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Around The Universe With:

Walter Watchell

New York Mirror, June 10th, 2015

Dotty Dull, the bewowtiful ingenue in "Angles Asway," who the critics say can't act, can't act. (They can't be wrong *all* the time!) . . . The local board of censors up in arms over two scenes in the Howard Chews flicker "Gin's No Sin." One is a rear shot of a dog crossing the street, the other shows a man actually talking back to a woman! . . . Take it from the National Health Bureau in Washington: no truth to the rumor that a Clifton (N. J.) woman is a rhinitis victim. Over seventy years since a documented case of that disease was reported. . . . Dejah Thoris, the Barsoomian beauty, is in town doing the night spots. Intimates say she's eggsppecting again. . . . Look for plenty activity along 4D Row, now that Woowoo Lowbridge has consented to do pix. Measures 44 inches—and that's no bust! . . . Expect a sharp rise on Planets Pf. now that Mars is completely airconditioned. . . . Here's a laugh: the biggest importers of Pluto water are the inhabitants of guess which of the neighboring planets. . . . Bob Dope's new lit'ry tome: "Have Spacesuit, Must Travel" already a best seller. Over 1200 copies, say publishers Seemoan & Shooster. . . . Local vice squadders busy stripping Times Square bookshops of under-the-counter copies of "Lassie." About a (shush!) female canine!

They're telling it along Park Avenue: A last-year's deb (Papa made ooodles from Saturn's mines) finally met THE guy. It happened at La Vie en Sunflower a moon ago. Luv at first bite, since he's a real doll and etc. They were introduced by Professor Armond Azimov, which should've been the Big Tipoff. The Prof. you see, is the inventor of the android—and the guy was his latest model. Now her ticker's busted. Like, sez she, being in love with a Bendix! . . .

Paul Fairman VIII, descendant of the famous poet of two centuries ago, has sued Roscoe Robin (he's the NBS-TV tycoon) for a cold millyun bux. Claims the lyrics for Robin's hit platters

(Continued on page 85)

The GIRL WHO PLAYED WOLF

By G. DICKSON

ILLUSTRATOR FINLAY

*The werewolf legend has always
been interlaced with shivers and
wrapped in a shroud of horror.
But maybe we've been wrong.
Perhaps werewolfery
can be fun!*

IT WAS Harry Decant who started it. There is no use his trying to dodge the responsibility for starting it, for that, at least, is a matter of record. He may or may not have been a thoughtless pawn in the coldly scientific hands of Amos Slizer; but the fact remains that he was the one who first dragged David off to a doctor, he was the one who found out about Amos' private resort, and—so Harry said—talked that eccentric genius into accepting them as guests. And, certainly the most important point of all, it was he who managed their joint introduction to Leona.



The man-beast was after



bigger game, but the kid would do.

It was the introduction that really started things off. Harry and David were sitting on the dock, Harry fishing and David day-dreaming wistfully of meat—thick, juicy steaks, by preference; or, failing that, any kind of solid food that would not exhibit a mad urge to retrace its steps the minute it completed the pleasant journey to his stomach. The Minnesota woods were basking pleasantly in the summer sunshine and faintly over the water came the embattled voices of Amos and that rugged stone wall of scientific conservatism, Angus McCloud, who were ostensibly, fishing from a boat. So lay the scene, and David was finding it, in spite of the breakfast which had recently deserted him, all rather comfortable.

He was brought back to reality by the voice of Harry murmuring with admiration in his ear.

“—A super babe.”

“Huh?” responded David absent-mindedly.

“Look!” demanded Harry, digging his elbow into David’s ribs. “—Coming down the path.”

Wearily, David turned his head toward the rutted trail that led down from the slope on which the guest cabins

perched. Super babes might be all very well to look at, but at the moment they were running a poor second to day-dreams of tenderloin.

“Where?” he asked.

But Harry had already scrambled to his feet; and David, finding the super babe was not on the path, but already stepping on the shore side of the dock, automatically followed him. So it was, that what with his own abstraction and the confusion attendant on getting to his feet, he did not actually get a good look at Leona until they were standing almost face to face.

What he saw was a lissome redhead in a scarlet bathing suit. She was tall, easily as tall as Harry—which made her just about even with David’s chin, and her eyes were as green as the summer woods. At the sight of David she stopped dead, and the two of them stood, transfixed, staring at each other.

Meanwhile, with the ease of long practice, Harry had charged blithely into the business of making himself acquainted.

“Well, well!” he said, heartily. “And, well! You must be one of our fellow guests. Let me extend the hand of friendship and exchange names. I am Harry Decant, and this

long, dyspeptic-looking character with the ugly face and large hands is known as David Muncy."

He jugged David with an elbow as a signal to speak up. But the effort was lost. For, suddenly, at the moment of finding himself face to face with the redhead, David had become completely lost in a welter of reactions similar to nothing he had experienced before. His throat had gone dry. His body was tense. The little hairs on the back of his neck had risen tinglingly, and he was possessed of a sudden overwhelming urge to sniff at the newcomer.

"David!" said Harry, joggling him again. "Say hello to the lady."

"Sniff!" sniffed David audibly, leaning forward.

"Dave!" cried Harry.

The redhead drew back half a step, curled her upper lip away from one dainty tooth and snarled delicately.

"Dave!" repeated Harry, grabbing him by the arm and pulling him back. With a start, David came to himself. The odd sensations disappeared in a wave of embarrassment, and he drew back in his turn.

"Excuse me," he mumbled, extending an awkward paw. "I'm glad to meet you."

Cautiously, the girl took it.

"How do you do?" she said in a warm contralto, "I'm Leona Parr, Dr. Slizer's secretary." A feeling of warm pleasure spread over David. He shook her hand warmly. She smiled up at him.

"I'm up here for my health," he said, still holding onto her hand.

"Really," said Leona. "That's too bad."

"Yes," said David, blissfully, "I can't eat solid food."

"How terrible."

"Yes."

"Hey!" said Harry.

They both turned toward him.

"I've got a hand too," he said.

"Oh. Sorry," said David. He thrust Leona's hand rather ungraciously into Harry's. She shook it absent-mindedly.

"It comes from overwork," said David.

"It does?" asked Leona.

"Yes. I was working on my Doctor's thesis in Elizabethan prose and I guess I overdid it."

"You should take better care of yourself."

"Hey!" said Harry.

"I will."

"Yes, do."

"I guess I might as well shove off," said Harry.

"I keep dreaming of meat."

"Poor thing."

"Thick, juicy cuts of meat."

"Well, goodbye," said Harry.

"Goodby," said Leona absently. "Fresh meat—raw."

"Raw?" echoed David. "Oh—goodby, Harry."

"Bah!" said Harry, stamping off.

"Much better than cooked," said Leona.

"Do you really think so?" asked David. "I once had an uncle who—"

When the sun went down on the lake, they were still on the dock, and still talking. Leona's bathing suit was still dry.

"Well?" said Harry that evening, in the cabin they shared jointly.

"Well what?" asked David.

"I have," said Harry, sitting up in his bunk and pointing a deliberate finger at David, "known you for twelve years. In all that time, you have been, if you will pardon the expression, a schlumpf where women are concerned. I say this not to cast any reflection on you, for you are the scholarly type and everyone knows that scholars have a reputation for goggling, stammering, and stumbling in social situations. But, consider, I—" Harry thumped himself emphatically on the chest—"have been working my tongue to the bone for you these last twelve

years. If we needed dates, I got both of them. If the conversation lagged over the doughnuts and coffee, I spoke for both of us, filling the air with light chatter and careless banter. And now, all of a sudden, you seem to have blossomed out with this Leona female and become an operator. And I think you owe me an explanation. Have you been goldbricking in lazy treacherous fashion all these years? Or have you suddenly been struck by lightning? Or—" Harry looked at him suspiciously—"what?"

David turned away from the moon he had been contemplating through the cabin window.

"Harry," he said. "Do you know what brought us here?"

"An invitation from Dr. Slizer," answered Harry. "Arranged by yours truly."

"No, Harry," David contradicted with gentle patience. "That's what you think it was. But actually it was fate."

"Fate?"

"Fate," said David, turning back to the window, "that which o'ersees the affairs of men, and turning, twists them to its goals."

"What?" yelled Harry. "Fate? Goals? What are you talking about?"

"Oh, that," for a second David looked his normal shy self,

"It's a line from a poem I was writing this evening."

"It sounds like Shakespeare," said Harry, suspiciously. "It does not sound like Shakespeare," answered David indignantly, "and anyway, that's beside the point. The point is, Fate, had brought Leona and myself together. I almost proposed on the dock tonight. I'll do it tomorrow. We can drive to the nearest Justice and be married in the afternoon. Will you be my best man, Harry?"

"Good God!" cried Harry. "You've been struck by lightning!"

He leaped out of his bunk—a startling figure in maroon pajamas.

"Stay here," he begged. "Promise me you'll stay here until I get back, Dave."

"The world is all one to me tonight," answered David, loftily.

"Well, just stay here," said Harry, and rushed out into the gloom.

The resort was plunged in that absolute blackness peculiar to forested country at night; but the lights of the windows up at the owner's lodge stood out clearly. With only an occasional yelp or curse as his bare feet came into painful contact with stones

or twigs, Harry plowed through the darkness to the front door of the lodge and hammered upon it.

"Come in," rasped the irascible voice of Amos Slizer, and Harry burst in to find the two savants arguing over and around a bottle of scotch in the kitchen.

"Have a drink and get your breath back," said Angus, hospitably, offering the bottle, which, incidentally, belonged to Amos.

Harry grabbed at it and poured a couple of good-sized swallows down his throat by way of lubrication.

"That's fine," said Angus, approvingly, "and now that you've got your breath back—"

"I don't know what to think—" began Harry, wildly.

"Now that you've got your breath back," repeated Angus, smoothly, folding his knotted hands together, "perhaps you'll bear me out on a small point of my discussion with Amos, here."

"But David—" began Harry.

"Tush and foosh, David," interrupted McCloud, whose accent betrayed him only when he became irritated. "This is important. Our good friend Amos here—" he leered at the other, who snorted, "has

been reading a lot of old wives tales, superstitions and the like. And the result is, they've driven him clear out of his head. They've addled his brains so much he's come up with what the poor soul thinks is a whole new division of knowledge."

"Pay no attention to his phraseology, Devant!" snapped Amos. "He's trying to prejudice you."

"But—" said Harry.

"The result is," continued McCloud, laying a heavy hand on Harry's arm, "that he's taken to believing in witches and ghosts and the like and maintaining that they follow purely natural laws of their own order."

"Para - science!" barked Amos.

"Fool-science! Numbskull science!" roared Angus, suddenly purpling. "Have you any proof, man?"

"I have," said Amos.

"Then why won't you show it to me?"

"Because," crackled Amos. "You're just pigheaded enough to deny the evidence of your own senses."

"Hah!" thundered Angus, gripping Harry's arm and dragging him involuntarily forward half a step. "That's what ye've said before. But I've got you now. Let's see you

convince young Harry, here. He's an open-minded pup. Convince him and I'll admit I'm wrong."

Amos brought one bony fist down on the kitchen table with a crash.

"Got you!" he cried. "Why do you think I invited Harry and that friend of his and the girl up here? Eh? Just to get you to make that statement and be forced into abiding by the proof when I produced it. Ha!" He threw back his bony head and roared with laughter.

Angus McCloud's face deepened a good two shades in color.

"A put-up job," he rumbled.

"Not on their part. Not on their part," said Amos. "Harry doesn't know a thing about it, do you, Harry?"

"For Pete's sake!" yelled Harry, finally finding a gap in the conversation. "I've got something important to talk about. David's gone nuts. Clear out of his mind."

"What?" barked Amos, jerking himself upright in his chair and sobering suddenly. "Nuts? Already? What happened? What's he been doing? Why doesn't he take better care of himself? Harry, if you've let him go out of his

head, I'll shoot you. What happened?"

"I've been trying to tell you," said Harry, plaintively.

"Well, don't keep standing there telling us you've been trying to tell us," snapped Amos. "Tell us. What's this all about?"

"All right, it was this way," Harry, finding his knees suddenly weak, sat down at the table and took another pull from the bottle. "This afternoon Dave and I met this Leona—"

"Beautiful girl, by the way," said Amos to Angus.

"I've noticed—" said Angus to Amos.

"—and Dave sort of monopolized the conversation right from the start, which isn't like him. Well, I didn't pay much attention to that; but I was talking to him tonight and he tells me he's going to marry her tomorrow."

Amos sighed in relieved fashion and leaned back in his chair.

"Oh, well," he said. "That's nothing to get alarmed about. Young blood—you know—" his voice trailed away vaguely.

"What?" cried Harry.

"Summertime — prime of life—think nothing of it," said Amos soothingly.

"But he asked me to be his

best man," bleated Harry, incredulously.

"It'll blow over," said Amos.

"The hell it will," answered Harry, "you don't know Dave."

"Well," said Amos, judiciously, "I suppose I could speak to him. In the morning of course. First thing in the morning."

"Nothing doing," said Harry. "If you know anything about this mantrap that'll make him slow down for a bit, you tell it to him tonight."

"Not tonight."

"Tonight!"

"All right," sighed Amos. "Bring him up here."

"You bet!" said Harry. "Don't move. I'll be right back." He took off from the lodge at a run, which, however, due either to the scotch, or the reassuring effect of Amos' unconcern, slowed down to a more cautious walk which was infinitely kinder on his bare feet. He picked his way down the slope to where the lights of the cabin belonging to David and himself, loomed.

But when he got there, David was gone.

It was high breakfast-time when the prodigal returned. Harry was just finishing his third cup of coffee and looking at Leona with deep suspicion

in his eyes, when David wandered in. He was wearing a shirt and pair of slacks, somewhat dirty, ruffled and torn. Harry compared his tangled condition with the bandbox freshness of Leona and the suspicion deepened.

"Where have you been?" he asked.

"Morning, darling," said David to Leona.

"Morning, dear," replied Leona.

"I said," repeated Harry. "*Where have you been?*"

"Out," replied David, turning to him with a courteously puzzled expression. "In the woods. Is it important? What is the difference?"

"Important?" said Harry, with a bitter laugh. "To me? Hah! No. I wouldn't say it was important. Merely inconvenient. You babble deliriously in the night. I run for help to the lodge and arouse Dr. Slizer and McCloud. Amos implores me to bring you back up to him right away. I go to get you. You're gone. Hah! No, not important. Merely inconvenient, when you're used to people keeping their promises to stay places until you get back to them."

"Oh, did I say that?" inquired David, vaguely.

"You did," said Harry. "Perhaps after you've had

breakfast you'll see Dr. Slizer."

"Oh, I don't want any breakfast," said David. "I've already eaten. Some of that raw beef in the icehouse," he turned toward Leona. "You're quite right. It's much better that way."

"Then maybe we can go talk to Amos," said Harry.

"Certainly," consented David. "Be right back, Leona."

"Take your time, dear."

"Hah!" said Harry.

The two savants were sitting on the sun porch. Amos waved Harry and David to chairs as they approached.

"Cigars?" he said.

They shook their heads and sat down.

"Ah, David," said Amos.

"Yes?" said David.

"Harry here tells me you're quite taken with Leona."

"I intend to marry her shortly," said David, nodding his head, "one o'clock this afternoon—or two."

"Humm," said Amos.

"I beg your pardon?" said David.

"The truth is," Amos frowned professionally, "you are making a mistake. You think you're in love."

"I am."

"No," said Amos. "I'm afraid not. In the case of any

other two people it could well be love. But in your case I'm afraid that what you think is love, is actually something else."

David blushed.

"No, I don't mean that either," said Amos hurriedly. "The truth is—well—I understand you were out all night last night."

"Well, yes," answered David. "I was."

"Tell me," said Amos, leaning forward confidentially. "While you were out in the woods by yourself, did you have the impulse to—or did you actually—er—bay at the moon?"

"Why," said David, turning a trifle pale, "come to think of it, I believe I did do a little baying."

"At the moon?"

"Yes."

"On any other occasions?"

David squirmed in his chair.

"Well," he stammered.

"There was that rabbit."

"What rabbit?"

"Oh, just a rabbit," said David, with a bad attempt at airy unconcern. "I chased it a little way."

"Baying?"

"Well, yes."

"Holy Hannah!" exploded Harry. "Running around the woods at night and howling at moons and rabbits."

"I wasn't howling," said David, with dignity. "I was baying. There's a difference."

"There is, there is," interrupted Amos, hurriedly. "Harry, of course, doesn't understand."

"Damn right I don't," said Harry, belligerently.

"But what's this got to do with me and Leona?" asked David. Amos got up, walked over, and put a fatherly hand on his shoulder.

"My boy," he said, "brace yourself. You and Leona can never be married. Leona is a werewolf."

Angus snorted.

"Angus!" said Amos, sternly. "You promised not to say a word until I was through here."

"But that's ridiculous," said David.

"Is it any more ridiculous than what has happened to you in the last twenty-four hours?" asked Amos. David colored, but stuck to his guns.

"Even if it was true," he said, "I'm not afraid. We'll go see a specialist, or something. Leona and I can never be kept apart." Amos turned his head away sadly.

"Truer words were never spoken," he said. "But not the way you think it. You've only heard half the story. Remem-

ber last night. Remember chasing the rabbit. Didn't you notice any change in yourself?"

David's face went totally white.

"Come to think of it—come to think of it—" he choked—"I did. I had a—a tail; and dewlaps."

"You see?" said Amos. "Unknown to yourself all these years, you have been a werewolfhound, one of the old breed whose ancestors were developed by the Magicians Anti-Were-creatures Guild of Verona in the early thirteenth century. You are a werewolfhound, and Leona, being a werewolf, is your natural prey. It is her proximity to you that has made you revert to type. Due to the fine selective breeding of your ancestors, you have felt the were-call early. Leona will feel it in a night or two. She will become a werewolf. You will become a werewolfhound, and track her down and tear her to bits. The attraction, David, that you feel for Leona, is not the love of a male for a female, but the lust of a hunter for his game."

David fainted.

Later on that day, when David had finally been calmed down and put to bed, Harry slipped away from the first

distraught snores of his friend and cornered Amos in the library.

"What're you doing?" he asked.

Amos shook his head, sadly.

"I've been trying to think of some way para-science could be used to obviate the inevitable," he said. "But my knowledge of the field is still too much in the theoretical stage."

"Can't you do anything?"

"I wish I could," said Amos.

"I set this little tragedy in motion in a thoughtless impulse to convert Angus to a true scientific curiosity. Now, I'd do anything I could to stop it."

"Well, there must be something we can do."

"What?"

"Can't we lock them up at night, or something?"

"We can try," Amos shook his head dolorously, "but remember, we're not dealing with ordinary humans. Both David and Leona are werewolves, and nobody can know just what powers they possess."

"Well I don't know about you!" snapped Harry. "But I'm going to keep my eye on Leona, from here on out!"

And so, for the next two days, Leona suffered what can only be referred to as persecution. She took it as long as she

could; but finally even her were-will cracked. She sought out Amos in the library and cried on his shoulder.

"There, there," said Amos, nervously, patting her shoulder.

"But it's just awful!" she wailed.

"Come now," said Amos, with the falsely cheerful air of a man who has just heard what his wife claims are burglars downstairs, "are you sure you aren't just imagining things?"

"Certainly not!" sniffed Leona. "It's that Harry. He keeps following me around and saying 'Hah!' darkly."

"Pay no attention," answered Amos soothingly.

"—And David. He keeps putting off getting married, and every time he looks at me and sighs deeply, as if I was somebody dear departed."

"Nonsense," replied Amos. "It's just your imagination. You're overwrought. You haven't—er—been having any strange feelings or impulses lately, have you?"

"Me!" said Leona, indignantly. "Certainly not. Has that Harry been telling stories about me? Oh, I get so mad at him I could tear his throat out!"

"Er—yes," said Amos.

At this moment, there was

a knock on the door and Harry breezed in.

"Hah!" he said, noticing Leona in close conversation with Amos.

"You see!" cried Leona, bitterly, and swept out. Harry carefully closed and locked the door behind her.

"Hist!" he said in Amos' ear. Amos jumped back nervously.

"Don't hiss at me!" he snapped.

"I've got it all fixed," said Harry. "They'll be delivered this afternoon. One large steel cage for Leona, and a stout collar with a strong leash for Dave."

"You young idiot!" fumed Amos. "You can't lock a girl up in a steel cage."

"Hah!" said Harry. "Can't I?"

"Don't 'Hah!' at me!" barked Amos irritably. "And anyway it wouldn't do any good. No steel cage will hold a werewolf. It would have to be silver at least."

"Hmm," muttered Harry, a bit crestfallen. "Well, we'd better think of something quick. Time's getting short."

"Nonsense," said Amos, but without his usual spirit, "it probably may not happen for days."

"Hah!" retorted Harry disbelievingly, and went out.

Unfortunately, as it turned out, Harry was justified in his pessimism. That afternoon, Leona was missing. Harry went out looking for her; and came bursting back into the lodge to spoil what was left of the small appetites of the three men sitting around the dinner table—I beg your pardon, two of the three men; Angus McCloud, serene in his scientific skepticism, was eating with his normal appetite, which is to say, like a horse.

"It's started!" cried Harry, slamming the door open. Amos and David leaped like harpooned whales.

"What's happened?" roared Amos, when he had recovered his balance.

"It!" shouted Harry excitedly. "Leona is on the loose. They've found a kid about five miles down the road, torn to pieces."

David turned pale, Amos turned green.

"Oh, no!" groaned Amos. "A little child—"

"Not child!" interrupted Harry, excitedly. "The other kind of kid—son of a goat—you know."

"Thank God," muttered Amos, mopping the perspiration relievedly from his brow. Suddenly, however, his brightening eye caught sight of David sitting at the table, gazing

abstractedly at the tablecloth. David was still pale, but there was a slightly puzzled expression on his face, as if he was trying to remember something.

"Oh, oh," groaned Amos. He moved hurriedly over behind David's chair and from this obscure position began to signal frantically to Harry.

"What on earth are you waving your hands for like that?" inquired Harry, in a loud, interested voice.

Amos groaned again, clutching at his forehead in an extremity of despair. Suddenly he took his hands down and began to sing wildly in a cracked voice.

"If a body get a leash
"Comin' through the Rye,
"If a body wear a collar,
"Need anybody cry?"

"Oh, I get it," said Harry cheerfully. "You want the collar and the leash I got to tie Dave up with." And he hurried out.

There was a loud clang from the end of the table where Angus' knife and fork had dropped unheeded on his plate. He was rising to his feet, his face convulsed with wrath.

"By Heaven!" he thundered. "I've been insulted and maligned and controverted by you, Amos Slizer, but I'll be

damned if I stand for parodies of Scots' songs. If ye wish to apologize, I will be smoking in the library."

