . ."

Tate glared back at him with burning eyes. "Why don't you understand, you fool? You poor deluded idiot! Can you not see that you are the only one getting any happiness out of the thing? Can you not see that what means happiness to you means hell to me? Can you not see that I, too, want to see this world fully for myself?"

"You!" Hoffman hissed the word. He drew nearer to Tate. "You want to go? You? I know you! You want to go to Avina, to Tanye and to Lulla, and to rob me of my rightful adventures. That is why you are talking like this; you are madly jealous of the happiness that I am going to find."

"Hoffman! Don't look at me like that! Are you mad to talk such balderdash? I only want to see those worlds from a scientific point of view; I want to see them and see if there is any basis of reality in them. I only want to test them and see if any part can be true—"

"I know, I know," Hoffman interrupted, wearily. "I know what you want. I took the first risk, didn't I? It is only right that I should go again."

"How do you mean you took the first risk?"

"Surely you understand that I had to risk going mad when I embarked on this strange quest?"

"Mad? If you ask me, I think you have gone mad. There never was any danger of a normal person going mad, or I would not have had the experiment."

"I think you are the mad one," returned the other man, steadily. "What could I have met in those lives that would have driven me mad? Many things! If I had not been abnormally steady in mind I should have gone mad when I was in the future world."

"Then let me go this time, and you concentrate."

"To which world would you go?"

"Any—any, I am not particular."

Hoffman laughed harshly. "You wait. I must go back to Avina first. Perhaps some other time you will get your turn. Hold fast to your promise and your science, Tate. You're older than I, and too scientific for time-travel or interplanetary travel, either. I go, and you may go some other time."

"You make me feel like giving you an overdose of Ni-gas!"

"I cannot help that. You have tried my patience to its farthest extent. Come, let us get to work."

"You go for only thirty minutes this time."

"That will be long enough. Heaven knows what you are talking about when you say it is hard work. The whole thing will be over in thirty minutes."

"That's not it; it is the strain that counts. I will give that half-hour on condition that when you return you serve me for half an hour."

"I am agreeable to that. The only fault is that my mind will be full of Venus, and you are not going there."

"Why not?"

"Why not?" Hoffman repeated. "Because you are not. I've staked my claim in that world and no one else can go. Get ready. Let us have no more arguments."

"As you wish," the other retorted, in a low voice.

TOGETHER they entered the laboratory. Tate switched on some lights and Hoffman, without a glance around, went to the glass case and got in, pulling the hinged side shut after him. Tate stood staring at him until a muffled curse from the case reached him. Then he put his hand out, and turned on the Ni-gas. Carefully he watched the regulator which measured every thousandth-part of it. He checked it when it reached the point he knew was the safety limit; his scowl had not left him. He glanced at the clock and set an alarm for thirty minutes. Then a thought struck him. Surely if Hoffman's mind was so full of the thought of Venus he could carry himself there? And if so, could he not take himself also if he were under the influence of Ni-gas?

Tate crossed to a small cupboard and took from it a thing like a gas-mask. It had a long tube attached to it. This he connected to a socket on the Ni-gas container. For a moment he held the gas full on, then forced it back as he felt his brain slipping.

And suddenly, to Tate, the walls of the laboratory had dematerialized and were gone. Around him rose great trees. Warily he stepped behind one as he saw Hoffman enter a clearing in front of him. Through narrowed lids he watched the man as he crossed the clearing and came out on the grass bank by the steaming river. Hoffman stood there a moment, his eyes on the water. Then suddenly his cry rang out: "Lulla! Lulla!"

There was no answer. Time after

time Hoffman called, and then with a despairing cry flung himself on to the grass bank. Presently he set off through the forest, Tate at his heels, watching him closely, and never letting him get far in front. For many days they journeyed thus, Hoffman never seeming to suspect that he was followed. Until a day came when they stood on the edge of the forest, staring down into a hollow where lay a shining silvery city.

CHAPTER V

INSTINCTIVELY, Tate knew this was the city of Tanye. He watched as Hoffman began descending the slope, then followed, circumspectly. They entered the glowing mass, with its strange square buildings; buildings which did not seem real, or if they were, were made of some material akin to glass. And Hoffman went on into the centre of this mass that was Tanye. He went as if there was a purpose in his mind. He went as if his will was no longer his own. He went as if he was drawn by some alien power. And the city was silent, as if it were dead and knew not mankind. It seemed to Tate like a thing with a soul of its own, aloof and distant from them. Relentlessly he followed on the heels of Hoffman.

At last they came to a towering edifice which seemed to be the heart of the strange city. It was of the same glass-like material as all the other buildings, but overshadowed them with its height, rising as it did into the mists that filled the sky. This building Hoffman entered, Tate so close behind him that had he turned he would have seen him. But Hoffman never looked behind. Unchallenged, they came to a great room. In the centre of it was a platform, and on this platform lay a woman . . . A woman who seemed of substance and yet at the same time of no substance, so that Tate paused and watched, silent and astonished. Not so Hoffman. His wild cry rang out: "Lulla! Lulla!"

The woman looked at him. "You have come," she said softly, and rose.

"I have come," he retorted, and stopped short, looking at her.

"Why do you not come to me?" she murmured.

Hoffman backed a step. "No . . . No . . . You are not Lulla."

A strange look contorted the face of the being. "I am Lulla," she said, in a husky voice that tore across the heart of the watcher by the door.

"Come," she ordered.

Slowly, step by step, Hoffman went to her, drawn seemingly against his will. Up the steps he went to the platform as if an invisible wire was drawing him, marionette-like. Tate gulped and stared, the scene stamping itself on the retina of his brain.

Suddenly, in this tense moment of silence, Hoffman reached the platform.

"Come," she repeated, in that deadly whisper that stirred Tate with its malevolence.

And abruptly her hand was out and she had drawn Hoffman on to the platform. As she laid her hands on him the beads of sweat started out from Hoffman's face. And as he stood there, on the platform, the whole devil's maze of things in this city seemed to commence working. From every side great shafts of light came, all the colors of the spectrum meeting in a blinding glare of white on the platform and lighting up the two figures. They were swaying as if in a rhythmic dance of death. And out

of the heart of that light there came to Tate words, the words of the woman, sibilant and passionate.

"This is our marriage . . . This is the marriage of Tanye . . . This is the culmination in the Purifying Light. . . . This . . Man of other world, this is my way of escape. Long have I waited your coming, for it was written that I would not escape from this world until I was released by the coming of one from another. That release lies here. I change to your world and you remain, the vague and chained spirit of Tanye. You will remain here for all time, alone, or until your freedom comes and you escape as I have escaped. I go to your world to work my will amongst the inhabitants. Alone no longer! You have lost your world; and in the losing of it you have lost your soul; that vague combination of elements whose secrets Tanye solved and which shall remain for ever the riddle of Tanye. And the glory of Tanye is no more; there remains only the lost city, unpeopled now . . . Except by you . . ."

TATE SCREAMED out in the horror that gripped him, stifling and choking him. He rushed forward to that platform. "Stop! Stop!" His voice echoed through the hall. . . It was followed by the scream of the Being of Tanye.

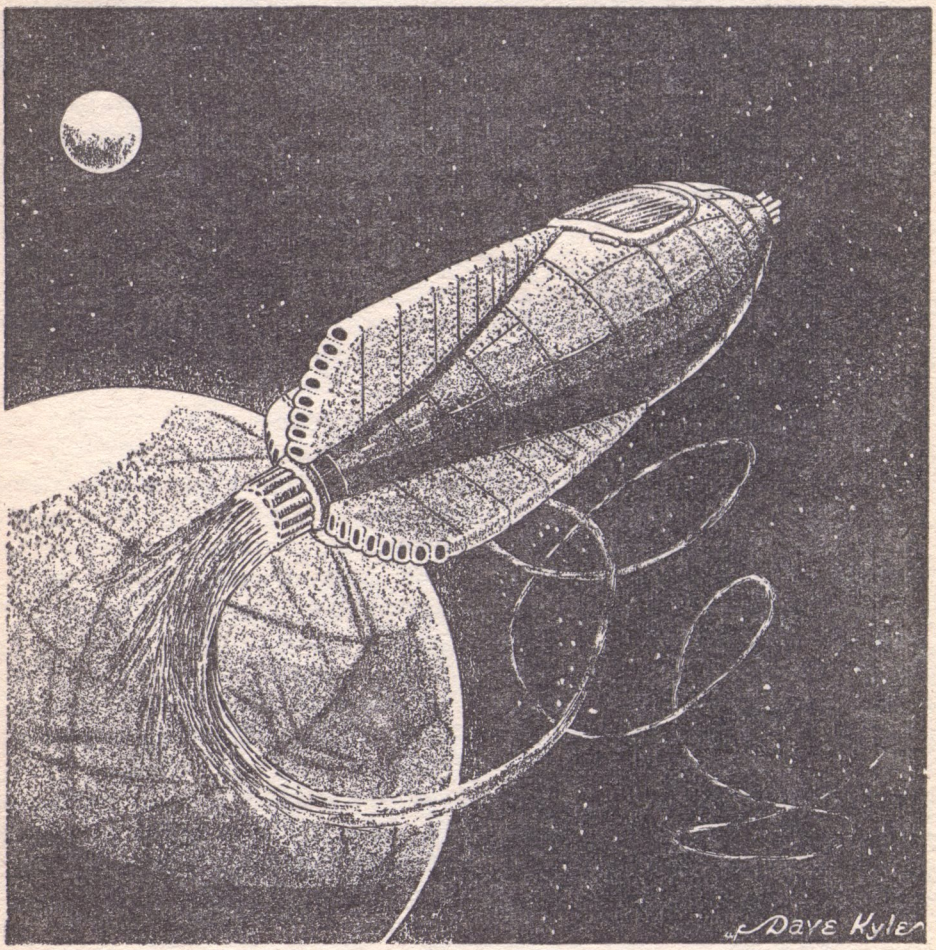
There came a wild clamoring that seemed to shake the very building. The light burst apart, and Tate found himself abruptly back in the laboratory, bathed in the cold glow of the white electric light. The alarm was ringing; he tore the mask from his face. He stared at the case in the centre of the room, and shuddered in terror. That body in the case was moving, contorting itself; flinging itself against the glass as if it did not know the way out! He rushed madly forward and stared at it, then saw the eyes. His wild scream rang out as he stared in them and recognized the eyes of the Being of Tanye! It was come to work havoc on earth! He plunged across the room and tore down the Ni-gas regulator. He saw the finger of it leap round as he put it at full speed and heard the subdued hiss of it entering the glass case. The figure seemed to be motionless again. Leaving the regulator open, Tate went forward to look. It was still alive, for the eyes were open. With the wild cry of a wounded animal, the man ran into another room, to return with a can, the contents of which he scattered on the floor. The liquid seeped deeply into the floor. The Thing in the case was moving again, was fumbling at the side. Tate thanked heaven for the heavy glass plate that kept it from bounding out to throw itself at his throat, and rushed to the door. There he paused to strike a match and toss it on the floor. There was a roar and the flames shot to the ceiling . . . He rushed outside and stood rocking on his heels as he watched the flames shoot out of the windows. Watched, too, as the chemicals exploded, hurling masses of brickwork into the air. Then presently the flames died down, and he approached nearer. Suddenly he gave a wild cry, backed away. Shriek followed shriek and he staggered away, and ran. Half-running, half-leaping, he threw himself onwards. Foam flecked his lips and he cast himself down, his limbs refusing to carry him any further.

There he was found later, gibbering to himself. And the verdict at the trial of Reginald Tate for the murder of Arthur Hoffman was "guilty but insane."

NO PLACE TO GO

by Edward J. Bellin

(Author of "The Touching-Point," "Ultrasphere," etc.)



There was Mars and there was Gallacher in his rocket with plenty of fuel, yet he could never reach the red planet! No place to go in rockets!

Cold and lonely as he roared through space, Gallacher whimpered softly to himself. Mars was so far behind, and Earth so far ahead ...

GALLACHER was no doctor of Philosophy or Science, no more than a humble 'mister', and as such could not hope to rise beyond the modest university readership which he had held for some score of years. He was in the Department of Physics, and his job was little more than the especially dirty one of correcting examinations and reading the hardy perennial themes submitted by generation after generation of students. He was also the man who punched calculating machines late into the afternoon, tabulating work of men higher up and preparing their further ground.

He left the university grounds as

the sun was setting over the Hudson, jammed a dark green, crumpled felt hat on his head and walked briskly home to the five-room bungalow where he had lived since his marriage.

Entering through the kitchen door he was greeted by no more than a curt nod from his wife, and his buoyant gait reduced to a hesitant shuffle. For Mrs. Gallacher, with her bitter tongue, endless ills and higgling economy was the terror of her husband.

Dinner was, as always, a grim affair punctuated by little bitter queries from the distaff side—money, always. Why didn't he stand up to Professor Van Bergen for a raise? Then he'd be able to get a little car and not have to walk two miles from home and back on the highway like a common tramp. And why didn't he see her cousin, the realtor, about another place near here but where those terrible Palisades wouldn't arouse her acrophobia. Gallacher had shuddered when his wife, seven years ago, first proudly told him that she "had" acrophobia. He knew then that it would not be the last said on the subject.

Vaguely he wiped his mouth with a napkin and said: "'M going down for a little tinkering . . ."

"Tinkering!" spat Mrs. Gallacher poisonously. "You in that cellar where I can't keep my washing machine because it's cluttered up with—"

He heard her out, smiling deprecatingly, and without answering went into the tiny foyer and opened the cellar door with two keys. His wife did not have copies of either.

Down the steps he snapped a switch, and the plot-sized basement sprang into sharp being under the glareless brilliance of the most modern refractory glow-tube installation. He smiled proudly on the place and its furnishings. This, he thought, is my real life, and I can deny it nothing.

From the shelf of black-bound, imperishable notebooks, through great racks of reagents, turning lathe, forge, reference library, glassware and balances to the electronics and radioactivity outfits, nothing was lacking to make up an almost complete experimental set-up for advanced work in physics, chemistry or practical mechanics.

Gallacher, sitting there among his tools, had a spark of something in his eyes that would have baffled his wife. He opened a notebook and stared almost feverishly down at the half-written page. The last words had been: "—to dry set in 12 hrs. This cmpnd to be xmnd tomorrow."

Swallowing gingerly, he turned the book face down and lifted a tray from a drying rack cunningly placed in the cool draft of a window high up in the wall. Removing a tiny speck of the marble-sized, flinty mass that rested on the glass surface he inserted it into a spectroscope's field chamber, then snapped on the current that sent his electric bills soaring higher month by month. The speck glowed a vivid white; he squinted through a series of colored filters at the incandescent particle. Then, sighing inaudibly, he lit the projector's bulb. On the calibrated ground-glass screen appeared the banded spectrum of the compound.

Gallacher ticked off the bands with a pencil. Thoughtfully he turned up his notebook and wrote: "Spctrscpe confirms 100%."

MRS. GALLACHER was in bed, a magazine flung irritably on the floor beside her. As she heard

the steps of her husband coming slowly up the cellar stairs she settled her hair and scowled.

He came through the door and blinked dazedly. "Still up?" he asked. "I had some special work to do—finishing my tinkering. . . ." He smiled feebly.

"Tinkering!" She crowded into his own word all the vitriolic indignation of which her small, mean soul was capable. Then, seeing his face, she paused, frightened and almost terrified. For it was white and giddy with triumph. "Andrew," she said sharply, "what have you done?"

"My series of experiments," he said mildly. "Tonight I closed my notebooks. My work is finished—and successful." Then, astonishingly, he blazed forth: "Edith! What I have done no man has done before me—in this house I have synthesized the perfect rocket fuel." He smiled as he saw her face pale. "The fumbling adventurers who tried three times to reach the Moon and finally blew themselves up—their mistake was not to wait for me. Their fuel was not only dangerous but too weak for the job; any adding machine could have told them that. I have been working with explosive propellants for seventeen years, and have you ever heard one of my thousands of tests? No, for I worked calmly and with small quantities. And yet through me the universe has been opened to man! Venus, Luna, Mars—"

"Mars," whispered Mrs. Gallacher inaudibly. Then, for the first time in many years she addressed her husband sweetly: "Andrew, what are you going to do now?"

"Publish my facts," he rapped. "Take my place among the immortals of science."

"Just—have them printed in some magazine?" she asked, bewildered.

"That would be sufficient," he said. "I shall give my work to the world." He turned into himself, smiling secretly at the thought of honorary degrees, banquets, plaques. . . .

"Andrew," snapped his wife, "if you think that I'll allow you to waste this stuff you're mistaken. For your own sake, Andrew, for your own sake I ask you to come to your senses!" Her eyes grew hard as she mused, "We could be rich—richer than anyone!" A sudden purpose crystallized in her mind. "How big would one of your ships have to be?" she demanded.

"Thinking of that Lunar Rocket?" he asked. "Foolishness! All a ship powered with my propellant needs is living quarters, a hull, about a half-ton firing chamber with an infusible exhaust tube and tanks holding a few cubic feet. Foolproof firing apparatus weighs about two pounds. I could build a rocket myself."

"Yes," she said abstractedly. "I know that." And in her mind the proud boast was spinning, "Wife of the first interplanetary traveller!" How she could lord it over the full-professors' wives who wouldn't invite her to tea more than twice a year! She'd show them— "Andrew," she began carefully. . . .

AND SO IT WAS that Gallacher found himself with a sick headache and groaning muscles roaring through space in the tiniest one-man rocket imaginable, following only his bare specifications, from end to end no larger than a light automobile. Far astern was Mars, red planet that he had not reached, and frustration bit into his vitals.

He had resigned his readership and

raised money from relations, finance companies and every source he knew of to build this little space-scooter. His exultation as he plunged through the stratosphere of Earth and the sky went from violet to black had tempered and was now quite gone. The flaw—well, how could he have known? He had been a physico-chemist, and this insane adventuring was none of his doing, he thought confusedly. Ahead he could plainly see North America. He wondered if he could land as quietly as he had taken off, not one person in the world knowing except himself and his wife. Then he would publish the incredible proofs of his journey and his fuel. Then he would patent his compound and possibly lease contracts for its manufacture.

Era of progress incredible, to come from his mind alone! Huge ships of unemployed immigrants leaving for the fertile soil of Venus. Astronomers to establish observatories on airless asteroids and see with incredible clarity the answers to old, vexatious riddles — freighters winging their ways to icy worlds undreamed of for rare hauls of alien artisanry and produce, making Mother Earth a richer and fairer place to be on—

He laughed chatteringly. No; he had forgotten again. It was not to be so; it was not to be at all. Ahead there loomed New York State. He fired off his one braking rocket-tube and began to head South above the Hudson. Why not, he wondered, plunge beneath those waters—now? He shuddered. If he was to land it would be without photographs, without data, without a hope for the future of Mr. Gallacher except a slow, corroding old age.

The rocket passed low above Poughkeepsie, and he began to recognize landmarks. Ahead were the palisaded banks of the river, and above —East Side—was his cottage. He had taken off from a field near by, and there he was to have landed in triumph.

His headache was worse; the needles of pain lanced into his skull so savagely that he almost shot past the field without seeing it. But, not quite. Almost at the last moment possible, he slanted the ship downward and cut loose all his brakes. He hit Earth with a terrible shock, for all the safety devices aboard, and lay on his side in the canted pit of the rocket until he heard a vigorous clanging on the side. His wife's face peered exultantly through the quartz porthole. He looked at her, struggling to recognize the woman, then reached out to open the heavy door of the little craft. His strength was not enough; he heaved himself to his feet and leaned on the sealing bar, bearing down heavily. It gave. With a sucking noise, the rubber-lipped door yielded and swung open. He lifted himself through the port and dropped onto the ground, resting against the warm side of the ship.

"I came over as soon as I heard the rockets," said his wife. "Are you all right?"

"Sick," he answered weakly, holding his head.

"Never mind that," she said. "How did the ship behave? Did you have any trouble?"

"'M a scientist," he replied plaintively, "not an adventurer. Shouldn't have gone—my fuel—useless . . ." His voice trailed off incoherently.

"Useless!" she snapped, startled. "You got to Mars!"

"No!" he gasped. "I didn't. Nobody can."

"Andrew!" she cried, "what are you saying?"

With a terrible effort he fought his way through a haze of pain and confusion. He said, in lecturer style: "Now and then meteors hit Earth that do not behave as meteors should." Someone had to know this, he thought bitterly, before he ran down. He could see figures far away, figures sprinting toward the ship.

"They *drift* down, observers say—Charles Fort tells of many instances—yet, as soon as they strike Earth, or rather, high ground, they fall normally—the rest of the way. Just heavy pieces of rock."

The woman stared bespelled at his blank, lax face. "The reason—didn't know. But now—know too well. I didn't land on Mars. No one can. Gravity is just like magnetism. *Likes repel each other.* I was charged with Earth gravity; Mars charged with the same sort of stuff." Gallacher laughed hysterically. "I couldn't get near it," he complained. "Nobody can — meteors that land the usual way have another kind of gravity—from outside the Solar System, must be."

Suddenly, bitterly, he cried: "Shouldn't have gone! Fuel, useless. No good for anything except rockets. Rockets useless. Nowhere to land. No place to go in rockets!"

And those were the last sane words that he uttered in his life.

THE STAR MAKER

Probably the most powerfully imaginative science-fiction book ever written is *The Star Maker* by Olaf Stapledon. The book is a sequel to Professor Stapledon's *Last and First Men,* which was a complete history of mankind from the first World War to the end of the very last species of humanity two billion years from now on Neptune. It seemed impossible to write any sequel to as final a work as that but in *The Star Maker* the impossible has been accomplished. The sequel is a history of the entire cosmos, all existence, from beginning to end and even past those boundaries!

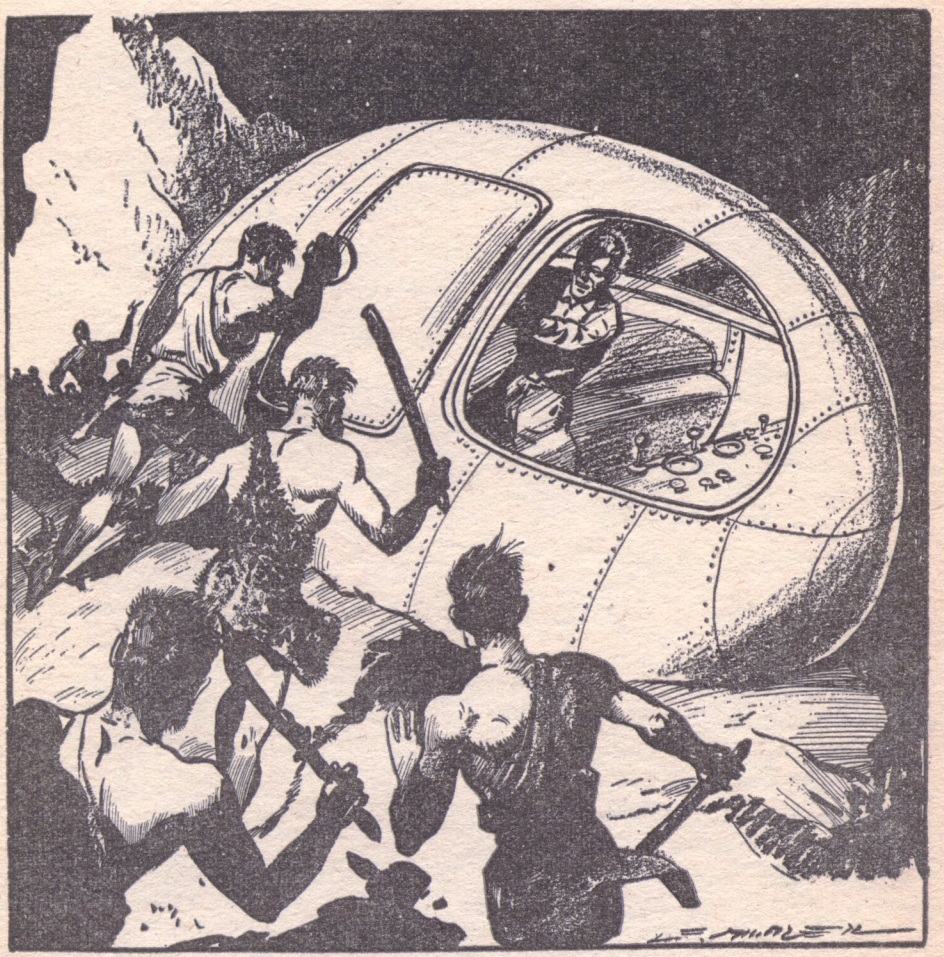
Stapledon takes a disembodied human on a tour through the cosmos and through time, first visiting planets similar to ours, then developing to take in the whole of the universe, the minds existing on all types of worlds. The variety is breathtaking. Nautiloid worlds, symbiotic civilizations, and warfare between worlds and suns. We read of artificial planets, of galactic federations, their rises and declines, of the coming to being of a galactic mind, the colonization of dead stars, the "Supreme Moment of the Cosmos," and the gradual decline and death of the stars and galaxies.