And he stalked out after Harry.

"Kid torn to pieces?" murmured David, wrinkling his forehead at the tablecloth.

Harry came back in with the leash. In response to Amos' frantic signals, he brought them around behind David's chair.

"Kid?" murmured David. "Torn? Teeth? Animal? Wild? Wo—"

"Stop!" yelled Amos, grabbing David by the shoulders. Don't think of it. Think of the girl you love. Think of Leona. Think of her as a beautiful woman—"

"That's silly," interrupted Harry. "He knows as well as we do, she's a were-wolf."

"You fool!" cried Amos. And—

"Werewolf?" roared David, surging to his feet. "Were—grrrh, gnash, gnash. Yowp! Yowp! Yowp!"

"Get the collar on him quick!" panted Amos, who was struggling with the metamorphosing David.

"Got it!" grunted Harry, snapping the collar shut. "Sheer good luck the clasp on this happened to be silver." He looked down at David, who

was now down on four legs and completing his tail and ears. He made a very good looking hound, indeed. About the size of a St. Bernard, with the dewlaps of a bloodhound and the rather trimmer body of German shepherd or police dog. He was straining at the leash.

"We can't hold him very long," cried Harry; and, sure enough, just at that minute David got all four feet dug in and took off through the house, casually smashing the front door, which happened to be closed, open.

They charged off through the night. Together they made a weird sight, skimming over the ground, the two men being pulled along the path and sometimes through the air, under the light of the rising moon. David's magnificent baying filled the woods.

"We—can't—keep up this pace much longer—" grunted Amos, as he bounded along with fifteen-yard strides.

"Why—" gasped Harry. "Why—don't we just—ride him?"

"Fine—idea," agreed Amos as he drew closer.

Hand over hand they hauled themselves up the leash and assisted each other to seats on David's back. He did

not seem to notice the weight, and, as a matter of fact, picked up speed.

"Yowp! Yowp!" bugled David. "Huroo! Huroo!"

He put on the brakes, suddenly, and skidded to a stop.

"What's up?" asked Harry, peering over Amos' shoulder.

"I think," said Amos, cautiously, "that we've reached the dead kid."

"Snuff? Snuff? Snuff?" sniffed David loudly.

"You're right," said Harry. "We have. Do you suppose it's still possible to reason with him?"

"I don't know," said Amos. "We can try." He leaned forward toward one of David's floppy ears. "David!" he said.

"Ruff!" snapped David.

"I don't think he wants to be bothered right now," said Amos, a little timidly.

"Try again," urged Harry.

"David," said Amos.

"Yowp?"

"Stop and think, David. She may be a werewolf, but she is also Leona, the girl you love. When you think of that, doesn't your heart soften toward her?"

"Gruffff —growr! —gnash-rashashash!"

There was a moment of shaken silence on top of David.

"I gather," said Amos, finally, "it doesn't make him feel much different."

Meanwhile, David had been casting around in circles, which grew wider and wider. Suddenly he paused, stopped his circling and plunged off in a straight line, baying with greater energy and intensity than ever.

"What now?" jolted Harry into Amos' ear.

"I think," Amos shouted back, "he's hit her trail."

"Huroo! Huroo! Huroo!" yodeled David.

"This is the end," choked Amos. "She doesn't stand a chance." They plunged on through the night woods, the three of them, David galloping and the other two hanging on for dear life, but nevertheless bouncing clear of David's broad backbone some ninety or hundred times a minute. Up gullies, under pine trees, through underbrush and over huge boulders, they raced, with the moon keeping pace with them, flickering through the trees.

"Hey!" said Harry suddenly. "Aren't we heading back toward the lodge?"

"That's right," ground out Amos, between his clacking teeth, "we seem to be. He'll catch her there. She'll be cornered. And it's all my fault."

Why didn't I leave Angus to wallow in his stupidity?"

But at this moment, David checked his headlong flight so suddenly that the two men shot on ahead off his back.

"What's up?" spluttered Harry, coming to a sitting position with his mouth full of moss. He looked around him and was astonished to see Amos on his feet and doing an impromptu war dance.

"Huh?" said Harry, his eyes bugging out.

"Why, don't you see?" chortled Amos. "She's confused her trail. He's all mixed up trying to untangle it. Oh, clever girl, clever girl!"

"And what good," inquired Harry grumpily, "is that going to do us?"

"Why, it'll give us enough time to get to the lodge and head her off. Come on."

"Sniff? Snuff? Snuff?" Sniffed David perplexedly.

"You're right!" said Harry, leaping to his feet. The two men ran off through the woods.

They were still about a quarter mile from the cabin and they covered the distance at the best speed they could manage, which was a slow trot. This, unfortunately, gave them time to think, and memory jabbed them both sharply

as they came into the clearing around the resort.

"My heavens!" said Harry, suddenly. "she's a werewolf."

"And Angus is all alone in the lodge!" added Amos, strickenly.

They burst into a clumsy run, approaching the French windows that opened on the library. Across the green-sward, as they approached came the rumbling tones of Angus' voice.

"Good girl, nice girl. All right now."

They redoubled their pace and burst through the windows into the library. The sight that struck their eyes brought them skidding to a halt on the library's well-waxed hardwood flooring. Angus McCloud was half bent over by the library table, under which Leona crouched, her eyes shining greenly in the shadow.

"Are you all right?" yelled Harry.

Angus straightened up creakily.

"Of course I'm all right!" he said testily. "Why shouldn't I be?"

"But—but—" stammered Harry, pointing one shaking forefinger under the table. "Leona—the werewolf—didn't she come in ravening for your throat?"

"She did raven a little bit," said Angus mildly. "But I spanked her with a rolled up newspaper. Now she's gone under the table and won't come out. Who did you say she was?"

"Leona! The werewolf!" shouted Amos, almost beside himself with vexation. "What I've been trying to prove to you. Now don't you believe, me, you old idiot?"

To the surprise of both men, McCloud lifted his nose in the air and pointedly ignored Amos, addressing himself instead to Harry.

"In case your friend is interested," he said, "you might remind him that I am still waiting for a suitable apology for his desecration of one of my favorite melodies."

"Holy Hannah!" said Harry. "We haven't time for that. We've got to get Leona out of here before David commits murder." He leaned over and addressed the werewolf. "You hear that, Leona? David'll be here in a minute. Come on out and we'll hide you someplace."

Leona rolled the whites of her eyes up at Angus and stayed put.

"I think," said Amos, "I'm not sure, but I *think* she's waiting for an apology from Dr. McCloud. A fine thing, I must

say, Angus, spanking a lady with a rolled-up newspaper."

"She's not a lady, she's a dog," said Angus.

"She's not a dog, she's a werewolf," said Harry. "And if we don't get her out of there inside of the next second or two—oh—oh!"

He held up his hands for silence. And in the distance, approaching with the speed of an express train, they all heard the triumphant yodeling of David, who had finally gotten the mixed up trail straightened out, and was on his way to the lodge.

"For the last time, Leona," pleaded Harry. "Will you come out? We can—"

"Too late," interrupted Amos.

There was the noise of pounding feet outside and David came crashing bodily through two of the French windows into their midst.

"Huroo! Yowp? Yowp? Yowp?" he yelped.

"If you must know," said Amos, "she's under the table."

"Ruff?" said David, astonished, discovering the crouching Leona and eyeing her with surprise.

"Angus here beat her brutally with a rolled-up newspaper and drove her under the table," said Amos, nastily.

"I did not beat her brutal-

ly," protested Angus. "A few whacks with a rolled up newspaper—"

"Arf!" said David, shocked, looking at the older man, accusation in his eyes.

"Go ahead," said Amos, somberly. "She's battered to a pulp. Go in there now and finish her off."

David turned back to Leona; and to all who watched, it was evident that a terrific struggle was taking place within his shaggy breast. The characters in the scene that met his eyes were correct. Here were the humans it was his duty to protect. And here was the werewolf it was his duty to protect them from. But something about the tableau was wrong. It was not the werewolf, savage, bloodthirsty and evil, who stood towering over the shivering, frightened humans; but a human, irascible, brutal and cruel, who stood looming over a shrinking and abused werewolf. There could be no doubt that the revelation of Angus' savagery with the rolled-up newspaper had shaken David's were-wolfhoundish heart to the core. Still, duty was duty, and he might have followed the instincts bred into him; but at that moment, it may have been by chance, and it may not—but Leona allowed a sad little whine to escape her.

It was too much for the gallant were-wolfhound. For generations it had been the code of his line to succor and comfort the threatened and attacked. He stretched his head under the table and licked Leona's nose. Then he crawled under himself.

"Thank heaven!" gasped Amos, mopping his brow. "It's going to be all right." He grabbed Harry and Angus by their elbows and hustled them out the door of the library, closing it behind him. "Quiet now," he said. "Just leave them alone."

"Wait a minute," protested Harry, digging in his heels. Noises had begun to emanate from the library. "Listen to that. Maybe they're starting to fight, after all."

"I don't think so," said Amos, firmly, retaining his grasp on the two elbows. "Gentlemen, I must insist. This way, if you please!"

Harry, Amos and Angus were already seated at the breakfast table the following morning, looking somewhat dazed but not unhappy.

"—and so I will accept your apology," Angus was just saying to Amos, "although in the old days singing a parody on Comin' Thro the Rye would

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MAGIC WINDOW

By ROBERT F. YOUNG

ILLUSTRATOR SUMMERS

I DON'T know which was the more improbable—the girl or her painting.

Of all the artists displaying their wares at the sidewalk exhibit, she was the only one with but a single canvas. She stood beside it timidly, as though afraid someone would stop and make fun of it—or, as though afraid no one would stop at all. In a way, she looked like a child, with her odd blue eyes and her sunny hair (one lock of which the April wind had playfully tumbled down upon her forehead); a charming and undernourished child playing grown-up in a blue artist's smock and an absurd beret.

As for her painting— Well, try to imagine a vast meadow rolling away to low, lavender hills. Now scatter a handful of small lakes over the meadow and sprinkle them liberally with starlight. Now raise your eyes. The first thing you'll see is a line of exotic mountains

*By what strange magic could
an ordinary window reflect
the beauty in the soul of
a lonely girl?*

capped with starlit snow, and then you'll behold a sky so crammed with stars—blue ones, white ones, red ones, yellow ones—that there's no room left for darkness.

Now think of the title—*Meadow Lakes by Starlight* . . .

"You—you *do* see them, don't you? The stars, I mean."

I wasn't aware that I'd paused. Art is not my cup of tea, and the only reason I'd been walking through the exhibit was because it stood between the parking lot where I'd left my car, and the office of my next customer. "Why, of course, I see them," I said.

I don't believe I've ever witnessed anyone's eyes become so bright as hers did. "And—and the meadow and the lakes?"

"And the mountains, too . . . Do you think I'm blind?"

"So many people are. Especially the candlestick makers."

"The *candlestick* makers! People don't make candlesticks any more."



No one else was interested in the picture.

"But they think like people who do. They see like them. The butchers and the bakers aren't so bad. They can see a little. But the candlestick makers can't see anything at all."

I stared at her. Her eyes were disarming enough, but a bit too earnest for comfort. "Well," I said, "I've got to be getting along."

"Do—do you like my painting?"

There was a desperate quality, both in the way she spoke and in the way she looked at me. But there was another quality present, too—a quality that made dishonesty impossible. "I'm afraid not," I said. "It—it frightens me a little."

Her lashes fluttered once over her blue eyes, like quick clouds over blue patches of sky. Then: "That's all right," she said. "Please don't say you're sorry."

I'd been about to say just that, and now that I couldn't, there was nothing else I could say. I stood there a while longer, wondering what to do, feeling, for some illogical reason, as though a significant moment had come and passed, and that I had lived through it like some dull clod totally unable to grasp its context. Finally, I touched my hat, muttered a little "G'by" and walked away.

It was a long morning and a bad one. My usual glibness had forsaken me, and I got no more than standard orders from the first two customers I called on, nothing from the third. I knew what the trouble was—

That damned painting!

Everywhere I looked, I saw it—the meadow, the lakes, the stars. And my mind had added to the original: there was a girl walking on the meadow now—a girl with thin cheeks and off-key blue eyes; an ethereal girl in an ill-fitting artist's smock, alone beneath that vast, impossible sky . . .

I met Mildred at noon and we lunched together in an out-of-the-way, but very respectable, restaurant. Mildred is the girl I'm going to marry. She's a fine girl and comes from a fine family. Her father is a prominent shoestring manufacturer, and he's told me several times that he'll be glad to place me in his sales department any time I say the word. As the salary he mentions by far exceeds my present income, I'll probably say the word shortly.

I'm sure we'll be very happy. We're going to buy a ranch-style house in the suburbs and raise children and plant arbovitae and juniper and dwarf

pine. Summer evenings we'll have backyard barbecues, or go for a spin in the country, and on winter nights we'll watch TV, or take in the latest movie. Perhaps I'll be accepted into the local order of the Masons, and maybe Mildred will become an Eastern Star . . . I'm *sure* we'll be very happy. A little stodgy, perhaps, by the time middle-age catches up with us, and perhaps a little set in our ways; but happiness isn't something that flies with the night, or visits your backyard once in a blue moon. It's a house and a new car and the sense of being one with your fellow men. It's a pension check and an insurance annuity and a Series E savings bond—

Or so I tell myself.

Over and over again . . .

Mildred was her usual poised self at lunch, said all the proper things. I thought I was my usual self, too, and that I was saying all the proper things, till, just after I'd paid the check, she gave me that all-knowing look from beneath her arched eyebrows, and said: "What's the matter, Hal? You're worried about something."

I considered telling her about the painting, but I knew I'd be wasting my time. Not that Mildred isn't an under-

standing, even a broad-minded, person; but I could hardly expect her to understand something I didn't understand myself. Not only that, mentioning the painting would have involved mentioning the girl, and somehow I couldn't bear the thought of exposing her to Mildred's feminine scrutiny.

So I said: "Didn't you ever hear of blue Mondays? Well, this is one of them."

"Blue isn't the word for it," she said. But she let it go at that.

I had to drive out to Addlebury that afternoon: a steady customer of mine, who operates a small machine shop there, wanted advice on how best to turn down a particularly hard alloy into a newly-designed camshaft which he intends to put into production. I solved his problem for him, using one of our Supercutter tungstens, and received a gratifying order for my trouble. It was almost 6:30 by the time I got back to the city, and I should have headed straight for my hotel for a change and a shower. I was due to pick up Mildred at 7:00.

But I did nothing of the sort. Instead, I detoured around to the street where I'd seen the art exhibit that morning. It

was a completely illogical thing to do. I knew perfectly well that the show must have been over hours ago.

It wasn't over, though. Not quite. One artist still remained. One painting. Her face was blue with cold when I pulled up in the no parking zone, her cheeks thinner than ever. The bright colors of *Meadow Lakes by Starlight* flashed bravely in the last slanted rays of the sun.

I got out of the car and walked over to where she was standing. The brightness came into her eyes again, and this time it was accompanied by hope. "How much is it?" I asked.

"Five dollars."

"It's worth twenty." I pulled the bill out of my billfold and handed it to her. I was so mad that my hands were trembling. "Didn't—didn't anyone else ask to buy it?"

"No. No one even stopped—except you."

"Did you have dinner?"

She shook her head. She was rolling up the painting. Presently she handed it to me. "I'm not very hungry," she said.

"Let's have a bite anyway."

"All right."

I took her to a diner I'd passed several blocks back, and both of us had steak and

French fries and coffee. It was 7:15 by the time we finished eating, and I knew I was hopelessly late for my date with Mildred. Somehow, I didn't care. I pulled out my cigarettes and we lit up over our second coffees. "What's your name?" I asked.

"April."

"April," I repeated. "That's an odd name."

"Not so odd, really. Lots of girls are named 'April'."

"I'm Hal . . . Do you do much painting?"

"Not any more. The market keeps shrinking every year."

"Maybe your work's too far-fetched for the average person," I said. "Take *Meadow Lakes by Starlight*, for instance."

"I don't think that one's far-fetched. It's just the view from my kitchenette window."

"You—you don't live here in the city, then." I should have said "on earth." It would have been more appropriate.

"Yes, I live here sometimes . . . I can see just about anything from my kitchenette window. You could see just about anything from *your* window too—if you looked hard enough . . . I call mine 'The Magic Casement'."

I remembered my high school Keats. "*Magic casements, opening on the foam of*

perilous seas," I quoted, "*in faery lands forelorn.*"

She nodded solemnly. "Yes," she said. The earnestness in her eyes would have been frightening if their cerulean cast hadn't tempered it. "Keats knew. So did Wordsworth. *We have given our hearts away . . .* Do you read much poetry, Hal?" Her question was innocently direct.

"I should say not! About all I have time for these days is the paper every morning, and a magazine every now and then."

"Just so you don't watch TV," she said.

"And what's the matter with TV?"

"It's a medium for candlestick makers."

So there we were, back, practically, to where we'd started from.

"Come on," I said, "I'll take you home."

She lived in a tall, gaunt apartment house on a street lined with similar structures. When she asked me if I'd care to come in for a few minutes, I didn't know what to say. Despite her little-girl appearance, she was a long way from being a little girl; and yet I couldn't, for the life of me, put her into the category where you usually put women who

make such invitations on such short acquaintances.

When I continued to hesitate, she said, "I'll show you 'The Magic Casement'."

"All right," I said. Mildred was undoubtedly mad at me already; a few more minutes' delay wouldn't make my reception any chillier.

April's apartment was on the third floor. No. 303. There were four rooms. Roomettes would be a more appropriate term. A small parlor, a bedroom, and a kitchen and a bathroom. She took my coat and hung it over a chair, and led me into the kitchen. It was a sad kitchen. A cramped little stove, an antediluvian refrigerator, a cast-iron sink, a beat-up table and chairs. The single window was above the sink, and it was the one object in the room that wasn't mean and ugly—probably for no better reason than the fact that it was a double window with small panes, and opened outward like a pair of French doors.

She got two bottles of beer out of the refrigerator, opened them and handed one to me. I was mildly shocked that so young a person should have beer in her refrigerator, and then I reminded myself that she wasn't young at all, that she was as old, probably, as I

was, and possibly even older.

She drank her beer out of the bottle, and I followed suit. I noticed her easel, then, propped against the wall beside the sink, and her palette and brushes lying on the sideboard. I raised my eyes to the window. "The Magic Casement?" I asked.

She nodded, a little shyly. "Yes." She leaned over the sink and unfastened the catch and threw the doors wide. The dampness of the spring night crept into the room.

I looked over her shoulder. Naturally, I didn't expect to see a meadow with starlit lakes—I'm not *that* pedestrian; but I *did* expect to see a view of some kind—a narrow backyard, maybe, or a distant park; anything at all on which a slightly unstable person might base a fantasy such as the painting I had just purchased.

I saw nothing of the sort. Less than ten feet from the open window, the kitchen light formed a yellow rectangle on the brick wall of the next apartment house.

April was regarding me intently. "I see a river," she said. "A blue river. There are golden trees growing on the farther bank, and nestled among the trees is a silver

house with azure shutters. A pebbled path winds down to the river bank, lined with lilies of the valley . . . What do you see?"

"Bricks," I said.

She gave a little sigh. Her blue eyes were so intense they frightened me. "Try," she said.

And I did try. The palms of my hands were moist, and I could feel the prickling of cold sweat on my forehead. I found myself wishing that I *would* see a river, golden trees, a pebbled path . . . hoping desperately that the window *would* prove to be a "Magic Casement" instead of just a convenient means for rationalizing hallucinations.

Again, all I saw were bricks.

I shook my head and turned away. I saw the disappointment come into her eyes just before she dropped them. Somehow, it made me angry.

"Why should you expect me to see something when there's nothing there to see?" I said. "I can't help it if I'm normal!"

"But I can help you to see, Hal. I *know* I can!" She stepped close to me and gripped my lapels with taut fingers. Her eyes, upturned now, were enormous, and the blue in them had darkened to the color of an April sky before a sudden storm. "Don't let them

swallow you up, Hal. Don't let them turn you into a carbon copy of everybody else. There is magic in the world, no matter what their facts and figures say—and I can help you to see it. But you've got to believe in me!"

I gripped her wrists till her fingers loosened their grip on my lapels. Then I went into the parlor and picked up my coat. "I've got to be going," I said.

She had followed me in from the kitchen. The storm in her eyes had blown over, taking their blueness with it. She did not look like a child any more: she looked like a tired old woman. "I'm never coming back again," she said, half to herself. "Never . . ." Then, "Thank you for buying my dinner—for buying my painting. Will you promise to hang it over your mantel after you are married and not let your children throw darts at it?"

"I promise," I lied.

She opened the door for me. "Good-by," Hal.

"Good-by," I said.

I saw her only once after that. It was the last day of the month, and Mildred and I had driven uptown to attend the midnight show. I had just got out of the car and was walking around to the curb, when I glanced up and saw her coming down the street.

She was so thin she seemed tenuous, unreal. There were shadows beneath her eyes, hollows in her cheeks. She was wearing a faded jacket and an indifferent skirt. Her bare legs were pale flickerings in the darkness . . .

I was struck—shocked, in fact—by her aloneness. There were scores of people all around her, the street was filled with cars—

But she was completely alone. Utterly alone.

She looked right at me when she passed, then quickly looked away. I wanted to call out to her, to run after her and stop her. But her name froze in my throat and my feet turned into lumps of clay. A moment later she was gone, engulfed by the crowd and the darkness.

I forced myself to walk the rest of the way around the car. I forced myself to open the door. I gave Mildred my arm when she stepped out. My arm was all I could give her. My mind was somewhere on a vast meadow where a lonely girl walked among starlit lakes. . . .

It was late the next afternoon before I got a chance to stop by the gaunt apartment house. When my knock on No. 303 went unanswered, I thought at first that I'd blun-

dered into the wrong building; but the landlord apprised me otherwise when I went back down the three flights of stairs and interrupted his evening meal. I had the right apartment house, he told me, but the girl I was looking for had checked out the night before.

"What time did she check out?" I asked.

He wiped his chin on the paper napkin he'd carried to the door. "About 11:30."

"I see." There was a large calendar hanging on the opposite wall and I automatically glanced at the date. May 1.

May 1 . . .

It was one of those crazy thoughts that you have sometimes—so crazy that you try to discredit it immediately so that the world can return to its natural balance—

"Could—could you tell me what day she checked in?"

"I'll have to look in my book."