But that does not end the book! We go on to the complete end of existence and onwards to attain hints of other existences based upon different laws and developments. *The Star Maker* is an unbelievable book, marvelously done, that leaves the reader utterly breathless.

TIME, INC.

by John L. Chapman

(Author of "Lunar Gun," "Crystal World," etc.)



When the Time Agents set up in business, they didn't figure on there being more than one possible stream of time.

CASMIR OF THE HORDES set the huge box down and looked at the door before him. It was plainly marked: "Stanley, Holmes and Forthmiller—Time Agents. Entrance."

Casmir hesitated, adjusting his robe-like tunic, running his hands through his dark, unkempt hair. Then he entered, his sandaled feet crossing the floor noiselessly.

Forthmiller was tall, red-faced and

curly-haired. Holmes was small and wiry. Stanley was dark, obviously the youngest of the three.

As one, they turned and stared at their visitor.

"Yes?" prompted Jack Stanley.

"You're the time agents, I take it? I'll introduce myself. I am Casmir, of the Hordes of 2012. I wish to be taken to that year as soon as possible."

"A gag!" said Holmes. "Throw him out!"

"Wait!" said Stanley. "2012, you say? You claim you're from that year?"

"Correct."

"But how did you get to 1948?"

"In my time-flyer. It was destroyed this morning—in a laboratory explosion. I have to get back some way, or my mission will be a failure —"

"Woodley's laboratory!" cried Forthmiller, jumping to his feet. "I remember—it was in the morning papers. Woodley was killed."

The future man looked at him curiously. "Yes. His name *was* Woodley at that."

He stepped back, amazed, as a barrage of questions flooded him.

"One at a time!" snapped Stanley. "Tell us—what were you doing with Woodley, and what caused the explosion?"

The other was momentarily perplexed. Then he said: "Why, Woodley had a new weapon, a highly destructive bomb controlled by radio. It employs a new explosive he calls deconite."

"Yeah, but where do you come in?"

"I repeat—I represent the Hordes of 2012. We are at war with the Dwellers. We and the enemy are both weaponless—to any important degree. The Hordes, however, have a time machine. This I used to travel back to the present—on a mission to procure a powerful weapon. You see, all weapons were demolished in the great war of 1994—the war that changed the world and started the Hordes and the Dwellers."

He paused, curious at the amazed expressions of the three time agents.

"Impossible!" scoffed Henry Holmes. "The man's crazy!"

"We'll hear him out," declared Stanley. "Go ahead, you—what about Dr. Woodley? Tell us what happened to him."

"Of course. It's obvious that the doctor had the weapon I was seeking. I landed my time-flyer in his laboratory, went to him and explained my purpose. He was astonished and didn't believe me, but I showed him the machine and thus provided proof of my identity. After some time I persuaded him to release a model of his weapon. I obtained it from him last night and took it with me to his home, where he insisted that I go. He remained at the laboratory, saying he would be along later, and that he would go over the apparatus with me in order to avoid mistakes. He never arrived, for he proceeded to experiment with a new deconite bomb, the bomb that wrecked the laboratory late last night. My time-flyer was destroyed as well. But I still have the weapon, and I must get it to the Hordes in 2012!"

"That," muttered Jack Stanley, "is where we leave off. Our machine doesn't go to the future. It goes only to the past."

"I STILL maintain," argued Henry Holmes, "that a flight to the future is impossible. The future is not tangible, even in the time state."

Casmir of the Hordes looked at the

scientist strangely. "Impossible? Not at all."

"Have you done it?" Holmes inquired, astonished.

"No. We of the Hordes have not travelled in time before. But our principle for future travel is quite simple. It is like the ancient sport called fishing. The fisherman casts his line, and when he makes a catch, he draws the line back to him."

Holmes scoffed. "Fishing and time-travelling—bah!"

Casmir resumed without comment. "In time travel the fisherman is the present. Its time state is stable, and can be used as a pivot to travel pastward or futureward."

"True," murmured Forthmiller. "Our own trips have used the present as a tow, so to speak."

"Of course," said Casmir. "Thus, in your return trips to the present, your flights were not in the exact sense *futureward*. Had you travelled in the opposite direction from your pivot, you would have gone forward—"

"Into nothing!" growled Henry Holmes. "The future is not there yet!"

Casmir ignored him. "The fisherman, in this case the present, casts the time machine in the opposite direction of the pivot. The return flight is similar to the rewinding of the reel."

"The pivot of your time flight," put in Stanley, "was 2012. Right?"

"Exactly. The destruction of my machine was like the fish breaking the line. I lost contact with my pivot. Now then, a minor change or two in your apparatus, and I will show you that future travel is by no means impossible. Are you willing?"

"No," snapped Holmes.

"It's worth a try, Henry," said Stanley. "We'll give him a chance, anyway."

"That settles it," said Forthmiller. "Bring your radio bomb into the lab and we'll turn you loose on Bessie."

BESSIE was eight feet high and fifteen long, and wide enough for the four men to stand comfortably before the intricate control board. Casmir of the Hordes grimaced as he gazed at the array of meters and indicators.

"Strange," he murmured, "that you of the past should have the advanced mechanisms. Had I lacked interest for the ancient books, I'd never have understood your machine."

"It'll be a failure," muttered Holmes.

"We'll see," said Casmir. "Everything is ready. The exact stopping point is clocked. We can start."

Stanley gripped the starting lever, hesitated, and plunged it.

Through the lone circular port the outside world went hazy and vanished. The machine had dematerialized into the time state, which was dead, void and colorless.

A moment slipped by, then the port flourished and took color again. Swiftly, silently, the time machine had leaped the years, to . . . . .

CASMIR HURRIED to the port. He looked once, and shouted: "We've made it! I know the hills and the plains. We've gone futureward—and to the very spot I designated!"

"Nonsense!" snorted Henry Holmes. "It could be any time, any place. How do we know it's 2012?"

"Take it easy," cautioned Forthmiller. "Everything can stand trial—once."

Casmir pulled the metal door aside,

and with an exuberant shout, he fairly leaped outside.

"It's the city!" He was pointing. "The city of the Dwellers!"

The time agents followed his gaze. In the east, rising brilliantly in the morning sunlight, was a silver-sheened city of colossal height and beauty. Gracefully its shimmering towers reached skyward, woven through a narrow pattern of curving roads and archways. It was not a wide city, its base being less than a mile across. Its beauty was in its height.

"Magnificent!" gasped Holmes.

"You see," said Casmir. "This *is* 2012. I recognize the city—it's the home of the Dwellers. If we could destroy those towers, the war would end!"

Jack Stanley looked on in amazement. "You mean—the people of that city are weaponless?"

Casmir nodded. "When the city was built, there was no need for weapons. Nor has there been such a need prior to the Horde rebellion. With the coming of the war, both combatants found themselves defenseless, and unarmed. Of course, there are a few ancient guns in existence, but they are used only by the guards of the city. We have never been able to duplicate them successfully."

He hastened into the time machine again, returning with the large box. He took from it a smaller, black box, a cylindrical tube with several mounting accessories, and ten packages.

"A few deconite bombs," he remarked as he set to mounting the tube, "and the city will be demolished. Dr. Woodley's weapon is that powerful."

"Look," said Forthmiller, scratching his head, "you're going to bomb a city like that—without warning?"

Casmir didn't even look up. "This is war," he said bitterly, "and the supremacy of the Dwellers has existed too long."

He was interrupted by a distant murmuring that floated across the desolation behind them. Together the four men turned. Not far away, the ground dipped into a vast valley, and from it was advancing a strange, roughly-shod group of warriors. First their heads appeared, then their tanned bodies. They carried no useful weapons to speak of, only rocks and crude spears.

They were marching toward the city.

"The Hordes?" asked Stanley, expectantly.

A slow frown crossed Casmir's face. "No," he whispered, "they're dressed as Hordes, but they're not Hordes. They're Dwellers."

"But you said—the Dwellers lived in the city!"

"I know." Casmir was perplexed. "But these are the Dwellers. I'd never mistake them. Besides, the leader you see is Mulr, their dreaded ruler. He governed from his palace in the city—before I went to the past!"

The marchers poured forth from the valley in a never ending stream. There must have been hundreds of them yet hidden from sight. The leader, upon seeing Casmir, held his hand high, and the procession slowed.

"I can't understand it," whispered Casmir. "It must be a trick of some sort. They're Dwellers all right—I'll turn the deconite on them—"

"No!" protested Stanley. "You'll have them charging us—"

But Casmir had swung the metal tube around so it pointed into the air above the valley. When the warriors saw this, Stanley's prediction became

reality. At a shout from Mulr the Dwellers rushed forward with spears upraised.

Casmir uttered a shill cry of terror, dropped the weapon and ran for the city. When the spears and rocks began flying, the time agents took up quick pursuit.

"It's impossible!" wheezed Henry Holmes. "Everything is turned around!"

"Maybe this Mulr knows," panted Forthmiller, "what it's all about. But you ask him, not me."

"They've stopped coming," said Casmir, slowing. "They don't want to charge the city—yet."

"We're not heading back now," growled Forthmiller, wiping perspiration from his face. "The city looks much more inviting."

No one disagreed. At a slow trot, they proceeded into the metropolis.

A SECOND RACE occupied the streets of the city.

"Hordes," murmured Casmir as they walked along the crowded avenues. "The people are Hordes, but they're clothed as Dwellers."

The Hordes stared incredulously at Casmir and his three companions. Unlike the warriors outside the city, they were fabulously robed and immaculate in appearance. As yet, none of them recognized Casmir.

"Rhamnol," said the future-man, "was the leader of the old Horde race. Undoubtedly we'll find him in the city palace. He can explain."

Presently the palace, a lofty tower with a vast, arching entrance, came into view. Casmir led the group through the archway and into a private elevator that shot upward noiselessly.

"You're well acquainted with the city," remarked Henry Holmes.

"I was here once before," replied Casmir dryly, "at a time when hostilities didn't exist."

He took them along a curving corridor, past guards who nodded briefly at him, and into a small, luxurious room.

There sat Rhamnol, the leader of the Hordes, a bulky, short-legged personage with a plump face and tiny eyes.

He looked at Casmir queerly. His voice boomed. "Yes? What do you want?"

"You remember me, Rhamnol! Casmir! I've been to the past!"

The other frowned. "Eh? Casmir? Oh yes, I recall, faintly. Someone reported you missing. Where've you been?"

"To the past! I took our machine —went back before the war. And I found the weapon I was looking for —a great one!"

Rhamnol shifted uneasily, sliding his hands along the sleeves of his robe. "Weapon? Yes, we need weapons, but this machine you mention. Vaguely, I—"

"You've forgotten?" cried Casmir. "What has happened to you and the Hordes, Rhamnol? Did you take the city from the Dwellers?"

Rhamnol was bewildered. "You talk strangely. No, we didn't take the city from the Dwellers—we've always had the city. Don't you remember that? The Dwellers are outside, and they've been trying to overtake us for years—"

"But when I left," Casmir insisted, "it was just the opposite. The Hordes were outside—fighting for the city."

For a long moment Rhamnol sat in silent contemplation.

Henry Holmes mopped his brow, muttering: "It's crazy. It's not possible."

Casmir went on with his story, explaining to Rhamnol the flight to

1948, the destruction of the machine, and the return trip with the time agents. The Horde leader listened intently, and when Casmir had finished, he said:

"The first trip to the future, you say, and according to your friends, it was the first trip beyond the present, which is in this case 1948. That's strange. Could it be—"

"I'm beginning to understand," voiced Henry Holmes. "Why, it's just like I said. I was right! I told you—"

"Two futures!" exclaimed Stanley.

"Not two!" insisted Holmes. "Any number of futures—futures that haven't existed and are nothing but branches of your pivot point."

"Exactly," said Rhamnol. "Your time flight landed you in a different future—one that is patterned after Casmir's original future, save for the fact that the Hordes and Dwellers are turned around. A quirk in time did it—some insignificant event that gave the Hordes complete rule, and left the Dwellers on the plains outside."

"Then," gasped Jack Stanley, "a flight *back* to the pivot point might go astray too! We might land in the wrong 1948!"

"Possibly," murmured Rhamnol. "The machine would be moving through a non-existent future, in relation to the pivot. Anything could happen."

"That's great," opined Forthmiller. "From now on, we can't be sure of anything!"

AT NIGHT the torches of the Dwellers could be seen from the palace balcony, glowing dimly where the valley dipped and shaded the warriors from sight. Likewise, the balcony presented a sweeping view of the magnificent Horde city. Below, the white-robed masses wandered the streets, their voices a hushed murmuring cast adrift among the soaring, windowless towers. The shining full moon climbed into the eastern sky.

"I expect an attack at dawn," were Rhamnol's soft tones. "It will be a weaponless battle."

"Unless," Jack Stanley added quickly, "the Dwellers discover the secret of the deconite gadget."

"They may try to operate the weapon," remarked Casmir. "Mulr is smart enough to comprehend."

"A strange race, these Dwellers," remarked Rhamnol casually. "We of the city have never quite understood them. Their army is frequented by deserters who seem fearful of the odds against them. Many individuals have left the ranks and run madly for the city. As we have no use for them here, and must take great precaution against spies, our only alternative is to shoot them down before they reach the gates."

"That sounds like a lot of fun," said Forthmiller. "Picking 'em off, I mean."

"Seems like the Hordes and Dwellers have been at war for a long time," said Jack Stanley. "They're well informed along those lines."

Rhamnol smiled broadly. "We consider that complimentary," he said. "However, we have been fighting for many decades. Most of us were born during the early stages of the conflict, so you see, we have learned to ignore such things as pity and—"

"Look!" yelled Holmes. "One of your deserters!"

They looked—and to the east they saw a tiny, disheveled figure, plainly visible in the moonlight, running madly toward the city. One hand was held high in the air, waving.

The Horde leader watched with an

amused expression. "A deserter all right. The guards will get him."

"Not if I get him first," said Forthmiller as he drew a gleaming little pistol from an inner pocket. "I came prepared, and the pleasure's mine—"

"Wait!" protested Stanley. "You aren't going to shoot—"

Forthmiller pulled the trigger and the running form tripped and fell lifelessly into the dust.

"You crazy fool!" Stanley growled. "Now look what you've—"

Rhamnol interrupted him. "It's all right. He was merely shooting a deserter. That's common in the city."

"Sure," agreed Forthmiller, "and he was a Dweller besides."

"No use arguing," interposed Casmir. "The fellow is probably dead, and there's no reason for regretting that. I suggest we forget about it and get some rest—before dawn."

"One minute," put in Henry Holmes. "Do you want to sleep and wait to be blown apart in the morning? The Dwellers will turn this deconite thing on us."

"Now you're talking sense," said Stanley. "While we've got the chance, we ought to get the weapon on the Horde side. If we did that, we could take care of the Dwellers in no time."

"But how will we get it?" asked Casmir, shrugging. "No one wants to take the chance."

Forthmiller uttered a mirthless chuckle, and spun the gun on his finger. "No trouble at all," he grated. "Why didn't somebody think of this before?"

His lanky frame moved to the opposite side of the balcony, where he climbed over the railing and dropped to a nearby roof. The roof led to a point near the city's surrounding wall. Forthmiller leaped across the small space, and let himself down the outside of the wall, beyond which the Dwellers' torches still flamed.

"Better go along," said Stanley, starting after him.

Rhamnol gripped his shoulder. "No. One is enough, and at that they may sight him. If he can get the weapon alone, so much the better."

FORTHMILLER crawled along in the soft sand near the edge of the illuminated valley. He looked back for a brief while, glimpsing the little trail of footprints that led back to the hushed darkness of the city. The moon had merged with a cloud, and now the only light came from the torches of the Dwellers.

To the right, he could see part of the metallic walls of the time machine. He looked about anxiously for the deconite apparatus, and his hopes sank. The weapon was gone.

Inch by inch, Forthmiller crept to the valley's edge. Soon he could see the direct flame of the torches, and the heads of a swarm of Dwellers. He crawled another body length, raised his head a little, and saw an appalling scene before him.

Mulr, the leader, and several of his aids were grouped about the deconite bomb. The weapon's tube was pointed skyward—in the direction of the city. Mulr was crouching at the control box, studying its instrument panel anxiously.

The old warrior *was* smart enough to comprehend. Casmir had been right—the weapon that had been meant for the Hordes was going to be used by the Dwellers!

A moment passed and Mulr's bearded face beamed triumph. His thin hands played experimentally over the controls, while his aids moved back from the tripod fearfully.

Drawing his gun, Forthmiller got to his feet, let out a yell and ran

forward into the valley. Mulr turned in surprise, forgetting the control box. He reached for a club.

Forthmiller jumped, skidding roughly to a stop beside the tripod. He levelled his gun, forgetting that the Dwellers didn't understand his weapon. Ignorantly, they came forward. He fired a shot, one fell, but they kept coming. Growling, he gathered the tube in his arms, mounting and all, started back up the hill.

Mulr's aids charged after him, overtaking him at the top of the valley. They bore him to the ground, tearing his clothes and snatching at the tube. He lifted his gun, and it was knocked viciously from his grasp. He fought back angrily, kicking two of them aside and rolling away. They pounced on him again, and managed to jerk the tube free. He got to his feet this time, and starting running. A couple of them clung to him, but he wrenched them off vigorously. He saw the time machine's blurred form before him, and made for it. Safe within its strong walls, he bolted the door and watched through a heavy glass window.

Part of Mulr's army poured forth from the valley and surrounded the machine, pounding their clubs violently against the metal walls. After some time they converged on the door and tried to smash it through, without success. Forthmiller grinned at them.

The pounding ceased in a short while, and the murmuring warriors trudged back to the valley. In the glimmering torch light, Forthmiller saw them resume work on the weapon. Apparently it was undamaged, for in a few moments the murmurings rose to shouts.

Forthmiller watched helplessly. At length he turned away in despair, his mind searching frantically for a means of regaining the weapon. He *had* to do that, or contact the city, or . . . .

He thought for a moment. His face brightened a little, and he muttered something about his stupidness. He snapped on a light above the control panel, and bent forward anxiously.

A dull, swooshing noise stopped him. He hurried to the window in time to glimpse the trail of sparks that were trickling back into the valley. He turned. In the east, an arching fireball reached its zenith and began a lazy drop toward the towers of the Horde City. The deconite bomb!

Forthmiller made a lunge for the controls. He had a time machine—a means of travelling through the years or minutes; a means of closing a gap in space, reaching a destination in an instant. There was a chance . . . .

Adjustments were rapid. A switch was flung, and things changed outside. The light of the torches had disappeared. There was moonlight, and a distant stretch of sand. When Forthmiller went to the window, he could see the Horde city—from a different angle entirely. A moment ago it had been to the east. It was now to the west.

Forthmiller withdrew the bolt on the door and dashed outside. He ran directly for the city.

It was a half hour *ago*. Forthmiller had moved the machine pastward thirty minutes, chancing that it might land in another time state and disrupt the whole situation. He was certain that a brief flight wouldn't have effect. If he was right, he could warn the Horde city of the fireball that was to come. He could tell them that Mulr was going to comprehend

the purpose of the weapon and use it against the Horde race. He could save thousands of people, including Stanley and Holmes, his fellow time agents.

Forthmiller ran on, his head lowered, his heart beating fast. He looked up once and saw the city looming before him in the pale light. Exulting, he ran faster.

It began to grow on him. Vaguely he remembered another man running toward the city, running just as he was now . . . and the shot that he himself had fired at the deserter.

His jaw fell open. Things blurred before his eyes and he felt a rising panic within his body.

A shot rang out from the city. He saw a flash of flame, and no more.

Forthmiller lurched and went skidding along in the dirt.

"I STILL THINK I should have gone with him," growled Jack Stanley. "He's been out there too long."

"He'll be back," asserted Henry Holmes. "This Mulr fellow will have to be plenty smart to understand that deconite thing."

"He *is* smart," Rhamnol answered him. "He is the only smart man among the Dwellers, and that's why he's their leader. I wouldn't doubt that he could—look below—the commotion on the streets. What does it mean?"

"Something's wrong," said Casmir. "We'd better go down."

The four descended in the palace elevator. Emerging on the streets under the arching entrance, they met a vast crowd of Hordes. Foremost were two guards, and between them lay a bloody, disheveled form.

"We discovered this outside the walls," one of them announced above the crowd's murmur. "Someone claims it to be one of our friends from the past."

"Forthmiller!" exclaimed Stanley, starring forward. "And he's shot—he was the deserter!"

"You're crazy!" snapped Holmes. "Forthy shot the deserter!"

Pale-faced, Jack Stanley pointed. "Look for yourself. This is Forthmiller, and he's dead."

Casmir took in the scene meditatively. "There's but one answer," he said suddenly. "The man encountered danger out there, and entered the time machine. He moved backward in time, taking the machine to the opposite side of the city. He was trying to save us from something—"

"Mulr!" cried Rhamnol. "He discovered how to use the weapon—"

"Then the city is going to be bombed," Casmir warned. "We've got to evacuate!"

Rhamnol needed no further urging. He gave orders for immediate mobilization. The city was to be emptied of people, and the army was to advance on the valley at all costs. The results were sudden, and amazing.

The Hordes, having prepared for such emergencies, left their city quietly and efficiently. The army, with Rhamnol himself at the head, marched westward out the gates.

Half-way to the valley, the procession stopped as a streak of light leaped skyward in front of them.

"Fireball!" shouted Casmir.

Horrified, they watched it cross the sky and dip toward the city. It struck a tower, exploded violently, and sent streams of shattered remnants through the air.

Rhamnol's face was white. "Charge them!" he yelled, "before they can send another!"

The words took swift effect. The Horde army moved en masse across the plains, swarming to the valley's edge and charging straight at the huddled thousands of Dwellers.

Jack Stanley felt a tugging at his sleeve. He stopped, hearing the whine of Henry Holmes' voice.

"—their battle!" Holmes made out. "—don't want—any part of it!"