He went over to an old-fashioned desk, fumbled with the catch, finally shoved back the retractable top. He pulled the book—a tattered ledger with a soiled cover—from the top drawer, began thumbing carefully through it. Supper sounds came from the kitchen and the whole apartment smelt of onions and fried po-

tatoes and something else I couldn't identify. A TV speaker blared uninterruptedly from an adjacent room. I realized that I was sweating—

"Here it is—"

"She checked in March thirty-first . . . Why, I remember now. She got us out of bed. It was nearly midnight and it was raining and she was wearing a blue raincoat with flowers painted on the collar. I didn't want to take her in at first because she didn't have any luggage. You know how it is sometimes. But there was something about her . . . Say, is something the matter?"

"No," I said. "No . . . Nothing's the matter. Thanks—thanks for your trouble . . ."

—and if you can't discredit it, you do the only other thing you *can* do. You rationalize it.

I rationalized it all the way back to my room. I did a pretty good job, too, and the world was just about back to where it belonged when I opened my door. Then I thought of the painting, and I did something I'd lacked the courage to do the night before—I took it out of the closet where I'd hidden it, carried it over to the window and unrolled it.

It was like the coach turning into a pumpkin and the footmen becoming white mice.

(Continued on page 84)




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PATENTED PARADISE

By BRYCE WALTON

ILLUSTRATOR NOVICK

Let's let science do it all; make our living, spend our money, bring us contentment and happiness. But happiness is a pretty big word. Perhaps we'd better define it first.

THE fear began working in Borden after the second hour of his three-hour shift. He sat absolutely alone in the center of a mechanical organism covering a quarter of a square mile known as the State Central Automatic Control Station. Finally he knew that he was afraid because he was alone.

Joan Seton, a feedback system engineer, hadn't been in Borden's bed that morning, nor in his apartment. She usually was. Sometimes she was in her own apartment but she hadn't been there either. Her three-hour shift at SCACS paralleled his and she had always been here.

She wasn't here now.

Borden had never been alone before.

Once in a great while something came out of the maze of millions of circuits, tubes and servo-mechanisms, that demanded a brief human touch. Certain lights on the control

panel would blink, and a little codification job would be needed to complete some feedback loop.

Usually Borden did nothing during his shift but sit, only he had never sat alone before. Joan had usually been around somewhere.

Once there had been a few hundred system engineers and maintenance men. Then, as end-point control units were installed making everything more automatic, men were displaced. Finally there were only a few lonely engineers wandering about the spectral automated plant. Then they were replaced by more efficient gadgets.

Finally only Borden and Joan remained. He hadn't been in love with her or anything like that. But she had been the only other human being around and she had also been more or less of a woman. She was much older than Borden, rather cold and detached,



Instruments coldly recorded his physical reactions.

and uninspired in the sex department. But they had had one very common human need—the desire not to be alone. And other deficiencies had been easily overlooked.

Borden's shift ended. Still no sign of Joan. She had *always* been there.

He went through the empty noiseless corridors where millions upon millions of signals were being translated with limitless virtuosity from discrete digital to continuous analogue statements, from electric and electronic impulses to mechanical and hydraulic action. Where continuous stream analysis, through process control systems, filtered everything in the State of Cal and made it run from beginning to end almost completely free of the touch of human hands.

The vast pulsing walls of this quasi-organic unity of self-regulating systems only emphasized Borden's finite aloneness. He walked faster.

Electronic governors and intricate feedback loops from thousands of other Automatic Control centers all fed through SCACS. SCACS was the main computer of the State of Cal, the "quality" loop, a giant brain responsible for the supervision of every

function in the State. Responsible for manufacturing and distribution, communication, social unity, everything. If the controls operating the socio-economic system were suddenly shut off, there would be instant chaos.

Borden was impressed by the importance of SCACS and his own contribution to it. However, he resented being one of those few unfortunates who, following the Second Industrial Revolution of Automation, still had to submit to the drudgery of mechanized work, and be deprived of the wonderful world of full-time leisure.

Also he was concerned with his own survival as a human being. He knew that a man cannot live alone for long and remain sane. He considered himself quite sane now and desired to stay that way.

Joan was nowhere inside SCACS.

Nor did he see her anywhere as he walked the mile home, down the winding gravel path through the pines, over the stone bridge, past the concrete guard wall that once, years ago, had been built to prevent surface autos from driving off the thousand-foot drop into the valley.

He edged into the vast empty Labor Temple like a

lone ant returning to an abandoned hill. Thousands of workers had once lived in the workers' housing project. All of them had been replaced by automatic control, and had been retired to full-time leisure. Joan and Borden were the sole residents of the huge and vacant project.

Only Joan still wasn't in his apartment or her own, and he went around calling her name but got no answer except his own hollow echoes.

He sat in his two-room apartment surrounded by the plague of isolation. He no longer dared turn on the TV. It was geared to the world of leisure, and only made his loneliness more intense. He tried to read a book entitled *The Fine Art of Engineered Leisure*, but threw it away. It reminded him of that one terrible possibility—that he might never be replaced by automatic control, and that he was already 27 years old.

If he were never retired, he would be forever isolated, doomed to a no-man's land, a twilight zone, between work and a paradise world of leisure. The world of work and the world of retirement were very separate and distinct from one another. He could never get a transfer permit to a Social Housing Project any-

where until he was replaced. It had never occurred to him to wonder why these two worlds should be so separate. They were, that was all, and he was the victim.

He took the usual tranquilab in order to sleep, and woke up the next morning to a day yawning like an empty hole.

A young woman's face floated outside his window. Impossible of course. His apartment was thirty-one stories high. He struggled from the bed, took three long strides to the window and opened it.

The face was still there, a rather cute but weather roughed face. Borden was relieved to see a body under it, a nice tight body, obviously exciting even encased in an absurd gray suit of coveralls. She was standing on one of those antique pneumatic whirbugs about three feet across.

"What are you doing dangling out here in mid-air?" Borden asked. "At eight in the morning?"

"Trying to wash your window."

"What?" he said incredulously.

She looked at her wristwatch. Her fingernails were genuine, but short and slightly dirty. "And I've got at least

fifty more to wash over at the Sunnydale Project. You're wasting my time."

He remembered that Joan's husband had been transferred to Sunnydale when he was retired several years back.

"But you can't be washing my window, or any window?" he said.

"One of those jobs that still must be touched by human hands," she said, rather mockingly he thought.

"When did this human slavery start?"

"I've been out here at eight every Monday morning, once a month for some time. It's nothing bad."

"Oh, I see. My work schedule was cut from five to three hours a day last month. I've never been here at eight on a Monday morning before, or any morning."

"So that explains it. Now will you please remove your head so I can wash the window?"

"You've got to explain washing windows first."

"We lowly proles," she said, sardonically, "are supposed to remain as inconspicuous as possible. We do our dirty work while the leisurely masses are away. It would be better if you didn't carry on this conversation with me any

further. Ignorance is bliss. Now I've only got a twelve-hour day and only six days a week, and a lot of windows."

The window struck the back of his neck, and he fell back shocked into the room. Twelve hours a day, six days a week? Impossible and terrible. He slammed the window up again and got a spray of cleaning fluid in his face.

"Did you say twelve hours a day, six days a week?"

"Yes, and I'll be even longer if you don't stop interfering."

"I won't cooperate until you explain this ridiculous joke."

His suspicion increased that she was some poor maladjusted soul who had escaped from some sort of zanyward.

"You must be desperate for company," she said.

He flushed.

"Or maybe," she said, "you really don't know about us lowly proles. I get it, you're one of those poor devils who still have to work a little bit. But you got stuck with one of those almost-but-not-quite-replaceable jobs, and now you're neither fish nor fowl. You graduated from tech school right into automatic control and you really don't know what it's all about."

"I know what ghastly exploitation is. I know it doesn't belong in this benevolent society, and that something is horribly wrong. And the term prole is an absurd anachronism."

He was beginning to feel outraged that this poor girl should be so exploited in a society he had always been educated to believe was purely for the greatest good for all. His honest feeling was bolstered by years of indoctrination. To him, the era's greatest virtue was its complete freeing of man from the accursed dehumanization of tyrannous work and mechanized enslavement to the machines. He pointed out to her that this was the age of leisure, self-development, spiritual growth, hobbies, games, freedom from work and the machines. Man was at last free to concentrate on himself alone, free of the drudgery of work, master of his environment, of machines, and of nature. He was red-faced with indignation as he shouted at her what a terrible injustice it was that anyone should work twelve hours a day six days a week, when practically no one else worked at all. It was a real crime.

As he finished shouting at some shadowy bureaucracy,

the girl started to move the whirlbug away.

"Wait," he shouted. "Why do you tolerate it if you really have to do this? Why don't you strike, rebel?"

"Because," she said, "some things still have to be touched by human hands, and some human beings have to do it. Windows and streets have to be cleaned in areas where machines can't do it. Garbage and rubbish have to be disposed of. All sorts of dirty, nasty little jobs only human inefficiency can handle."

"But I'm talking about the unfair distribution of labor. If these dirty things have to be done, why should some small labor pool be sorted out and victimized?"

"Why should you worry?"

"How can you tolerate it?"

Suddenly she was very serious as she stood there on her whirlbug in the morning mist. "Don't think about us so much," she said softly. "Think more about yourself."

Then she was gone.

By God, he thought as he slammed down the window, someone would answer for this. It was incredible, but somewhere there was corruption in the best of all possible worlds.

He dressed, pushed a break-

fast automat button and ate tasteless mush out of a plastic cannister, then went looking for Joan. She wasn't in her apartment. He yelled. Joan didn't answer.

When he got to his job at SCACS, he sat down before the graphic instrument control panel and started to look for any sign of needed codification. There was none. He looked around for Joan. She wasn't there.

Then a metallic voice came out of the wall.

"Mr. James Borden, G-2947. You are hereby informed that you are retired. Your selfless duties have been replaced by a more efficient and completely self-regulating end-point master control unit. Yours is the honor of being among the very last to be freed from the tiring, nerve-wracking and even boring jobs of mass manufacturing and distribution that have for ages impoverished the quality of human life, robbed it of opportunities for individual creation, pride and sensitive qualitative discrimination. Society thanks you for your loyal service continued beyond the call of duty. You will report at once to Personology, Sunnydale Social Housing Project No. 7. Good-bye, and enjoy your full rich future

good-bye, and enjoy your full rich future good-bye and enjoy your full rich future good-bye and enjoy your . . ."

There was a metallic click, and then a deadening silence from which Borden ran with a yell of joy building up inside him and exploding in the morning sunlight as he burst out of the prison of SCACS.

He was a thin, wiry young man with a long serious face. But he began leaping and dancing about on the devil grass, whooping and laughing. Then he ran down the gravel path heading for the Labor Temple where he wanted to pick up a few personal items.

That's what happened to Joan, he thought. She was retired yesterday. She was so joyful and elated about it that she didn't even stop to tell me good-bye.

He was 27. But with luck he would have a good full forty-five or fifty years of full-time leisure. All those years of nothing to do but live!

He passed the pile of cigarette butts by the concrete guard wall, then stopped and came back and stared down at them. They were all twisted in the way Joan always twisted them. About ten or fifteen butts lying there at the foot

of the wall. One of them was still smoking, the vapor drifting up the side of the concrete, clinging to it, then rolling away over the top in the airless sunlight.

He leaned over the wall and something happened to his stomach. He stared at her body sprawled on a rocky ledge a hundred feet down. It had an unreal appearance, the body lying flat, had a one dimensional look. A while later the word dead seeped into Borden's numbed consciousness. The word was vaguely familiar, but the fact was not. Borden had never seen death before. His parents had long since been retired and so as far as he knew they were still alive. He had never thought about death before, and now it didn't really register. Death had not been included in his careful indoctrination for life.

Dazed, he worked his way down the precarious slope, and he almost fell several times as he clung to gnarled junipers to keep from joining Joan Seton's incomprehensible end.

"Joan," he whispered as he stopped five feet from her. "Joan," he whispered again as though he expected an answer. But she was horribly crushed, blood running from

the corner of her mouth, her eyes and ears, and the dead eyes looking straight up at the sky.

Borden finally managed to wonder what to do. He thought about trying to get her back up to the road, but knew he could never do it alone. He would call in and have some agency or other come out here and get her. He would tell someone at Sunnydale.

He stared at the rather fat legs, crushed and exposed up to the thighs. At the familiar large breasts and sagging face. He felt like crying because she had slept with him only because they had been lonely. It was as though he had never really known her at all.

She had had a really martyred life. She was almost forty, an old woman, had worked all her life as a system engineer. And just as she finally was retired, this—

She had never talked about retiring. She had loved her work, but of course she had looked forward to retiring.

Two whirlbugs dropped down over the rim rock and settled near Joan's body. A short stubby man with long hair jumped off one whirlbug and started going through

Joan's handbag. A woman stood on the other whirlbug, and she looked at the dead woman a moment, then up at Borden. It was the window washing girl.

The man stood up and read aloud from Joan's identification card. Borden didn't listen. He already knew all those statistical facts about Joan Seton, even about her husband having to leave her because he was retired to Sunnydale several years ago. She had never been talkative or even very friendly after that. Just someone to sleep with so you wouldn't feel all alone.

The girl and the man hooked a stretcher between the whirlbugs and started loading Joan Seton's body onto it. Then the girl came over and put her hand on Borden's shoulder. He was sitting on a rock.

"She was a friend of yours?"

"Yes, you could say that."

"I'm sorry," she said. "As long as we keep running into one another, my name's Lisa Pearce."

Borden nodded. When he stood up, nausea curled at his stomach.

"Easy," Lisa Pearce said. "Here, cigarette?"

"I don't use them, thanks." He glanced quickly at Joan.

"It's an awful thing. I mean—all those years waiting to live, then dying just when her chance came along. Falling off a wall—"

"Let's go, Lisa," the man said.

"Just a minute, Lew." Lisa Pearce looked at Borden sympathetically.

"I'm going to tell you something you won't like hearing. Your friend didn't fall off that wall. She jumped off."

He backed away from Lisa Pearce in a sudden horror. An intolerable pressure rose in his chest. "You're lying," he whispered.

"Lew saw her," Lisa said.

"That's right," Lew said. "I might have stopped her if I'd known. How could I have known she was going to jump?"

"How could you have even seen her?" Borden asked.

"Lew has a lookout station across the valley. That's another of our jobs, watching for fires. Forest fires."

"I thought it was funny, her sitting up there so long, smoking one cigarette after another," Lew said. "I figured it was someone from SCACS, but I'd never seen one alone before."

Borden leaned back against

the warm rock. He hated Lisa Pearce and he hated Lew and he was afraid of them. He wanted to get away from them and he never wanted to hear of any of them again.

He stared at a pool of black blood in the rocks and the green flies glinting around it. If death was vague and unreal to him, the idea of Joan Seton killing herself was impossible. He stood up straighter and pressed his hand into his stomach. "You're both lying. What right have you to take her body away? Where are you taking it? What do you know about her?"

Lisa Pearce seemed angry then. "Do you want to take care of your friend?" She talked to him now as though he were a child. "Do you want to take care of her?"

"You said you were a window washer? How come—?"

"Lew signaled for help, and I was the nearest. I told you we had other jobs to do. We'll have to do this too, until you have machines to bury your dead."

He started to yell something at her but whatever he intended to yell it choked up in his throat.

Her voice softened. "Well, good-bye again. Sorry if I've upset you. But usually there's no one around when we take

the dead away. No one wants to see it."

She offered him her hand, but he backed away. There was blood on her hand.

He ran all the way to the arched gateway that led into the Labor Temple grounds. He stopped and forgot how out of breath he was. Where the Labor Temple had been was only a few square blocks of barren and empty space surrounded by groves of eucalyptus trees.

A shadow flicked across his face. A huge helioplane was going straight up lifting with it several slabs of dismantled wall. Several other helioplanes were disappearing in the west carrying the rest of the Labor Temple.

Whoever they were, he thought, they certainly hadn't wasted any time. He turned, walked toward the skyrail station a mile down the valley road. He resented Joan Seton now. It was as though she had betrayed him, betrayed the new wonderful future stretching interminably ahead for all mankind. He felt an intense and frightened rage at Lew and Lisa Pearce too. He didn't want to think of any of them again. Nasty, dirty bits of work still have to be touched by human hands, she had said.

Window washing, garbage disposal, street cleaning. Burying dead people.

He sincerely hoped he would never again see or hear of the so-called proles. He no longer had any desire to protest their puzzling exploitation.

At nine thirty-three that night he was still waiting at the skyrail station for a car going toward Sunnydale. Stars suffused a black sky, and nearby he could hear wild dogs baying in hunting packs.

He began to shiver sitting there hunched up with his hands in his pockets. He was hungry. He was tired. He was scared. He was also confused. He could walk over the forested hills toward Sunnydale, though he wasn't sure where Sunnydale was, and even if he were sure where it was, the chances were that he would get lost.

This time it startled him and he jumped to his feet, but he wasn't surprised to see Lisa Pearce and her whirlbug drop down out of the sky. She wore a thick red sweater and a woolen cap, and boots.

"I'll give you a lift over the hills to Sunnydale," she said.

"That won't be necessary."

"It might be," she said, "if you feel it's necessary to get to Sunnydale and unfortunate-

ly I imagine you do. Better step aboard."

"I'll wait, thank you."

"You'll wait a long time for a rail car."

"They usually run every two hours."

"That was when Labor Temples were sprinkled up and down this valley clear to San Diego. There aren't any more Temples, no more workers wanting rides, no more rail cars."

He hadn't thought of that.

"They dismembered your apartment building," she said. "They remembered that. But they forgot you."

Reluctantly, he stepped onto the whirlbug and it shot up and away over the tops of silent pine trees hiding in a lake of depthless black.

"Better put your arm around me," she said. "You might fall off."

He felt her body pressing against him. She wasn't an escapee from any zanyward, he knew that much now. It was a comforting theory, but it wouldn't hold up. He wondered how many so-called proles there were running about out in the country, and where they stayed and how they lived. The hell with them. In a little while now he would be forgetting he had ever heard of them.

"I'm sorry about your friend, Joan Seton."

"I don't understand it. She was forty years old. Been a slave to mechanization all her life. And just when she was to be released for a life of freedom and laughter, she—" He couldn't even think about it let alone say it.

"Maybe she didn't want to be retired," Lisa Pearce said.

"Are you mad?" he asked her.

"If she was looking forward to being dumped in the sargasso sea of eternal leisure," Lisa Pearce said, "she celebrated in an odd and depressing way."

"That was in poor taste, Lisa. And I don't wish to talk about it further."

"It wouldn't make any real difference if we did. You're too well educated. You're one big conditioned reflex of affirmation. And the real tragedy is that when you start living and finding out what it's all about, it will be too late to rebel—even if you might want to."

"I know you're some sort of pathological malcontent," he said. "And all I'm saying is that I would rather not know any more about you and your prole friends."

"You probably never will," she said softly, "unless you

happen to be one in ten million. Unless you happen to be a tilter. And even then you may never hear of us again."

"Tilter?"

"I won't bother explaining that either. Let me just say this much. They used to have a gaming machine called pinball. It was electrified and if you cheated you tilted the machine so that a ball would get joggled into a certain slot. It was a criminal act to be a tilter."

But he was no longer listening. The lights of Sunnydale began blinking and flickering, swooping and soaring and exploding in the night.

"The great midway," Lisa Pearce said in a low voice. "The garden of leisure, the last playground."

The whirlbug slanted down. A thunderous murmur of sound began fading in from everywhere out of the glittering night.

"This is the last bird's-eye view you'll ever get of happy town," she said. "You know what it always looks like to me? A great big slot machine, only without a jackpot."

He had no idea what she was talking about. She let him off in a grove of trees from which a pink sidewalk led out and directly into a huge

square windowless block with PERSONOLOGY written across it. "There's your headquarters. Go in there and report to the human engineers and the doctors of retirement."

Borden stepped into the wet grass. "Thanks for not forgetting me."

"I wish you wouldn't forget me."

"Why should I?"

"You want to, for one reason. Another one is—but they don't matter. You wouldn't remember any of the reasons after they've happened to you." She angled the whirlbug up a little on its pneumatic thrust. "There's Sunnydale. It isn't as complicated as it looks though. You can only play one game at a time and you've got a lifetime to learn."

The whirlbug shot up into the darkness and disappeared.

Sometime later, dazed and dopy, he sat naked in a posture chair under a light in an otherwise pitch black room. Someone said, "I'm your personology counselor. My name is Doctor Voto. Now before your life of leisure really begins, Jim, you must have patience. A great many preliminary tests are necessary so that we may determine ex-

actly where you will fit best in the social scheme so that you may extract a maximum of pleasure from your road of life, and at the same time contribute as much as possible to the good of all your brothers and sisters."

Another nurse appeared and shoved another hypodermic syringe into his arm. A dreamy ease washed through his blood. The tests began.

Days later he was still being tested. Finally, more often than not, he was not particularly conscious of how he was being tested, or for what. Except that he knew he was being tested for everything.

"It's important," said Dr. Voto, "that no mistakes in personality appraisal tests be made, otherwise you won't fit properly into the social mechanism."

There were batteries of tests. He would wake up dulled by nameless injections in the middle of the night and find a stroboscope hooked to his head, a machine with a stylus registering brain waves and another registering heart beats. They even tested his dreams.

Perception tests. Learning tests. Tests for physical skills and manual dexterity. Tests of talent such as mechanical aptitude and musical talent.

Tests of personality traits, of introversion, extroversion, outgoingness, of warmth, responsiveness, masculinity and femininity. Combinations of tests. Balance tests and coordinate tests.

Scores were graded and calibrated. He was something, he knew vaguely, on a percentile scale. A huge graph map covering one wall had grid lines moving around on it, and Borden knew that this was himself. He would be taken from one testing room to another, twenty-four hours a day, then back into the big room where his grid line was running about on the graph map.

"This is testing, Jim," Dr. Voto was saying, smiling with his thin mouth and his receding chin. "We're gearing actual training and assignment to these tests. The point is of course to get as much play efficiency from a person as possible, while at the same time enabling him to play harmoniously with his play group. Now here, Jim, is normal on the playchart of your social level. You're here."

"I seem pretty low on that chart," Borden whispered weakly.

"But you're coming up. Though where you are on the percentile scale really isn't

important. It's merely to find your niche. In the world of leisure there is a place for all. Competitiveness, status, prestige, all those diseases of the consumer era are passe."

Right now, Borden would agree with anything in order to get out of the testing routine and into the world of full-time leisure.

"What's that?" he inquired politely.

"That's your play output fatigue factor."

"Oh, I see." He did not see, of course, because the phrase somehow did not jive with the idea of happiness, play and leisure. But it did. He knew it did. He trusted Dr. Voto.

"Games and energy participation capacity per hour, Jim. Every man in his correct play niche. Everyone's different, and we're concerned with respect for individuality. One game might be perfect for one, but destructive for another. One person prefers sedentary indoor sport. Another likes outdoor physical exertive types. A certain group and game waits for everyone and we find his place."