"What about the weapon?" Jack yelled back. "We've got to get it out of here—"

But Holmes didn't hear him. The oncoming Hordes rammed him and knocked his frail body to the ground. Stanley dodged, pushed a couple warriors aside and bent swiftly. He lifted Holmes, kicked, shoved and fought his way clear of the moving army. In the valley below, he heard the clashing of the Hordes and Dwellers.

HENRY HOLMES wiped a smear of blood from his cheek and looked up anxiously at Jack Stanley. He stopped panting long enough to say: "We don't belong here—let's get out!"

"But Woodley's gun—"

"Let them have the thing—we've got to get away from here—get back to '48. We've gained nothing, and lost Forthy—"

"Yeah, I know. Maybe you're right. Things are a little different now."

"And look—the Dwellers are deserting again. Running the other way. Rhamnol will get ahold of the gun, and that's all that seems necessary."

"Yeah—he's got them licked—"

Stanley helped Holmes to his feet and started him toward the city. "We're checking out. We've got something bigger than all this to worry about."

They hurried past the city and made their way eastward in the bright moonlight. Behind them, the distant shouts of the Hordes faded and were replaced by the steady humming of the city's machines. Ahead, the waiting time machine took shape.

Safe within its walls, Henry Holmes whined: "Now to find the right 1948!"

"That might not be so easy," reflected Stanley. "We're in a future that hasn't existed, and might never exist in relation to our own time. It's different from travelling in the past. This way—the return trip could land us anywhere."

"I still say it's impossible!" snorted Holmes. "Unexisting futures, time channels, pivots—it's all—"

Stanley cut him short with a quick throw of the starting lever. Holmes stood there, shaking a little, his mouth open. Outside, the time state enveloped them like a blanket.

The flight was swift, and the window began to color. Through the heavy glass, the laboratory of Stanley, Holmes and Forthmiller, Time Agents, took form.

"Success!" exulted Holmes, "if this is the right channel—"

They took hasty departure from the machine, bursting noisily into their office. They looked once, and saw that time had played another trick on them.

"HELLO," said Forthmiller cheerfully. "How was the future?" He brought his feet down from the desk top and stood up, yawning and stretching.

"You! gasped Holmes. "You're dead! You shot yourself!"

Forthmiller glared at him. "Dead? Do I look dead? Snap out of it, Hank—"

"Wait," sighed Jack Stanley. "Let's get it straight. We took you to the

future, Forthy. Don't you remember Casmir and Woodley's bomb? And—"

"Of course. I remember all that, but what gave you the notion I went along? I've been right here all the time. I didn't go. I told you I didn't want to go. And from the looks of things, I'm glad I didn't."

Stanley gaped. "You didn't go! Sure, that's it! We *did* land in another channel, Henry—but in this one Forthy stayed home. He didn't want to go!"

Holmes sank miserably into a chair. "I know—I see it all now. But what did we gain? We're the Time Agents—and our business is going to flop."

"Yeah," agreed Stanley. "The time-travelling idea is all shot. We can't play around with seven or eight futures and expect—"

"You two are talking nonsense," growled Forthmiller. "What do you mean, seven or eight futures, and what's this about my shooting myself? You're both crazy. What's more, our business is okay—it's all fixed. Fellow came in a half hour ago and offered to buy us out. Said we had a good racket, and the big guys behind him were interested. I told him no, but he said I'd better talk it over with you two first. He'll be back in a few minutes, with a couple grand as a starter. If you like, we can sell—but I don't see why. Everything's okay. I can't figure you guys out—"

SCIENCE FICTION INDEX

Thousands of people make a hobby today of collecting science-fiction, in magazines and books. If you don't believe that, ask any back number magazine dealer and he will verify the fact that there is a steady and large demand for issues of fantasy publications from years back.

One of the great necessities to such collectors has always been a comprehensive list of all science-fiction magazines ever issued and their contents. Yet such an index had always been unavailable. For some reason the many fantasy organizations and groups have always failed to produce such a work. That failure has at last been remedied.

Two Los Angeles enthusiasts have finally published what they call the *Imag-Index*. This is a volume of over seventy mimeographed pages listing the title, artists, and contents of every science-fantasy periodical issued between 1926 and 1938. Not only do they list the contents but indicate the type of each story, the artist, the cover artists and other invaluable data. The Index may be had from the fan publishers, F. Brady and R. Kuntz, 2532 Burnside, Los Angeles, Cal., for the cost price of fifty cents. They are also publishing the Fantasy Yearbook for 1940 with a year's listing.

THE IMPROBABLE

by Charles R. Tanner

(Author of "Out of the Jar," "Tumithak in Shawm," etc.)

It was all utterly impossible. Therefore as Professor Hoopdeowdow Gallows explained, it just had to happen!

BOB DECKER WAS PROPOSING to Dorothy Gallon. It was not the first time that he had proposed to Dorothy. To be exact, it was the eleventh.

He was using the cool, calm, reasoning method. The first five times Bob had proposed, he hadn't used any "method" at all. Then, seeing that he was getting nowhere, he decided to put a little psychology into his attempts, and so his sixth proposal had been the romantic, passionate, moving-picture type. That

hadn't worked so well, so number seven was the "cave-man" type. That *was* a fiasco.

Then in quick succession had come the careless, man-about-town style, the love-me-or-I-die type and the warning type. And now—this.

But Dorothy remained firm in her resistance. It was almost as if she really didn't *want* to marry Bob Decker. But the cold, calm, reasoning method demanded persistence, and so Bob Decker was persisting.

"You know, Dorothy," he was saying. "There's more to life than just romance. We must think of the future, of the days that lie ahead. Just think how convenient it would be, if we were married. Already I'm your father's assistant, and I could come and live at your house and work in the lab— And you could keep on being your father's housekeeper, just like you are now—"

Dorothy interrupted him.

"Bob Decker, this is the most miserable proposal you've ever made. As if I'd keep on living with father after I'm married. He doesn't need me and you know it. With all his money, he could hire a whole house full of housekeepers. And as far as convenience for you is concerned— Well, it just goes to show how much romance there is in your make-up. You never think of poor little me. All you think of is how nice it would be for you.

"But *I* think of love and marriage in a lot different way than you do. I want a bold, strong, masterful man. I want a hero. Someone who can pick me up and carry me off over the hill to the land of dreams where a castle and servants await me— And I just can't imagine you even picking me up." She glanced at Bob's slight form in a sort of contempt.

"No, Bob," she went on, a softer tone creeping into her voice. "I like you well enough, but I couldn't see you as a husband. As far as I'm concerned, you're still just the little man who works for father."

As they were speaking, they had been walking along the street on the way from a movie-house, and now they had reached Dorothy's home. Bob was expected to supper, and he had a strong suspicion that Professor Gallon was going to ask him to do a little overtime work in the lab. It was customary. Professor Gallon never hesitated to ask Bob to work overtime when he needed him, and Bob, who nursed his job because of Dorothy, seldom refused to work, when asked.

Sure enough, after supper, the crusty old professor's mouth cracked into an experimental smile as he suggested that Bob and he repair to the laboratory. With hardly a nod of agreement, Bob followed him down to the cellar and donned a smock. Professor Gallon turned his attention to his "machine."

This "machine" (and that was all Bob ever heard it called) was a huge complicated thing that had something to do with dimensions. Professor Gallon had a theory that the arrangement of the carbon atoms in the molecules of the benzene series was due to their placement in a *four* dimensional structure. After long study, he was convinced that important discoveries in multi-dimensional theory might be made by a careful arrangement of the benzene molecule. Hence this machine.

And hence his keeping Bob working overtime, this Saturday night. For the machine was finished at last, and Gallon was so excited to see if it would work as he had planned it that he almost forgot his usual testiness. Once, Bob could have sworn

he even saw a pleased smile pass over Gallon's features, but this was probably merely a trick of the lights in the room. And then the professor reached for a big switch and shoved it home.

Bob expected some remarkable phenomenon and squinted his eyes and half raised his hands to his ears. But nothing happened. Professor Gallon scowled. He studied the wiring on the top of the machine. He went around behind and opened up the apparatus and peered into it for a long while. Then he came around from behind it and scowled at Bob over his glasses.

"Have — you — been — monkeying — with that — machine?" he asked, firing the words at Bob like shots from an automatic.

Bob started to quail, decided not to, and answered truthfully.

"I haven't touched that machine since it was built," he said. "You've done all the work on it."

"'S dern funny," complained the professor, and mumbling further comments under his breath, he returned to the back of the machine. Presently he gave a pleased ejaculation and seized two wires which dangled loosely in their places. He seized them up and fastened them to two binding posts nearby.

But Professor Gallon made a mistake. He connected those wires to the wrong posts and then, never noticing it, came around and threw on the switch again.

This time there were results. A light began to glow from somewhere in the interior of the machine and a high-pitched whine was heard, a whine that grew higher and higher until at last the sound grew too high to be heard by human ears. Then Professor Gallon picked up a tuning fork and a small metal mallet.

"Watch carefully, now, Bob," he said tensely. "If this thing works at all, it'll work when I strike this fork."

He hesitated a moment and then struck the tuning fork with the mallet.

PWOONG!

That sound had never come from the tuning fork! It was a tremendous sound, a sound as though someone had plucked the lowest string on an immense bass viol! And there was a flash of light, too, a flash so brilliant that for a moment, Bob was unable to see. As his eyes readjusted themselves, the assistant of Professor Hezekiah Gallon found himself unable to believe them.

For a huge maw had developed in the machine, an immense black void that seemed almost solid in its blackness; and it was calmly devouring the professor, swallowing him whole, in fact. Yes, there went his coat, his trousers, his socks, last of all, his shoes, heels first— Professor Hezekiah Gallon was *gone!*

Or—was he?

An image was forming above the machine. An incredible image, that seemed at first to be made of haze or smoke, but that thickened rapidly and assumed solidity. It was Professor Gallon, all right, or his living double. The creature was certainly alive, and it certainly looked like Hezekiah Gallon. But Professor Gallon had been clad in a neat, pinstriped suit, he had had his usual mean, crabbed look on his face, and he had had nothing in his hands save a tuning fork and a mallet.

While this utterly impossible creature, seated cross-legged in his great lotus carved from a single ruby, wore a most beatific expression on his countenance, and, clad nattily in

an old-style, striped convict's suit, he held in one hand a crow-bar, and in the other an easter lily!

AT ABOUT the time Bob Decker and Professor Gallon entered the laboratory, a young man a few blocks away was seating himself at a typewriter. Andrew Montieth, his name was, and he was hungry. Of course, just being hungry wasn't so bad, he was hungry most of the time, these days. What made it bad was the chance, or rather the certitude that he was going to be much hungrier.

For when one still has ideals at thirty-five, one is an incurable idealist. And incurable idealists do not accept charity, nor do they work on the W. P. A. If they are inclined to literature, they write, as Andrew Montieth did, and spend foolishly for typewriter paper the money that they should have spent for food. And when they might be writing advertising copy profitably, they pass up the chance in order to write the Great American Novel.

So Montieth remained hungry. And took it philosophically, even with a sort of a smile. The smile was for posterity, for Montieth had a Great Idea. Yes, beyond a shadow of a doubt, he had completed the plot, and all the details, of what was certain to be the novel of the century.

If Montieth lived to write it.

For, quite plainly, he was really starving. And, being Andrew Montieth, he thought not at all of himself, but only of his novel. Could he possibly live to finish it? Would a publisher be found soon enough, who would consider its obvious merits? Would he be able to get an advance check?

Montieth inserted a sheet of paper listlessly, and typed the title of the story. He paused for a moment and wrote his name. And paused again.

Pwoong! From the distance had come a sound like the twanging of a string on a bass viol. What was it, the doorbell?

Yes, there it was again. No mistaking it this time, it *was* the doorbell. With a scowl at the almost inevitable interruption, Montieth rose and went to the door. A messenger stood there, with an envelope and a package. Montieth wondered what they were, signed for them and brought them back into the room.

He wondered idly which he should open first, then shook off his lassitude and tore open the envelope. A letter fell out, and a check. He glanced at the check and then gasped. It was for two thousand dollars! Hastily he read the letter, mounting panic sweeping over the joy at his good fortune. With trembling hands he tore the cover off the package.

It was a book. Publishers, Keith & Wright. Author, *Andrew Montieth!* He turned hastily to the contents page. There was no longer any doubt. Andrew Montieth slumped to the floor in a faint.

He had collected advance royalties on his great book, the book he had just sat down to write!

DOWN THE STREET, past the home of Professor Gallon, Mr. Ezekial Morganstern was walking. Mr. Morganstern was irritated. He had had to take the afternoon off, and business was in no condition to take an afternoon off.

Indeed, business was never in such condition that he could take the afternoon off. Look what had happened the time he had that spell of acute indigestion. Two days off, and Mannheim had lost the Hildering account. And momma had gotten her budget

mixed up because he was too sick to help her with it, as he did every night; and there were still two dollars unaccounted for.

So now he worried, wondering what should happen at the office while he was gone. Of course, it was worth taking the afternoon off to bid Uncle Ben good-bye. It would be worth a lot more than that to get on the good side of Uncle Ben. For Uncle Ben was rich beyond the dreams of avarice. And this visit had definitely impressed him with the integrity and good business sense of his niece's husband.

So when his ignorance of the city gave him reason to insist that Mr. Morganstern accompany him to the depot when he left, Mr. Morganstern had sighed and done his best to arrange things so that he could be away from the office for that one afternoon.

He was walking down the street now, in the direction of his home, where Uncle Ben awaited him. And someone was calling him. He looked around, and that someone was coming down the street, waving his hands. Mr. Morganstern waved back and peered through his glasses until the uncertain form resolved itself into Mannheim, his office assistant. Mannheim was panting.

"Mr. Morganstern—uh—down at the office — uh — uh — Hildering is there! He is asking—uh—to see you!"

Hildering! That big account that Mannheim had lost for them last year. If he was asking to see Mr. Morganstern, it meant that there was a chance that they might get that account back, after all. Only—

Leib' Gott im Himmel! Who would take care of Uncle Ben?

What a predicament to be in. Two jobs to take care of, each equally important, each equally unavoidable. Before he had thought for a minute, Mr. Morganstern found it necessary to clap both hands to his head. Hastily, he explained to Mannheim, his head spinning more and more as he detailed his dilemma.

Pwoong!

Mr. Morganstern heard the sound, but found no time to speculate about it. Sounds should bother him now, with all these real troubles. He groaned and tried to reason a way out of his problem. No chance. He groaned again.

"One of 'em is got to lose," he decided, woefully. "I can't tend to everything. I can't be in two places at once, can I, Mannheim? It's impossible, I should be in two places at once."

He suddenly realized that he felt very strange. He was standing still, but his legs felt as if they were walking. He was facing *down* the street, but he could see very clearly what was going on *up* the street, behind his back.

A man was walking toward him. Coming up the street. A man who was familiar, whom he was certain that he knew. He started forward walking down to meet him—and then suddenly he realized who the man was.

Briefly, it was Mr. Morganstern.

The street was quite unchanged, the world was the same old world, he was still walking down the street —but he was also walking up the street, to meet himself. And curiously enough, his mind occupied the bodies of both the Mr. Morgansterns, and saw everything through the two pairs of eyes.

Mr. Morganstern had achieved what he had just spoken of as impossible. *He was in two places at once.*

BILLY THE HEIST had seen better days. A darned sight better. He could remember, a few years back, when a guy could go out with a rod and have a century or two before he'd contacted more than three people. And in those days, as soon as you flashed your rod, they heisted and came across. Nowadays, it was different. Plenty different. These hard times made it tough to get enough to live unless a fellow worked regular hours every night. Might as well be honest as do that.

So Billy the Heist no longer confined himself strictly to hold-ups. This job he was on now, for instance. A "case" had slipped him the dope on a house where the owners were sure to be out on a certain evening, and where large quantities of real silver were to be found, to say nothing of jewels, maybe. Billy the Heist had taken the job; and here he was, on a common burglary lay, a run of the mine breaking and entering job.

The silver was all in the cheap suitcase which he had brought especially to carry it. He switched off his flashlight and rose from the floor. He stepped into the reception hall.

Pwoong!

Billy's heart leaped into his mouth. What was that? Sounded like—like somebody had rung a bell. Was there someone in this house after all? Billy turned and sped.

On soundless toes, he ran down the hall, flung open the door and dashed out on the porch. There was a flight of three or four steps that ran from the porch to the small lawn, and Billy took them two at a time. After the first step, he noticed something impossible.

Across the street, the houses stood, just as they always had. On this side, to left and right, nothing was changed. But—there was no street.

Just that! There was a place for the street to be, all right, but in place of the street was an awful void. Emptiness stretched away horribly, and far, far down in that emptiness winked the stars of the southern hemisphere!

Billy the Heist wanted to shrink back from that awful void, wanted to flee back into the house and lie on the floor and hold onto things and cry.

But the impetus of his exit was too much, and with a cry of mortal fear, he tumbled over the last step; and, like a character out of Dunsany, fell screaming toward the unconcerned stars.

HE WAS LATE again. He sat in the street car and fidgeted, and wished he could make the car go faster. He searched the street for a clock as he rode along, and every time he saw one, his panic mounted higher, and his nervousness increased. Lord, didn't time fly by when you wanted it to go slow?

He wondered if Old Man Pickering would be down at the office when he got there. He hoped not.

He'd be there, though. Never knew it to fail; when he was late, that was always the morning Old Man Pickering chose to be early. Joe had already been caught twice before, and last time the old man had been pretty sore.

Gosh, suppose he lost his job! He simply *must* break himself of this infernal habit of being late. If he got by this time, he'd make mighty sure that he was never late again.

He rang the bell for his stop and, leaping from the car, literally flew up the street. He was panting as he swept through the outer office and flung his hat and coat at the rack. He missed Clara's cheery "hello" and

Mike's bass bellow at once. He looked around, but there they were, seated at their desks as always. They had rather strange looks on their faces, and they replied weakly as he forced out the usual morning salutation. Joe felt a chill go down his back. Something was up, all right.

Jimmy, the office boy, popped in from the hallway, and:

"The old man wants to see you, Joe," he said. "He's been waiting for fifteen minutes. He's madder than a hatter. Gosh, I'm sorry for you, Joe," he ended, commiseratingly.

Joe began to tremble. Inside, like. He didn't shake, but it seemed impossible that the others wouldn't notice it. He felt like he was getting red in the face, too. But he smiled as scornfully as possible at Jimmy's commiseration and strode — boldly, apparently — into Old Man Pickering's office.

The Old Man was busy. He would be, of course. That was to make Joe wait, and get him more rattled. Old Man Pickering would have been busy, right then, if there hadn't been a thing on his desk. He'd have painted the walls, but what he'd have made Joe wait.

So Joe waited. And got more fidgety, just like the Old Man wanted him to. And at last, the boss looked up and peered at Joe over his glasses.

"Oh, it's Metzger," he grunted. "What do *you* want?"

"You sent for me, sir. Jimmy said you wanted to see me."

"Wanted to see you? What for— Oh, yes, I *did* want to see you. Want to have a little talk with you."

He took off his glasses, wiped them very deliberately and put them back on. He peered at Joe like an entomologist examining a bug.

"You've been late pretty often, here lately, Metzger," he snorted. "I'm afraid you're running it into the ground. And, personally, I'm getting sick and tired of it."

He cleared his throat and settled down to tell Joe just what he thought. Joe knew he was in for a long siege of windiness, and so he settled down, too, to weather the storm as well as he could.

Old Man Pickering wandered on and on; and Joe shifted from one foot to another, occasionally answering, as well as he could, the questions that the Old Man fired at him. He was thinking only one thing—was this tirade going to end in a discharge or wasn't it? He wished the Old Man would finish and end his uncertainty.

Old Man Pickering was summing up. Joe, long familiar with the boss's peculiarities, recognized the symptoms. He began to pay a little more attention.

"The trouble with you youngsters is that you got too many other things on your mind," the boss was saying. "You've got to forget all these distractions and concentrate your mind on your work, instead of forgetting it the minute you leave the office."

Somewhere beyond the door, Joe heard a peculiar sound. It was a sound that had no place in this office, a *"pwoong,"* as if someone had plucked the string of a bass viol. He gave it but slight attention, however, for Pickering would be reading him his fate in just a minute, now. And Pickering ignored it, too, and went on with his speech.

"If you ever want to make a success of yourself, young man, you've got to forget outside interests. You've got to forget women and clothes and automobiles; and *throw yourself into your work.* Like this!"

Old Man Pickering stood up. He carefully arranged the letters and

papers on his desk. He backed away to the far end of the office, took a running jump — and quite literally threw himself into his work!

The papers fluttered up into the air, scattered, and came down over his disappearing body like falling leaves. Where they touched him, they seemed to suck him up, like blotters suck up ink. In a moment, the boss was quite absorbed in his work, and there was no sign of him left at all.

And that was the last anybody ever saw of Old Man Pickering!

BOB DECKER gaped speechless for all of a minute. Then he reached out and touched the ruby lotus bowl in which the astounding professor sat. It seemed solid enough, in spite of the fact that it hung, without support, a good foot above the machine. A little emboldened by the fact that this was evidently no spirit, Bob finally spoke.

"Are you—are you Professor Gallon?"

The beaming figure beamed, if possible, even more.

"Eh?" it shouted suddenly.

Bob started back. "I—I said, are you Professor Gallon. Professor Hezekiah Gallon?"

"Hezekiah?" The professor's double cackled merrily. "Hezekiah! Of all the silly names. No, indeed, young man. I'm not your Hezekiah. Though I may possibly be a projection of him. But my name is Gallows, Hoopdeowdow Gallows. In fact, *Professor* Hoopdeowdow Gallows."

Bob was taken aback.

"Gallows?" he stammered. "Not Gallon?"

"Indeed, no. Gallows, I said. G-A-L-L-O-W-S. You know, Gallows, like you hang yourself on?"

"Like you—hang *yourself* on?"

"Sure, you know, when you go on picnics."

Bob gasped again. If this were Professor Gallon, he was apparently was insane. But the incredible "Professor Gallon, then whoever it was, was insane. But the incredible "Professor Gallows," unaware of Bob's astonishment, was speaking again.

"I fear an explanation is due you regarding my sudden appearance. I don't doubt, you've worried considerable about it during the last few years. But it has a very rational explanation, I assure you."

Bob was not interested in explanations, rational or otherwise. He didn't even care to comment on the amazing use of the word "years."

"If you're not Professor Gallon, then where is he?" he demanded. "And can you make him come back?"

"Oh, he'll be back, I expect, as soon as I release the warp. He's probably wandering around in some impossible world or other."

"Well, release that damn' 'warp' then, and bring him back."

"Oh, no. I couldn't do that." The creature was shocked. "I've had trouble enough getting here to ever think of leaving so soon. You see, it was utterly impossible for me to ever get here in the first place. So that's how I was able to do it. But now that I've done it once, it's possible to do it again. So I don't suppose *I'll* ever be able to accomplish the feat."

Bob was no longer amazed. He was angry.

"I don't know what you're talking about," he said, hotly. "It sounds like so much gibberish to me. It sounds like so much 'Alice in Wonderland'."

"Oh, but it's sound science. Sound science. Let me explain."

With a bound, the double of Hezekiah Gallon leaped from his lotus cup to the floor. He made no attempt

at balance, he just threw himself out of the ruby and spread-eagled on the hardwood. The crowbar and easter-lily flew from his hands and slid up against the opposite wall of the room. The creature picked himself up and looked ruefully at Bob.

"What a world!" he muttered. "What an incredible world!"