"I like ice-skating best," Borden said tentatively. "Next I like tennis. After that, I enjoy swimming and hiking."

"Those are what you *think* you enjoy most, Jim. We'll see."

Borden was wheeled into another test room and strapped into a control chair. His hands clamped onto a T-bar and he stared at an instrument panel.

"And of course there's one indoor sport I prefer," Borden said, grinning. "I have a strong fondness for women."

Voto didn't grin. Suddenly he was deadly serious. "Jim," have you ever heard of motivational research?"

"No, I don't believe—"

"The right motive for the right game, Jim. Honest play, honest happiness, honest group participation based on genuine motivations, and the fulfilling of honest healthy needs. We often behave as we do, Jim, for motives completely different from the ones we like to think we have. You follow me?"

"You mean I don't really know what I like?"

"You know what you think you like. And you really do like what you think you like. But we find out what your true motives are, and what you really will always like the rest of your life."

Borden's hands felt sweaty and slippery on the T-bar.

"In other words, Jim, *why* did you prefer tennis, ice-skating, swimming and hiking? You're in a different world now, Jim. Back there in the mechanized era of consumption and competition, sport, play, games and hobbies were completely different in motivation than they are now. Then they were escapes, releases, from full-time work. Now play, games, hobbies, sports, these are ends in themselves. There isn't anything else *but* leisure. Your motivations must be different now. Notice all those sports you prefer are loner activities, you against the world types of things? Highly competitive, and lacking in any group-spirit."

"Yes, I can see—"

"Perhaps you preferred tennis because it was a release of hostility that piled up inside you because of your enforced study and work. Tennis then would not be an end in itself, but a compensation. Unhealthy competitiveness carried over from trying to best the next man might have been the reason for your enjoying running a race. Frustration in not beating someone else's time with a woman might have motivated your love of swimming, and you swam as a symbolic re-

turn to your mother's womb where such involvements and chance rejections with nature love could never happen. You follow me, Jim? I want you to fully understand the process of your reorientation to full-time leisure. Ask any questions."

No need to ask questions about this, Borden realized. It was quite clear that these human engineers knew more about what he liked than he did.

"You see, Jim, there's a difference in what you might enjoy doing now, and what you would like doing forever. We find out what you really want, really need and will always want and need. We find out what's right for you and we dig it out and put it on the map and put it in your personology file, chart your vector and send you on your way. There'll be errors, but only through small errors can we rectify imbalance."

The chair in which Borden was strapped began to sway, move up and down, twirl to either side. Frantically, he worked the T-bar while instruments clicked and lights blinked and a horizon line on the control panel swerved.

With millions and millions of people having to be guided and controlled in the world of

leisure, Borden realized that it was truly a big problem in human engineering.

Sometime later he found himself walking a tightwire in absolute darkness except for the phosphorescent glow of the wire and of his feet. Frightened, seeing an airy blackness of unknown depth, he swayed and after straining gyrations he fell screaming into empty space. He was trembling for hours after that even though he had fallen into a net only a few feet below the wire.

"You'll never enjoy any sort of altitude sport, Jim."

"But I could have told you that. I have a height phobia."

"That's what you've always thought, Jim, and this time you happen to be right. We had a case of a woman who was sure she was afflicted with height phobia. Scared to death of the tightwire. You know where she is now? With the Sunnydale Eagles. Up there most of the time in the blue, parachuting, stunting, bat-diving, and climbing mountains and doing aerial acrobatics at the Sunnydale Circus. She thought she was frightened of heights but we knew better and broke the circuit. Seems she was dropped by her mother when she was

a baby, and all the time she has been suppressing a genuine love of being up in the air. Her phobia was a resistance against height which she had symbolized as her mother always threatening to drop her."

"But I really am honestly scared?" Borden said.

"Genuinely and honestly scared, Jim. So you're grounded for the duration."

Borden worked on affirming his confidence in Voto and his staff of human engineers. They really seemed to know their business.

Later, feeling debilitated, Borden stumbled back into the main chart room and stared at his grid. Now the chart was covered with many colored lines going every which way, and he couldn't make head nor tail of his pattern. Voto could though. He understood everything.

Borden drooped and sank half-fainting into the posture chair. Voto made notes, talked into an intercom box and studied calibrations. "We're coming along, Jim. It's almost over. Soon you'll be swimming in the sea of leisure."

"Hope I'll be strong enough to swim without a life-preserver," Borden said, smiling wanly.

"Oh you will. You'll be fit and ready. Another few days and you'll be out there having a ball."

"Doing what? Or haven't you fully decided yet?"

"It's complex, and we haven't coordinated the findings yet. It takes some time to work out a life-graph. You've got a long life ahead of you, and our job is similar to a long period of re-education and adaptation. Full-time leisure is wonderful, but complex. Like a good marriage, you've got to work at it."

"Work at it," Borden thought oddly.

Dr. Voto studied a chart and dropped it into a clicking computer. "You're a rather special, complex unit, Jim, but you'll fit in. Homogonizing is always a problem."

"In what way am I a special, complex case?"

"You're loaded with conflict potential. In other words a great deal of oscillation in personality. You want to love, and you want group participation, yet you are also neurotically individualistic. There is an excessive competitiveness, and also a desire to merge with the happy larger social unit. There's arrogance and false pride, and also humility and outgoingness. All this oscillation must be leveled

off. Moderation is the word, Jim. Take your rather exaggerated sex-drive for example—”

He sat looking through a screen into another room consisting of a large lacy bed under a red spotlight. He was hooked into a number of measuring instruments including an electroencephalograph, and wires were checking his blood pressure. Needles wavered. Styluses recorded brain-wave rhythms. A personometer shot red liquid upward in a tube.

One by one, various women entered the room, disrobed and lay down invitingly on the bed. Various perfumes drifted past Borden's quivering nostrils. Many forms of mood music faded in and out to fit the personalities of the stripping women. There were all sorts and conditions of women. Young, middle-aged, mature, shy, brazen, voluptuous, thin, fat, timid, vital, washed-out, sad, anxious, passionate-looking and cold.

As each woman entered the room, undressed and lay down on the bed, a voice whispered a name over and over. Mary, Lisa, Mildred, Gloria, Lara, Ann, Ava, Lana, Joan, Sophia, Za Za, Lina, Loraine, Teresa, Shirley, Jane, Marilyn, Gloria, and others.

Borden found himself worked up to a pretty feverish pitch of anticipatory excitement by a dark, voluptuous number named Lina. She undressed slowly, aware of her magnificent charms, proud to display them, and anxious to make use of them to her greatest advantage.

When Borden later woke up from a drugged sleep, Voto was smiling down at him, and several nurses were calibrating him, and various machines were clicking and working away in the surrounding darkness.

“That strip-tease is quite a test isn't it, Jim?”

“I enjoyed it. Particularly the one named Lina.”

“Remember motivational research, Jim. Control of human and social units depends on the complexity of its behavior pattern and on the range of variations under which it can maintain that pattern.”

Borden didn't know exactly what that meant in human terms. But he remembered distinctly what it meant when applied to a self-regulative feed-back control system. Voto seemed to be thinking of him in terms of an analogue computer.

Borden began to admit that

he was feeling a growing uneasiness.

"Well, Jim, you're about ready to graduate."

Borden closed his eyes. He was very glad to hear it.

"In the morning, you'll be launched on the sea of leisure. Your games are set. Your social group has been determined. Your roommate has been selected."

"I appreciate all the trouble you've taken with me," Borden said, dazed.

"That's our job here, Jim. And we're always on duty. That's the essence of control, Jim. Measure, compare, correct, and check the result."

As Borden walked weakly out through an anonymous lab door, he turned. "Dr. Voto, it seems unfair. Everybody enjoying leisure, and you're still stuck with work twenty-four hours a day."

"Someone has to coordinate and control," Voto said quickly, then he smiled. "But I'm looking forward to retiring one of these days."

How could that be possible, Borden wondered? How could a man with Voto's type of work ever be replaced by automatic control? It was an extremely unpleasant question and Borden immediately forgot it.

He stood in the sunlight where a number of pastel-colored sidewalks wound about through the Sunnydale project's cubed apartment buildings. He had his kit. He had graduated. He was about to begin to live at last. His kit consisted of a map indicating where he was and where he was going, with intricate charts of the Sunnydale geography. There were various charts entitling him to unlimited purchasing power at numerous Sunnydale consumer outlets. There was a thick booklet bound in plastic entitled *Your Play Book*, and another thinner pamphlet with the incomprehensible title, *Canopydoes*. Another card indicated the location of his apartment. 5-B, Sector H-739.

He turned around several times, then walked in what he figured was the right direction. He was tired, drained, and considerably lighter in weight than he had been several weeks ago. He wanted to go to his apartment and rest for a long time, sleep, eat, regain his strength. He began to feel a growing exhilaration as he walked between the apricot and pomegranate trees.

Now and then signs pointed. Skating rink. Carnival—

keep right. Circus—keep right. Circus—keep left. Spectator Sport Palace. Bongo Heights. Gambler's Row. Partyville. Dreamtown. Actor's Studio.

Something for everybody, he thought happily. The world is mine.

From the direction of the Excursion Center, a number of huge traveling cities shaped like gigantic basketballs drifted heavenward, causing a momentary eclipse of the sun. Streams of skywriting smoke spelled out behind each ship exotic and exciting destinations. Samoa. Switzerland. Siberia. Sweden. South Africa. This was S-day.

Slowly the wind dribbled the letters and words away into a white cloud that raveled in all directions and left the sky a blue blank. Borden had forgotten to tell Voto that he also always had wanted to travel leisurely about the world, just dabbling in old ruins, art galleries and cathedrals. In fact, Borden had neglected to tell Voto several facts among which was Borden's curiosity about many things, and his desire to do a little of everything. He wanted to sample all of life's inexhaustible cake. Well, he had plenty of time.

His apartment building was

pastel green, and in appearance indistinguishable from hundreds of other similar modernistic cubes sitting like a square bloom among carefully planted trees, flowers, shrubs and walks. So far there had been a noticeable absence of people. He didn't hear anything. He didn't see anything except now and then a couple disappearing rapidly in some direction.

He went up to the fifth floor, found door B, and opened it. It was similar to his two-room apartment at the Labor Temple, only newer and painted a soft chartreuse. A thermostat pulsed, and there was a control panel on the wall and a row of buttons that hooked into master control somewhere.

He looked into the next room, and saw the woman lying naked on the bed.

"Hello, dear," she said, hardly looking at him.

He tried to say something, but his throat seemed constricted.

"Cat got your tongue, dear?" she said in a dull and thoroughly uninspired voice. She was short, rather fat, and with round dull eyes like those of a cow. She had blonde hair streaked with mousy brown, and she lay

there with her nakedness awkwardly exposed as though she had simply fallen there on the bed and was too lazy to move.

"Who are you?" he managed to inquire.

"Flora," she said as she chewed gum. "Your roommate, dear."

"Roommate?"

"What's your name, slim?"

"No, I'm Jim Borden."

She put her folded hands under her head and said as though she were commenting on the weather. "You want to make love now, dear? Or later?"

Now he remembered Flora. One of those varied females in the strip-tease test parade. He remembered her now, vividly, but in a purely negative sense. She was the most undesirable woman he had ever seen. Voto must have made some dreadful mistake.

"It says here in the pamphlet, dear, that we make love every Monday. This is Monday, dear. But it doesn't say when on Monday. So I guess it doesn't matter what time just so it's Monday. What do you think?"

"I guess it doesn't matter. So let's make it later," Borden said. "I didn't know it was Monday."

"You'd better read your book of rules, dear. It says here that failure to play the rules of the game will result in co—co—coer—sive control action and adjustment therapy."

"I haven't read all the pamphlets yet."

"You'd better, dear. You don't want to make love now?"

"No. Later."

"All right, dear." She sat up and pulled a thin negligee over her shoulders and lethargically lit a cigarette and stared listlessly out the window. "It's a nice day out isn't it?"

"Yes it is."

"We're supposed to be in the gaming room at nine in the morning, dear. You wake me up, dear. I just sleep and sleep, like an old log. I'm grumpy of a morning."

She stood up and shuffled to the closet. "We can go shopping now, what do you think? We can buy anything we want only it isn't buying now you know. I just got my kit too. I was just retired. You know what I was doing?"

"No," Borden said.

"Nothing, dear. Just nothing. And it's sort of funny isn't it, I mean being retired when I wasn't doing anything?"

"Very amusing," Borden said.

She opened a box and took out a pair of white sunshorts, sandals and a halter. "I just got these at the Consumer's outlet, dear." She held the shorts up in front of her thick and somewhat flabby thighs. "Cute aren't they?"

Borden turned and ran out of the apartment.

Voto's office was warm and sunny. Voto was not smiling now.

"Trouble already, Jim?"

Borden nodded. His face was damp. "Someone must have made a mistake. Someone's file got mixed up with mine or something."

"We might make small errors in human conversion, Jim. But nothing like that. A human being, Jim, is a closed analogue type mechanism. Of course being a graduate system engineer, you know that. Feedback control, unlike open-sequence control, can never work without some error, for the error is depended upon to bring about the correction. The objective, Jim, is to make the error as small as possible. Now, what is your small error?"

"It isn't *my* error."

"Please, Jim. Cooperate. You're not being condemned

for making an error. I want you to err. Predictors are essentially analogues of the external situation. We must predict in order to control, and adjust behavior accordingly."

Borden took a step backward. It now struck him coldly that Voto, not smiling, talked as though the words came out of a recording device. The man delivered his rote messages like some anthropomorphic robot.

"Someone made a mistake. My roommate, she's the wrong one."

"Something there is causing excessive oscillation," Voto said. "You must learn that your roommate is the right one."

"But she's all wrong!"

"You only think she's wrong now. But she's right for you, and you're right for her, and the both of you are a perfect unit fitting into the larger social unit. Believe me, our personology computers don't make errors. Only people make errors."

Voto pressed buttons. Borden could hear buzzings and clickings in the walls. The walls were really, he knew, eyes and ears, watching and listening and measuring and charting out everything on a grid map.

"I'd have to be a raving zany," Borden whispered, "to be that wrong."

"Didn't I explain about motivational research?" Voto said, with an exaggerated gesture of patience. "What you think you want now, you couldn't stand as a regular diet for the next fifty years. That other one that aroused you so much, Lina was it? Great for a while, but it would be an overload and lead to satiation and eventually to social disruption. You know what you think you want. We know what you can stand. Flora has no competitiveness, no hostility, won't strike sparks with your aggressiveness."

Two large male nurses with disinterested faces stood on either side of Borden. As Borden started to move toward the door, the two men blocked his way.

Voto said, "I said you were a special complex case, Jim. I hope you're not a tilter."

He thought of Lisa Pearce.

"You've got to cooperate, Jim. You must realize the gravity of our problems. Leisure for all can't be a matter of everyone doing as he likes. That would be anarchy, a milling chaos. And the fact is that there must be a great deal more discipline and con-

trol now than before. Rigid work schedules with a social order geared to them, created a disciplined sort of life. Now other disciplines and controls must be maintained. It's a delicately regulated inter-dependency setup, Jim. And I want to tell you this quite seriously. We can't have tilters."

The two white-jacketed men pulled Borden back toward a lab door. Voto looked rather sad. "You've got to consider the others, Jim. You must learn to play the game. You must learn that the only real crime left in the world is tilting."

He was too weak to struggle but he made a few futile gestures while they strapped him down to a plastic-topped table and clamped electrodes to his head. Beyond the rim of light he could see blurred faces and the chrome shine of machines. Something ticked regularly as a blinker began working in his eyes.

He never knew what they did with him. There were sequences of painful dreams. Later he walked back toward his apartment knowing that two days had passed, and that he had been wrong.

Flora was a perfect roommate.

He didn't know why she

was a perfect roommate. He couldn't understand why she should be a perfect roommate when she was also an obese bore. But she was. Whenever he wondered why, he got excruciating pains in his head.

To relieve the pain he stopped wondering why. The absence of pain was more rewarding than the possible satisfying of a curiosity.

Nevertheless, Borden continued to tilt. Everyone else seemed to go along in a placid and smiling and normal fashion. But Borden practically everytime he turned around, was guilty of tilting.

And everytime he tilted, he was taken to Personology. There were painful dreams, a kind of misty terror, then release. He tilted often, but he never made the same tilt twice. Not until he got deeply into his full-time game of *Canoplydoes*.

During those first trying weeks when he continually tilted while struggling to master the complex rules of *Canoplydoes*, he also tilted the bigger social mechanism as well as various individual units composing it.

He met Joan Seton's former husband once in a hallway. He was running, carrying a baseball bat, and his legs and arms were covered with protective

padding, and a steel mesh mask protected his face.

"Well, hello, Sinclair," Borden shouted and grabbed his hand.

"Er . . . hello," Sinclair Seton said, and stared blankly. "I must hurry. I'll be late for the game. I was late last week. I'll tilt. Good-bye."

"Wait a minute," Borden said. "Don't you remember me?"

"No, no I don't. I'm sorry but I don't seem to remember you."

"I'm Jim Borden. You had an apartment next to mine at the Labor Temple before you were displaced. Joan—"

Sinclair only stared blankly.

Borden walked down the hall with Sinclair who was in a panic of anxiety about missing his game and tilting. Borden had forgotten that he was also supposed to be going into the basement to the gaming room to take his place at the hundred foot long *Canoplydoes* table.

"I just wanted to tell you that Joan missed you a great deal after you were transferred," Borden said. "She was very fond of you."

"Joan? Joan?"

"Before she died, she said—"

The baseball bat tumbled down the hall and Sinclair screamed. He screamed and screamed and fell on his back. He lay there with his eyes rolled back, screams squeezing from his clenched jaws, and his body twitched and his heels drummed on the floor.

Doors slammed, people were running in every direction. Personnel from Personology appeared and conducted Borden hurriedly into the lab's correction wards.

In the wavering darkness sparked with blue light he could see Voto's disappointed face, and the now slightly accusative eyes. The thin jaws, the angled eyes of Voto suggested someone betrayed by broken faith.

"You see what I mean, Jim? You're tilting. You tilted Sinclair Seton and caused his entire games group to tilt. You didn't appear to take your place at your Canopydoes table and there was a tilt also. Sinclair's breakdown tilted a number of individual and group units in the vicinity. You have no idea how one tilt can spread like a virus through the entire social unit."

"All I did was—"

"Seton took separation from his wife very hard, Jim. We had trouble readjusting

him. And another thing—we don't think about death here. We don't talk about it, think about it, and we simply forget it."

After being confined in the corrective lab for several days, Borden realized how ridiculous it was to be aware of death in the midst of life. He forgot about it. Sometimes he vaguely remembered that episode with Sinclair Seton, but even a vague memory of it was so painful that he soon forgot even what it was he wasn't supposed to remember.

He tilted again when he tried to slip into the apartment down the hall and make time with a luscious brunette. He found it impossible to look at this particular brunette again without feeling excruciating horrors of impotency and fainting spells. But he tilted again when he attempted to play toesies with a redhead under the Canopydoes table.

That was a very bad tilt. Not only was the entire Canopydoes game stalled for a few minutes, but the redhead fainted with a sobbing cry causing several others to run screaming from the gaming hall. This in turn caused a jamming of circuits in the Canopydoes electronic score

panel. It was over an hour before a feedback repair job came through from Automatic Control, and by that time at least fifteen Canoplydoes players were taken to Personology for corrective treatment.

Borden was confined in correction labs for over a week. He got out feeling tight and raw and with a full realization of how terrified he really was.

Any action on his part might become a tilt. The very thought of tilting brought on an inner spasming anxiety. An anxiety impossible to alleviate because he knew that he would tilt, again and again.

He hurried to his apartment and dropped into a chair and started studying his Canoplydoes pamphlet. In the next room, Flora was lying naked on the floor surrounded by Canoplydoes diagrams and sample plays. Flora's life was simple and comparatively free of tilt guilt. She shopped, played Canoplydoes, and studied Canoplydoes. On the few times that she talked, she talked Canoplydoes. She was far from being mentally sharp, but she hardly ever tilted at Canoplydoes. No one of the hundred or so players at the Canoplydoes gaming table ever seemed to tilt much except Borden.

He didn't want to tilt very much more either. He knew that if he tilted very many more times he would be much less than what he was now. Everytime he tilted and was corrected, a little more of the familiar Jim Borden was reduced. He knew that much, and he was afraid to think any further.

He sat rigidly in the chair and concentrated on the rules of Canoplydoes. But the pages were blurs of diagrams, moves, countermoves, interdependent plays, all mixed with dice-throwing, intricate control panel scoring, and a scoring system so involved that he was sure only SCACS could figure it out.

Then why did a low-grade moron like Flora avoid tilting? And those kids, they never tilted either. Kids ranging in age from three to sixty, and none of them ever tilted. It was the old principle of application and absorption, he decided. A small degree of intelligence fully applied and without distraction could achieve a much higher score than a much larger intelligence poorly applied and constantly distracted.

The fact was that Borden hated Canoplydoes.

The game went on 24 hours

a day. It never stopped. When a player left the game to sleep, or visit a restroom, or eat, or shower or go to bed once a week with his roommate, then a substitute sat in for him.

I can't play Canopydoes 24 hours a day, Borden thought. But on the other hand he knew that if he did not, he would tilt. Then the full impact of his situation stunned him and he felt a sudden burst of sweat.

If he kept trying to play, kept tilting, kept being corrected long enough—*he would like playing Canopydoes 24 hours a day, and he would play it 24 hours a day, and he would never tilt.*

What had Voto said: "That's the essence of control, Jim. Measure, compare, correct, and check the result."

Borden knew all about the principle of analogue computers. He was a graduate system engineer, had studied nonlinear systems, matters related to probability theory and statistics and the new mathematics that is associated with sampling, the handling of discontinuous data and number theory. He had done post-graduate work in physics, in chemistry, measurements, communications and electron-

ics, servo-mechanisms, energy conversion, and computational techniques. He knew the mathematics of differential equations, functions of complex variables, statistics and was thoroughly familiar with computational aids, differential analyzers and computers.

But social science was not something he had been particularly interested in.

He dropped the Canopydoes pamphlet and went over to the window. He looked out into the neon-lighted darkness of Sunnydale.

He had thought that things were all for the best. And now he knew that it was bad, that it was very bad. And he was beginning to understand what had happened.

The principles of automatic control were being applied to human beings and society, and apparently with devastatingly successful results.

Automatic technology had encouraged the concentration of political power, and authoritarian controls had been established for human beings who were now hardly more than units in a vast social machine. Government regulation of society. That was where it was going. Or had already gone.

Feedback system engineers were now social controllers,

human engineers called Personology experts. Automatic control was efficiency. And society was geared for mechanical efficiency. Man and society turned into self-regulative systems.