He picked up his crow-bar and lily and laid them on the table. Then he turned, all smiles again, to Bob.

"Look here," he said. "Do you know anything about dimensions?"

"Quite a little," admitted Bob, deciding to abandon, temporarily, at least, any attempt to get news of Professor Gallon.

"Very well then, listen carefully."

The little man assumed the air of a teacher lecturing his class.

"Here we have three dimensions. Length, width, and thickness, if you call them by the same name we do. And, whether you know it or not, there is a fourth dimension. It's called *time!*"

He looked at Bob as if Bob should be astounded, but the young fellow only nodded impatiently.

"Oh, you understand that, eh? Very well, it makes my explanation that much easier. Do you know about the fifth dimension, too? The dimension of probabilities?"

Bob thought for a while.

"I've read speculations about it in stories," he said. "But I never thought it was taken seriously by scientists."

"Oh, but it should be! It's really a fact! Extending sidewise in time, at right angles to each time-line of the space-time series of universes is a fifth dimension, in which lie the planes of all the realms of possibility—the worlds of 'if,' I might say, or the branches of time."

"And you've come across that fifth dimension from some other possible world?" asked Bob.

The thing that called itself Professor Gallows snorted.

"Do I look possible to you? No more, I'll bet, than you look to me. No, I have come across the *sixth dimension!*"

"The *sixth* dimension!"

"Quite so. The sixth dimension is at right angles to all the others and embraces, in its infinity, all the events that couldn't possibly happen in any universe of probability. In short, as the fifth dimension is the dimension of *probability*, the sixth is the dimension of *improbability*. See?"

"No!" said Bob Decker, bluntly. "I get you all right, but I don't believe it. Even if there was a sixth dimension, it would be impossible for any one to cross it."

"Quite so." The professor was insufferably smug. "And its very impossibility made it inevitable, somewhere in the immensity of the dimension of impossibility. It just happens that this is the spot where that impossible event takes place."

HE PAUSED, reached into his pocket, took out a long, black cigar and calmly began to eat it. He went on:

"I am surprised, though, at one thing. How did your Professor Gallon ever manage to create that receiver, if he didn't know about the sixth dimension?" He pointed to Hezekiah's "machine" and Bob looked at it, puzzled.

"That's not a receiver, it's a—a—I don't know what it is, but if it works as a sixth dimensional receiver, it's due to an accident."

"My. My." The stranger was pleased. "Such an accident would

have been quite impossible in my world."

He approached the machine and looked at it with a new interest. Presently, he frowned. "Crude," he said. "Crude, but effective." He studied it again for a while and smiled rather patronizingly. "I imagine the warp at this end is not as tight as it ought to be," he said. "I wouldn't be surprised if a number of impossible events might happen around here, soon. Although the spatial and temporal warps may not tally. Still—"

He turned away from the machine and faced Bob.

"And now, if I may, I would like to question you, a little bit, about the conditions here in your world. Do you know much about—let's see—astronomy? I guess we'd better start with astronomy."

Bob Decker was just about to answer when he heard a sharp crackling from somewhere in the room. The impossible Professor Gallows paled and cried, "Oh, the warp!" and rushed to his lotus cup. He almost reached it when: *"Pwoong!"* went that viol string again, and lotus cup, professor and all faded away like a dream. Out of the machine flew a bundle of clothes which fell in a heap on the floor, unwound themselves, and stood up. Unhurt, but amazed, it was Professor Gallon.

The real Professor Gallon, this time, pin-stripe, crabbed look and all. But there was a cowed touch to the crabbed look, and the pin-stripe was a ruin. He looked dazedly around for a moment and then fled to Bob for protection.

"Hold me, Bob, hold me!" he cried. Don't let me get back in there. I've been through hell, during this last week. But I'm back now. Thank God, I'm back!"

Bob made no attempt to comment on that "last week." It was on a par with the other one's "last few years." Professor Gallon seized Bob's hand, and it looked for a minute as if he was going to kiss him.

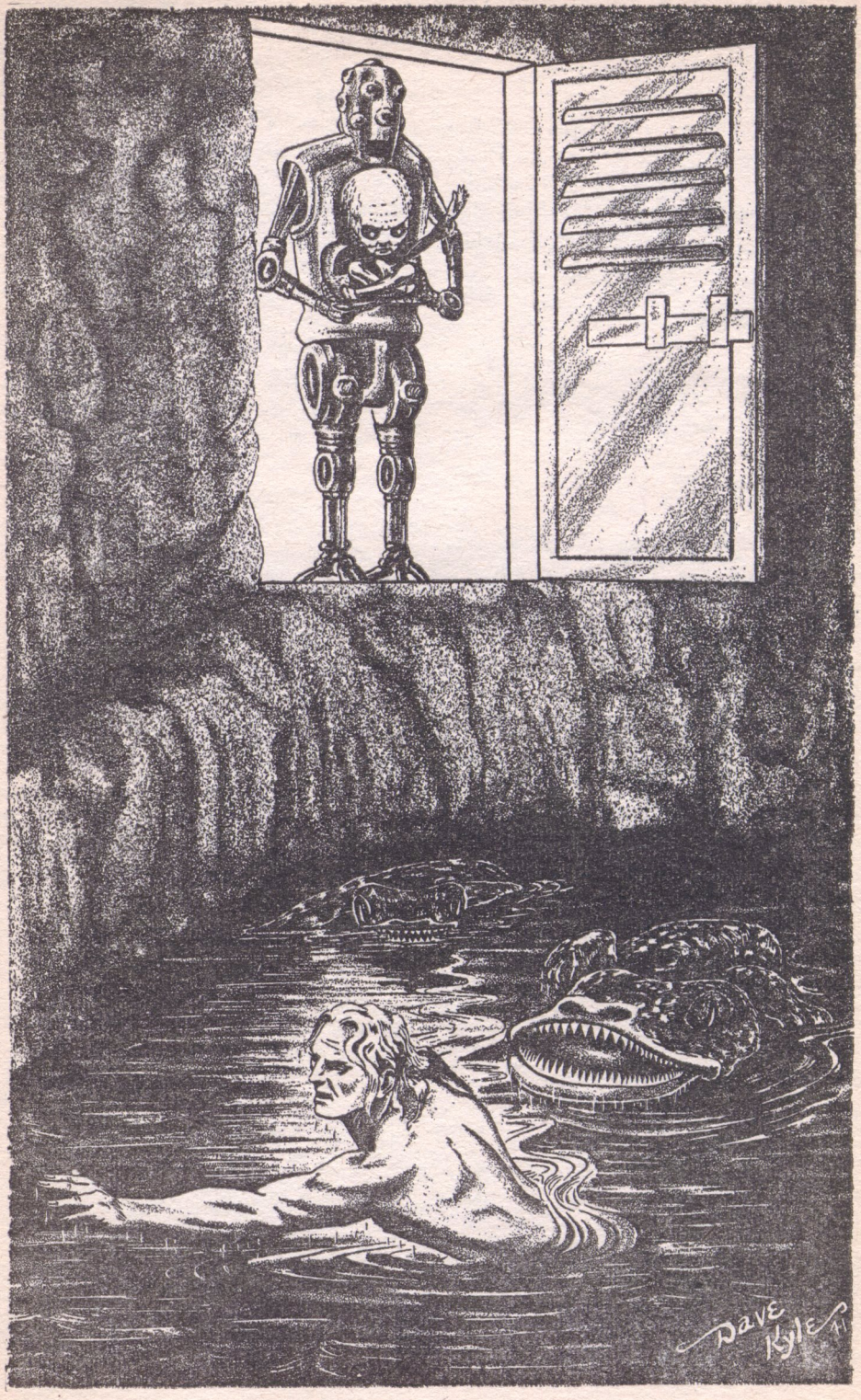
But it wasn't the professor that kissed him.

THROUGH THE DOOR sped a feminine form that flung herself on Bob's shoulder and smothered him with kisses. It was Dorothy, and she was sobbing with joy and relief.

"My hero!" she cried, like a heroine in an old time melodrama. "Oh what would I *ever* have done without you?"

More kisses and then she turned to her father.

"Oh, Daddy, Bob was wonderful. So masterful, so daring! Where would I have been now, do you suppose, if he hadn't rescued me from those little green men with whips?"


DAVE
KYLE

NEW MOON

by Basil Wells

(Author of "Biped," "Rebirth of Man," etc.)

The barbarian rode out of the wilds to capture one of the little demons whose eyes flashed fire.

ARIS CX13 perched precariously atop a gleaming white boulder as she watched the strange rider's approach. A ferocious shaggy gray pack of wolfish grals clawed futilely at the rock's smooth base, fighting to gorge their gaunt bellies on her tender flesh.

Her scanty black tunic hung in ribbons, shredded by clawing branches as she had raced to escape their keen fangs long hours before, and her long raven hair streamed unbound down about her shoulders.

Less than two miles away, upon the rocky upper plateau, the dozen dome cities of her people gleamed in the afternoon sunlight. Two miles, or a thousand parsecs distant—she knew there would be no rescue from that source. Only this morning Krath GDT8 had announced that she must soon be exiled from the plateau, to live out her life among the miserable wretches who eked out a precarious existence in Numark's inner swamplands.

Aris CX13 was an atavistic throwback to some primitive ancestor—a shapely, beautiful reversion to the ancestral type. She walked, a giantess, among the scrawny bald men of Numark. They regarded with disgust her graceful rounded body, and her gleaming white teeth filled them with horror—beastly fangs! But for her father, kindly old Hed CX12 the scientist, she would have been destroyed many years before.

Eagerly now Aris watched the rider from beyond the horizon reach the cliff's tree-clad rim and ride toward her along a narrow game-trail.

She could see now that he was a barbarian, a tall giant of a man, well-muscled and straight. Here was no shambling hairy outcast! Here was a man!

A great bow of yellow wood thrust above his bronzed shoulder, the polished shaft of his stout, quartz-tipped spear beside it. At his side a knife of soft, hammered iron, its handle bound about with shrunken leather bands, swung in its sheath. He wore no garment save a simple g-string of tanned leather, and clumsy looking moccasins of zarp-hide were upon his feet. His hair was long—a tawny yellow—and the flame of his deep-set eyes made startling sparks of blue in the darkness of his lean features.

He came full upon the grals as he rounded a turn in the trail. He pulled up his horse and unslung the bow, nocking the bowstring in place with one swift motion. Then his bow bent; one—two—three the arrows flashed, and three of the lank-ribbed beasts kicked out their lives on the uneven grassy ground.

The snarling pack melted away before this new deadly foe, seeking shelter among the jutting rocks and

the clumps of brush that sparsely dotted the lower plateau's grassland. In a moment the last of their shadowy shapes were gone.

Aris slid down from her rough-surfaced seat atop the great rock and was gingerly rubbing a portion of her bruised anatomy as the stranger rode up beside her. Aris faced him proudly but the color was high in her cheeks and her heart was thudding fast. He slid from the muddy gray blanket that did service as his saddle, not three feet away.

"I am Toam Blak," he announced stiffly.

"I am grateful to you, Toam Blak, for driving away the grals," Aris replied. "I am called Aris CX13."

"I look for the hills of ice," Toam said, "and for the little demons who dwell within them. I wish to see them breathe fire from their nostrils."

"Do you wish to die?" exclaimed Aris. "I live in the domes of Numark and I speak the truth. The little bald men destroy any barbarian or swamp-dweller found on their plateau. You must not go near their domes or the robot guards will kill you."

"I must see the demons," insisted Toam stubbornly, "and the shining hills of ice. I have journeyed far across the swamps. I have battled the slim zarps that come from the sea, and I have beaten off the attacks of the scaly, winged thulars. I have come to see the demons and take one, captive, back to Yark. I will not turn back now."

"Well," said Aris breathlessly, "why not take me back to Yark with you. I can teach your people many things. I have studied the ancient books that gather dust in musty vaults beneath the domes. I can show you how to build machines. I can teach you to read."

"You," laughed Toam, "are not a demon. You are a woman like my sister, Elner. But you can come to Yark with me—when I have captured a demon."

"Good!" cried Aris. "I will help you capture one of the little men, Krath GDT8 if possible—the heartless old wretch. I will meet you tonight outside the domes. My robot can easily carry double and it will not tire as does your four-legged beast."

"I can trust you, I think," said Toam slowly, his piercing eyes intent upon her face. "Yes, you are speaking words of truth. You are unhappy living with the demons. That is why you wander here alone."

FOR A LONG time they sat in the lengthening shade of the giant white boulder and made their plans. Aris tried to explain to the simple barbarian that the dome-dwellers were really men and not demons, but Toam would not be convinced.

"Our legends tell us that Dawan, the great Erth god, carried us from our ancient homeland in a vast boat," he said. "Out of the Great Sea only a single barren rock lifted. There was no sunlight. But Dawan carried water from the ocean and made a moon, and when the water was gone the islands appeared.

"Our people and the demons lived together on the great rock in the hills of ice. But the demons would not let Toam, my ancestor, mate with the woman he wanted; so he took some of his friends and their women in a boat and went to the island of Yark."

"Men did come to this planet, Venus, in a spaceship," admitted Aris, "and they landed on the level

top of the upper plateau, the only exposed bit of land on this watery world. They built great domes and grew their food in hydroponic vats. Later they discovered the catalyst that frees the energy of copper atoms, in a deep-buried meteor. They constructed several mattercasters like those used on distant Earth for the transmission of matter from station to station, and set the spaceship spinning in an orbit about Venus.

"Then the transmission of water from the Great Sea to the tiny artificial moon began. Centuries passed and ice built up about the spaceship into a miniature satellite. More mattercast receivers were constructed on the moon and its bulk grew swiftly. The Great Sea's level constantly lowered and the higher islands appeared. Vegetation spread out across the mud flats. Animals escaped from the domes to run wild and multiply in the dankness of the swampy jungles.

"Your ancestor, Tom Blake, was a biologist in Dome 7. He rebelled against the rigid code that forbade him to mate with a woman from outside his own classification. He declared that mankind would grow decadent and perish if such overspecialization of mental types were long continued. And the passing centuries have shown how right he was. . . .

"The little men with the bulging hairless heads are the final product of that code. All the human traits of love, kindness, and curiosity have been carefully and scientifically bred out of them. They have become impractical students of useless abstractions, creating nothing new or worthwhile. Long ago they halted the transmission of water to the moon. They were content with the artificial life of the domes where the temperature was always even and robots did all the work. Every year their number dwindles. They are doomed. . ."

"Your legend is silly," laughed Toam. "Our story is of course the true one. The demons have told lies to you."

"I read all that I have told you in the books of the historians," cried Aris indignantly. "But, of course, a barbarian like you could not read. When we are in Yark I will teach you to read. Then you will know the truth."

"You are pretty when your eyes flash lightning," said Toam unexpectedly, "and your mouth puckers so. I like you very much, I think."

Aris smiled. She gathered the shreds of her tunic about her closer and got up from the flat stone where they had been sitting.

"Time that I was leaving, I fear," she told him.

Then she hurried away toward the chalky white cliffs that rimmed the upper plateau.

Toam watched her go, a quizzical half-smile rifting his dark features. Then he knelt on the grassy ground beside the flat rock, his fingers busy with the contents of the beaded leather bag laced inside his loincloth. His eyes sought the eastern horizon where lay Yark and his lips moved slowly as they framed silent words. He bowed his head down to the pouch again and again as though he were listening to the faint voice of some unseen spirit.

"It is good," he said after a time. "I will meet the girl tonight outside the domes. We will escape across the marshes."

Carefully Toam stowed the little bag in its accustomed place and laced it firmly there. To lose that beaded bit of leather and its precious contents would be worse than losing an arm. It was a very potent amulet.

He ate a hard black strip of dried meat, a handful of grain kernels, and several of the wrinkled yellow fruit that grew on a low bush near at hand. The girl was gone from sight by this time, so he took his weapons and set out upon her trail.

TOAM TOPPED the last steep slope of the rocky trail and crept cautiously into the welcome shelter of a stunted clump of brush. The red flame of the twilight outlined his surroundings with a brush of deepest crimson.

The upper plateau was a barren thick U, roughly five miles in diameter, an unlovely broken stretch of jumbled rock and layered shale. At the base of the U sheer crags of gleaming black rock butted their serrated spines sharply against the clouds; while into the empty center of the plateau there stretched a finger of the Great Sea. In this natural bay, choking its shoreline, lay the swamplands inhabited by exiled dome-dwellers. And along either side of the great U glistened the vast transparent domes of the little bald men—a dozen of them squatted there upon the drab gray rocks.

There was no growing thing within a hundred yards of any of the domes, nor were there any concealing ridges of shale. The ground was levelled smooth and hard—blackened as though by fire—close up to them. Only under shelter of night could he hope to reach those looming half-globes.

The pale icy disc of the moon was riding close down to the horizon's rim when Toam came at last to the barren stretch of rock before the dome. He crouched behind a low cluster of rock fragments, his eyes searching that curving smooth wall for an opening. This was the dome that Aris had entered he knew, but he could see no door leading inside.

The click of metal against rock behind him gave belated warning that he was not alone. Swiftly Toam launched his body forward out into the blackened zone, and his knife flashed in his hand as he turned to face this unknown foe.

Eight broad shapes, taller than the tallest man, lumbered from behind shadowy rocks on either hand. Ponderously they moved forward, their great arms outstretched ready to block any attempt at escape. Toam slid his knife back into its sheath and fitted an arrow to his bow.

The feathered shaft rebounded with a metallic clang from the body of the nearest giant. A second, and a third arrow suffered a like fate, their slender shafts shattering against unyielding metal. The mighty shapes loomed nearer now, closing grimly in about him.

Toam dropped his bow and swung his heavy spear, point foremost, like a club at the nearest monster's head. Down it crashed and splintered across the narrow head of the giant. Then harsh, unyielding fingers of metal clamped about his body and a hard something crashed with stunning power against his skull. He struggled hopelessly in that iron grip for a moment.

Two of the shadowy giants lifted his limp body. Dimly Toam remembered being carried through a circular port that somehow opened in the blank dome-wall and thumping violently down upon a cold stone floor. Then his senses failed him and the misty grayness that clouded his vision darkened into impenetrable inky blackness. . . .

TOAM CAME abruptly back to consciousness with the realization

that all was not well. His head seemed to expand like a balloon with every beat of his heart. His eyes felt raw and puffy and his limbs were rigid and senseless. Numbness pressed close about his body as though metal bands were slowly constricting his vitals.

His eyelids slitted open a minute fraction of an inch. He *was* bound, strapped into a massive chair of some glossy gray material. Shining white metal bands were locked across his arms and legs, and three similar bands were about his middle.

Toam felt another pressure, like a heavy helmet of bone or metal, that flattened the long hair against his skull. He was held rigidly upright, pinned, like some impaled insect, against the smooth hardness of the chair's back.

His eyes widened slowly, taking in a constricted view of the narrow gray-walled room and its furnishings. Strange apparatus and intricate machines, most of them in dusty disrepair, cluttered the floor-space. A great globe of light, festooned with dark cobweb streamers, was set flush with the low-arched ceiling overhead.

Suddenly Toam laughed.

Clustered about him on low padded chairs, their owlish watery eyes oddly distorted by the transparent helmets that reached to the level of their meager nostrils, sat a half-dozen spindly-legged, corpse-skinned little men. They wore baggy dark tunics that almost covered their knobby little knees, and tiny, slipper-like sandals were on their stunted feet. Their hairless blue-veined heads, clammy-skinned bulbous caricatures of normal human skulls, perched like some toothless living puffball atop a stalk-like scrawny neck. When they stood erect they were little more than three feet in height. But they stood on their puny feet rarely. The impassive robots that stood rigidly behind each little seat carried them where they directed.

Toam did not laugh as he regarded the robots. Great eight-foot bodies of dull-sheened metal and tough plastic were theirs, stronger than the combined muscles of ten fighting men. The things that captured him outside the dome must have been giant machines like these. He studied their thick cylindrical bodies and the many-eyed knobs of metal that jutted above them. No wonder that his hard-driven arrows had shattered!

One of the little monsters seated before Toam leaned toward him, peering near-sightedly up into his face. Then the dome dweller spoke, in a dull rasping monotone that made Toam's flesh crawl, asking Toam whence he had come.

"You are not a swamp-dweller," he said. "Perhaps you are an ape."

"I am a man!" cried Toam, breaking his stubborn silence. "It is you who are the monsters, the little demons of our fables. No wonder my ancestors escaped from your ugly presence."

A chill gleam of some emotion—hatred or triumph, Toam could not tell which—came into the eyes of his questioner.

"It can talk," he muttered to the others, and they nodded.

"Tell me,' he commanded, "have you great stores of the copper catalyst on your island?"

"Cat List?" exclaimed Toam, "The magic stones? No we have none of them."

"Come now, barbarian," snarled the little man impatiently, "there is no use denying that you have the catalyst. Must I have a robot twist off an arm before you tell us the truth?"

"We have none of the magic stones," replied Toam firmly.

A little man whom Toam had not seen before spoke from a corner of the room where he huddled over an instrument board, flanked by many glowing tubes and dusty coils of wire.

"He speaks the truth, Krath GDT8," he informed Toam's inquisitor. "The dectors linked with the metallic plates against his skull and those running from the bands upon his arm indicate that he is not deceiving you."

"I had not finished questioning him, Hed CX12," almost screamed Krath GDT8. "Now it is useless to question him further. He will not answer so we can discover whether he tells the truth or not.

"Drag him away," he ordered one of the robots, "and feed him to the zarps penned beneath the dome. They must have food."

Robot fingers, hard and cold, unstrapped Toam's unfeeling body from the chair. He could not stand upright, his blood-starved muscles refused to function; so the mechanical man draped Toam's limp body across his thick arm and carried him from the room.

TOAM LAY on a narrow shelf of stone rimming about the shallow filth-scummed pool of water at the cell's center. Floating on the dark surface were the bloated, rubbery-hided shapes of two amphibian monsters, the terrible shark-jawed zarps that lurk in the marshy pools and muddy coves of island-spotted Venus. Shapeless they were as a seal is shapeless, but their hides were mottled purple and yellow—hideous and slimy as a wet toad to the touch. . . .

When the man from Yark was tossed through a quickly opened cell-door and landed with a splash in the waist-deep pool of stinking water his strength had almost fully returned. Cautiously he had waded through the water until his outstretched hand brushed a damp wall of masonry and he had climbed up to a slimy stone shelf barely a foot above water level.

Hardly had he reached this poor refuge when the sucking slither of rubbery wet hide warned him of a zarp's dragging approach. His eyes had gradually accustomed themselves to the gray twilight of the underground cell, its only illumination a distant corridor globe; so now he could see the gaping maw of the hideous monster that crawled, on stubby flippers, toward him.

Toam had flung himself forward to the zarp's slippery back and his thumbs had sought, and found, those twin, red-rimmed eyes. The monster roared—a bellowing, shrill, pain-wracked cry—and slid, blinded, back into the shallow murk of the pool. Toam leaped from his back, in time to witness the arrowing approach of a second swimming zarp.

The sightless zarp had felt the movement of that other bulk and had shuttled swiftly about, his four rows of sharply serrated teeth sinking into the fat-armored side of his fellow. In a moment the pool had become a whirlpool of slashing, fighting bodies locked in combat to the death. . . .

Now Toam lay silently beside the narrow door of latticed metal, waiting patiently for the coming of some robot attendant. If he could smash the scanning lenses of the robot with the bit of stone he had wrenched from the wall he might escape.

The sound of cautious footsteps outside his cell brought him crouching silently to his feet. He gripped the stone tighter.