Technology had been liberated from the limitations of the human system. Now society was being turned into an efficient, closed-system, feedback loop, in which the human nervous system itself was becoming a state of controlled oscillation.

A norm was set up. Errors were made and corrected and repetition of error ruled out by short circuiting techniques. The human system then becomes slowly self-regulating but capable of various self-excitatory types of behavior, like a kitten chasing its own tail.

Borden glanced down at the Canoplydoes pamphlet.

He knew why he could not play Canoplydoes without tilting. There was no end to the game. No one could win. The game was a closed loop. It went round and round and never came out anywhere. The game was the ultimate end in itself.

It was meaningless. It was death, he thought.

It explained why death it-

self was unthinkable in Sunnydale. The thought of death is only unbearable when you're not really living. Death would be a horrible concept to a Canoplydoes player, reminding him somewhere unconsciously that he was already dead, one of the living dead, a controlled analogue corpse, with built-in psychological selsyns providing an electrical signal proportional to error of alignment. Time-leads anticipating time-lags.

The loop was closed, Borden thought. The human engineers had become too enamoured of technological efficiency.

I've got to get out of Sunnydale, he said aloud. I've got to get out of Sunnydale before I forget what death is.

He put the Canoplydoes pamphlet in his coat pocket and looked into the other room at Flora lying on her stomach studying sample Canoplydoes plays.

"Good-bye, Flora," he said.

"Where you going, dear," she asked, not looking up.

"I'm getting the hell out of Sunnydale."

A quiver ran down the flabby thighs. When she looked up, her face was gray with terror and her mouth was twitching.

"You can't do that, dear. It says in the rules book that—"

"I know what it says, Flora."

She rolled over on her back and passed out.

Staring down at her he felt a deep compassion for her that he had not felt before. Nobody knew who or what she had once been before she was replaced by more efficient gadgets. She no longer remembered, and she didn't care and neither did anyone else. But obviously once, maybe years ago, she had tried to leave Sunnydale. He could tell that from her immediate cut-off at the very suggestion.

He looked at his watch. In another five minutes both Flora and he were supposed to be sitting back in their Canoplydoes chairs. He had five minutes to get out of Sunnydale.

He knew that if he tried and failed, he would be committing the prime tilt. And he also knew it would be the last tilt of which he would be conscious. He might make occasional small tilts after that, but they would hardly be important.

An analogue computer is never conscious of its own errors. It might oscillate but its self-regulative system takes care of error without self-consciousness.

He looked quickly at the

Sunnydale map provided for him in his graduation kit, and ran out into the night.

He turned and started walking rapidly in a westerly direction. Sunnydale project covered at least ten square miles, but he was approximately a mile from its western boundary near the entrance to the Simi Valley.

He passed the Gaming Hall. Through the brightly-lit windows, he could see the shadows of the players and the clicking of the games machines.

A hundred yards further on along the curving walk, he heard the stealthy hum behind him. When he turned he saw the electric clinic car, shiny white, and almost noiseless, sliding along the walk toward him.

He turned and walked at right angles where a pointing sign said, *Carnival—Keep Right*. When he walked faster, the clinic car increased its speed and it kept following him.

He knew it was following him. It had followed him several times before and taken him into the Personology correction labs.

He ran. The little mobile clinic gained. He left the sidewalk, and ran across brightly,

lit lawns of devil grass, past neat housing cubes and huge Gaming Halls.

The clinic car circled around the walk, waiting for him to come out of the grove of eucalyptus trees. Two men moved over the lawn toward the trees, both in white jackets.

A small artificial stream ran back of him in the shadows, through carefully nurtured fern beds and under an arched toy-like bridge.

Against the sky he could see the twinkling turn of the ferris wheel, and the dipping and rising blink of cars on the roller-coaster, and the faint sounds of a caliope drifted in the night.

He had thought he would head for the carnival and stand a chance of losing himself for a while in the crowd. But now he could not go there. Thinking about it now, it would be too horrible to see. All those people at the carnival, going round and round, up and down, forever. For now he knew that whoever had been selected to experience carnival leisure were stuck there for God knew how long, 24 hours a day. It might seem better, but it was the same as Canopydoes.

It was one huge slot-ma-

chine, Lisa Pearce had said, only without a jackpot.

No game, not even the game of life, was worth playing if you could never win.

"Jim. Can you hear me, Jim."

The two men had stopped about fifteen feet away.

"Yes, I hear you, Doctor."

"Come here, Jim."

"I don't think so."

"Your roommate called us, Jim. She was terribly upset. You're causing a great deal of oscillation."

"Oscillation? Who the hell do you think you're talking to, Voto? A goddamn robot?"

"Jim, we're only trying to make it easier for everyone."

An intense pleading note was in Voto's voice. He really meant it too, Borden thought. Maybe you couldn't blame Voto or the controllers. They were sincere. They had been sold on the efficiency of the last big revolution.

"Then let me leave Sunnydale," Jim Borden said. "That will make it easier for everyone."

"I can't do that, Jim. We know what's best for you."

"You'll have to come in and get me then," Borden said.

"Don't make us do that."

"Someone will get hurt," Borden said. "You won't get me easily."

The two men whispered together, then started slowly toward the eucalyptus trees.

Borden backed down the slope into the wet ferns and felt around, picked up a stone. He didn't back any further. He went up the slope and met them as they came into the shadows. One of the men yelled wetly as the jagged rock crashed into his face.

Voto made a wild grab and the stone thudded down, snapped his arm at the wrist. He was moaning as he stumbled back into the light and stood hunched over on the devil grass.

Borden ran out into the light so that Voto would see him, then he ran straight across the lawn heading west. He circled around as he got out of Voto's sight, then came fast back up the stream bed toward the dead man.

He stood in the shadows by the dead man and watched Voto's clinic car start up, and at the same time several other cars joined it and they headed rapidly west. Several whirling shadows hovered over them, white helicars as noiseless as moths.

It was less than an hour later that the whirlbug dropped down, then another. They hovered a few feet from the

dead man, and a couple of proles in gray coveralls got off, and started rolling the dead man onto the stretcher.

One of them jumped and snarled a little as Borden came up behind him.

"I hope you have room for one more," Borden said.

The other man came up and they looked at Borden, puzzled. One of them said, "This guy really got it. Face smashed in like a crock."

The other one said to Borden, "You do this one in, mate."

"That's right. And I'm ready to do it again if I don't get a lift out of here."

"Easy mate. How come you did him in?"

"He was going to stop me from getting out of Sunnydale. It was him or me."

"You sure made it him all right. You knew we'd pick him up?"

"That's right."

"Is that why you murdered him? So you could get a free ride?"

"That helped. But I would have had to do it anyway. You know a woman named Lisa Pearce?"

The men were surprised. "Sure, we know Lisa."

"Take me out of here, and I want to find her quickly as possible." He hesitated, and

then said in a low voice, "She's a friend of mine."

"Come aboard, mate," the man said. "But if you don't mind, how about dropping that boulder."

Borden's hand jumped open and the boulder rolled down into the fern beds. He hadn't even known he was still carrying it.

They sat him down high on the side of a pine-forested hill in the moonlight, and as he walked toward the door of the small cabin, he heard a dog bark. A soft light shone through the window, and the moon was crescent through the pine branches. A cool fragrant wind whispered through the trees.

She came out and smiled as she saw him standing there. He took her hand and said, "I was a tilter."

"I knew you were, but I wasn't sure you would find out in time to escape. There are a lot of tilters, but some of them never get out in time."

"Were you a tilter?"

"Yes, all the proles were tilters once. We don't fit in there, and we got out. Once we get out, they don't bother us. There are things only we will do and those things have to be done."

"When do I start washing windows and burying the dead?" Borden asked.

"Anytime," she said.

"Do you—live alone?"

"I have been, since my husband was replaced a year ago. He wasn't a tilter."

"I was."

"I waited for him to come back, but he never did."

"I did."

She leaned against him as he put his arm around her waist and they walked toward the cabin door. He knew what loneliness was. But now he knew of something that was infinitely worse.

The alarm went off at four-thirty in the morning. She was cooking a big breakfast of bacon, eggs, and biscuits. At five-thirty they had their lunches packed and they went to work.

THE END

SOMEBODY UP THERE TYPED ME

By GERALD VANCE

ILLUSTRATOR SUMMERS

There are many concepts of how the Universe works—the part we can't see—many different ideas of "what goes on up there." Here's one of the strangest ones we've ever encountered.

FRANCIS PEMBERTON was a sophomore in college when the analogy first occurred to him. He was allergic to analogies and spent most of his time developing them. Usually, though, after developing one to his satisfaction, he forgot all about it. But not this one.

He was reading *Crime and Punishment* in bed one night, and had just closed the book and turned out the light when the thought of the characters whom he had mercilessly squeezed between the pages assailed him. What, he wondered, would they do from now till tomorrow night when he again resumed reading? Would Raskolnikov expire on his sordid sofa? Would Nastasya freeze in the act of leaving the room? Would

Razumihin wait wordless and motionless with Pashenka till an omnipotent god named Francis reopened the *Crime and Punishment* universe to p. 158?

At this point Francis took the mental step that was to alter his entire life: he bolstered his whimsical idea with an analogy. Just suppose, he thought; just suppose that all of the people on earth are no more than characters in some cosmic novel that some cosmic reader is reading. What would happen to us if he closed the book?

The analogy was so intriguing that it kept him awake half the night. It recurred to him at breakfast and he took it to classes with him. By the time he returned to his room that night, the idea had grown



Suddenly the clouds formed a strange picture.

so big that his mind could accommodate nothing else, and he started to work immediately on his first book—*The Fictitious Universe*.

From the foregoing, it will undoubtedly be inferred that Francis Pemberton was *not* a well-integrated person. The inference will be entirely correct. He was not. But neither was Nietzsche; neither was Kant; neither was Dostoevski. Concepts are not the province of well-integrated persons whose universes are bounded by their jobs, their TV sets and their two-toned Fords. Concepts are the province of the Nietzsches, the Kants, the Dostoevskis and the Pember-ton.

So it always was; so shall it ever be.

The public, Francis discovered some months later, was not yet ready for his new perspective. His book, which he subsidized through a Vanity publisher, languished in bookstores, gathered dust on library shelves and presently disappeared from sight.

But not from mind—Francis', that is. And instead of being discouraged over the public apathy to his new and revolutionary way of thinking, he set about developing his analogy still further.

The Fictitious Universe had advanced the following theories:

That the past, present and future of mankind was a cosmic novel written by a cosmic author for the entertainment of a host of cosmic readers.

That the basic conflict of the novel concerned good and bad, and against this moralistic background, the cosmic author had interwoven a vast pageant of events and characters.

That, from a cosmic viewpoint, the novel was short enough to be read at a single sitting (in a cosmic sense, it might even be a short story).

That time was an element supplied by the cosmic reader's mind; so long as he continued to read, time would continue to pass, but the moment he stopped reading, time would cease to be.

That the present was contingent on whichever page of the book the reader happened to be reading.

That reality was contingent on whether the book was opened or closed.

That when the novel ended, the world would end, too. (However, since the novel had yet to show any evidence of plot or pattern, this would probably not happen for pages/millennia to come.)

Francis was in the middle of his second book when he first saw the cosmic reader. He had quit college that spring, rented a rundown farmhouse, and planted a vegetable garden. He was standing in the garden one morning, eating a green onion and staring absently at the sky, when he was struck by the unique formation of a bank of clouds above the western horizon. It wasn't long before he realized that the clouds weren't clouds at all, but a gargantuan nose instead.

Slowly, the rest of the Brobdingnagian face swam into focus. The eyes were two vast ovals about ten miles above the horizon. You had to concentrate on them to distinguish them from the surrounding blueness, but they were there all right. Arched above each one was a lofty cirrus eyebrow.

Francis had to crane his neck to see the cosmic forehead. It was quite unmistakable. The lingering vapor trails of a recent formation of jets had lent it a horizontal series of realistic wrinkles, and it was topped with a mop of wavy cirrus hair.

It was perspective, Francis thought. That was the answer. The cosmic reader's face had

always been there, but to perceive it you had to change your *manière de voir*; and to change your *manière de voir*, you first had to free yourself from the fictitious reality in which you were involved by becoming *aware* of your involvement, thus you became detached enough to see the actuality.

Well then, he thought, taking the next logical step forward, since I *am* free, I should be able to walk right out of the pages of the book and leave this sorry plot behind. Closing his eyes, he made an intense effort to visualize a vast sheet of paper covered with words; then, eyes still closed, he began to walk.

He did not walk far. At first, when his right foot descended and found no solid substance beneath it, he thought he had come to the edge of the page. But he had forgotten about the drainage ditch behind the barn.

He climbed out, muddy and crestfallen. His new reality, apparently, was not quite complete. What he needed was a catalyst to snap him out of his fictitious environment, and since he could not manufacture one himself, he would have to wait till the cosmic reader, or some other cosmic force, did the task for him.

In the meantime, there was his book—

He wrote furiously all summer, leaving his typewriter only long enough to take a catnap, or to go out in the garden to munch an onion or a radish or a head of lettuce, and later on, an ear of corn or a tomato or a cucumber. He was amazed, as his work progressed, at the number of angles he had neglected in his first development of the analogy.

For instance, if you postulated that reality, past, present and future, was a work of fiction dreamed up by an imaginative cosmic author, you automatically threw new light on such seeming paradoxes as the expanding universe, the Fitzgerald contraction hypothesis and the limiting factor of the velocity of light. And if you went one step further and postulated that said work of fiction was a work of *science* fiction, you began to see *why* such paradoxes existed. They were mere quirks of the author's mind and he had thrown them into the story to bedazzle his reader.

Obviously, however, merely bedazzling his reader had not been enough. It was clear to Francis that the cosmic author, from the very first page,

had been hell-bent for sustained reader-interest, and hadn't been in the least particular about how he sustained it.

Take the Trojan War. Take the destruction of Carthage. Take the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius. Take the conquest of Mexico. Take the Great Plague. Take Austerlitz. Take Gettysburg. Take the Lusitania. Take Buchenwald. Take Hiroshima—

What a bang the cosmic reader must have gotten out of that one!

And certainly it could not be attributed to any lack of design on the cosmic author's part that disasters were becoming more spectacular, wars more colossal, and sex more salacious. Probably he had one eye peeled on the cosmic best-seller list and the other one peeled on the cosmic movie industry!

Another angle that Francis found intriguing was the relationship of fictitious reality to the circulation of the book. For, if reality hinged on a reader perusing the pages, then would not the whole of history be repeated every time some new reader picked up the book and read it through? Here, certainly, was a brand-new approach to *déjà vu*; why, for all the characters knew, they'd already lived

their thousand lives a million times, and might, if the book turned out to be a classic (happy thought!) live them a million times more.

And suppose the book was being read by more than one cosmic reader at a time? In such a case, some of the characters would be involved in two different existences at two temporal levels. For instance, Francis thought excitedly: suppose cosmic reader No. 1 is on p. 237—the page when I was born—and cosmic reader No. 2 is on p. 301—the page when I'm going to die. Why, it'll be like being born all over again; and perhaps, by the time cosmic reader No. 2 reaches p. 301, cosmic reader No. 3 will have reached p. 237, and the process will be repeated all over again!

But such teamwork, however delightful to contemplate, was highly improbable. More likely the time intervals would overlap, in which case the predominant reality would be the one being sustained by the cosmic reader with the most vivid imagination.

But in any case, Francis thought, his own book was going to be a whopping success. And perhaps it would have been. Who can say? He carried it down to the local post office one brisk September

morning and sent it off to his publisher. Then he settled down, alternating his time between waiting for the mailman and watching the cosmic reader's face.

Late in September the face began to change. . . .

The change was gradual, and Francis did not notice it at first. When he did notice, the transition was almost complete, and he was shocked.

Strictly speaking, it wasn't the face itself that had changed: it was the expression on the face. When Francis had first viewed those massive cosmic features, he had received the distinct impression that the cosmic reader was at least mildly interested in what he was reading. But now the expression of interest had transmuted to one of unmistakable disgust.

Oddly enough, the change coincided with the persistent rumor that an IBM had nosed down on an insignificant Pacific island and blown it to smithereens, coconut palms, yam gardens, Melanesians and all. Gladiator No. 1, apparently, was flexing his biceps.

Day by day, as Francis watched, the face grew bleaker and bleaker. Another island—this one in the Black Sea—

disappeared from the face of the earth as Gladiator No. 2 flexed *his* biceps. Shortly thereafter, the northern sky began to darken.

Everybody attributed the darkness to the dust and debris of another bombing—everybody, that is, except Francis. Francis knew better. When a reader gets disgusted with the book he is reading, he asked himself, what does the reader do?

Answer: He slams it shut, and if he is disgusted enough, he throws it into a corner.

Francis began to run.

He ran and ran, and as he ran, hills and trees and houses flattened out into a great white plateau covered with parallel rows of gigantic words. The sun disappeared and the sky turned black, and a huge tubular star beat blindingly down upon the page.

I've emerged, he thought exultantly. I've emerged into reality. In a moment I'll step from the cosmic book and confront the cosmic reader!

The pages had almost come together when he reached the edge of the plateau. He hesitated only a moment, then he leaped—

If a microcosmic character emerges from the pages of a book, he is subject to the laws

of micro-macrocosmic transmutation, and according to the laws of micro-macrocosmic transmutation, he must be assimilated by a macrocosmic character, in the immediate vicinity of his emergence, whose personality most closely approximates his own. The process is instantaneous and painless, but unfortunately the assimilated character loses his identity. All that is left of him when the process is completed, is his main character trait . . .

Thom Templis, office boy for *Gruesome Publications*, accepted the manuscript which Editor Poul Pfaff handed to him. Automatically he read the words which Editor Pfaff had penned in the margin of the attached rejection slip: *Sorry—this is too gruesome, even for us.* Then he slipped the manuscript into its stamped, self-addressed envelope and took it into the mail room.

That was when the analogy first occurred to him. What, he wondered, would happen to all those billions of characters squeezed between the pages? Would they languish there forever, denied even the brief reality that publication would give them?

He took the next step then

(Continued on page 124)

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CHICAGO 5, ILLINOIS



OPERATION SCRUMBLIES

By HENRY STILL

ILLUSTRATOR FINLAY

To: Our Beloved Leader.

From: Committee for Propagation Control and Colonization.

1. Reference is made to Project Alpha regarding Planet Sol III, Sector 8447. Preliminary surveys indicate ecological factors favorable. One experimental case history now in progress, involving ingenious utilization of a custom practiced by the young of this planet's semi-intelligent inhabitants. Progress reports will be forwarded as they become available.

I NEED a quarter, Pop." Walter Kippel heard the request, but he filed it mentally below the morning paper propped in front of him. A piece of fried egg slipped off his fork.

We assume that our defense against our enemies terrestrial or otherwise—is in the form of missiles, rockets, bombs, and such. But perhaps our most potent weapon comes in a box with a coupon inside.

"GIMME A QUARTER, POP!"

"Sonny's asking you a question, dear," Myrtle said.

"I heard it." Walter Kippel folded his paper deliberately and slammed it down on the table. The sugar bowl rolled over and crashed to the floor. With the battle already lost, Walter sighed and dug in his pocket.

"That's four quarters in three weeks," he said, "what's it for this time?"

"Thanks Dad." Sonny scooped up the coin and scampered out of the room without answering.

"What's it for?" Kippel bellowed, determined to salvage some self-respect from the situation.

"Scrumblies box top," Sonny called over his shoulder.



It was the darndest premium a kid ever got.

"With this one I can finish my mosterglee."

Walter turned back to his egg, now flabby and cold.

"Box tops! A house full of that glorified sawdust and still we buy Scrumblies for the box tops."

"Yes, dear," Myrtle said.

"He's got a roomful of atomic rings, plastic fire lenses and cardboard space pistols. What'd he say this would finish?"

"His nasty tree or something." Myrtle said, pulling the collar of her worn bathrobe around her throat. It was the first chilly morning of fall and the furnace was turned low to save money.

"Don't you know what he's talking about? You're his mother."

"You know how it is," Myrtle whined. "I'm so busy I haven't been up to his room lately."

Walter was already late to work, but he determined to take a new grip on the household and find out what was going on.

The word mosterglee sure sounded ugly.

Kippel climbed the stairs and threw open the door. An unearthly stink boiled out of the room.

He almost lost his breakfast. Sonny was squatted on

his haunches beside an old tin washtub.

"Good grief!" Kippel held a handkerchief over his mouth and nose. "Don't you ever open a window?"

Boys, if left to themselves, can become quite stagnant, but this smelled like the snake pit at the zoo. The room was hot and damp. Sonny looked up from the tub long enough to acknowledge his father's presence.

"It's not bad when you get used to it," he said. "Isn't it cute?"

"What—" Walter felt a symptom of regurgitation, "What is it?"

"It's my mosterglee. It took only ten box tops and I'll get the last parts with this one." Sonny still gripped the quarter in his hot little fist.

"You got this thing with box tops?" Walter reswallowed a piece of egg. "Through the mail?"

Sonny nodded vigorously. "This part first," he pointed, "then this one and that one. They came packed in moss."

All Walter could see in the shallow water was a gelatinous gray mass like an oversized garden slug. While he watched, the thing moved.

"It's alive!"

"Almost," Sonny agreed. "On the Scrumblies box it

says I'll be surprised when I attach the last pieces."

"I'll bet," Walter growled. "What in heaven's name is it supposed to do."

"Everything." Sonny gestured grandly. "The Scrumblies box says the mosterglee will do everything."

The monster slug turned over, like a sleepy puppy in the sunshine. On the bottom it had cartilagenous ventral plates, like a snake's locomotion equipment. But in addition, it had a series of pink appendages like the legs of a fleshy centipede.

Walter thought of calling the office to say he was sick. On second thought, it would be better at the office, away from the monstrosity.

"Your mother said you could have this?"

Sonny nodded. "She didn't see it, but she said okay."

"Well, all right," Walter said reluctantly. "Just be careful." Somehow that stock admonition seemed inadequate.

The mosterglee's curdling affect on his stomach didn't diminish until almost lunchtime. Then at 3 p.m., Myrtle called the office.

"Walter," she wailed. "Come home!"

He didn't ask why. Myrtle

was sensitive to snakes and worms. He went.

It was one of those early autumn afternoons when the world seemed to be storing sunshine in Mason fruit jars for the coming winter. Walter thought of the lawn that needed mowing for the last time, and the overlapping job of leaf raking. An hour at home would be good, with Sonny to help.

Myrtle met him at the front step. She was pale. Her hands worked convulsively.

"That thing's got to go!" she hissed.

From inside he could hear roars of anguish, Sonny's normal reaction to an ultimatum.