"Toam," a voice whispered, "are you alive?"

"Aris!" exclaimed Toam gladly. "Unlock the door."

"Just a moment," came the reply and a key rattled thunder-loud in the echoing corridor.

A zarp bellowed his weird whistling cry of warning from a nearby cell and his penned fellows echoed his challenge. Then the door swung slowly open and Toam crossed its threshold to the girl's side. Her hand touched his fingers and clung.

"I feared for your life, Toam," she whispered, an involuntary shudder wracking her slim body. "Those terrible creatures. . . .

"We must escape through Hutson Bay," she went on. "My father, Hed CX12, is going with us. Krath GDT8 has ordered that he be exiled among the swamp people because he protested my own exile.

"I know the ancient ways that descend from the dome to the inner swamplands where the exiles live," she finished. "We can steal a boat from them and escape to the Great Sea."

"Good," agreed Toam.

HALFWAY ALONG the ancient dusty tunnel that angled downward from the lower levels of the great dome they overtook a giant robot carrying a bulging-browed little man in his padded chair. Toam recognized him, the man who had come from the corner to say that he told the truth—a scientist he must be. Toam smiled. He would bring a wise little demon back to Yark after all.

They came out through a ragged cave entrance into the swamplands and followed an ancient oozy trail that wound outward toward the open waters of the bay. Finally they came to a raised hummock of solid earth where a grove of low, thick-stemmed trees bulked like some grotesque woodcut against the background of silvery moonlight.

Aris pointed to the trees. "Swamp dwellers," she said.

Toam saw a score or more jumbled masses of poles and mud, interwoven with swamp grasses and weeds, that perched shoulder-high above the ground. He snorted his disgust. Even the zarps constructed better nests out of mud and reeds for their newly laid eggs.

They hurried through the ugly tree-village and came to the muddy rim of the bay. A dozen crude dugouts were drawn up on the shore, and of these Toam selected the most seaworthy.

The robot he seated in the stern while Aris and her father sat in the boat's middle. Then he waded alongside the ungainly craft until they were afloat on the smooth surface of the bay and sprang aboard. He showed the robot how to handle the clumsy paddle; took another for himself, and the boat drove erratically away from shore.

They had paddled barely ten canoe-lengths when a great uproar arose from the direction of the tree-village. A string of mechanically striding robots advanced to the water's edge and came to a halt. Carefully they set five little chairs, and their dwarfish occupants, on the ground. One of the little men, Krath it must have been, spoke a sharp word of command, and three of the metal giants pointed their right arms toward the escaping boat.

Three pencils of bluish flame lanced out across the water. Water hissed and boiled into steam as they struck, but the range was too great and the occupants of the dugout were unharmed. Hed CX12 drew an ovoid object from beneath the heavy cape that he wore over his tunic and

pointed it back toward shore. Greenish light flamed for a moment and two of the foremost robots dissolved into scattered scraps of metal and plastic.

"Hurry!" cried the girl, "before the other dome-cities are warned of our attempt to leave Numark. Once outside the bay their heat projectors cannot reach us."

The robot in the stern had rapidly learned how to paddle. The little dugout leaped ahead and Toam was hard put to it to keep the craft on its course. Swiftly they raced across the heaving swells of the sheltered bay toward the frowning cliffs guarding the watery road to the Great Sea.

Then Aris shouted something to Toam and pointed back the way they had come. He turned and a grim smile tightened his lips. Four more dugouts were moving slowly in their wake, methodical robot arms forcing them along!

ALL THAT NIGHT they raced before those untiring pursuers. Toam's muscles ached and his hands were raw with blisters, but the robot in the stern paddled steadily ahead, the scorched smell of overheated oil in his bearings alone telling of the strain he had endured.

Despite all their efforts to escape, the pursuing boats were slowly closing the gap between. Numark had long since vanished below the horizon but ahead a thin black line of land showed. Once ashore Toam felt sure that he could evade the dome dwellers and their mighty robots; so he had headed toward that smudge of darkness.

But now he realized that they were trapped. The low, wave-drenched bow of a crescent-shaped mud flat lay ahead, closing pincher-like arms in on either hand. Already the pursuing boats had spread out to block any sudden dash for the open sea again.

"Perhaps," he told Aris, "we can slide the boat across the mud banks to the opposite side and so escape."

The girl nodded doubtfully and took the paddle that he handed her.

Toam's hands found the little beaded pouch that the little men had not troubled to remove from inside his loin cloth. A rapt expression came across his face as he knelt above it. He seemed to be listening. Hed CX12 watched curiously as his fingers fumbled inside the bag.

At last Toam heaved a sigh of relief and restored the bag to its hiding place. He caught Hed's curious glance and laughed exultantly.

"We will be rescued," he said. "With the little bag I have summoned aid."

Hed grimaced bitterly. These superstitious barbarians with their blind faith in fetishes and medicine bags! He clamped his chilled tiny fingers about the ovoid of silvery metal. Only that now lay between them all and destruction.

The low mud flat loomed closer and suddenly the boat's uneven bottom ploughed through soft ooze and came to rest. The robot continued to churn up the water into a muddy froth until Aris commanded him to stop.

Toam climbed over the dugout's side into waist-deep, clinging mud. Five short steps he waded and then suddenly plunged to his neck in a crawling pit of quicksand. Aris stretched her paddle to him and slowly dragged him back to safety.

"No use," he panted as he climbed back aboard.

"Then we're doomed!" cried the girl.

"Maybe not," disagreed Toam. "Remember your father's weapon."

Hed CX12 lifted his weapon as the boats closed in about them. Green flame spat from its narrow mouth and one of the enemy dugouts fell apart. Brilliant blue flashes hissed from the remaining three boats but all fell short. They drew back out of range.

Then the sea about the shattered boat was filled with writhing scaly monsters. An unearthly shriek of mortal terror burst from the throat of a struggling little man, and choked off abruptly. Aris shuddered and covered her eyes with clenched little fists.

Another boat ventured within range after a time and Hed sent a spear of green toward it. Unexpectedly a low splutter of sound came from the metal ovoid and it swiftly turned to red. Hed dropped the weapon and stared tragically at his burned fingers.

"Burned-out!" he exclaimed. "The salt air or faulty insulation."

"The finish, I'm afraid," said Toam, and the girl's hand squeezed his blistered palm hard. "If only. . . ."

And then, behind the central boat that bore Krath GDT8 and his six robots, a great black bulk smoothly emerged from beneath the waves. A long black object on its back swivelled around toward Krath's dugout, its hollow black tip dropping lower and lower.

Boom! A stab of flame roared out from the object's hollow snout and Krath's boat dissolved into torn splinters of fire-scarred wood.

"Good work, Jonesy," shouted Toam Blak, standing up in the grounded dugout. "Blast 'em out of the water."

"What does this mean?" cried Aris, her eyes wide and eager. "You are no barbarian! That is a—a submarine!"

MOONLIGHT LAID a silvery sheen across the placid harbor of Yark, capital city of half Venus, outlining sharply her jutting towers and soaring domes. The sound of soft music drifted from the building behind them and the voices of other couples, strolling like themselves in the garden, came faintly to their unheeding ears.

"Beautiful moon," said Aris in an awed voice. "But for that moon Venus would be a watery, cloud-mantled, dead world. All this beauty would be impossible."

"That is right," agreed Toam. "We must be kind to the dome dwellers. That is why, while we have duplicated the civilization of Earth in more distant islands, we have left Numark alone. They carried on the work started by our common ancestors, for many centuries. Now, in their last days of decadence, their supplies of the copper catalyst all but gone, they are doomed to final extinction."

"Toam," whispered Aris softly, "why did you come to Numark?"

"We wanted to know more about the machines and weapons of the dome dwellers," Toam told her, "before they became extinct. I disguised myself as a native and planned, somehow, to slip inside the domes. Once there I thought that I could carry away some of their text-books or kidnap one of them."

"And the leather pouch?" Aris wanted to know.

"Contained a tiny radio receiver and transmitter," laughed Toam. "A sacred little dot and dash affair."

Then they were silent and the moonlight outlined the sharp blackness of one shadow where two had been before.

THE COSMIAN LEAGUE

WE ARE PLEASED by the considerable response that has been accorded the Cosmian League at its first appearance. Above all, we note with interest how many seem to have caught the spirit that motivated it. Others have queried further; they want to know why we are so firm in our belief in the future, why we seem so positive in our assertion that science can master interplanetary space and can survive the present dark days? Above all, everyone wants to know what Cosmians can do about it?

We have watched the progress of inquiry into the means for interplanetary travel for years past. You will go far to find a school boy these days who does not accept interplanetary travel as a coming thing. Even the hard-headed older generation is freely admitting it.

For hundreds of years before the dawn of this century, some men had dreamed of flying. These men always remained isolated and scorned. Even plans for aircraft as late as the middle of the last century were considered crazy. Yet about the end of the Nineteenth Century a new mental attitude developed, young men began more and more seriously to accept the possibility of the invention of flying machines. Serious experimental organizations were formed to carry on inventive work and agitation for more such. These "aeronauts" had come to believe firmly that flying was in order for their own future. Yet in all the hundreds of years before, no such numbers of men believed so. What caused this sudden growth of faith in aviation?

It was the conviction, independently arrived at by hundreds and thousands, that the growth of human knowledge and progress had at last found sufficient power actually to make possible what was impossible for earlier ages. These conclusions occurred almost spontaneously everywhere, and by the faith of these persons, aviation became a reality; a reality that had been an utter impossibility during the thousands of years before. The growth of faith in space-flight today is identically inspired. We know now that we have already the ability to master space, we need only master technicalities.

The Cosmian League cannot engage in experiments; that is not our part. Our part is that of continually spreading this faith in the impending conquest of space. After this war and present turmoil are over (and it won't be long historically), space-flight will be "on the order of the day." Science-fiction can and has played a powerful part in bringing that day closer. Cosmians today, by spreading science-fiction, are performing an invaluable function towards the actual bringing about of their dreams. Science-fiction keeps the fact of the future always before us and never allows us to lose faith in science and triumphant progress.

To join the Cosmian League, to register yourself with those actively working for the future, write to The Cosmian League, c/o Cosmic Stories, 19 East 48th St., New York, N. Y., stating that you are in agreement with its principles (which are support of science and human progress). Enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for your membership card.

WHAT SORGHUM SAYS

by Cecil Corwin

(Author of "Thirteen O'Clock," "The Reversible Revolutions," etc.)

It's a mighty strange yarn that's going around in the hill-billy country. Sorghum says foreigners are "behind the times."

UP IN THE FOOTHILLS of the Cumberlands they have something new in the way of folk-lore. If you're lucky and haven't got the professorial gleam in your eye, the tale is unfolded something like this:

Sorghum Hackett lived by himself up by Sowbelly Crag, not because he was afraid for his still but because when he was a young man some girl blighted his life by running off to Nashville with a railroad man. Ever since that he's been bitter against most people.

So this spring morning, when the scientific man came climbing up to his house he got out his squirrel-

gun and asked him like the mountain people do: "Will you make tracks or your peace with God?"

"Shut up!" said the scientific man, not even looking at him. Then he went pacing off the ground and writing down figures in a book. At last he turned to Sorghum. "How much do you want for your property?" he asked. "I suppose it's yours."

"Anyone in his right mind wouldn't be eager to dispute it," said Sorghum dryly. "But it ain't for sale."

"Don't be stubborn," said the scientific man. "I haven't any time to waste on benighted peasants."

Sorghum dropped his gun in real admiration for the bravery of the man, whoever he was. He held out a hand saying: "I'm Sorghum Hackett, and I've killed men for less than what you said."

The man shook his hand absentmindedly. "I'm Wayne Baily, and I've got to have the use of your land for about a month."

Hackett nearly fell in love with the man; he didn't know there was anyone who could stand up to him that way, and he liked it. "I'm willing," he said at last. "But I won't take your money—it ain't clean."

So Baily just laughed and then went down to the village and came back up with a Nord truck loaded to the gills with junk. "Hackett," he said, "first thing we do is run this penstock down from that springhead."

And by the next morning they had forty yards of big piping down from Chittling Spring, and the water gushing out of the end of the pipe would have irrigated a whole farm. Baily rigged up a metal globe that he bolted to the pipes' end; a globe with a small-gage turbine wheel in it, and he hooked that up to a little dynamo that stayed on the truck.

When a week was up there was precious little room in Sorghum's house for him and Baily, because it was cluttered up with the junk from town—insides of radios, big coils of wire, aerials, rods stuck into the ground so deep that they were cold from underground water they touched—everything crazy you could think of, and all lit up every now and then whenever Baily turned on his dynamo in the truck.

Finally Baily said to Sorghum: "It's been a pleasure knowing you, Hackett. Now there's only one stipulation I'm putting on you, and that is to knock all my machinery into pieces as soon as I'm gone."

"Gone?" asked Sorghum, because Baily didn't say it as though he was going down to town for another storage battery.

"Yes—for good, Hackett," said Baily, puttering with the wires and finally turning a switch. The things lit up and glowed even brighter than ever before. "Goodbye, Hackett," said Baily. Then he grabbed at his chest and his face twisted. "Heart!" he gasped faintly, and even fainter he cut loose with a string of curses that made Sorghum blush.

Baily hit the floor, and Sorghum listened for his breath, but there wasn't any. He scratched his head, wondering how he'd explain things to the coroner, and reached automatically for his jug to help him think.

But one of the things he didn't think of was that his jug had been moved outside to make room for what the late Mr. Baily had called a condenser. Sorghum got a shock that sent him crashing back on his heels into some of the deep-driven rods. The last thing he knew the lights were still sparkling and glow-

ing, but he never could tell what hit him.

THERE WAS a dizzying splash and Sorghum found himself floundering in water up to his knees. He looked around and wasn't in any place he knew, because he didn't know any places that were all marble and tile. Overhead a hot sun was beating down on him.

"Well!" said someone. And right there Sorghum knew that something was wrong, because though what he heard was "Well!" the sound he heard wasn't anything like that—more like "Ahoo!"

He looked up and saw a man facing him, dressed in sandals and a shirt that fell to his knees. And the man said, still talking so that Sorghum could understand him but not making a single sound in English, "It's a blundering assassin that falls into his victim's fishpond. Tiberius chooses unwisely."

"Are you calling me a bushwhacker, mister?" demanded Sorghum, who never killed except fairly.

The man, who had been grinning proudly, looked surprised then. Not frightened, surprised. "I don't know what language you speak, assassin," he said, "but it's a damnably strange one that confounds and is clear at the same time." He looked closer at Sorghum. "And you don't seem altogether real. Are you always as ghostly when you're sent on the Caesar's errands?"

Sorghum looked at himself and saw that the man wasn't lying. His own flesh seemed to have got a funny trick of being half here and half there, like a column of smoke that's always ready to break. "I reckon you're right, mister," said Sorghum, cracking one of his icy smiles. "I seem to be in a predicament. But I ain't what you take me for. I'm Sorghum Hackett of Tennessee."

"Never heard of the town," said the man. "I'm Asinius Gallo. Need I explain that this is Rome?"

Now Sorghum had heard that foreigners were peculiar, but he didn't expect anything as peculiar as this, and he said so.

"Foreigners!" yelled the man. "I don't know what barbarous land you're from, stranger, but bear in mind that when you're in the City *you're* the foreigner until and unless naturalized. Though," he added, calmer, "what with that avaricious slut the Lady Livia raising the prices on the roll week after week, soon a Julio-Claudian himself won't be able to stay in his place."

"I don't get your talk, Mr. Gallo," said Sorghum. "I'm here by accident, and I'd like mightily to get back to Tennessee. How can I earn some passage money? I reckon it's overseas."

"Work, eh?" asked Asinius Gallo. "What can you do?"

Sorghum considered. "I can do a little carpentering," he said. "And I can make the best white mule in the Cumberlands."

"Carpentry's out of the question," said Asinius Gallo. "The Joiners' Guild has it tight as a drum. But I don't know of any guild covering the manufacture of white mules—doubt that it can be done."

"Do ye?" asked Sorghum, grinning again. "Just give me some corn, some copper and a few days and I'll show you."

Asinius Gallo abruptly nodded. "It might be worth trying," he said. "Certainly I can't raise my own. And if they're really good they can be resold at a profit. Sorghum Hackett, I'll finance you."

SO, WORKING in privacy, the way that the mountain folks like to, it took him a few days before he got a good run. He had to fool around a lot because they used a funny, stunted kind of grain, but finally it came out all right.

"Here, Mr. Gallo," he called to his backer. "It's finished."

"Will it kick?" asked Asinius Gallo cautiously.

Sorghum laughed. "Like the devil with a porky quill in him, I promise you that much. Best you ever saw."

"Well," said Asinius Gallo uncertainly as he entered. Sorghum held up the big jug he'd caught the run in. "What's that?"

"The white mule," said Sorghum, a little hurt.

His backer was downright bewildered. "I expected an animal," he explained. "What you've got in there I can't imagine."

"Oh," said Sorghum. "Well, if you don't agree with me, Mr. Gallo, that this is better than any animal you ever tasted I'll make you an animal.' And he said this because he felt pretty sure that the benighted idolater wouldn't take him up. Sorghum had asked the terrified servants, and they told him that they didn't have anything stronger than the sticky red wine they drank at supper. And that, Sorghum judged by the body, was no more than twenty proof, while this run of his would prove at least a hundred and twenty. He poured a medium slug—four fingers—for his host, who smelled it cautiously.

"Don't put your eyes over it, Mr. Gallo," cautioned Sorghum. "Just drink it right down the way we do in Tennessee." He filled a glass of his own with a man-sized drink.

"Feliciter," said Asinius Gallo, which sounded like "good luck," to Sorghum. "Confusion to Tories," he replied, downing his. His host immediately after swallowed his own shot convulsively. Almost immediately he screamed shrilly and clutched at his throat. Sorghum held a water-pitcher out to him, grinning. The pitcher was empty when he took it back.

"That," said his host hoarsely, "was a potion worthy of Livia herself. Are you sure it won't kill me?"

"Sartin," replied Sorghum, enjoying the backwash of the home-brew. "That was almost the smoothest I've ever made."

"Then," said Asinius Gallo, "let's have another."

THE TENNESSEE MAN had a few more runs, each better than the last as his equipment improved and settled, and with Asinius Gallo as his agent he had amassed quite a bit of the coinage of these foreigners. Altogether things were looking up when a slave appeared with a message.

Sorghum's host read from it: "The Lady Livia will be pleased to see Sorghum Hackett, the guest of the Senator Asinius Gallo. She believes that there are many mutual interests which it will be profitable to discuss."

"Right kind of her," said Sorghum.

"Hah!" groaned his backer. "You don't know the old hag. Sorghum Hackett, you're as good as dead, and it's no use hoping otherwise. She's always been down on me, but she never dared to strike at me direct because of my family. Now you're going to get it. Oh, I'm sorry, friend. And I thought I'd kept you a pretty close secret. Well, go on—no use postponing fate."

Sorghum grinned slowly. "We'll see," he said. He picked up two bottles of the latest brew and rammed them into his boot-tops. "Goodbye, Mr. Gallo," he said, entering the se-

dan-chair that was waiting for him.

The bearers let him off at the Augustan Palace and conducted him to a side-entrance. He waited only a moment before the door opened and a cracked voice bade him enter. "Come in, young man; come in!" it shrilled.

Sorghum closed the door behind him and faced the notorious Livia, mother of the Emperor Tiberius, poisoner supreme and unquestioned ruler of Rome. "Pleased t' meetcha, ma'am," he said.

"You're the Hackett they tell me about?" she demanded. He studied her wispy white hair and the bony, hooked nose as he answered: "I'm the only Hackett in these parts."

"It's true!" she shrilled. "You are a magician—your body waves like a flame, and your language is strange, but I can understand it. Everything they said is true!"

"I reckon so, ma'am," admitted Sorghum.

"Then you're condemned," she said promptly. "I won't have any magicians going about in my empire. Can't tax the brutes — they're unfair. You're condemned, young man!"

"To what?" asked the Tennesseean.

"Amphitheater," she snapped. "Wild beasts. Take him away, you fools!"

Sorghum's arms were grabbed by two of the biggest, ugliest people he had ever seen in his born days and he was hustled down flights of stairs and hurled into something of a dungeon with other condemned magicians.

"You got in just under the wire," one of them informed him helpfully. "We're going to get chased out into the arena in a few minutes."

"What can I do?" asked Sorghum.

"Don't struggle. Don't shield your throat—let the animals tear it out as soon as possible. That way it's over with at once and you cheat the mob of watching you squirm."

"I reckon so," said Sorghum thoughtfully. He remembered his courtesy and the bottles in his boots. "Have a drink?" he asked, producing them. The magicians clustered around him like flies around honey.

THE AFTERNOON GAMES were to consist of such little things as a pack of craven magicians and fortune-tellers being killed in a mess by leopards. Consensus favored the leopards; odds were quoted as something like eighty to one against the magicians.

Tiberius waved his hand from the President's box in one end of the colossal amphitheater, and the gate which admitted the beasts opened. There was a buzz from the audience as the magnificent animals came streaming through like a river of tawny fur.

The emperor waved again, and the public prepared to be amused by the customary sight of unwilling victims being prodded out into the arena by long-handled tridents. But something must have gone wrong, for the craven magicians came striding boldly out, roaring some song or other. At their head was a curiously shimmering figure, who was beating time with two enormous bottles in either hand, both empty.

It roared in a titanic voice, as it sighted the animals: "Look out, ye hell-fired pussy-cats! I'm a-grapplin'!" The magicians charged in a body to the excited screams of the mob.

Roughly there was one cat to every man, and that was the sensible way that the men went about eliminating the cats. The favorite grip seemed to be the tail—a magician would pick

up the leopard and swing it around heftily two or three times, then dash its head to the sand of the arena. The rest would be done with the feet.

In a surprisingly short time the magicians were sitting on the carcasses of the cats and resuming their song.

"Let out the lion!" shrilled Tiberius. "They can't do this to me!" The second gate opened, and the king of the jungle himself stalked through, his muscles rippling beneath his golden skin, tossing his huge mane. He sighted the magicians, who weren't paying him any attention at all, and roared savagely.

The shimmering figure looked up in annoyance. "Another one!" it was heard to declare. The song broke off again as the grim, purposeful body of men went for the lion. He eyed them coldly and roared again. They kept on coming. The king of the jungle grew somewhat apprehensive, lashing his tail and crouching as for a spring. The bluff didn't work, he realized a second later, for the men were on him and all over him, gouging his face cruelly and kicking him in the ribs. He tumbled to the sand rather than suffer a broken leg and grunted convulsively as the magicians sat heavily on his flanks and continued their song.

"It was dow-wen in Raid River Vail-lee—" mournfully chanted the leader—he with the empty bottles.

Tiberius stamped his feet and burst into tears of rage. "My lion!" he wailed. "They're sitting on my lion!"

The leader dropped his bottles and sauntered absently about the arena. One of the deep-driven, iron posts of the inside wall caught his eye. He reached out to touch it and—was gone, with a shimmer of purple light.

SORGHUM'S REAPPEARANCE was as unchronicled as his disappearance. He didn't tell anybody until they asked him, and then he told them from beginning to end, substantially as I have told it here.