"Now take it easy," Walter said, "I know it smells, but the thing can't do any harm messing around in that old tub."

"It's not in the tub!"

To punctuate Myrtle's hysteria, the front door opened. It was Sonny, tears dry, now beaming with pleasure.

"Look Dad," he shouted, "it follows me like a puppy."

Myrtle screamed. Walter backed up against the porch rail. The mosterglee was following Sonny like a puppy.

The body still looked like a slug—the size of a half-grown dachshund. Its skin was moist as a seal. Underneath the pink legs moved together in smooth

undulation. Multi-faceted eyes sparkled with faint iridescence. Two antennae sprouted from the front-end. No mouth was visible, but plaintive mew-ing sounds issued from somewhere.

Myrtle grasped her husband's arm.

"Get rid of that horrible thing. NOW!"

"Aw, Mom, please."

"No. Get it away from meeeEEEE!"

Kippel stepped quickly between Myrtle and the mosterglee.

"Look, Sonny," he muttered, "get it around the house, out of sight."

Sonny heeded the storm signal and went, the mosterglee tagging along behind as close as possible.

Myrtle staggered into the house and collapsed in an easy chair. Walter gave her the pity routine, then switched to the boys-will-be-boys theme. After a while she agreed to let Sonny keep "that beast for a week—no longer."

"But it's got to stay outside. I won't have the slimy thing in the house."

Crisis past, Walter went to the back yard. He found Sonny and the mosterglee basking in the sun against the house.

"He likes it warm, Dad,"

Sonny said, "listen to him purr."

The purr, to Walter, sounded like a faucet leaking in a pan of soggy pudding.

"We need a heart-to-heart talk," Walter said. For once Sonny listened. "We don't know what this thing is and it might be dangerous. It doesn't bother me as much as your mother, but eventually you'll have to get rid of it."

"But Dad," Sonny's voice had an edge of tears, "when I look in Mosty's eyes, I can't think of parting with him. We're pals now."

Walter looked into Mosty's eyes. They were deep, and colors shifted here and there like a misty rainbow in the bottom of an old well.

"Yeah," Walter said slowly, "I see what you mean." He had the feeling he had gone somewhere and was just coming back. "But Sonny, this thing *grows*. Look at those eyes and antennae, they weren't there this morning."

"Oh, those came in the mail this afternoon."

"In the mail! You just sent out the box top this morning."

"They were in the mailbox this afternoon," Sonny insisted. "The eyes went in easy, but I had a little trouble with the antennae."

Walter felt a chilly thorn of

fear probing here and there in his guts.

"Son, go get me a Scrumblies box."

Sonny scampered away. The mosterglee stretched lazily and then decided not to follow. Mosty and Walter eyed each other warily.

Sonny raced back. Walter examined the cereal box. It was standard—an exaggerated list of vitamin content on one side, a coupon for silverware on the other. The word "Scrumblies" monopolized the front of the box.

The back advertised the mosterglee. No picture, just a mess of blurb loaded with adjectives. In the bottom corner in fine print was the address for mailing the box top.

"Box 77899, Aurora."

"Aurora where?" Walter exploded. "There's probably an Aurora in every state of the union. Didn't you have a state name in the address?"

"Nope. Just Aurora."

"Come on," Walter said grimly. "We're going to call the postmaster."

He dialed and went through the chain of command until he got the postman on the Kippel route. When he finished, his hand was shaking a little. He dropped the phone. Sonny retrieved it and put it back in the cradle.

"They say," Walter had trouble getting his voice above a whisper. "They say no package has been delivered here for a month."

"It was in the mail box," Sonny insisted.

"Okay, okay. I believe you. At least someone—or something—put it there." It was wise not to transmit his panic just yet. "Let's you and me get at that lawn mowing job. You get the front and I'll rake up the junk out back."

Since the mosterglee had established a certain rapport between them, Sonny didn't complain. Mosty followed him around to the front. Fifteen minutes later, Walter hadn't heard the lawnmower. He investigated. Sonny was sitting under a tree, whittling.

"Hey, look bud," Walter began, "let's get with it. There's work—"

"Sure Dad, sure," Sonny waved a hand lazily. "Mosty's got it."

Mosty had it all right. The little beast was traveling around the yard at a leisurely five miles an hour. Behind him the grass was clipped to a velvety one inch high. There were no clippings. And the few early fallen maple leaves had vanished, too.

"Wow!" Walter said.

"Not bad, huh Dad?"

"Bad? It's great! When he's done there, turn him loose out back." Walter hurried in the house to report the miracle to Myrtle, but she wasn't impressed.

After supper, Sonny gave the mosterglee the garbage to take to the can in the alley. Mosty didn't seem to move. But the garbage disappeared.

Walter scratched his chin. "Wonder how he does that?"

"The Scrumblies box said we'd be surprised," Sonny said.

"We are indeed," Walter answered. For a fleeting moment he wondered what the thing could do to people.

"Oh, no," he muttered, "it's friendly."

"What did you say?" Myrtle asked.

"Nothing. Nothing at all."

The night turned cool. At 9 o'clock there was a scratching at the door. Sonny opened it.

"Aw, it's Mosty," he said, "poor little guy's cold."

Walter looked. The mosterglee was cold all right. The slimy gray hide had turned pale blue.

"Can't we let him in, Mom?"

"NO!"

"Please, Mom, just look at those sad eyes."

After some coaxing, Myrtle

looked. "Well," she said, "but just this once." Mosty undulated in and settled himself gratefully in front of the living room hot air register.

Breakfast the next morning was more unappetizing than usual. Mosty insisted on being near Sonny, and Sonny would not eat on the back porch. Myrtle didn't eat at all.

But when Walter came home from work that afternoon, she was beaming with pleasure.

"Come here," she said, "I want to show you something."

Opening off the dining room was a magnificent new brick patio.

"I told you we couldn't afford that," Walter roared.

"It didn't cost anything."

"Mosty did it," Sonny piped.

"Don't give me that.

Where'd he get the materials? Where'd he get the tools? *How in the name of Jupiter could the improbable beast do it at all?*

"He must have read my mind or something," Myrtle said. "Sonny went to school and I took a nap this afternoon. Mosty was outside. When I got up, the patio was done just like that."

Walter felt sweat trickling down his armpits. Box tops that *didn't* go through the

mail. A lump of slime with hypnotic eyes that devoured grass clippings, leaves and garbage with equal aplomb. And now it contained some sort of supernatural factory which produced bricks and mortar . . .

The mosterglee was asleep on the warm side of the house again.

"He also did this," Sonny said. Walter looked at scattered shreds of black and white fur on the ground.

"What was that?"

"It was Mike," Sonny said sadly.

Mike was the Thompsons' dog, next door. Only hair was left; even the bones were gone.

"You always complained about Mike tearing up the flower beds," Sonny said. "He came over this afternoon. When he saw Mosty, he howled something awful, and then *poof*, he was gone."

"Listen, son," Walter whispered. "That thing, whatever it is, can do things that have never been done on earth before."

"Yeah," Sonny agreed, "he scares me, too, except when I look in his eyes."

"Don't look in his eyes! We're going—"

"We're going to kill that monstrosity," a voice said behind him.

It was Thompson. His face was pale. His hands trembled with rage. And they held a revolver which made a nasty clicking sound as he turned the cylinder.

"Now wait a minute!"

"Wait, nothing," Thompson shouted. "I saw what that thing did to Mike. I was standing right there at the kitchen window and I saw it. I loved that dog. My kid loved that dog. And I'll tell you something else, Kippel, the same thing could happen to your kid or mine. Now stand out of the way."

Walter complied numbly. Sonny uttered a wail of anguish and ran sobbing into the house.

"You could at least spare the kid's feelings," Walter protested, "take it out in a field or something."

"You didn't spare my kid's feelings. It's right now. This very minute."

The mosterglee was still asleep. Thompson raised the pistol, aimed carefully and fired.

The sound of the pistol was flat and sharp and died without echo in the still, autumn warmth of the afternoon. Mosty squawled, cartwheeled in the air and crumpled in the grass. Yellow fluid seeped out

of the wound and soaked into the soil.

Thompson pocketed the pistol and climbed back to his side of the fence. It was the right thing, Walter thought. Whatever it was, the mosterglee did not belong on earth. He had not realized how frightened he was. And he probably would not have found the nerve to kill it himself. He buried the carcass in the farthest corner of the lot with the feeling that he had lived with something very wonderful, and very horrible.

Sonny stopped crying after a while. Myrtle and Walter promised him his choice of animals for a new pet.

"He wasn't a bad little guy," Walter said, "but he was out of our league."

It was almost Sonny's bedtime when they heard a thump at the back door. Sonny went to see what it was.

"Dad!" he shouted, "It's Mosty!"

Walter and Myrtle raced to the back door. The mosterglee wriggled cordially inside and climbed into Sonny's arms. Walter examined the bundle of gray flesh. Bits of earth still clung to the moist hide. The .38 caliber bullet had smashed completely through the slug-like body. Now dull black scar

tissue covered the ragged holes.

Mosty purred contentedly.

"He's glad to be in out of the cold," Sonny said. Children take miracles for granted. Myrtle pulled her husband aside.

"I'm scared, Walter."

"So am I," he said grimly, "but don't let Sonny see it. Both of you get to bed and let me handle this."

When the house was quiet, Walter went to the kitchen, heated some left-over coffee and drank it black and scalding. His thoughts were a mess, but he knew he had to think of something positive and decisive to do about the impossible monster in his house.

Somehow he felt that the mosterglee, whatever it might be, was a very young creature. Its behavior was erratic and unpredictable, like a child. It was helpful and friendly, which also was not characteristic of most adults. Even Mike's destruction was an attempt to be helpful—if the mosterglee had been able to read Walter's mind.

Mosty was curled up near the stove. Its large eyes watched Walter as he moved uneasily about the room. Walter tried not to think about what he was going to do.

"Hi, boy," he said in a tone

of false joviality. "You hungry?" Mosty wriggled his hind end cordially. Walter dug into the refrigerator and dumped a mess of leftovers into a pan. He warmed it over the gas burner and then rummaged in the high cupboard over the sink.

Cyanide crystals to kill ants. He dumped the contents of the can into the food and stirred it in. He shoved the pan under Mosty's nose quickly so there would not be time for the cyanide to evaporate.

In whatever method he used, Mosty cleaned out the pan in a fraction of a second. Walter waited. Nothing happened.

With rising panic, he grabbed the can of rat poison. There was almost half a pound of that. He dumped it in the pan.

Once again Mosty ate it.

Once again, there was not the slightest sign of discomfort.

"I can't kill him," Walter whispered. He felt a ridiculous urge to run to the farthest corner of the house and hide under a bed.

He might as well have done just that for all the sleep he got. Myrtle was lying there wide awake, her body shivering convulsively. When he climbed between the sheets,

she grabbed his arm and crept close for comfort. As if he could be any comfort . . .

"Where is it?" she whispered. "What's it doing now?"

"It's curled up out there with a belly full of cyanide and rat poison," Walter growled. "There must be something that will kill it, but I'm damned if I know what."

Myrtle burst into a fit of terrified weeping. "It'll kill us all in our beds! I just know it will."

"Don't even think like that. The beast can read minds. Give it a thought like that and it might finish us all off."

They didn't sleep, except for a half hour filled with moster-pleed nightmares.

At daybreak Sonny was up and his bone-weary parents crawled out of the twisted bed covers. The night had done nothing but transmit the fear more deeply between them. Myrtle mechanically passed cereal bowls around the breakfast table, and set on the Scrumblies box. Mosty came over and curled around Sonny's feet.

"Now eat your Scrumblies, dear," Myrtle said, automatically pouring cream and sugar in her son's bowl.

"Aw, Mom, do I have to? I'm not hungry."

"Eat it, and shut up," Walter roared. "We've had a bad enough night without going through that argument again."

Sonny made a couple of half-hearted passes with his spoon. Myrtle and Walter were not watching when he surreptitiously passed the dish down to Mosty. They heard nothing as the Scrumblies disappeared.

An instant later the mosterglee went into a strange convulsion. He shot out from under the table like a greased pig. Myrtle screamed and leaped up on the chair.

The sluglike body stiffened in a long, fat cigar of gray flesh vibrating at a frequency too fast for the eye to follow.

"Good Lord!" Walter breathed. "Look at that."

Around the blur there appeared thousands of silver threads, winding and rewinding around the mosterglee.

"Hey, Dad. He's making a

cocoon. Maybe he'll change into a giant moth!" Myrtle was holding her hand over her mouth. She was sick.

Walter said nothing.

Because the motion had stopped. And the cocoon was not finished.

After a while he went over and nudged the half-finished cylinder. It was light as a spider web. He looked inside.

There was nothing left but a trace of gray powder.

Mosty was dead.

"Well," he sighed, "that proves Scrumblies are good for something."

To: Our Beloved Leader.

From: Committee for Propagation Control and Colonization.

1. *It is with deepest regret this committee reports an unexpected lethal substance encountered on Planet Sol III has resulted in the failure of Project Alpha.*

THE END

MAGIC WINDOW

(Continued from page 32)

The ghost of April hadn't carried a wand, but her enchantment—to the extent she had been able to use it on a denizen of a world that had forgotten

wonderment—was just as effective as the faery godmother's—and just as ephemeral.

All I saw were bricks.

THE END

FANTASTIC

AROUND THE UNIVERSE WITH: WALTER WATCHELL

(Continued from page 5)

were lifted from his progenitor's pomes (all of which were copyrighted in perpetuity). . . .

The latest concoction for the Lost-Week-end set has the Bellevue medics in a dither. Made by combining one part Betelgeuse brandy, one part Venusian vodka, three parts Kentucky sour-mash bourbon. Hangover: three weeks' total paralysis! . . . Backers of the Galaxian, swank new vacation resort on Andromeda, claim they'll recover their investment within one season, now the flight-time problem is licked. Once nine days, now twenty-six hours! . . .

TV's newest: "It's All Yours" near the top of Trendex. Five correct answers give you your own planet in the Cassiopeian constellation. But here's the rub: you'll need transportation—and the sponsor's product (no money down, five generations to pay) is spaceships! . . . The National Safety Council is plenty worried. For the first seven months of the year traffic fatalities for the nation number seventeen—a rise of four over the same period last year. "Remember: the life you save may be artificial!"

Vinolyte Vignette: Two years ago the sawbones gave him up. Too many radio-active cigarettes, they said, wagging their beards. Instead of putting in a hold order at the neighborhood crematorium, he put his problem in the lap of the DuPont white-coats. Today he's in perfect health, and his job as tobacco auctioneer calls for powerful lungs. He has them too—made from DuPont plastic!

A Paris couturier (dressmaker to you) has gone Too Far. Latest creation for milady actually covers upper part of body. Previewers call it scandalous! . . . No truth to rumor that the peanut-oil bomb could wipe out 8,000,000,000,000 square miles of the galaxy. One-fourth of that would be nearer the truth. . . . The Andre Livinggolightlyworth's are reaching for their rayguns again. Threaten to air it all in the courts. . . . Local gendarmes claim to be baffled by the recent painful passing of a Beekman Place gal-about-town. Any of the ESP boys on our staff can name the culprit. Today's stock-market tip: Consolidated Time Machine. Will Go Places!
—HB.

(From AMAZING STORIES—Nov. 1955. Reprinted by request.)

The Hunter And The Cross

By JEANNE WILLIAMS

ILLUSTRATOR NOVICK

Gil wanted the girl; he wanted her so badly morals and decency meant nothing and he was ready to use force; until his manhood was humiliated—by his own conscience.

THE mountain towered blue and white into the sky and beneath it was a crossroad. One way led to the village. The narrower path wound up the mountain. Not many people used it. It was the trail of the Penitentes, where they marched in the night wind, leaving a track of blood in the snow. There on the mountain at Easter they crucified one of their number, enacting the passion of Christ.

A spring glittered by the crossroad, born of the mountain, its waters clear and icy cruel. Most of the village used the well at the *plaza*, where one could visit with neighbors and quiver at the freshest scandal. The life of the village centered there. Old men smoked black tobacco in shucks, looking over pretty girls who

in turn watched the young men strut around the square. In the shadow of the church, with its bells brought from Spain during the Conquest, days flowed in sunny peace, even for the dead of the ribbon-decked *campo santa*.

Yet there was another worship place, shaped in solitude beyond the village. The windowless, earthen *morada* of the Penitent Brothers. There was the steep mountain above the crossroads. And the spring.

Soledad came to the spring each day to get water for herself and Don Anastacio Rivera, her husband. Don Anastacio was old. Gossip at the *plaza* had it that he only stroked his young bride's hair, what time he wasn't dozing under



He covered her with the lion skin and drew her close.

the quince tree in the *patio*. Still, Soledad, an orphan whose uncle had been glad to marry her off, seemed happy enough.

Anyhow, she sang. While she scrubbed clothes, or patted *tortillas*, and while she went to the spring. Making no hurry, she sang with her heart in her voice. Sometimes the people by the well would stop their chatter to hear.

"Wait till she has the babies!" Doña Carmen Cabalero would sniff. "Then the *plaza* well and our company will be good enough!"

"Ay, Doña Carmen," would reply Señora Baca. "How can she have the babies when Don Anastacio's eggs are dried up?"

Whereupon there would be laughter and possessors of virile husbands and many babies would watch the blue-rebozoed figure leaving the village, and say, "After all, she is to be pitied, poor little one!" This charity lasted till they should catch their husbands gazing too long at Soledad.

One day as Soledad knelt to fill her jug at the spring, a hunter came from the mountain, with a beast on his shoulders.

His name was Gil. He came from the other side of the

mountain range, and he had tracked the lion for a week until he trapped it by its den. He was scratched and torn and laughing as he came down the trail, thinking of the hundred *pesos* he would be paid by the great *hacienda* for the lion's corpse, for the estate had lost many animals and two herders to this beast.

So full of triumph was Gil that he came upon the girl without warning, for her or for himself. When she glanced up, there he stood, with the lion over his back and the blood on him.

She screamed, springing back. Then something changed in her eyes, making them gentle, anxious. She came toward him.

"You're bleeding—"

That brought back his laughter, for he was a hunter, and not hurt much anyway.

"Give me a drink," he said. "That will make me well."

She handed him the jug. He drank with deep pleasure and gave it back. "That was good. Better even than the water of my own village."

"It's better than the water of my village, too. It comes from the snow." She looked at the blue peak, harsh as an obsidian sacrificial knife, before she turned back to Gil. "You came from the mountain?"

"I killed the lion there." He tossed the body down so she could see it better, stirred it with his foot. "This fellow ripped up many cows and sheep, two fine bulls, mauled two herders. The *hacienda* offered a hundred *pesos* for its hide." As he spoke, Gil watched the girl and wondered.

Why go back to his village yet? He knew there was something about his body when he came from the hunt, something about his flat bones and green eyes. He had many girls. But none like this one. She would be as different from the girls of his village as its water from the mountain spring. But headier than water could ever be. He tried to pierce her shadowed eyes. She ran through his blood like a wine he had never known. He had no way of saying this, only the old words; so he set his strong neck on one side and laughed.

"Yes, a hundred *pesos* for this lion. I will spend them all on you—if you will smile at me."

Turning, she picked up her jug, suddenly remote as the snow on the mountain. "I am married. I cannot smile at you."

What of it? he started to say. Had he not made love with the colonel's wife, the

jefe's wife, and the lawyer's wife? Hadn't they asked him? But the pride in the girl's walk struck the coaxing gaiety from his lips and he stood watching as she took the village road, till she quite disappeared.

He shrugged, like a man waking. So she was married and a *correcta*. Let it be so. He would spend the bounty on Concha who hadn't succumbed to him yet. Or go to Monterrey and taste the women there. He would—

He bent to pick up the lion. As he touched it, a shock from the fur ran through his hands. He thought, involuntarily and almost with fear, of how it would be to touch her body. Then nothing, Concha, or the bounty, or Monterrey, mattered. He threw the lion over his shoulder and strode towards the village.

He got lodgings with the blacksmith, paid for by the sale of game he killed. When he passed the village well, all the women stared, and the unmarried ones giggled and whispered. He didn't see them. What time he wasn't hunting, or drinking at the *cantina*, he spent in his room, or loitering near the crossroads, hoping to meet Soledad.

After skinning and tanning the pelt, Gil worked the hide

with his hands, kneading it till the skin part was soft as glove leather. He had listened well at the *cantina*. It was not right for old Anastacio to have Soledad, barking like a toothless dog over prey it could not eat. When the lion pelt was ready, Gil took it to the mountain spring and waited in the piñons till he saw Soledad coming.

When he stepped out from the trees, she flinched, whirling to run, but he came after her, barring the way.

He held out the tawny pelt. The sun warmed it till it seemed a thing of gold. As if fascinated, she touched it. Then, jerking back, she shook her head.

Gil had never offered a woman such a gift before—the prize of all his hunter's stealth, the risk of his life, his pride. Surely she didn't understand. He kept holding it out to her.

"I—it was there, on the mountain."

She looked up at the blue peak, her eyes wide and staring. A shudder went through her. His heart as wild as when he had moved for the lion, Gil wrapped the hide about her, holding her close.

"It is for your bed," he muttered.

He hardly felt her struggling. Turning her face up, he took her mouth. Soon, wrapped in the fur, she lay dead still against him. Yet what he had dreamed of eluded him. He shook her.

Her eyes opened. He read in them the drugged compliance and desperation that said he could do anything he wanted. Ashamed, still burning, he said, "Listen! That old dried stick! He's no husband. You were the same as sold to him by your uncle. I have heard it! I will take you across the mountains to my village and you will be my wife."

"I cannot." Her lips barely moved, as if they were numb. "I am married already—"

Up the trail, with her head on the lion skin, she'd forget that. She couldn't blame herself if he took her in spite of what she said. After a while, she would forget the priest's foolishness. Gil started up the mountain, his cheek against the bright fur. She didn't struggle. She would go. But as Gil moved by the spring, a helpless rage began in him.

Unless she wanted to go, he couldn't take her. She would somehow absent herself from him as she had a moment ago. It was the strange shining gentleness of her he wanted, the mystery. He put her down.

The pelt slipped from her shoulders and he saw a gold crucifix between her breasts. He would have to love a pious one!

"Will you go with me?" he asked in passion and anger.

She touched the crucifix as if she prayed not to feel his gaze. She ran away from him. The second time. But now he could not even think of the bounty, the girls, or Monterrey. He had to know the thing that drew him after her, hunt it down before he could ever have peace. He picked up the hide.

Striking up an acquaintance with old Don Anastacio, Gil presented him with the hide. It was hung on the wall beside the little shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe, where, like it or not, Soledad had to see it and think of him.

But if he compelled her mind, she haunted his. Her crucifix swelled in his brooding as a sign of power that made her deny him. He hated the power.

Yet it was a great mystery. He who hunted creatures through their marks, who walked the secret paths, the blind caves, could not ignore the secret he sensed in the cross. Before, he had seldom gone to church, but now he

went often. He watched Soledad's face and trembled with jealous rage as she genuflected.

It grew to be more than the girl he hunted; he had to learn the force behind the cross which made him impotent. He found no clue in the quiet village church. After some months, when he had many friends to back his request, he asked to join the Penitent Brothers.

He didn't want to. He had heard enough of the brotherhood to know pain was their ritual, penance their creed, and he had seen, at his own village, that Good Friday crucifixion. Then he had viewed it with careless mockery. In the flush and joy of his strength, in his pleasure in loving, hunting, and drinking, he couldn't understand what could drive a man to lash his back till it ran blood, or carry a cross, or be bound to one. Now, he knew a man could be so tormented that he would seek any way to peace.

The night was appointed for his initiation. He went to the dark *morada* and knocked, saying, "God's child knocks at this chapel door for His grace."

After the ritual questions and answers, he was made to kneel, and his back was bared.

The laws of the order were explained, and secrecy enjoined. With a knife of obsidian, his back was slashed its length and width. Salt was rubbed into the gashes. Biting his lips, Gil spoke in a choked voice.

"For the love of God bestow upon me a reminder of the three meditations of the passion of our Lord."

The rawhide lash bit into his gashed back. His head swam. But he saw the huge cross before him and gritted his teeth. "For the love of God bestow on me the remainder of the five wounds of Christ."

He took these, certain through the red haze that he must cry out, wrest the whip from his tormenter. The cross taunted him, though. He forced the congested air from his lungs and begged the rest of the lashes, the Forty Days in the Wilderness, and the Seven Last Words.

When it was finished, he hardly knew they were raising him, cleaning his wounds. His back was a raw mass. In his belly was acrid sickness. But now he was one of the Brothers of Blood.

Gil lived wretched, between despair and snatches of vision. In the *morada*, he sometimes felt the presence of infinite power, but other nights it was

only a small, close room with bloody whips, an altar, images which cared nothing for the tortured men who strove through pain to touch Reality. Once Gil asked the *sangrador*, the man who let the blood of initiates, why such penance was believed in. The *sangrador* turned on Gil in shock.

"What would you desire? A man's body is the cross he is given to bear in this world. Is it not better to beat the cross than the man?"

Gil couldn't answer. He only knew the cross tormented him, and when it did not, his love did. A glimpse of Soledad could turn to black hatred those flashes of power he saw in the earthen chapel.

Yet more and more, his yearning to know that power shamed him when he stared at Soledad with desire. He could no longer fondle her in his dreams without seeing the cross, too. Among the Penitent Brothers, he became known for piety and scorn of his flesh. He alone knew what a lie that was. He grew thin and silent and when he passed the well, the women looked at him in wonder; they no longer called to him with their smiles and eyes.

Winter was over. Soon it would be Easter and he would follow a trail of blood up the

mountain, with the rest of the hooded brothers.

One would be bound to the cross, perhaps to die if he wasn't taken down in time. Gil believed that then, surely, he would understand the power of the cross.

But Soledad— He doubted there would be an answer, to her. Blood hummed through him, he rose in loathing and grief, seizing his whip.

He fell sick of a fever from the beating. The blacksmith and the village people brought him food, but he would not touch it. He was sick, sick. He hated his body and he hated the cross that had made its old pleasure empty lies. He drowned.

A soft voice waked him from his stupor. Soledad. She was holding a cup of broth.

"You must eat."

"Why?"

She held the cup to his mouth. "You must not die. You must get strong and well."

Desire flamed in him like fire in a chaff. He thrust the cup to the floor, taking her hands tight so she couldn't elude him.

"Let's go to my village—you will be as my wife, I swear it! Let us go away up the mountain—"

He felt her trembling, the

heavy beat of her pulse, though she shook her head, bending back.

"What are you saying? You will damn yourself!"

The crucifix shone on the warm sweet flesh he was forbidden. He tore the chain apart, flinging it to the dirt, and reached for her. The cross was no longer between them now. No matter what happened he would have her.

Before he touched her, she made the sign, on lips and breast and forehead. Her arms dropped as if broken; she carried the cross with her, in hands and heart and mind. There was no way he could get rid of it. He whirled from the room, ran stumbling with weakness toward the mountain like someone pursued.

As he lay panting on the trail, a strange *peon* came along. He had shifty eyes and sly mouse feet and was sort of a gray color, even his *sombrero* which fastened under his chin with a red cord. He carried a coarse bag over one shoulder and as he stopped by Gil, he spoke in a soft sleepy tone.

"You do not look well, *señor*."

"What business is it of yours?"

The *peon* smiled. "Maybe I

can help you. What is it you want? Would you like to dream dreams?"

Gil said with a harsh laugh, "Ay, I desire dreams—raw, rich dreams, with her in my arms and the cross gone, the priest out from between us with his bell tolling and gray looks!"

"The *peyote* in my sack will bring those dreams, *señor*."

"That little cactus? That stuff the Indians use? What is the use of such tricks? Listen. The priest says go and delight your body all the days of your vanity. He says that life is vanity. So what should dreams be? Frauds, like you."

Humbly, gently, the *peon* said, "All the same, master, if you chew the *peyote*, you will be glad."

Gil rose, still shaking from his weakness and flight. "Go away, little devil!" he said, resuming the climb.

But when he stopped to rest, the *peon* trotted up, smiling, holding out the blue-green cactus bulbs. Gil got back up and hurried on, trembling with faintness, his legs feeling hollow. He glanced behind him several times without seeing the little man. Sinking down in the trail, Gil fought for breath. In the blink of an eye, the *peon* was there.

"I am grieved for you, mas-

ter. I cannot let you go un-comforted." He held out the sack.

"No!" Stumbling to his feet, Gil fled.

When he dropped in exhaustion half an hour later, the gray man was with him, still smiling, still breathing easily. This time as he offered the *peyote*, the bulbs had a tempting sheen, promising cool refreshment to Gil's parched tongue. He reached, jerked back, the back of his neck prickling like the fur on an animal's ruff when it senses danger.

"Wait a minute! Who are you? Why do you want to make me peaceful?"

"It is my business, master. I am the servant of mankind. I offer them dreams. Is that not sweet, the way out of the body?"

His voice lulled Gil. More and more tempting grew the succulent buds. But a last edge of caution made Gil ask, "How must I pay you?"

"I'll come for payment later, Here, *señor*—"

And Gil had visions, many visions . . .

Strange beasts with crowns, tall angels with bright wings, Nezhucoyotl, the Aztec king, and the Great Wolf who came and spoke with a man's voice.

And there were lions, all kinds of lions. Somehow, the lions made him wake, sweating, wanting to get away from the mountain and the *peyote* dreams. He started back for the village, the world of men, but his body, slow and dragging now, maddened him. It had been so restful, in the haze of bright color and heroic creatures, free of the flesh.

The *peon* came around a bend in the trail. He was still small and gray and unassuming.

"You would have more *peyote*, master?"

Gil thought of the cross and Soledad, the mysteries he had never conquered. With all will, he managed to say thickly to the little man, "Leave me! I want no more of your dreams!"

He walked on, slipping, panting; his nerves cried for relief. Yet when he would glance back, the *peon* was at his heels. With the blessed cooling *peyote* that yielded visions, Gil tripped on a root and fell sprawling. His palms and face bled. He tried to rise and could not.

It was no use. The *peon* would always be following after him on his small mouse feet. Gil turned to the gray man with the dependence of the destroyed on the destroyer.

"Give it to me."

He dreamed. He saw no angels now, only beasts. And in his dreams, when he touched himself, he had a lion's body. But he was satisfied with the *peyote* and the dreams of the *peyote*. He ate the plant for many days and many nights. In his dream, the beast he had become did all the evil Gil could imagine. There were screams and the scent of blood. Gil laughed, for it was only a vision.

Then, one day, the beast of the vision caught the smell of Soledad and tracked her. It padded softly to her house and heard the shrieks of anger and stones thudding on the flimsy walls.

"Witch! *Onza!* Come out that we may kill you!"

"Come out in that hide, the hide of the lion you are when you maim and slay!"

And far away, from the direction of the *morada*, came the wailing of a flute and a dark, monotonous chanting.

With a rending shock, Gil was back on the mountain. He didn't understand or reason. All he knew was that Soledad was in danger and that it was Good Friday eve when the Penitentes gathered in the *morada* before the enactment of Christ's death.

He tried to spring up, was dragged down by his flaccid body. To sleep, to dream . . .

But he could not. Or Soledad would die. The death for a witch was a dreadful thing, with tortures first. Gil tore himself from the earth, and ran.

As he neared the village, his mind cleared from the *peyote* trance. A dreadful fear began in him. The mob had cried of a lion, an *onza*, which had killed and crippled. *Onzas* were witches who took the shape of an animal to work terror. In his visions, he had been a lion. Was it possible? Had he done the wickedness he had thought he was only dreaming? As he neared the *plaza*, he heard a sudden eruption of sound from the *morada*. Moving torches showed the procession come out of the chapel. With chains and whips, the brotherhood flogged themselves while other villagers knelt or held the torches. And all the time, from the other side of the village, came the cries of those who wanted Soledad's blood but feared to take it, lest she magic them.

Soon, though, the mob lust would spur them on. While some of the village mourned and did bloody penance for an ancient execution, the others

would bring about a new one. As Gil came in sight of Don Anastacio's house, three men were charging the frail hut with a huge pole, while around, in a huddle, bayed the women and a few other men, their faces distorted by rage and fear. Gil thrust between them to the men with the pole, seizing the end of it.

Only one way he could stop them.

"What do you do?" he shouted. "You profane Good Friday with your bellowings! Stop, or a curse will come on you!"

Uneasily, the men shifted the pole and glanced from one to the other. But the women were bolder, pitiless for the beautiful young woman.

"A curse is on us already!" cried Doña Carmen. "Our fields are trampled, three men are dead, others mauled past healing. All by an *onza*! And this slut is that *onza*!"

"How do you know this?" Gil countered.

Placatingly, one of the men said, "From the look of you, you have been off fasting these past days. Your piety is known and renowned even among the Penitent Brothers. It must be hard for you to believe such wickedness. But the truth is that when this *onza* could not be tracked, we knew it must be a witch and not a real lion. So

we searched the village to find out the sorcerer. And when we entered Don Anastacio's home, there stood the hussy, with the hide about her, stroking it with her fingers and smiling."

Gil started to cry out that he had given her the hide, then realized that would kill his last chance of saving the girl. He would be discredited and executed as the lover or accomplice of a witch. The men raised the pole, shuffling, but determined.

"Move from our way!"

In desperation, guarding the door with his body, Gil called loudly. "Hear me! I am a great hunter. And as you know, I killed a lion when I came across the mountain from my own village. You are my people now. If you will wait till the passion of Our Lord has been enacted, for the sake of your own souls, I promise to catch the *onza* for you. Leave a guard at this house if you will, but do no violence, till Easter is passed." Gil took the pole from the men, rolled it away with his foot. "Come," he said, "let us go to the *morada*."

He stopped at the far edge of the crowd. As soon as those who had formed the mob were swept raptly into the solemn drama of the procession, Gil slipped around the village and

entered Soledad's house by way of the patio. Quietly, he walked through the small house to the front room.

Before the small Virgin, Soledad knelt. The only light in the room was a candle lit by the shrine. The lion's skin lay tangled on the floor. Outside, Gil could see two men hunkered down a respectful distance from the door, machetes in their hands.

Gently, so as not to make her scream, Gil said, "Soledad."

She whirled, a low cry strangling in her throat. She had been weeping and her dark hair clung damply to her temples. As she saw him, in spite of her distress, such joy glowed in her eyes that he knew why she had wrapped herself in the skin—to dream herself in his arms as she had been that day by the crossroads. Then she remembered everything and the danger. Her head drooped.

"Why did you come, señor?"

Señor? When she might die because she loved him?

"Where's Don Anastacio?"

Gil asked. "Why didn't he tell the people I gave that hide to him?"

"And get himself accused as a witch? He said he loved me too well to watch me killed and would they in mercy let him

go? He's probably still running."

Gil's mind raced. The guards were in front. He should be able to get Soledad out of the village. And since the old man had deserted her—well, on the other side of the mountain Gil could take Soledad as his wife, to his own village. He'd hunt again, forgetting the cross by lying in her arms, and they would be happy. He took a long step toward her. The light flashed on her crucifix, and though her arms were half-extended, Gil froze.

And what of the evil he had done and dreamed, up on the mountain with the *peyote* in his mouth?

"Listen!" he said, turning away. "Is there some place you can go? Where you will be safe till I have trapped the *onza*?"

"You—you aren't taking me?"

"I can't." Gil smiled, trying to reassure her. "I have to catch the lion, as I promised. And have you forgotten I am a Penitente? I must go back to the *morada*."

She straightened. "If that is your word, I will go to the convent in Socorro. That is two days from here, but I know the way. I cannot be Anastacio's woman now. I shall take the veil."

"Then pray for me," Gil said. He lowered his eyes and his voice trailed off.

After he had seen her on her road with a small bundle of food and clothing, Gil went to join his brotherhood. He flogged himself in earnest, almost hoping he would die that way. Once Soledad was under the protection of the nuns, she would be safe even if the villagers learned her whereabouts, which was unlikely. But the brothers were filing back into the *morada* and Gil knew he would not get such an easy death. He had to find the *onza* for these people; and the *onza* was himself.

Half-dazed by his wounds and days of privation, Gil hardly knew what was happening till they began nudging him, speaking to him in mingled terror and envy.

When he understood, he glanced about wildly, desperately, he was ready to die, but not for what they had elected him.

He was to take the part of Christ. Because of his rigid penances and fastings, he was thought the most holy of them. The honor was his. And the damnation!

How could he touch that man-sized cross, knowing he was the *onza*, knowing his own

evil? He said, "Comrades, I beg you—I am not worthy!"

"Nor is anyone! But you are the best of us."

Cold sweat dewed his body. He couldn't discredit himself yet, or his protection of Soledad would be remembered and they might hunt her down as his accomplice. Slowly, he gave himself into their hands.

He was judged by the High Priest and Pilate, stripped and spat upon, beaten and cursed.

Late on the morning of Good Friday, the procession formed. Gil was only half-alive. He staggered out of the *morada*, bearing his cross, with the Penitent Brothers before him, lashing themselves. Through the village they toiled, towards the crossroads. Perhaps because this was the place where his life had changed, Gil, even in his pain, looked at the spring, and the piñons. His flickering vision touched on a face peering from the trees.

Soledad. She had not gone straight to the convent, after all. He could only pray she would keep hidden till this was done.

The procession struggled up the mountain, stumbling. Gil fell under his cross twice. But at last they reached the peak. He let fall the cross. They reached to stretch him upon it, holding strips of cot-

ton cloth in readiness to fasten his arms and legs.

As he felt his body shaping to the rough wood, an instinctive horror convulsed Gil. He fought to elude the cross, yet they forced him to it. His pinioned body, arms outspread, made the sign.

Then he felt the shuddery, furry, sinking. His limbs warped, his mouth grew strange. His executioners shrieked, leaping back. From his dreams, he knew the shape he was taking. He lay crouched and spitting, a sacrilege, his beast's form bound to the cross. But he still had his man's brain and he heard them.

Some called to run for the priest, others cried for big stones which could crush the *onza* from a safe distance for the hurlers. A few flew after the priest, but the stones were closer to hand. They began to strike Gil, breaking him, splintering his bones. He felt the seep of blood from his head. So he and the cross were joined and this was the end of it.

Well, he had given them their *onza*. The stones, the biting, cutting stones—to die like this, damned— They didn't know what they were doing. He tried to cry out, but the sound died in his beast's throat. He felt his head drop.

He was dying. He would never know the mysteries, never understand.

He felt his head being raised. Looking up, he saw Soledad, felt her tears falling hot on him. He tried to tell her to get away, but he couldn't speak, and then there was another change going on in him. He thought he had his man's body back, only it was light and tireless. Before him rose a mountain, a beautiful blue mountain reaching into the

sky, and on it stood the cross with an ineffable shining. If he reached that cross, that he would know . . .

He heard the priest saying, "No, wicked ones, do not stone the girl! She is no witch, her touch has changed a beast into a man. See now, the blessed cross leaves them in peace. Do you likewise."

Then Gil was out of the body, going toward the mountain.

THE END

THE GIRL WHO PLAYED WOLF

(Continued from page 23)

have called for claymores at dawn. Ah, good morning, lad."

"Morning," said David, blushing and blinking around the room.

"I see you're fully recovered," said Amos, with satisfaction. "Luckily, I believe I've now stumbled on a new principle in para-science which should enable me to treat both you and Leona and bring this matter under control." He turned to pound Angus affectionately on the back. "Well, how about it, Angus?" he said. "Are you convinced now that para-science exists?"

But Angus had had an evening to think it over.

"Well, now, I wouldn't exactly say that," he replied cautiously. "While this is all very

interesting, you must bear in mind I've seen no actual proof that either of the two young people were actually the two beasts I observed last night. No, I'm afraid if you want me to admit I'm convinced, Amos, you'll have to arrange incontrovertible *physical* evidence that Leona and that wolf I left in the library last night with your dog, was one and the same—" He broke off suddenly. Leona had just entered the breakfast room of the lodge. "Ah, good morning, my dear."

But Leona ignored him. Eyes flashing, she marched up to David.

"How dare you?" she cried. "You beast! You hound! You brute!"

—And slapped his face.

Cat Island Hoax

By G. L. VANDENBURG

HAS your cat eaten anyone alive lately?

No?

Well, neither has mine. But for quite some time I entertained the brooding suspicion that she might be capable of it. More than once I have cast a jaundiced look at little Michele, purring against my trousers, and asked myself, "Is it possible?"

In the light of recent personal experience I can report that the answer was and is "no." This came as something of a major disappointment to me. I have a warm appreciation for the bizarre. And if carnivorous house cats don't qualify for the most bizarre notion advanced in years then I'm darned if I know what does!

The story of hundreds of snarling, spitting cats, capable

It started with a rumor we heard in a Madison Avenue restaurant—about a strange island somewhere in the South Seas where—well, anyhow, we called Mr. Vandenburg in and told him to follow it up and do an article on it. The result adds up to the darndest hoax we've ever come across.

of tearing a human being to shreds, was first related to me seven years ago by a theatrical producer friend of mine.

It was early fall and the city had just recovered from one of those hurricanes with the pretty names. Following a dreary script conference my friend and I retired to my apartment on West End Avenue for a drink.

Our conversation had hardly gotten underway when he suddenly inquired, "How would you like to own an island in the South Pacific?"

"What's the catch?" I wanted to know. I'm not a skeptic by nature but I've never been nagged to death by people wanting to know if I'd like to own an island in the South Pacific.

"It's full of cats," he said, smiling.

"What kind of cats?"

He pointed to little Michele, curled up snugly on the bottom shelf of the bookcase.

"That kind," he replied.

I laughed and poured myself another drink.

He assured me he was quite serious, that there was indeed such an island, inhabited solely by cats, and that it was available free to the first person who could exterminate the little devils.

"What's wrong with them," I asked. "Why must they be exterminated?"

"Well," he began, "it seems several people have tried approaching the place but when they got to within fifty or a hundred feet of it the sight they saw waiting for them on the beach was pretty frightening. No one has yet reached the island. And it's for sure no one *could* reach it and live very long. You see, the cats were originally placed on the island to get rid of rats . . ."

"Never mind that. What about the people approaching the beach? Why couldn't they land?"

"I'm coming to that. Now as I remember the island *was* at one time peopled with natives. Then it became infested with

rats. Eventually, by sheer force of numbers, the rats took over and the frightened natives beat a hasty retreat to the nearest neighboring island. Before long word reached the French Colonial Authorities at Tahiti, which is part of the same island group. After quite a few unsuccessful attempts at killing the rats they gave up in despair. They offered the island free to the first person who could do the job successfully."

"And some bright soul thought of cats?"

My friend caught the skeptical glint in my eye.

"But of course! Could you have come up with a more practical solution?"

"No," I admitted, "but it makes for a good story."

"But it's true!" he insisted. "The cats—five hundred of them—were let loose and inside of three weeks the rats were almost completely wiped out."

"And what happened to the practical minded Frenchman?"

"He got the island and started a plantation. I don't know how long things went well, but the time came when the cats had multiplied to the point where there was not enough for them to eat."

"Don't tell me that's what

happened to the practical minded Frenchman?"

"No, he abandoned the island and lodged a protest with the Colonial authorities at Tahiti. But, being the party responsible for the cats in the first place, his protest fell flat. The authorities did try to inspect the island but they found it swarming with vicious, hungry cats, ready to protect their kingdom by devouring anything that set foot on it."

He poured a fresh drink and continued.

"Finding themselves right back where they started from with the rats they decided to put the island up for grabs. That was fifty or sixty years ago and, as of the time I read the account two or three years ago, no one has been successful. The offer still stands. Find a way to get rid of a few thousand cats and an island paradise is yours."

Theatrical producers are an intrepid lot, endowed with extraordinary vision which some people call vivid imagination and others call pathological lying. But my friend was an exception to this rule. I knew that the story must have some basis in fact.

I pressed him for further details. He answered all of my

questions to the best of his recollections, freely admitting that his own fascination for the story may have caused him to exaggerate or minimize a point here and there.

On one crucial question his memory was an absolute failure. He was adamant in his defense of the source of the story and yet he could not *remember* the source. He had read it "two or three years" ago but had forgotten where or under what circumstances.

But in spite of this we continued into the early hours, the two of us conjuring up every imaginable method of eradicating a kingdom of house cats.

Fall was replaced by winter. The hurricanes made way for a blizzard or two. And I became mired in the fourteenth draft of a play which was destined never to see the lights of a Broadway stage.

One project followed another and, for the next seven years I did little more than think about the weird feline kingdom in the South Pacific.

Then one day a few months ago I was engaged in a plot thrashing session with the editor of *Fantastic*. Again it was late evening and the weather was behaving with the irregularity of a month old baby.

The discussion worked its

way around to *Fantastic's* newest feature, a monthly factual article dealing with weird and unexplained phenomena.

The Cat Island legend immediately crowded every other thought out of my head. I blandly stated that I was familiar with a story that would curl a reader's toes.

The editor was all ears.

I gave a brief synopsis.

A good idea for the new feature, he admitted, but where did I come by the story?

Unashamedly I owned up to the fact that I had never read it anywhere but had heard it second-hand. If the editor, enthusiastic man that he is, did not jump out of his chair and sing "Hallelujah!", it was only because *he* was getting it third-hand.

He regarded me with a skeptical grin.