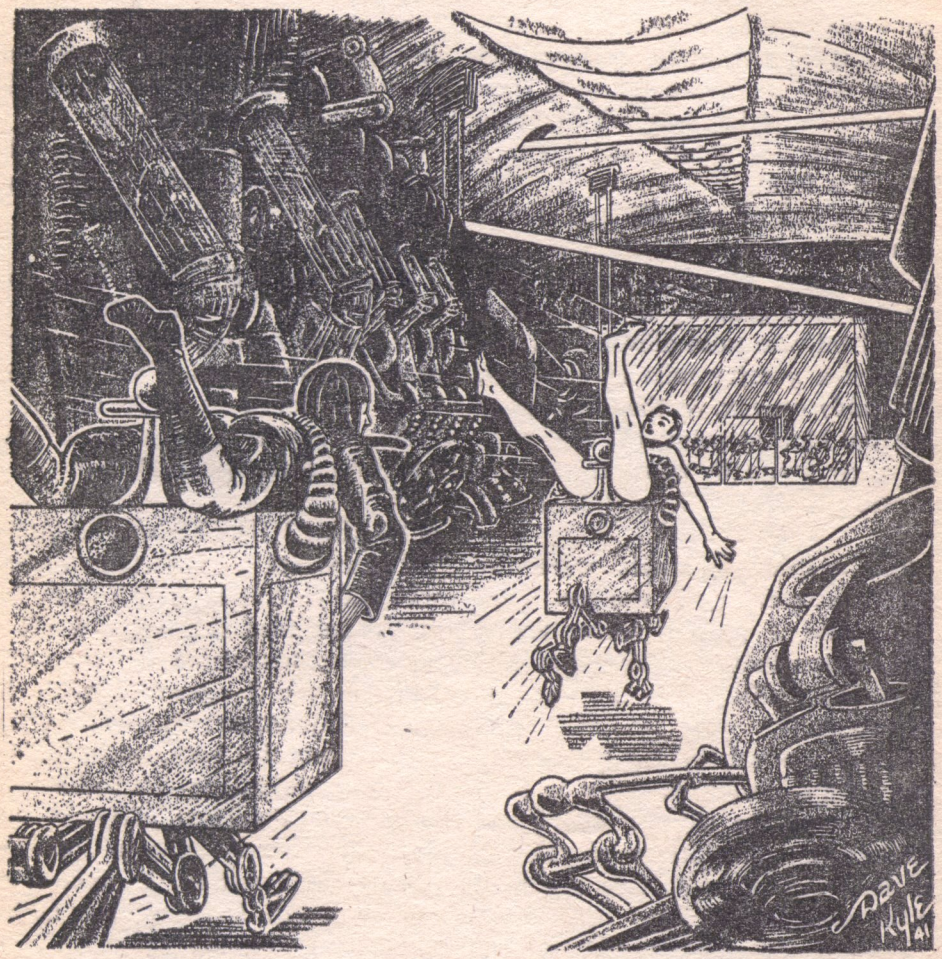
But every once in a while he remarks: "Foreigners are sartinly peculiar people. I know—I've lived among them. But some day I'm going to get me some money and take a boat back there and see that Mr. Gallo to find out if he ever did get the hang of running the mash. Foreigners are sartinly peculiar—behind the times, I call 'em."

That's what Sorghum says.

TRANSITORY ISLAND

by Richard Wilson

(Author of "Murder From Mars," "The Missing Sea-Serpent," etc.)



When three men are alone on a barren island in the middle of nowhere, how can two of them disappear without a trace?

DOUG PELTON CHUCKED a valueless penny into the Pacific and laughed grimly. He was remembering a questionnaire he had answered ten years ago in college.

"What three objects or persons would you like to have along if you were stranded on a desert island?"

He had listed: "Mary Astor, the complete works of Shakespeare, and a shaving kit."

Well, here he was on a desert island, but without Miss Astor, with nothing to read and with a stubby hedge on his face. Beside him was a life preserver, carefully folded, bearing the imprint of the *Honey-*

bell. The *Honeybell* had been Doug's home for the past six months. He and a small crew of natives were getting along decently in the copra trade until a sudden storm had sent the boat to the bottom. Doug had swum until he was exhausted, then clung to a drifting spar, which, some hours later, at dawn, had bumped into this island.

Pelton had always pictured desert islands as sandy, pebbled, circular things, about ten feet across, with a palm tree growing in the center. His island was quite different. It was perhaps a quarter mile in diameter, noticeably convex, so that the center was the highest point, the rest sloping away gradually under the waters of the Pacific. It seemed to be of rock.

The castaway's assets were the clothes now drying in the sun, a tin of biscuits, a pint of water and a wrist watch that had stopped at 4.06 a. m. His liability was one uncrossable ocean.

Pelton was celebrating his twelfth hour as a shipwrecked sailor by trotting around the edge of the island and singing disjointedly at the top of his lungs when a plane appeared in the northeastern sky.

He stopped singing and ran to where his clothing was drying in the sun. He climbed into his soggy slacks. After all, you never knew. There *were* lady aviators.

This one wasn't, though. The man who opened the door at the side of the cabin plane when it had bobbed over to the island was a tall, stocky man of about fifty, with iron-gray hair and a large mustache, pointed at the ends.

"Hey!" he cried. "Want a lift?"

"Sure," said Doug. "If it's not too much trouble."

The other hopped onto the island, surveying it with interest. "Quite a place you have here," he commented. "Have you laid claim to it?"

"Absolutely. It's called Pelton's Folly. I chose it in preference to a seventy foot copra boat that wouldn't stay afloat." He held out his hand. "Doug Pelton," he grinned.

"Charlie Hayes," returned the older man. "You know, this place interests me. What is it—stone?"

"I guess so."

Hayes noticed Doug's bare feet. "No, it isn't," he said. "Not if you can prance around at noon on the equator with no shoes on." He bent down to touch it with his hand. "Why, it's cool!" he exclaimed. "This warrants investigation."

CHARLIE HAYES was an American with a comfortable fortune who had bought himself a plane and was determined to see the world as he chose, unassisted by steamship lines or travel agencies. With his plane and pilot, Art Murray—a young man of doubtful background but excellent qualifications—he had set out from San Francisco early in July and, after a brief stop in Honolulu, headed southwest in the general direction of Fiji. Halfway there he had found Doug and his island.

But the island seemed to defy him. It was certainly not rock. Hayes tried to take a sample of it to test in the miniature laboratory aboard the plane, but succeeded only in breaking a drill without marring the island's surface.

"Looks like it's no use, boss," said Murray, as he coiled the wire that was attached to the drill.

"Nevertheless, I'm not giving up just yet. There must be an answer." Charlie Hayes turned to Doug. "If you don't mind deferring your rescue for a day or so."

"Not a bit," replied Doug. "Now that someone's started me thinking about it, I'm as interested as you are."

"Fine," said Hayes. He squinted at the horizon. They had spent the entire afternoon in their attempts at analysis. "It's getting too dark to do anything more tonight. We'll get an early start tomorrow."

But the next day Charlie Hayes had something else to worry about. Art Murray, the pilot, had disappeared. He wasn't in the plane, or on the island. Nor had he gone swimming. There was only one place left . . . Doug and Hayes looked at each other. *Under* the island?

Charlie Hayes took a diving helmet and pumping apparatus out of the plane.

"Know how to work this gadget?" he asked.

"Sure," replied Doug. "I used to run a concession in Florida. 'See the fish and flora on the ocean's floor. Ten cents'."

"Good," laughed Hayes. "I'm going down."

He had stripped to bathing trunks. He placed the diving helmet over his shoulders and waded out into the water. Gradually he disappeared under the surface.

Doug Pelton pumped rhythmically, watching the airhose snake into the water.

Five minutes later the hose stopped jerking. Doug looked out to where Hayes had disappeared from view. Bubbles were coming to the surface in unnatural profusion. He tugged on the airhose; there was no resistance. The hose was no longer connected to the helmet!

Was it cut? Doug hauled it in. No; the end had been disconnected. What did it mean? Was there air—somewhere—down under the island? He waited, tensely, lighting a cigarette from the pack Murray had given him.

Minutes passed. Doug tossed his cigaret into the Pacific. Why didn't Hayes come back? And where was Murray? What was down there? Were they in danger? He determined to find out.

With a keen-bladed pearl knife strapped to his trunks, he swam out to where the bubbles had come up. He breathed in a lungful of air—and dived. Eyes open under water, he saw the metal of the island curve downward, to disappear in a blue-green haze. Powerful strokes brought him nearer. The island seemed to be a great gray sphere, submerged for seven-eights of its depth.

Doug propelled himself closer. He made out a ragged, gaping hole in the side of the sphere. Nothing was visible within, save a forbidding blackness. When his lungs began to ache, he expelled his breath and streaked for the surface.

In the plane he found what he wanted: a waterproof flashlight. Again he went down. This time he made straight for the hole. With the light held firmly under his armpit, he swam cautiously inside. The light illumined a small compartment.

The swimmer shuddered. It was cold in here. His natural buoyancy caused him to rise. He flashed the light upward, and almost dropped it. He caught a glimpse of a bloated, distorted human figure, floating face down.

He felt a trifle silly when he realized that the apparition was merely a reflection of himself on the undersurface of the water. A second later he broke through into air.

Carefully he expelled some air from his lungs, drew a shallow breath. The air, although dank, was breathable. Gratefully he filled his lungs.

From the curvature of the gray walls revealed in the searching beam of his light it would seem that he was in a space between the inner and outer hulls of this strange, artificial sphere. The hulls were about ten feet apart, joined at intervals by girders of the same gray material.

Doug Pelton stuck the flashlight in his belt and hauled himself up on a girder. Here he sat, shivering slightly, while he pondered his next move.

Above him on the inside hull he made out a circular panel—or was it a door?

BY STANDING on the girder and leaning his body against the inside hull Doug managed to reach what appeared to be a knob in the center of the door. It turned under his hand.

The door opened slowly and silently—outward. He shone his light inside. A bare room, perhaps a dozen feet square, was revealed. At the far side was a door similar to the one standing open. But what caught his eye was the diving helmet Charlie Hayes had worn, lying on the floor. Doug climbed in and picked it up. It was still wet. So was the floor, he noticed, where Hayes' bare feet had tracked water across the room.

He closed the door. The far door opened as easily as the first.

At that moment the rays from his flashlight became weak, ineffectual compared with the radiance that poured through from beyond the doorway. When his eyes had accustomed themselves to the light, Doug found himself on the threshold of a strange, glittering world. He stepped through the doorway onto a platform. The door closed automatically behind him.

Immediately above him the whole ceiling of the huge room glowed with a brilliant, but unglaring, radiance. To his right at the edge of the unrailed platform was a set of parallel moving cogs, resembling the beginning of a descending escalator, but without steps or railings. It swept down, arced like a ski-jump, and vanished through a portal in the wall of the room below.

A rhythmic throbbing came from a glittering pile of machinery a hundred feet below. Doug, gratefully absorbing the glow of heat, marveled at the machines, that dwarfed even those that drove ocean liners. What sort of place *was* this? And where were the people in charge of it? So far he had seen no human being.

He looked for a way to get down to what seemed to be the center of activity. There was none—unless the rows of cogs that clicked downward in an endless chain were a means of transportation.

He dared not attempt such a descent in bare feet, and cast about for something to protect him. Standing in a row at an end of the platform were half a dozen gleaming cubes of silver, measuring perhaps three feet each way. Atop each was what seemed to be a handle, in the center of which was a metal ball the size of an orange—also silver in color.

He dragged one to the edge of the platform. It was heavier than he expected, but he managed to set it on the moving cogs.

It sped down the incline at a rate that made Doug step back in alarm. He noticed, however, that when the cube disappeared through the aperture at the lower end of the room, there was enough clearance to prevent anyone who might be foolish enough to sit on top of one of the cubes from being injured—which was what he proposed to do.

He saw no other way of descent short of a hundred foot drop to a hard floor—and he didn't relish the thought of going back to the "island's" surface . . . alone.

DOUG PELTON had been to Coney Island, but the concessionaires there would have writhed in envious agony if confronted with a ride such as he was now experiencing.

After the initial swoop down through the machine room, Doug, lying belly down on the side of the cube, his hands tightly clutching the handle, was whisked into a tunnel whose blackness seemed eternal. His head between his arms, legs outstretched behind him, Doug feared imminent dismemberment.

The only sound was a *clackety-clack* as the cube sped over the cogs and the whistling of a warm wind past his ears. Echoes were thrown back from all sides.

After what seemed an interminable period of time, a square of light appeared ahead and above. The cogs, reflecting the light, curved upward to meet it. The cube's tornado-like pace slackened as it emerged into something rather closely resembling a subway station, with an enormous door at one side.

The cube clacked on in a crawl. Doug forced his trembling body onto the platform, where he sat for a moment, too weak to move.

He turned his head as he heard running footsteps. Art Murray, the pilot, was hurrying toward him.

"For God's sake, Pelton," he cried, "did they get you, too?"

Doug expelled a sigh of relief. He noticed that Murray was fully clothed and dry.

"Hello!" he said—then: "What do you mean, they?"

Murray pointed to the cube that was vanishing into the tunnel at the far end of the platform.

"Those things. Those—silver safes—with arms."

Doug shook his head in bewilderment. "I don't know what you're talking about. What arms?" He got to his feet.

"I was taking a stroll on the island last night," explained Murray. "It felt good to be able to walk around after being cooped up in a plane for hours at a time. Then there was a click ahead of me and a trapdoor opened. One of those—robots stuck his head through and grabbed me. It got me down inside before I managed to get at my gun and smash its eye. Then it died, I guess. I've been wanderin' around ever since."

The immense door at the side of the platform opened. Murray groaned.

"See what I mean?"

In the doorway stood—on tentacle-like, silver legs—a cube such as Doug had ridden along the cogs. The "handle" glowed, eye-like, with a red, intelligent gleam. Two more tentacles emerged from the upper corners of the cube and weaved about, like powerful multiple-jointed arms.

"Good grief!" gasped Doug, staring fascinated at the gleaming eye.

"See what I mean?" repeated Murray. "They're alive!"

THE CREATURE MOVED toward them, then backed away. It seemed to beckon with its metal tentacles. There was a ticking sound from the eye above its body.

"Look out!" cried Murray. "It'll get us the way they got me."

He reached for the revolver strapped to his side. Quickly the cube leapt forward and lashed out a tentacle, pinning Murray's arms to his

sides. Before Doug could move he felt himself grabbed in the same way.

The thing whirled, and running awkwardly but swiftly on its metal legs, carried them through the door and into a long corridor, down which it sped.

Murray was cursing at a great rate, and raining ineffectual kicks on the body of the metal monster that had them in its power. Doug was silent, wondering whether he'd have been better off if he had gone to the bottom with his copra boat, instead of being whisked through the bowels of a great floating sphere by something that properly had no business outside a nightmare.

Out of the corner of his eyes Doug saw walls flash past at a rapid rate. There were some strange things on the walls—and behind them, for they were of a glasslike substance. One portion bore varicolored murals, depicting unfamiliar scenes in an alien land peopled by strange folk—giants in stature, gaunt, hairless, intelligent-looking, an unearthly green in color.

Behind one transparent section of the corridor, Doug thought he saw a row of slabs, with immense figures, draped in white, laid out on them. But his metal captor whisked him past so quickly that he could not be positive.

The automaton's pace slackened as it approached a large door set in the end of the corridor. It swung open as they neared it, and the creature ran through.

It set Doug and Murray on their feet.

In the small, translucent-walled room a weird sight met their eyes. Approximately a dozen of the metal beings were grouped at one corner, with what—if there were any difference—would be their backs toward them.

They seemed to have all their attention centered on a screen set in the floor.

"What the hell's this?" muttered Murray. "A convention?"

Then they saw Charlie Hayes. He was on his hands and knees, in the center of the group. His eyes were intent on the screen. Doug edged closer, elbowing his way through the metal men as if they were human subway-goers.

He could make nothing of the action taking place on the screen. It was a flashing whorl of color, punctuated at irregular intervals by a lightning-streak of black, or by a series of white circles that leapfrogged from side to side.

CHARLIE HAYES, his forehead wrinkled in an effort to comprehend, was unaware of everything except the message that seemed undecipherable. One of the silver automatons had a tentacle thrown across Hayes' back. More by accident, thought Doug, than through any strictly human instinct of friendship.

There was a mechanical clicking of irritation as the metal men were roughly thrust aside by Art Murray, anxious to discover the center of so much interest.

For the first time Murray seemed to realize that his employer might be in danger. He noticed the nearness of the robot's tentacle to Hayes' neck.

Before Doug had a chance to stop him, he had cried:

"Get your dirty hands off the boss!" and drove his boot into the side of the robot.

The metal man pitched forward. Its eye shattered as it crashed through the glass of the screen. The screen abruptly turned white—the spinning colors vanished.

Hayes got to his feet. "You fool!" he breathed. "What have you done?"

The robot lay still in the wreckage of the screen. The others turned slowly toward Murray.

"Keep away from me!" he cried, backing against a wall. "Don't touch me!"

He drew his gun and fired wildly into the mass of metal advancing on him. One of his shots shattered the red eye of the robot. It fell forward, its mechanism out of control, and crushed the pilot against the wall. He gave a ghastly shriek, then sank to the floor, dead, with the red-spattered robot lying half atop him.

Charlie Hayes grasped Doug's elbow. "Poor fellow," he said, shaking his gray head. "They weren't trying to hurt us. They're our friends."

Indeed, the metal men were standing quietly now, their tentacle-arms at their sides.

Suddenly a tremor of titantic power rocked the sphere. Doug felt an unpleasant sinking sensation in the bottom of his stomach. The floor tilted to a forty-five degree angle, precipitating a mass of machines and men to one side of the room. Fortunately the humans landed atop the others, so that they were only severely bruised.

Painfully Hayes and Doug climbed uphill, out of the room into the corridor.

"What was it?" asked Doug, flexing a leg experimentally.

"Maybe we were rammed by a ship," suggested Hayes. "Though I doubt it. It's broad daylight. I hope," he added, "we aren't going to sink."

Doug watched the robots, who were having difficulty getting out of the room. They kept slipping backward on the smooth surface as they tried individually to mount the slope. As he looked, they piled themselves atop each other like children's blocks, till those remaining were able to clamber out by using their fellows as a ladder. Then the topmost robot, with a power that amazed him, pulled the others, who had linked tentacles, into the corridor.

ONE OF THE ROBOTS—he could not be called the leader, since all seemed to be identical, inside, as well as out—made his way down the slanting floor. He stopped in front of a cabinet that was one of several set at intervals along the wall.

His tentacle curled around a switch. The surface of the cabinet glowed, became opaque. There formed on the glass a vivid reproduction, in color, of the ocean's surface as it might be seen from the top of the sphere.

Doug gripped Hayes' shoulder.

"Look!" he said.

Steaming majestically through the waves at a respectful distance was a battleship, bearing the flag of Great Britain. All that could be seen of their plane was part of the fuselage and the tail, which slowly settled beneath the water before their eyes.

As they watched, a gun at the side of the ship belched smoke and flame Almost simultaneously the floor under them shot to a new angle as both humans and automatons lost their footing. Reverberating through the corridors came the sound of rent metal—additional proof that the sphere was the object of attack.

"Idiots!" breathed Hayes. Then, to Doug: "Come on. This fellow seems to know something."

They ran down the corridor, preceded by a gesturing metal man. Doug recognized the route they were following as the one he had traversed as a captive, not half an hour ago.

Doug halted suddenly. He *had* been right. There were people behind the glass walls! The two successive shocks from the guns of the battleship had shattered the glass and the white-draped figures on the long stone slabs could be seen plainly.

Hayes also stopped. He gave a start.

"Why," he said, "they're alive!"

Doug stared. He saw one of the enormous green figures slowly close the fingers of one hand that lay by its side.

"The air must have done it," muttered Hayes, almost to himself. "They were in an airtight, transparent tomb. Only fresh air was needed to revive them."

Doug's eyes were fastened on the nearest figure, which was turning its great bald head slowly to one side, although the eyes remained closed. "But," he whispered, "why?"

"Possibly these people are travelers from a distant planet—from the size of them I'd say a tremendous planet. Perhaps, after leaving for their destination, which might or might not have been Earth, they placed themselves in suspended animation, leaving the mechanical details of the weary journey to their near-intelligent robots."

"Then—they may have been here for years," commented Doug in awe.

"Decades, perhaps. Evidently the robots had instructions to revive them when that destination was reached. The fact that they have not done so leads me to believe that Earth was merely an accidental, unplanned stop. En route disaster overtook them."

"A meteor?" suggested Doug, thinking of the gaping hole in the side of the sphere. "You mean they used Earth as a sort of interplanetary garage?"

He received no answer. Following Hayes' gaze, he saw the nearest of the waking green giants wrinkle its brow in a mighty attempt to open its eyes.

At that moment the robot who had been leading them reappeared around a corner, evidently in search of them. Upon catching sight of them, it hurried forward and whipped out a tentacle that swept Doug off his feet. He made no resistance this time, not because he was used to being handled like a sack of wheat, but because he was convinced that the robots were friendly and trying, in their own way, to help them.

Doug looked back to see Charlie Hayes standing as one bewitched, his jaw muscles showing bunched through his skin, perspiration standing out on his brow, his eyes fixed in a wide, unseeing stare on the figure behind the broken glass.

For one terrible moment Doug saw the huge, quasi-human being, now sitting upright on its slab, supporting itself on its palms, its glowing superhuman *white* eyes boring into those of Charlie Hayes.

DOUG PELTON HAD a confused recollection of being locked with Hayes into a metal bubble in a room filled with pulsing machinery and circular openings in all the walls. He was glad the robot had wrapped a segmented arm around his wrist and fastened it to a handle, because when the bubble had stopped shooting upward swiftly through a tube, then more slowly through water, and finally bobbed up and down on the surface, he pulled the handle almost automatically. The top of the globe fell away, disclosing the Pacific Ocean, a battleship and a prodigious amount of air-bubbles coming to the surface from below. Of

the sphere and plane there was no sign.

Shortly afterward a motor launch brought Doug Pelton and the unconscious Hayes to the ship, where the young captain apologized in Oxford English for having caused discomfort to two honorable American citizens.

"Three," corrected Doug, somewhat dizzily. "One's down there—" he indicated the depths of the ocean "—dead."

The captain was desolated. But it must be understood that his nation was at war—and that the sight of an airplane refueling from a submarine, in restricted waters moreover, was certainly to be considered highly suspicious.

"It wasn't a submarine," said Doug, leaning weakly against the rail and disinterestedly watching the steel globe that had brought him to the surface bob out of sight in the wake of the man o' war.

Brows wrinkled in amazement. "Then, please, what was it?" asked the Englishman.

"That's something you'll have to ask Mr. Hayes," said Doug. "He's the only one of us with a scientific mind." He wondered whether the sphere had been flooded. He hoped not. Those robots were almost human; certainly they were likeable. But their — masters? Although he was not cold, Doug shuddered. For a moment he saw those staring *white* eyes again, and he was afraid.

"Very well," agreed the captain. "We shall ask Mr. Hayes. Soon the doctor will have him conscious again."

But when the soft-spoken doctor admitted Doug Pelton and the captain to the cabin only a poor mockery of Charlie Hayes lay there on the bed. Merely the shell of a man, who stared vacantly at nothing and repeated, in an awful whisper:

"The eyes . . . *the eyes!*"

THAT NIGHT, as Doug Pelton lay unable to sleep in his cabin, looking out the porthole, he thought he saw a great silver meteor flash across the sky and disappear—upward.

But he was not sure.

WORLDS WITHIN WORLDS

In 1822 a petition was laid before the United States Congress to equip an expedition of two ships for the purpose of sailing over a North Polar opening into the interior of the Earth where would be found a habitable land. Though Congress turned this down, the petition was repeated next year, also fruitlessly.

The petitioner was Captain John Cleves Symmes of St. Louis who originated a conception of the construction of the Earth that has fascinated many imaginative people. He believed that the planet, far from being solid all through, was "hollow and habitable within; containing a number of solid concentric spheres, one within the other, and that it is open at the poles twelve or sixteen degrees." He based his belief on a number of observations concerning the polar regions, Eskimo legends, and various hypotheses arising from "scientific" ideas of the universe.

The interior earths were all habitable on both surfaces, all warmed and lit through some mystical transfusion of light, and all in turn hollow at the poles. Symmes advertised several times for money and men to equip an expedition to prove his contentions, but it was never forthcoming.

SO YOU WANT TO BE A SPACE-FLIER?

If you do, you'd better read this article first; it's an eye-opener!

by Martin Pearson

SO YOU WANT to be a space-flier?

My friend, if you only *knew* what you are asking for. Life in a space ship is no joke. Nor is it a thrilling adventure. You're all alone there; you get tired of reading. You can't play cards and the like because, first, there's no one with whom to play and, second, because the cards won't stay put. There's nothing to see; space scenery is sheer monotonly. The whole ship smells; cooking's a rotten, messy job and the after effects are still more so.

Picture me after I'm about ten days out from Mars, approaching Earth. I still have five more days to go, am getting into the last sick-and-tired stage of space-flying. I've read everything in the microfilm box on the way out; for the return trip there's only a few rolls I picked up at Marsport, books written about a hundred years ago, dealing with some writer's idea of space-flying and life on Mars. Naturally, the author knew nothing of his subject.

Oh, those stories about giant space-ships, big crews, Martian princesses, space pirates, grotesque and malignant space-beings! The first day, they were amusing; the second day funny, the third day just silly, and the fourth day, I thought them specimens of sheer stupidity. By the tenth day, I was positive that those writers were lunatics who had barely managed to keep from being put away.

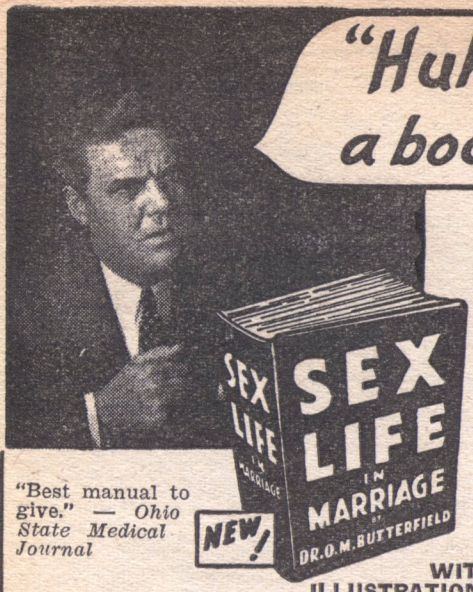
Picture my ship in contrast to the nonsense this maniac dished out a century ago. There weren't any fine gravity plates so that I could walk a deck with as much ease as if I were at home on Earth. Gravity plates could be done, but they'd raise havoc with drive belts, make your course impossible to figure, attract thousands of meteors, which would turn the ship into a sieve before you were two hours out. So, there weren't any fancy gravity plates.

You know what it feels like? It feels like falling. Like falling down an endless and bottomless elevator shaft out of which all the air has been pumped. Your organs are drifting around; you have difficulty in swallowing, and every once in awhile you forget yourself and think you are really falling, flail out in all directions with consequent damage. Then, when you sleep—oh, when you sleep! You dream of falling. From the second you close your eyes to the instant you wake up, yelling your head off, you're falling off a cliff, about to be splattered all over the ground. Sleeping in space is sheer hell.

Not that it's much better when you're awake. There's still no gravity, remember. That means, I floated around in mid-air looking like a goldfish in a bowl. Only not as comfortable; the goldfish is in its element. I had no right-side up, no top or bottom. Not being built for that sort of thing (for, like it or not, humans are constructed for planets, not free space) even an experienced spacer like myself keeps bumping his head, shins, shoulders, funny bone, or stomach into things—not to mention

(Continued On Page 118)

"Huh, ME read a book on SEX?"



"Best manual to give." — *Ohio State Medical Journal*

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

...ALL RIGHT, SMARTY—JUST LISTEN TO THIS!

You married one of the sweetest girls in the world. She loved you—and you loved her. But the happiest day of her life became the most tragic. Why? Because you THOUGHT you knew it all!

She put her happiness into your hands, but you bungled. You disappointed her BECAUSE you didn't know the REAL facts about sex!

Latest Facts About

PART OF CONTENTS

Marriage
- Various Kinds

Sex Stimulation
- Sexual Awakening
- Caressing

Helpful vs, Harmful Sex Factors
- Differences in Sex Temperament
- Sexual Attraction

Male and Female Organs of Sex
- Hormones

The Honeymoon
- The Marriage Bed
- Dressing, Undressing and Bathing
- Planning the Family

Technique of Sexual Intercourse
- The First Union
- The Invitation
- The Right to Refuse
- Beginning, Middle-Stage and Climax of Sex Union; "After-Glow"
- Lubrication
- The Hymen
- Centers of Sexual Feeling: In Men; In Women
- Psychic Impotence
- Variety in the Sex Embrace
- Producing Climax Together
- The Pleasure Function of Sex in Marriage

Married Sex Life
- Frequency of Intercourse
- Motives for Intercourse
- Releasing Sexual Tension
- Hindrances to Pregnancy
- Signs of Pregnancy; Aschheim-Zondek Test
- Intercourse During Pregnancy; after Childbirth
- Overcoming Sexual Maladjustments of Women; of Men
- Causes of Maladjustments
- Lack of Courting
- The Clumsy Husband
- Happily Managing the Sex Act
- Unequal Desire
- Self-Release
- Physical Changes
- The Menopause

12 Rules for Happy Marriage

Charts and Explanations

Female Sex Organs, front and side views . . . The Internal Sex Organs . . . The External Sex Organs . . . Entrance to Female Genital Parts . . . Male Sex Organs, front and side views . . . Male Reproductive Cell, front and side views.

Tells What to Do and How!

If you had read "Sex Life in Marriage," you would have saved yourself and your bride lots of grief.

You would know what to do before, during and after each sexual experience. This new book gives such definite and detailed information regarding the sex act that no married couple need any longer remain ignorant of exactly how it should be performed.

But don't think that newlyweds are the only offenders. Many married men (married a long time, too) are not satisfied with married sex life!

WHAT TO DO NOW!

No matter how long you're married, begin today an entirely NEW KIND OF SEX LIFE! Send no money, but mail coupon now for "Sex Life in Marriage." When it arrives, read it together!

DOUBLE GUARANTEE!

Solve sex troubles! Taste all the joys of the complete sex life! Unless you feel "Sex Life in Marriage" is worth DOUBLE its low price, return it for money back—send coupon NOW!

SEND NO MONEY!

MAIL COUPON NOW!

HEALTHCRAFT, Inc., Dept. 373-B
247 West 19th St., New York, N. Y.

Mail me SEX LIFE IN MARRIAGE in plain wrapper marked "Personal." I will pay $1.98 and few cents postage on delivery. I MUST BE DELIGHTED or I will return book within 5 days and you will refund purchase price. (I am over 21 years old.)

Name .....

Address .....

☐ CHECK HERE if you wish to enclose only $1.98 with coupon, thus saving delivery charges. **Same Money-back Guarantee, of course.**

(Continued From Page 116)

things bumping into him. Yeah, there's no weight, true: but things still have their mass and that spells sheer misery. You have Earth muscles, adapted to Earth conditions; no matter how much space-training you have had, you can't go easy all the time. All that training can do for you is give you an idea what you'll be up against. A spaceman won't run into one tenth the grief that an untrained person would, but the thing is still hellish. Because, every now and then, you forget and move just a little too fast, then slam bang into something. No matter how careful you are, after a few days you're a mass of bruises.

Everything that isn't battened down floats. A roll of microfilm hanging near the cook stove, a caged frying pan floating along near the porthole, pillows drifting around in an orbit by the light, old shirts and gadgets. At first, you decide that this thing won't happen; you'll put everything away, fix it so you won't have to worry about its drifting loose. After a few days, your outlook has changed on that. Taking things out and putting them away, as often as you have to do it, is gruelling labor. The slightest slip of muscles and you're darting in one direction while the object shoots off in the opposite direction.

And then there's debris. Little crumbs of food; like globules of liquid. You'll be careful, you think; you won't spill anything, eh? Think carefully: ever see anyone eating back on Earth who didn't spill something, or drop something, somewhere during the meal? Just a crumb, or a little drop of water, perhaps. But that, buddy, is all you need to spill or drop in space. These crumbs, these tiny droplets of water, don't fall to the tablecloth; they don't fall at all.

They float. They form into perfect little globes, if they're liquid, and take up an orbit, perfect little planets. If they're crumbs of food, then they become miniature meteors or planetoids.

Cooking has to be done in the single room allowed for living in your space ship. Even though your food is mostly canned stuff, concentrated, there's enough that isn't. Water keeps escaping from you; hot coffee is murderous. You have to keep it in a closed container while it's boiling; you have to leave it there until it cools sufficiently to drink. Then you suck it out through a drinking valve in the pot, directly into your mouth. You can't pour it, because it won't pour in space. If it got loose, you'd have a big ball of coffee, boiling hot; it would drift around, wetting and scalding everything it touched. And you'd run into plenty of grief trying to capture it.

Now re-picture the space ship, ten days out. Dozens of globes, tiny, oft-times virtually invisible, of water, crumbs, food, etc., floating about, getting in your eyes, your nose, your hair. Then, a final touch is added by the ventilation. You see, there isn't any.

The air is purified and re-purified as in submarines. Chemically, it's still breathable and that's all the designers wanted to know. But, to put it crudely, the air stinks. The air is foul and it stays foul. The smell of everything you've cooked remains in full strength. Living there doesn't help the atmosphere, either.

AFTER FIFTEEN days in a chamber like this, you are sick. You have a case of BO and halitosis such as no Listerine advertiser ever dreamed of in his palmiest days. Your digestion is shot to pieces; your mus-

(Continued On Page 121)

NOTE: This book will not be sold to anyone below 21 years.

Size of book is 9½ x 6¼ inches; beautifully printed in clear type; 151 pages with illustrations; HARD COVER; cloth binding.

FORMER PRICE $3.00

NOW ONLY 98¢

"SEX SECRETS of LOVE and MARRIAGE"

Daringly Revealed

Edited by Dr. Edward Podolsky

This is an enlightened age. Are you one of those, still *afraid to know the truth* about the many intimate questions of man or woman? Or are you one of those who thinks—"I know it all"—and is actually unaware of many important facts and pleasures. Do you know how to live a complete, vigorous and delightful sex life? Do you know your part in the game of love? Every happy marriage is based, to a great extent, on a happy sex life. But how can you lead a satisfactory love life, if you do not know—or are not sure, of the many, many facts and ways of love, of marriage, of sex—of the 1000 ways of a man with a woman! Are you getting ALL that you expected, that you dreamed of—from your love, from your marriage, from your sex life? Or are *doubts* and *difficulties* in the art of love troubling you, holding you back, spoiling everything.

Offers a Liberal Education in Sexual Science

At last, the whole truth about sex! The time has come to bring this intimate and necessary knowledge into the light of day—into the hands of every adult man and woman who wants to lead a satisfactory, healthy, full love life. Written in simple and frank language—SECRETS OF LOVE AND MARRIAGE explains: How to attract the opposite sex—how to win love—how to conduct yourself during your honeymoon. The book teaches the proper sexual conduct in marriage and the technique of performing the sex act. The book explains: the problems of the wife and how to solve them—and the problems of the husbands and how to overcome them. Sometimes they are actual physical disabilities, such as impotence, sterility, etc. The book advises you on correcting these difficulties. It also devotes a chapter to "BIRTH CONTROL," with reasons for and against—and the method of accomplishing. It features a table of "safe periods." It explains conception, pregnancy. In short, it is a complete teacher and guide on practically every phase of Love—Marriage—and SEX!

"Secrets of Love and Marriage" is an endless source of intimate, intriguing information, from the first awakening of youthful love to the full flowering of grand passion . . . answering many questions you hesitate to ask even your closest friends. You must know the real facts and ways or be cheated out of life's most precious pleasures!

Let Us Send You This Book on Trial!

Send no money now. Just mail the coupon. When book arrives, deposit with postman only 98c plus shipping charges, under our MONEY BACK GUARANTEE. You risk nothing. Mail coupon now.

HERALD PUBLISHING CO., Dept. AB-2
26 East 17th St., New York, N. Y.

Send me "SECRETS OF LOVE AND MARRIAGE," in plain wrapper. I will pay postman 98c plus shipping costs on delivery. I can return the book, if not satisfied, and my money will be refunded. (I am over 21 years old.)

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... State .....

☐ Check here if you are enclosing $1.00 with the coupon and thereby saving C. O. D. charges. Your book sent postpaid under same MONEY BACK GUARANTEE.

PART OF CONTENTS

Introduction by Edward Podolsky, M.D.

Foreword by James Parker Hendry
Need for sex understanding to aid married happiness—book offers key to true understanding of sex.

Chapter 1—Married Men Should Know
Instinct is not enough—the wedding night—perpetuating the honeymoon — functions of organs and body in marriage relations—skillful wooer can overcome timidities.

Chapter 2—Love Problems of Wives
Why marriages fail—wife often frustrated, disappointed — husband should improve in sexual relations —set routine grows boresome—case of the under-sexed wife—how to keep love alive.

Chapter 3—Scientific Sex Program in Marriage
Marriage based on mutual love and co-operation — instructions for performing and following marriage sex program—chart of safe periods —normal frequency of relations.

Chapter 4—Functions of Sex Organs
The purpose of sex—functions of the male organs — female organs and work — how conception takes place—secondary stimuli zones—lips, thighs, neck—manner of arousing desire—attaining highest pitch in compatibility.

Chapter 5—The Art of Married Love
The importance of preparation—first act the courtship or love-making—second part of the Coitus—many positions possible—final act or climax—half hour all too short for courtship — develop mutual sexual rhythm—reaching a climax together—women often unsatisfied —problems of physical mismatching —overcoming these difficulties.

Chapter 6—Secrets of Sex Appeal
What does a man notice—how to dress for charm and appeal—choosing clothing, attending to complexion, figure and personality

Chapter 7—Dangers of Petting
Is it wise to pet to be popular? —Embracing bodies and kissing lip dangerous?—yearning desires difficult to control.

Chapter 8—Choosing a Mate
Why children resemble ancestors —importance of selecting proper life's partner—choose a mate for more than physical reasons.

Chapter 9—Birth Control
A moral issue long debated—arguments in favor and against limitation of children—mechanical contrivances against law — various methods used—no method ideal.

Chapter 10—What is sterilization
Many misinformed on subject—advantage to individual—advantage to society—sterilization simplified today.

Chapter 11—Fertilization
Why children should be had early in marriage—superstitions regarding pregnancy—how fertilization accomplished in sex union—how to assure fertilization under normal conditions—causes of infertility.

Chapter 12—Pregnancy
Changes following fertilization—first indications of pregnancy—care of prospective mother — abortions and miscarriages—dangers of pregnancy — preparations for birth — pregnancy 280 days approximately.

Chapter 13—New Tests for Pregnancy
Need for prompt diagnosis in many cases—how test is made—combination tests valuable.

Chapter 14—Can Sex of Unborn Child be Chosen
Science investigating various theories—no certain methods.

Chapter 15—Motherhood
Actual process of childbirth—follow doctor's instructions—caesarian operations—puerperal fever—summary for prospective mothers.

Chapter 6 — Methods of Easy Childbirth
Select doctor you have complete confidence in—follow his instructions—anesthetics which diminish labor pains without injuring infant.

Chapter 17—Intimate Questions of Husbands
Overcoming some common sexual problems—how to attain "control"—importance of prolonged courtship —effect of frequency on control—overcoming frigidity in wives—if husband is impotent—can impotency be overcome — organic deficiencies—various faults and their remedies.

Chapter 18—Intimate Questions of Wives
Importance of free discussion with husband—avoid haste—be patient—strive for perfection—sex a mutual matter—abstinence and excesses—intimate women problems.

Chapter 19—Feminine Hygiene and Beauty
How to develop your charm and sex appeal

Chapter 20—Reducing Diets
How to diet. Complete menu for famous Hollywood 18 day diet.

HERALD PUBLISHING COMPANY
26 East 17th St., Dept. AB-2 New York

(Continued From Page 119)

cles lack exercise, and your eyes are bleary from too much reading, or too much looking at the practically unshielded glare of the stars outside.

Then there's the little matter of temperature. As a rule, there are two kinds of temperature on a spaceship. Too hot or too cold. The outside of the ship is half black and half mirrored. You regulate the temperature by juggling the gyroscope in the engine room until the ship has swung one of those sides to the sun. If it's the black side, then you absorb heat; if it's the mirror side, then the heat is reflected away. By varying you should get your norm—should, theoretically. Actually, you don't. Not as a rule. You think you have things just right and go to sleep (falling off a cliff in your dreams); while you're having your nightmares, the ship has swung slightly on its own axis and you wake up (screaming) either half frozen or half roasted.

And, you know, there's nothing to do on a spaceship, outside of keeping alive. That's what finally gets you. But there couldn't be two people, even if the ships were made larger. Under those conditions, two people would hate each other in a week and murder each other before the voyage was over. Three or more people would be impossible.

Well, you ask yourself, why one man then? First of all, let's touch on generalities.

The course of a space-ship is all figured out by mathematics before it leaves the planet. The weight is calculated down to the last gram, including crew of one, food, and so on. The exact second for starting, flight, figures on the orbit the ship will follow, the orbit of Earth, the orbit of Mars—precisely where both planets will be at the moment of starting,

(Continued On Page 122)

(Continued From Page 121)

where they will be the first day, the second day, etc., midpoint, and when the ship arrives. Plus research on the orbits of about three thousand asteroids, meteor swarms, the moon, comets, the sun, the other planets.

It takes about a week of solid calculation by trained mathematicians and super-machines to work out all the factors. Humans alone could never do it. When the ship is dispatched, its course is fixed on its control. It doesn't require a single human hand in operation; no human hand could possibly be as exact as control timing requires. Once in space you don't navigate; you couldn't possibly figure out your exact speed and position. All you can do is sit around wondering whether or not someone made a mistake, or if, perhaps, a wheel slipped somewhere in the calculating machines. If anything *did* go wrong, then it's curtains for you.

So, what's the one man for? Well, in case of accidents—minor accidents—he can be useful. He can put out fires, prevent cargo from shifting, keep the ship from absorbing too much heat in any one spot, thus damaging the cargo and records, or keep the ship from freezing solid in spots, thus ruining the mechanism. And, after the ship has reached a point of about one hundred miles off the surface of the planet, the space-man lands the ship.

But, out in space, there's nothing more you can do. Keeping the temperature steady doesn't require attention; you know it when it hits extremes. You don't navigate; you don't take readings, and you don't have to swab the decks or clean the place or oil the engines. You couldn't.

On the whole, the life of the space-

flier is easily the dullest, most dreary and sickening, irritating, and unhealthy life you can get. That's why there's always an opening for applicants; it's also why few of them last a year. When you get back from a flight, you're as weak as if you spent the time strapped to a bed; you can barely walk; your digestion is ruined and you're filthy, groggy, and smelly. Your eyes are bad; your lungs are bad, and your stomach's bad. Your skin is ruined; you've the hair and beard of a hermit. Shaving is impossible under no-gravity conditions, and the no-gravity treatment for baldness is unbeatable.

You're ornery, anti-social, and grumpy when you get back. A 100% sourpuss. You're poison to your friends and family. It takes days really to get clean, and, until you do, no one wants to come near you; in comparison, the camel is a sweet-smelling, pleasant beast. There is no camaraderie among space-men. You can't make friends on the job, and there's nothing to talk about, for all

(Continued On Page 124)

(Continued From Page 123)

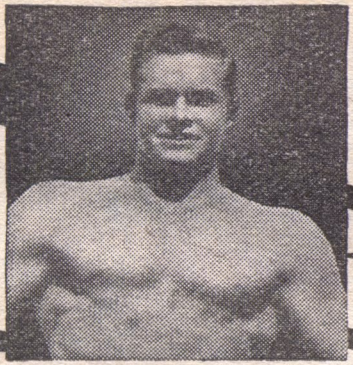
you see on Mars is a small, dusty space-port out in the desert. Everyone has read about that.

And you don't have adventures. If you did, no one would ever know because you couldn't possibly live to return and tell about it. Space ships whose allotted course is changed, for any reason at all, just never return.

So when I read that people, a hundred years or so back, around the '30s and '40s of last century, thought space fliers would be great heroic guys and wished they could become spacemen, I have to laugh. Only not because I think it's funny. It isn't. No wonder they called these people romantics; they just didn't know any better. I wish I could find me one of the time machines they have in some of their stories, so I could let them in on the inside dope.

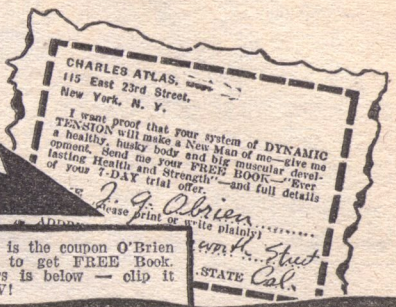
So you want to be a space-flier, eh? You're welcome to it, buddy; as for me, I know when I've had enough.

HE Mailed This Coupon



J. G. O'BRIEN
Atlas Champion Cup Winner

This is an ordinary snapshot of one of Charles Atlas' California pupils.



This is the coupon O'Brien sent to get FREE Book. Yours is below — clip it NOW!

...and Here's the Handsome Prize-Winning Body I Gave Him!

J. G. O'BRIEN saw my coupon. He clipped and mailed it. He got my free book and followed my instructions. He became a New Man—and also won one of my Atlas-Champion, Sterling Silver Cups for his physical improvement. NOW read what he says:

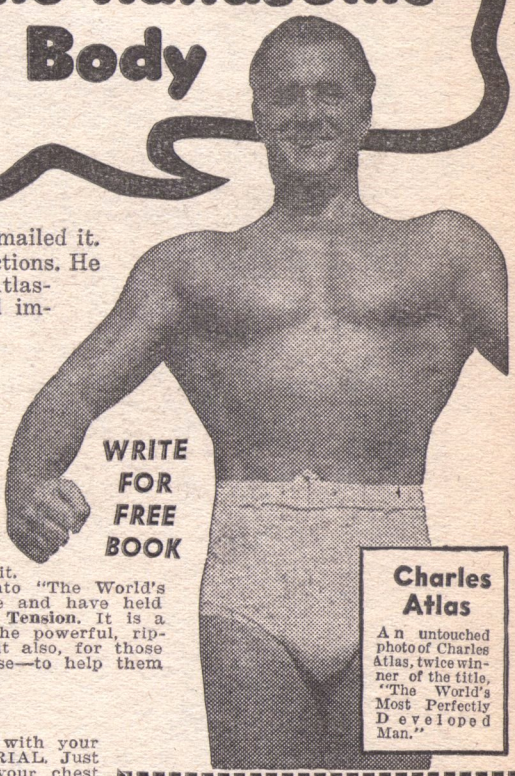
"Look at me NOW! Dynamic Tension WORKS! I'm proud of the natural, easy way you have made me an 'Atlas Champion'!"—*J. G. O'Brien.*

Let Me Prove I Can Make You a New Man

Would you like to have a handsome build — greater physical development — a strong, muscular body? Then listen to this:

I, myself was once a skinny weakling of 97 lbs. I didn't know what real health or strength were. I was afraid to fight, ashamed to be seen in a swimming suit.

Then I discovered the secret that changed me into "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man," the title I won twice and have held **ever since,** against all comers. My secret is **Dynamic Tension.** It is a **natural** method. Its purpose is not only to give you the powerful, rippling muscles you'd like to see in your own mirror, but also, for those whose systems are sluggish from lack of proper exercise—to help them tone up their entire body, inside and out.



Charles Atlas

An untouched photo of Charles Atlas, twice winner of the title, "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man."

Accept My 7-Day Trial Offer

Do you want a better build? Are you dissatisfied with your present physical development? All I ask is a 7-DAY TRIAL. Just one week! In even that short time you will notice your chest hardening and filling out with solid muscle—or the 7-Day Trial costs you nothing. Surely this is proof enough that by continuing with my "Dynamic Tension" method I will make you a **New Man**—give you bodily power and drive, and put you in magnificent physical condition which wins you the envy and respect of everyone.

FREE BOOK
On Dynamic Tension

Let me show you the results produced for other men! I'll send you FREE my famous book, **"Everlasting Health and Strength."** It shows actual photos. Write your name and address carefully on coupon. Mail to me personally **today.** I'll rush your free copy to you AT ONCE! Charles Atlas, Dept. 45B, 115 East 23rd Street, New York, N. Y.

CHARLES ATLAS
Dept. 45B, 115 East 23rd Street,
New York, N. Y.

I want the proof that your system of **Dynamic Tension** will help make me a New Man—give me a healthy, husky body and big muscle development. Send me your FREE book, "Everlasting Health and Strength," and full details about your 7-DAY Trial Offer.

Name .....
(Please print or write plainly)

Address .....

City .....State .....

We have a very interesting batch of letters on hand from readers and we shall not take up too much time in beginning. Let us say however that *The Cosmoscope* is the place where the reader can put his two cents in and get a hearing. We invited comments and are pleased to say that we received them. We hope that all of you will write us your opinions on this current issue.

E. Everett Evans of Battle Creek, Mich., starts off by writing:

"I received the first issue of *Cosmic* and it is a dilly. It is *not* the best magazine I ever read, of course, and also definitely it is not the worst. I consider it a good workmanlike job of editing, filled with interesting stories and that's what we readers want. A few of them like to criticize, of course, but the big rank and file of science-fiction readers are, I believe, much like myself. We read everything we can get our hands on, like some of it better than we do the rest, rave about a few outstanding folks like Smith, Weinbaum, Campbell, Heinlein, etc., and just go along enjoying ourselves and really welcoming a new mag when it comes out. To show that I really do appreciate what you are doing, you will find Money Orders for $1.80 for a year's subscription each to Stirring Science and Cosmic. And I imagine that's all the criticism you care about, eh?"

Thanks for the subscriptions, but we do appreciate criticism of any kind, whether monetary or not. It helps though . . . (and by the by, an off-stage remark to fanatical readers: subscribers receive their copies from seven to fourteen days before magazines hit the newsstand.) Next to write in is **Jack Robins** of Brooklyn, N. Y. He says:—

"Believe it or not! It so happens that *Cosmic Stories* and *Stirring Science* are the only science-fiction magazines that I have been buying within the past three months. And both magazines have been out at most two months! The reason I buy these magazines and not any other is that time is a very precious thing to me so that I have to take pains and be very critical in what I select for my reading material. Your magazine, of course, is not the best thing on the market. But there are several things few other magazines contain. For instance, I don't recall ever having read a story with such an unusual twist (like in "Purple Dandelions") in any other magazine on the market. The stories you seem to accept have odd twists and novel endings. I liked Robert W. Lowndes' "The Martians Are Coming." Very humorous bit of writing. Among your artists I like Bok. His characters are three-dimensional whereas the other artists draw two dimensional creatures.

"Do you hate S. D. Gottesman or something? If not, then why did you have the coupon for Cosmian League membership printed on the reverse side of the ending to his

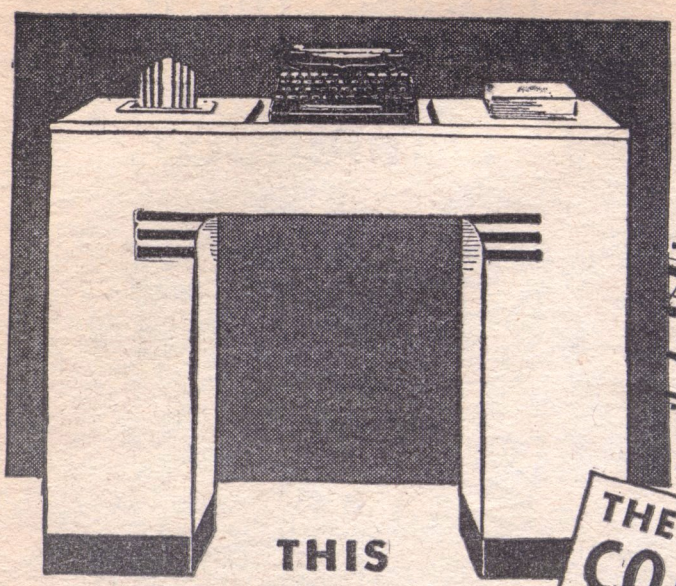
story "Return From M-15?" In cutting out the coupon, not only have I ruined the magazine, but now, in case I ever decide to read the story, I won't know how it ended! Why didn't you at least have it printed behind an advertisement?"

No, we don't hate Gottesman. But we suggest that you should have read his story first and then clipped the coupon. That way you wouldn't have the difficulty you're now in. We've decided, you may have noted, to drop the coupon entirely. If readers wish to join the Cosmian League (and we hope they do) they have merely to write in and say so. No more magazine mutilation. Concerning the endings of our stories, it is true that we are partial to new and off-trail ideas, and we are always looking for such among the manuscripts we receive. We are trying, how successfully we have yet to learn, to keep our magazine away from the stereotyped and hackneyed.

Stafford Chan of Darien, Conn., returns and writes:—

"You ask me what I want in your note upon my missive in *Cosmic* No. 1. When one has samples, it's simple enough to decide aye or nay. But, putting it coldly—well, the first issue of *Cosmic* itself is a fair example. I want most of all the kind of stories which leave me in a dreaming frame of mind; the kind that make me put the magazine down after reading but one, and fancifying to myself for an indefinite period thereafter. If I can go from one tale to the next without a mental pause, then, though the stories may be entertaining, they do not specify with my idea of science-fiction and they are not what I want. Sometimes a story may not be well written; there may not be much of a story for that matter, yet the offering may have that touch needed. That, I think, is what the early magazines of this type possessed, even though the tales were often somewhat bungled and tripped-over in the telling.

(Continued On Page 129)



ACT NOW!

ON THIS BARGAIN OFFER.

THE COMBINATION FOR AS LITTLE AS 10c A DAY

How easy it is to pay for this combination. Just Imagine! A small good will deposit and terms as low as 10c a day to get this combination at once. You will never miss 10c a day. Become immediately the possessor of this combination. You assume no obligation by sending the coupon.

THIS BEAUTIFUL DESK FOR ONLY $1.00

WITH ANY

REMINGTON PORTABLE TYPEWRITER

A beautiful desk in a neutral blue-green—trimmed in black and silver—made of sturdy fibre board—now available for only one dollar ($1.00) to purchasers of a Remington Deluxe Noiseless Portable Typewriter. The desk is so light that it can be moved anywhere without trouble. It will hold six hundred (600) pounds. This combination gives you a miniature office at home. **Mail the coupon today.**

THESE EXTRAS FOR YOU

LEARN TYPING FREE

To help you even further, you get Free with this special offer a 24-page booklet, prepared by experts, to teach you quickly how to typewrite by the touch method. When you buy a Noiseless you get this free Remington Rand gift that increases the pleasure of using your Remington Deluxe Noiseless Portable. Remember, the touch typing book is sent Free while this offer holds.

SPECIAL CARRYING CASE

The Remington Deluxe Noiseless Portable is light in weight, easily carried about. With this offer Remington supplies a beautiful carrying case sturdily built of 3-ply wood bound with a special Dupont Fabric.

SPECIFICATIONS

ALL ESSENTIAL FEATURES of large standard office machines appear in the Noiseless Deluxe Portable—standard 4-row keyboard; back spacer; margin stops and margin release; double shift key; two color ribbon and automatic reverse; variable line spacer; paper fingers; makes as many as seven carbons; takes paper 9.5″ wide; writes lines 8.2″ wide, black key cards and white letters, rubber cushioned feet.

MONEY BACK GUARANTEE

The Remington Noiseless Deluxe Portable Typewriter is sold on a trial basis with a money-back guarantee. If, after ten days trail, you are not entirely satisfied, we will take it back, paying all shipping charges and refunding your good will deposit at once. You take no risk.

SEND COUPON NOW!

Remington Rand Inc. Dept 448-6
465 Washington St., Buffalo, N. Y.

Tell me, without obligation, how to get a Free Trial of a new Remington Noiseless Deluxe Portable, including Carrying Case and Free Typing Booklet, for as little as 10c a day. Send Catalogue.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

(Continued From Page 127)

"In your first issue, the only stories which did not seem to have this vital point were "Crystal World" and "The Reversible Revolutions." And the latter was such a lovely agglomeration of nonsense, it can well be forgiven. The best were "Mecanica," "The Last Viking," and "The Secret Sense." "Martians Are Coming" was a particularly fine take-off on a certain well-worn science-fiction story and is well worth remembering as an invasion tale to end invasion tales. Of course it won't but it should. The short pieces, "Purple Dandelions" and "Man From the Future," were very nice balancing points. And "Biped" offered a nice bit of contrast to the general run of the others; while I, for one, would not care to see very many of this type, still one an issue does very nicely. If Basil Wells is a new writer, I hope we shall see more from him. And please continue to feature poetry if you can get pieces as good as the ones in this issue; "The Rocket" is delightfully amusing.

"Ordinarily, I should offer specific criticisms, but having been hashished by the run of the stream science-fiction, my faculties are not as yet restored to the fine point necessary; perhaps if you were up against competition worthy of you, I would be more exacting. But, as is, I know of but one other magazine comparable.

"Thus, I shan't be harsh on such matters as the front jacket; after all, it did stand out among the menage of similar magazines (in name only), so one supposes that it may be requisite after all."

Your views on the "dreaming quality" or stories are pretty sound; we are inclined to think that that is the basis on which all really great stories achieve their greatness.

Next issue of *Cosmic Stories* out in May. Leading stories in the March issue were "Mecanica," "The Martians Are Coming" and "The Reversible Revolutions." Don't forget to write to us about this issue.

—DAW

WHAT MYSTERIOUS POWER LIES WITHIN THIS RING?

YOUR SEARCH HAS ENDED!

THE SECRET AT LAST REVEALED!

POWER! MONEY! SUCCESS! LOVE! HEALTH! HAPPINESS! For countless generations, man has sought all these things but *only to a few* have all of them been given! The Ancients believed that *all* of them could be acquired by every man and woman if the *Key to the Universal Truth* could be found.

Even today there are people who believe that they have found this Key to Power and claim that the secret lies in the use of MYRRH as proven by their own successes.

MANY MYSTICAL POWERS

were attributed to MYRRH as far back as the time of Moses and reference to it may be found in Exodus, Chapt. XXX, Verse 34. The ancient Sassamans, Zoroastians and Egyptians used it in strange rituals which they claimed induced the vibration of a Lucky Planet toward them and followed them into the Astral Plane of Good Fortune and Success.

Old Folklore manuscripts relate that these ancient Metaphysicists burned an incense made of Myrrh and *bathed their hands in its smoke* in the belief that whatsoever their hands touched thereafter met with success. Could this have been the source of the seemingly supernatural powers which have been attributed to these ancient Mystics in so many old manuscripts?

THERE ARE MANY WHO BELIEVE

that this is so and accordingly use Myrrh as a Talismanic Symbol of Power. Since followers of this old custom claim that Myrrh *must be carried in the hands*, a beautiful 14 Karat gold plated ring has been designed with a *secret compartment* in which Myrrh may be placed and kept on the hand at all times.

STRANGE, ALMOST FANTASTIC INCIDENTS

are related about this Talismanic Ring in Folklore, Legend and Tradition. It has been written that the hand which wore the Talismanic Ring with Myrrh won at the Wheel of Fortune, Brought Success to contracts and other written documents, brought Favor to requests for Jobs, Gifts, Money and other petitions; gave Power to overcome obstacles and hidden fears.

WE GUARANTEE

that you will be in every way satisfied with the beautiful Rings which we offer—not at their originally labelled price of $5.00 but for the amazingly low price of $1.97. Each ring has a Hidden, secret compartment in the top *which contains genuine imported Myrrh.*

USE THIS COUPON

SEDUCTIVE PRODUCTS, Dept. CF-4
890 6th Ave., New York, N. Y.

I have read your offer and Guarantee and would like to have a genuine 14K gold plated Ring with Secret Compartment containing genuine imported Myrrh—ready to wear. I understand that this will cost me only $1.97 instead of the label price of $5.00.

☐ I enclose $1.97 Money Order. Please send PREPAID and enclose FREE Talismanic Seal and Psalm.

☐ Send C.O.D. I will pay postman $1.97 PLUS Postal charges on delivery. (NOTE: No Free Talismanic Seal on C.O.D. Orders.)

Name.....

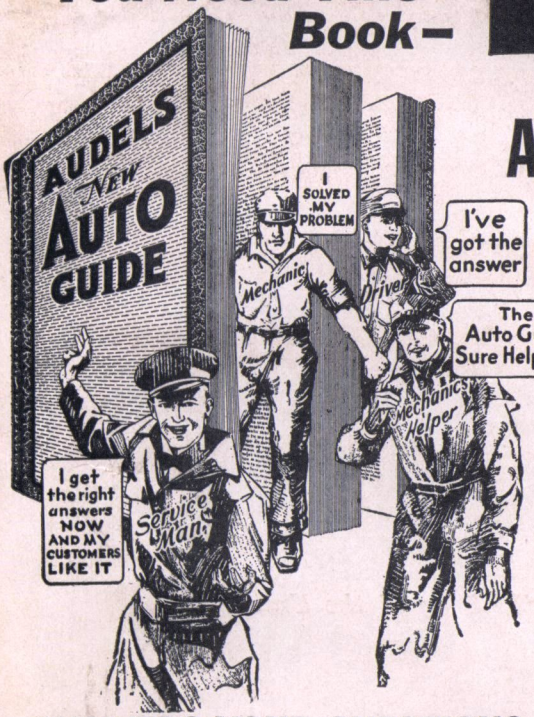
Address.....

City.....*State*.....

SEND NO MONEY!

MECHANICS You Need This Book—

Know! YOUR CAR



JUST OUT!

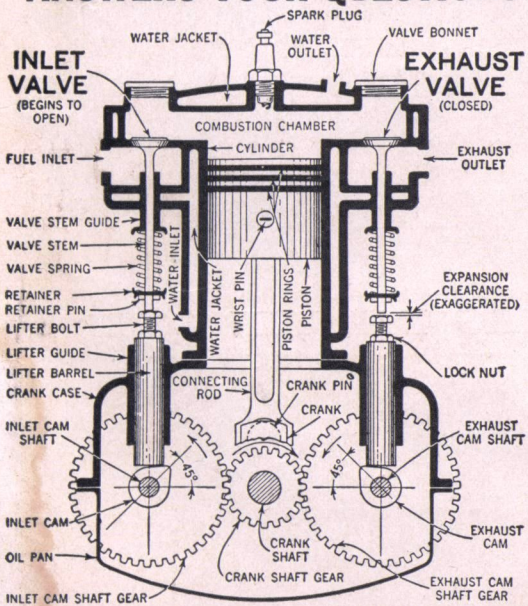
AUDELS NEW AUTO GUIDE

Audels New Automobile Guide is New from Cover to Cover. Contains all you need to know about the 1. Construction, 2. Operation, 3. Service, 4. Repair of Modern Motor Cars, Trucks, Buses and Diesel Engines. It contains Practical Information in a Handy Form—1540 Pages—1540 Illustrations. Written by an engineering authority and presented with forceful directness in PLAIN LANGUAGE and SIMPLE TERMS, generously illustrated. It is an up-to-date authoritative Book of Complete Instructions for all service jobs giving a New Vision of the automotive field. Covers the Entire Subject in Every Detail. Does Not Deal in Idle Theories, but gives Definite Directions telling Exactly What To Do and How To Do It. It is Packed Full with Important Information. Indispensable to Auto Mechanics, Service Men and Owners.

INSIDE VIEWS OF AUTOMOBILE PARTS FULLY ILLUSTRATED

The contents is Progressively Arranged; thus making it a Text Book and a Reference Book, to which you will refer again and again. This book completely covers the Parts of an Automobile—Automotive Physics—The Gas Engine—How a Gas Engine Works—Gas Engine Principles—Multi-Cylinder Engines—Horse Power—Automobile Engines—Engines: Stationary Parts—Engines: Moving Parts—Pistons—Piston Rings—Connecting Rods—Crank Shafts—The Valves—The Valve Gear—Cams and Cam Action—Valve Timing—Cooling Systems—Gasoline—Fuel Feed Systems—The Mixture—Carburetors—Automatic Choke—Super Chargers—Transmissions—Synchro-Mesh—Clutches—Universals and Propeller Shafts—The Differential—Rear Axles—The Running Gear—Brakes—Wheel Alignment—Knee Action—Steering Gear—Tires—Lubricants and Lubrication—Automotive Electricity—Ignition Systems—Magneto Ignition—Spark Plugs—Ignition Coils—Distributors—Automatic Spark Control—Ignition Timing—Generators—Starters—Generator and Starter Testing—Lighting Systems—Storage Batteries—Battery Charging—Battery Testing Troubles.

ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS



SPECIMEN ILLUSTRATION—INSIDE VIEW OF MOTOR

The 1540 Illustrations in this book are photographs of modern cars and mechanical drawings giving details for guidance. They explain all working parts and their functions. Alphabetical Index lists 55 interesting and instructive chapters with many sub-chapters—a big time saver.

TO GET THIS ASSISTANCE FOR YOURSELF SIMPLY FILL IN AND MAIL COUPON TODAY

$4 COMPLETE PAY ONLY $1 A MO.

DIESEL ENGINES Fully Treated

If you are interested in the Construction, Operation or Maintenance of Modern Diesel Engines including the New 2 cycle Diesel this new book gives Practical, Useful Information. Contains over 100 pages on Diesel with many illustrations. All details thoroughly and clearly explained. These interesting pages will answer your Diesel questions—save fuel and operating trouble. Complete with all answers.

ASK TO SEE IT!

THEO. AUDEL & CO., 49 West 23rd St., New York

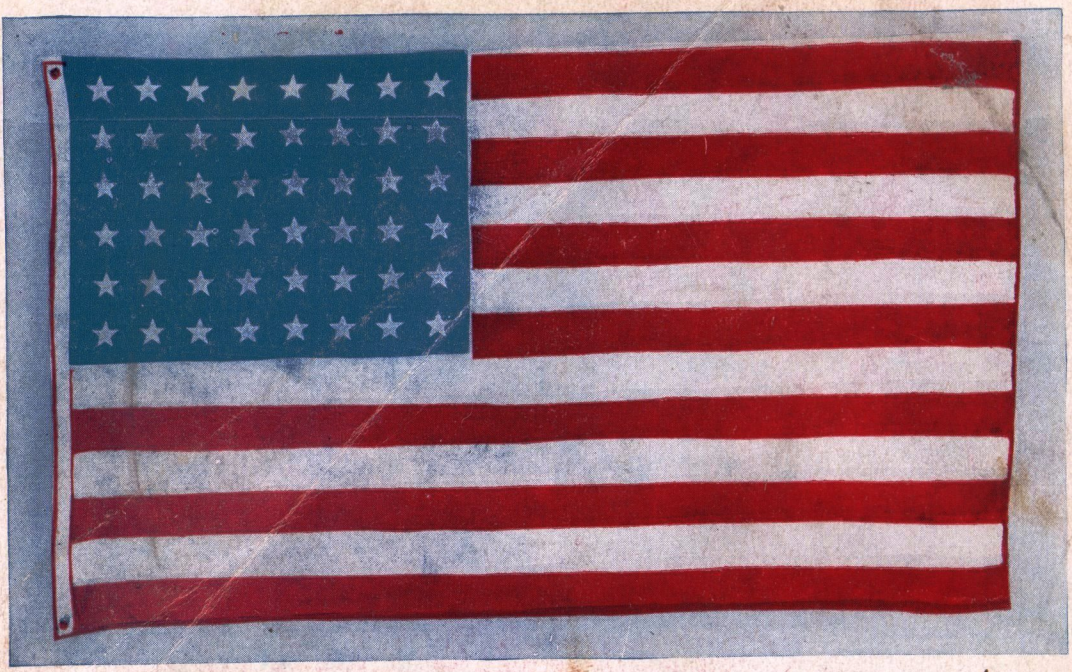
Please send me postpaid AUDELS NEW AUTOMOBILE GUIDE ($4) for free examination. If I decide to keep it, I will send you $1 within 7 days; then remit $1 monthly until purchase price of $4 is paid. Otherwise, I will return it to you promptly.

Name.....

Address.....

Occupation.....

Reference..... F.F.G.



OWN THIS BEAUTIFUL AMERICAN FLAG

for only

$1.98

PLUS POSTAGE

•

Act Quickly!

Bargain Offer May Not Be Repeated!

NOW—IS THE TIME TO SHOW YOU LOVE AMERICA!

Display the Flag of the United States

EVERY HOME NEEDS AN AMERICAN FLAG

Are YOU an American? Then the Stars and Stripes should be proudly displayed from your window every day. Or perhaps you would prefer to show Old Glory on the porch, hang it from a balcony, or put it up in your office or store, or at a camp, club, meeting room or boat. Also makes the finest of all gifts for friends and relatives.

BUY DIRECT FROM MAKER AND SAVE MONEY!

Now you can own a beautiful American flag at an amazingly low price—a price made possible because you **SAVE** by ordering direct from the maker.

A FLAG YOU CAN DISPLAY EVERY DAY— BECAUSE IT'S GUARANTEED TO LAST!

This especially made flag measures 3 x 5 feet — the right size for home or office, indoors or out. Made of Official Outdoor Bunting, hand dyed with fast colors. Weatherproof, washable, cleanable. Reinforced to stand any wind that blows! Beautiful, deep rich regulation colors. Up to now flags this quality have sold for much more. But you can get this one by return mail for only $1.98 plus a few cents postage.

Send No Money

Order Now!

Don't send a penny now. Just fill in the coupon and mail it TODAY! Then pay the postman only $1.98 plus a few cents postage, and this beautiful flag is yours forever. Don't delay. Mail the coupon NOW!

U. S. FLAG CO., Inc.

254 West 31st Street, New York City

FLAG BARGAIN COUPON

U. S. FLAG CO., Inc., Dept. 204
254 West 31st Street, New York City

Please send me the 3' x 5' American Flag as advertised. I will pay postman $1.98 plus a few cents postage in full payment, when received. (Or if you'll send your check or money order for $1.98 now, we will pay all C. O. D. and postage charges.) It is understood that if I am not satisfied I may return the flag and my money will be refunded without question.

Name .....
(Please print)

Address .....

City ..... State .....