"It'd be embarrassing if it got printed and turned out to be a phoney," he explained, "and can you imagine what a field day the ASPCA would have?"

He took the last cigarette out of a crush-proof box and twirled it between his fingers before he lit it.

"Wouldn't do any harm to check on it," he continued. "See what you can find and give me a ring on Monday."

I don't think he held out much hope that I would return with anything startling about carnivorous house cats.

The guard opened the doors of the library at nine o'clock on Monday morning. I ventured inside without the slightest idea of where to begin looking.

The New York Public Library is a massive granite edifice that looks as though it shot up out of the ground like a rock formation during an earthquake. Outside it looks cold and foreboding. Silent, clinical efficiency is the order of the day in its cavernous interior.

I went to the reference files next to the main reading room. I began the long sifting process. In the C file under *Cats*, for which there must have been two hundred catalogued cards, I found nothing. That in itself was discouraging. *Islands* proved even less rewarding. *House cats* was not even privileged to be a category unto itself. *Carniverous* was a waste of time. *Wild cats* produced nothing but lions, tigers, leopards and their sundry boring relatives. A long and patient search through various anthologies dealing with unusual places and events was fruitless.

I went outside for a smoke. It was close to noon. I knew I would have to call the editor before five and give him some kind of a report on my search. It looked as though it wasn't going to be a very cheerful one.

I thought of my producer friend and something of my optimism returned. He may not have been able to remember where he read it but at least he knew he *had* read it. There had to be a source! And if there was a source it had to be in the New York library.

But I had been through all the possible book titles and . . .

Was it in a book? I asked myself.

What about magazines?

I snuffed out my cigarette on a marble pillar and went back for round two in the reference room.

The designated shelves for periodical reference guides contained about forty volumes. I concentrated on the years between 1940 and 1950. The first five volumes brought negative results. Still no Cat Island.

But I struck it rich with the 1949 edition.

Cat Island: Article — "Where Cats are Kings"; Coronet, July; p. 153-4.

That was it! My excitement quickened as I filled out a call slip and submitted it to a

young, unsmiling clerk. I was instructed to go to the main reading room and wait for the magazine.

It was a two page factual article with an appropriate illustration of a small snarling cat with its claws outstretched toward the reader. It was written by Lucille Beckhart. At this point it might be well to fill in the minor details my producer friend could not remember. They are not important, merely interesting.

The island was described as a paradise ". . . where there is fresh water in deep springs and lush fruit hangs from leafy tropical trees. Soft waves lap against its coral shores and tall palm trees bow a graceful welcome in the tropical breeze."

"But," the article went on to caution the reader, "before you hasten to apply for ownership of Cat Island, heed this warning: a military invasion would be required to drive out its inhabitants. For Cat Island belongs to cats—hundreds of mean, lean, ferocious felines that have so far proved more than a match for any human foe."

Further statistics: The island dated back one hundred years. The rats, who began all the trouble, originally arrived

by escaping from a ship that was wrecked on the reefs. Neither poison nor traps nor smoke were effective in clearing them out. That's where the Frenchman came in and offered his practical plan to harass colonial officials.

He rounded up five hundred alley cats and loaded them on a ship. They were turned loose on the island and the Frenchman went back to Tahiti to await developments.

It took three weeks for the plan to work, whereupon the Frenchman was made a gift of the island. He retired to his new paradise and started a copra plantation and poultry farm. The cats were tame and happy and chuck-full of rats. All went well until the feline multiplication process got out of hand. The first sign of impending terror came when the hungry cats began to attack poultry.

"The distraught Frenchman," said the article, "tried all the tricks that had been formerly used to rout the rats, but nothing worked against the new usurpers. In desperation, the disillusioned owner packed his bags and said goodbye to Cat Island."

The article concluded by stating that the kingdom of cats "... now started to thrive in earnest. Soon the feline

population became fierce and wild, living in burrows and eating crabs and fish. Even giant sea turtles coming ashore fell prey to the vicious creatures.

"Today the South Pacific natives fear Cat Island, for any human trespasser would be ripped to bits by claws and teeth . . ."

I closed the magazine with an air of smug satisfaction. My friend and I had been vindicated! There *was* a cat island. And from what I had just seen I knew it would make good reading for the new feature in *Fantastic*. A check of the time revealed it was two o'clock . . . still three hours to go before I had to call the editor.

I was sure I had only scratched the surface. I reasoned that *Coronet*, being a digest size magazine, could not possibly provide the full story in just two of its pages.

Back to the periodical reference shelf, my energy and hope fully recharged! I attacked the reference guides with the fierce determination of a revolutionist storming the Bastille.

A recheck of the Summer-1949 edition brought nothing further to light. But my joy soared when the Winter-1949

edition turned up no less than three references to Cat Island.

I filled out call slips for the given issues of *Fortune*, *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Time Magazine*.

Once again I retired to the main reading room, certain that I was about to witness what lawyers call the "preponderance of evidence." I was impatient to call the editor and inform him that I was going great guns and I would, in two or three days, deliver a whopper of a factual horror tale.

The three magazines arrived.

And the roof fell in!

First of all, by way of keeping the record straight, the *Fortune* and *Saturday Evening Post* articles dealt with another Cat Island located in the Atlantic near the Bahamas. It was described as an island resort known as "The Millionaire's Hideaway."

But if *Fortune* and the *Post* proved disappointing, the *Time Magazine* piece really lowered the boom on me, for it was devoted solely to reporting that the *Coronet* article was so much baloney!

I herewith offer the facts for whatever little they are worth. According to *Time* a reporter named William Kennedy, who worked for the Los Angeles *Herald and Express*,

became fascinated with the *Coronet* account and ". . . tried to find Cat Island on a map, but couldn't . . ." (Why I never hatched that brilliant idea is beyond me). Kennedy then went to *Coronet* for more information and was told to contact the governor of Tahiti. This the reporter did with great dispatch, for it seems he harbored a few tongue-in-cheek plans for Cat Island. He then related these plans to Fred Beck, columnist of the Los Angeles *Mirror*, who promptly told his readers all about it. Kennedy's plan was to kill the cats by bombing the island with poison gas. He would then, *Time* relates, ". . . build a comfortable hotel for tired newsmen (The Cat House) and start a profitable local industry (catgut).

"But Kennedy wiped away the grin when a Pasadena millionaire made an offer to underwrite a vacation trip to Cat Island in his 36-ft. schooner. Last week, as the expedition got ready to sail, a disillusioning cable arrived from Tahiti's governor: *There is no such island . . .*"

Thus did *Time*, in its always incisive style, expose as fiction that which ". . . cat-napping *Coronet* had printed as fact."

Time concluded by asking

(though by this time I confess I didn't give a hoot) "Where did Mrs. Beckhart, a fortyish California X-Ray therapist and housewife who writes free-lance articles as 'a hobby,' get the yarn? She said last week: 'A friend of mine, a very well-traveled person, told me about it. Unfortunately, he has since died . . .'"

That did it.

I dropped the magazines in the book return rack and walked disconsolately to the nearest telephone.

The operator's voice was pleasant but hardly enough to send waves of cheer tingling through me.

"Ziff-Davis!" she intoned rhythmically.

"Extension 378," I said.

A moment's pause.

Then a phone left its hook.

A quiet voice with a confidential tone said, "Fairman."

"I'm calling from the library," I informed him.

"Great! How's it going on that cat thing?"

I put it as briefly as possible.

"It's a dud."

"You don't mean to tell me," he said, with just a twinge of amusement in his voice, "that that story wasn't historically accurate!"

"Not only that," I said, "it was hysterically inaccurate!"

I left the library and walked gloomily to the bus stop at 42d and 5th. It's a pretty sad state of affairs when you've devoted so many leisure hours to inventing ways and means of killing off carnivorous house cats and one day you discover that there are no carnivorous house cats to kill off!

THE END

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SATAN'S FOOTPRINTS

By
ERIC FRANK RUSSELL

ILLUSTRATOR KEITH



Presupposing the existence of functioning invisible entities with supernatural powers, we arrive at the question: can a bodiless intelligence impress tangible substance to the point of leaving footprints? One logical answer is actually another question: What would a formless entity need of feet? Anyhow, there have been many cases of footprints being found where no footprints should logically be. In this article Eric Frank Russell cites several cases and comes up with some startling answers.

IN THE mid-nineteenth century there occurred a remarkable phenomenon that aroused widespread curiosity, much excitement and a little fear in the British Isles. This was the sudden appearance in the county of Devon of a long trail of mysterious footprints the like of which no man had seen before. First report of them was given in *The Times*, February 16, 1855, reading as follows:

EXTRAORDINARY OCCURRENCE

Considerable sensation has been evoked in the towns of Topsham, Lymptone, Ex-

mouth, Teignmouth, and Dawlish, in the south of Devon, in consequence of the discovery of a vast number of foot-tracks of a most strange and mysterious description. The superstitious go so far as to believe that they are the marks of Satan himself; and that great excitement has been produced among all classes may be judged from the fact that the subject has been descanted on from the pulpit.

It appears that on Thursday night last there was a very heavy fall of snow in the neighborhood of Exeter and South Devon. On the following morning the inhabitants of the towns were surprised at discovering the tracks of some strange and mysterious animal, endowed with the power of ubiquity, as the footprints were to be seen in all kinds of inaccessible places—on the tops of houses and narrow walls, in gardens and courtyards enclosed by high walls and palings, as well as in open fields. There was hardly a garden in Lympstone where the footprints were not observed.

The track appeared more like that of a biped than a quadruped and the steps were generally eight inches in advance of each other. The im-

pressions of the feet closely resembled that of a donkey's shoe and measured from an inch and a half (in some instances) to two and a half inches across. Here and there it appeared as if cloven, but in the generality of the steps the shoe was continuous, and, from the snow in the center remaining entire, merely showing the outer crest of the foot, it must have been convex.

The creature seems to have approached the doors of several houses and then to have retreated, but no one has been able to discover the standing or resting point of this mysterious visitor. On Sunday last the Rev. Mr. Musgrave alluded to the subject in his sermon and suggested the possibility of the footprints being those of a kangaroo; but this could scarcely have been the case as they were found on both sides of the estuary of the Exe.

At present it remains a mystery, and many superstitious people in the above towns are actually afraid to go outside their doors after night.

Having said that much, *The Times* lost interest, perhaps thinking it beneath its dignity to have anything to

do with the night-time gallivantings of Satan. It gave no more space to the subject. The *Illustrated London News* promptly chipped in by inviting first-hand reports from its readers and was swamped with correspondence. A witness on the spot, signing himself "South Devon," gave the facts as he saw them:

". . . The marks which appeared on the snow (which lay very thinly on the ground at the time) and which were seen on the Friday morning, to all appearance were the perfect impression of a donkey's hoof—the length four inches by two and three-quarter inches; but, instead of progressing as that animal would have done (or as any other animal would have done), feet right and left, it appeared that foot followed foot *in a single file*; the distance from each tread being eight inches, or rather more—the foot-marks in each parish being exactly the same size and the steps the same length.

"This mysterious visitor generally only passed once down or across each garden or courtyard, and did so in nearly all the houses in many parts of the several towns above mentioned, as also in the farms scattered about;

this regular track passing in some instances over the roofs of houses and haystacks, and very high walls (one fourteen feet), without displacing the snow on either side or altering the distance between the feet, and passing on as if the wall had not been any impediment. The gardens with high fences or walls, and gates locked, were equally visited as those open and unprotected.

"Now when we consider the distance that must have been gone over to have left these marks—I may say in almost every garden, on doorsteps, through the extensive woods of Luscombe, upon commons, in enclosures and farms—the actual progress must have exceeded a hundred miles. It is very easy for people to laugh at these appearances and account for them in an idle way. At present no satisfactory solution has been given. No known animal could have traversed this extent of country in one night, besides having to cross an estuary of the sea two miles broad. Neither does any known animal walk in a *line* of single footsteps, not even man.

"Birds could not have left these marks as no bird's foot leaves the impression of a

hoof, or, even if there were a bird capable of doing so, could it proceed in the direct manner above stated—nor would birds, even had they donkey's feet, confine themselves to one direct line, but hop here and there; but the nature of the mark at once sets aside its being the track of a bird.

"The following effect of the atmosphere upon these marks is given by many as a solution; but how could it be possible for the atmosphere to affect one impression and not another? On the morning that the above were observed the snow bore the fresh marks of cats, dogs, rabbits, birds, and men clearly defined. Why, then, should a continuous track, far more clearly defined—so clearly, even, that the raising in the center of the frog of each foot could be plainly seen—why then should this particular mark be the only one which was affected by the atmosphere and all the others left as they were?

"Besides, the most singular circumstance connected with it was that this particular mark removed the snow, wherever it appeared, clear, as if cut with a diamond or branded with a hot iron; of course, I am not alluding to

its appearance after having been trampled on, or meddled with by the curious in and about the thoroughfares of the towns. In one instance this track entered a covered shed, and passed through it out of a broken part of the wall at the other end, where the atmosphere could not affect it.

"The writer of the above has passed a five months' winter in the backwoods of Canada and has had much experience in tracking wild animals and birds upon the snow, and can safely say he has never seen a more clearly-defined track or one that appeared to be less affected by the atmosphere."

At this stage the astute reader may be ruminating on a couple of contradictions in the preceding accounts. Noting the raised crest of snow in the middle of each print, *The Times* says that the mysterious foot or feet must have been convex. But a convex foot would have left a hollow in the center of each print. The evidence is that the foot was *concave*. *The Times* also starts off its account by saying that "there was a very heavy fall of snow." Just how deep it was depends upon what one calls "very heavy."

As the man on the spot, Mr. South Devon reports that "the snow lay very thinly on the ground at the time," so thinly that the prints went right through it and left it looking "as if cut with a diamond or branded with a hot iron."

Another writer to the *Illustrated London News* asserted that local laborers, their wives and children, old crones and trembling old men, dreaded to stir out after sunset or to go half a mile into lanes or byways on a call or message, "under the conviction that this was the Devil's walk, and no other, and that it was wicked to trifle with such a manifest proof of the Great Enemy's immediate presence."

Yet another correspondent, "G.M.M.," stated that he had personally examined the prints in company of a local clergyman on whose lawn they had appeared.

"We traced them through a low privet hedge, by a circular opening of one foot diameter. On applying a rule, the interval between each impression was found to be undeviatingly eight and a half inches. This, in my opinion, is one of the most remarkable and confounding

circumstances we have to deal with.

"It was quite inexplicable that the animal, considering the scale of the foot, should leave in single file one print only, and as has already been observed, with intervals as exactly preserved as if the prints had been made by a drill or any other mechanical frame.

"A scientific acquaintance informed me of his having traced the same prints across a field up to a haystack. The surface of the stack was wholly free from marks of any kind, but on the opposite side of the stack, in a direction exactly corresponding with the tracks thus traced, the prints began again! The same fact has been ascertained in respect of a wall intervening. . . . Two other gentlemen, resident in the same parish, pursued a line of prints during three hours and a half, marking their progress under gooseberry bushes and espalier fruit-trees; and then missing them, regained sight of the impression on the roofs of some houses to which their march of investigation brought them.

"I have addressed communications to the British Museum, to the Zoological

Society, to the keepers of birds and beasts in the Regent's Park menagerie, and the universal reply is: they are utterly unable to form any conjecture on the subject, however correctly the impressions had been copied.

"I am emboldened to address you with more than the ordinary confidence of a correspondent 'well up in his facts' inasmuch as I am living in the center of the district where the alarm, so to speak, was first given. Sir L. Newman's Park, at Mamhead, is exactly opposite my own residence. Starcross Tower and Powderham Castle . . . are on the other side of the River Exe, two miles in its breadth; and the marks were as abundant throughout the places just specified and their neighborhood—Kenton, Dawlish, Newton, etc.—as here at Exmouth, Whitecombe Raleigh, Lympstone, Woodbury, Topsham, and the vicinity of Bicton and Budleigh."

There followed a welter of guesses naming half the living creatures known to the British scene, each correspondent writing lengthily and sometimes passionately in support of his particular candidate, and each seemingly

convinced that the unrecognizable was merely the recognizable somehow made unrecognizable to any but himself. Swans, moorhens, cranes, seagulls, bustards, turkeys and others were offered. Those who scorned the birds and preferred the beasts "proved" to their own satisfaction that the marks had been made by otters, frogs, polecats, mice, rabbits, hares, badgers and almost everything but tomcats.

One or two backed up the Rev. Mr. Musgrave's theory concerning kangaroos for no other reason than that a Mr. Fische, of Sidmouth, Devon, had in his private menagerie a couple of kangaroos both of which remained firmly caged throughout the entire ruckus.

A certain Thomas Fox, writing in the *Illustrated London News*, March 10, 1855, "proved" that the prints were caused by a rat jumping repeatedly and landing with all four feet close together to form an impression of single prints. If this were true, the creature had leaped at accurate intervals of eight and a half inches for a total distance of about one hundred miles, hopping up one side of rooftops and down the other, clearing haystacks and fourteen-foot walls

en route, and managing to teleportate itself across an estuary two miles wide.

Some rat!

Excited and argumentative laymen were silenced when suddenly Authority stepped in and made its pronouncement. This came in the form of a letter to the *Illustrated London News* from Richard Owen, then a famous naturalist whose views were regarded with proper awe.

"An esteemed zoological friend has submitted to me a carefully executed drawing of one of the more perfect impressions left in the snow at Luscombe, South Devon, on or about the 8th of last month. It was of the hind-foot of a badger. This is almost the only plantigrade quadruped we have in this island, and leaves a footprint larger than would be supposed from its size.

"The sketch . . . gives a correct general idea of the shape and proportion of these footprints but without the indication of the pads on the sole, and the five small claws. Such perfect footprints are rare because those of the fore- and hind-foot are commonly more or less blended together, producing the appearance of a line of single footsteps; which

appearance, if a bear had been abroad in the five winter months spent by your correspondent in Canada, would have shown him was not peculiar to the footsteps of man, but characteristic of other plantigrade mammals, though they may be quadrupedal. The badger sleeps a good deal in his winter retreat, but does not hibernate so regularly and completely as the bear does in the severer climate of Canada. The badger is nocturnal, and comes abroad occasionally in the late winter when hard-pressed by cold and hunger; it is a stealthy prowler, and most active and enduring in its quest for food.

"That one and the same animal should have gone over a hundred miles of a most devious and irregular route in one night is as improbable as that one badger only should have been awake and hungry out of the number concealed in the hundred miles of rocky and bosky Devonshire which has been startled by the impressions revealed by the rarely spread carpet of snow in that beautiful county.

"The onus of the proof that one creature made them in one night rests with the asserter, who ought to have

gone over the same ground, with a power of acute and unprejudiced observation, which seems not to have been exercised by him who failed to distinguish the truly single from the blended footprints in question.

"Nothing seems more difficult than to see a thing as it really is, unless it be the right interpretation of observed phenomena."

This represents the dogmatic mind in its most pompous mood. From the heights of his allegedly coldly scientific and purely objective wisdom Mr. Owen asserts that his solution is the one and only correct one. And that is in bland disregard of the fact that he never actually observed the phenomena he interprets, whereas those he criticizes had done so at first-hand.

A good deal of intelligent interest in this mystery was taken in modern times by the late Lieutenant-Commander Rupert T. Gould, R.N., a shrewd if somewhat irascible author who devoted much of his time to analyzing such puzzles, collecting and overhauling ancient typewriters and—to judge from his many letters to me—gathering odd-shaped scraps of writing

paper from heaven alone knows where. In his book *Oddities* he takes a dim view of Owen's opinion, pointing out that in Victorian days people tended to be overawed by well-known names and had not acquired the modern habit of reaching for the salt. Therefore Owen's statement was accepted without argument by all save those who had failed to see what Owen said they should have seen.

Nowadays, continues Gould a trifle acidly, we know a lot more about scientific dogmatism and a good deal more about Richard Owen. As a naturalist, Owen was esteemed a very great man but, like many such, was not above occasionally making bald assertions in defiance of facts. This weakness becomes most evident in 1857 during a controversy with Huxley on the subject of *hippocampus major*, Owen assuming the leadership of the anti-Darwinians and advancing the since exploded theory that the adult skull is a modified vertebral joint.

Possibly influenced to some extent by the fact that he was once a naval officer himself, Gould also damns Owen for his "utterly childish" explanation of the sea-serpent seen by H.M.S. *Daedalus* in

1848; pointing out that the said explanation flatly contradicts the observed facts and postulates that the naval officers who observed them were, "one and all, half-witted."

Owen's theory, disguised as an incontrovertible statement of fact, does not stand up under serious examination by anyone with enough gumption not to be influenced by a big name. For an animal of its bulk and build the badger has a fairly wide stance. It is quite true that the prints of its hind-feet may be impressed upon and blend into those of its fore-feet. But not in single line. They form two distinct lines staggered with respect to each other.

And while a badger might conceivably swim an estuary two miles wide, or while one or more badgers might prowl one side of a broad river while a second group foraged the other side, no badger ever heard of has the agility to mount house-tops, stroll with neat precision across sharply sloping roofs, jump high walls, or surmount haystacks without leaving a print thereon.

The most noteworthy and the most important feature of the whole affair, as detailed by eye-witnesses, is that feelings were stirred across the

entire range from curiosity to open alarm, because the prints were *unfamiliar*. They were strange. They were new, unrecognizable, incomprehensible, even to old inhabitants who had lived through many a snowfall in company with all the local lifeforms. Indeed, it was these older ones, who could tell a badger from an ox, who got the biggest scare.

The Times, after apparently deciding to have nothing more to do with the matter, weakened enough to give it small mention in its issue of March 6, 1855.

"The interest has scarcely yet subsided, many inquiries still being made into the origin of the footprints which caused so much consternation upon the morning of the 8th ult. In addition to the circumstances mentioned in *The Times* a little while ago, it may be stated that at Dawlish a number of persons sallied out, armed with guns and other weapons, for the purpose, if possible, of discovering and destroying the animal which was supposed to have been so busy in multiplying its footprints. As might have been expected, the party returned as they went. Various speculations have been made as to the cause of the foot-

prints. Some have asserted that they are those of a kangaroo, while others affirm that they are the impressions of claws of large birds driven ashore by stress of the weather. On more than one occasion reports have been circulated that an animal from a menagerie has been caught, but the matter at present is as much involved in mystery as ever it was."

The late Charles Fort, by far the most redoubtable digger-up of peculiar data, also turned his attention to this mystery, and found concomitant items that had escaped Gould's notice. I

quote from his omnibus volume, *The Books of Charles Fort*.

The Times, March 14, 1840:

"Among the high mountains of that elevated district where Glenorchy, Glenlyon and Glenochay are contiguous, there have been met with several times, during this and also the former winter, upon the snow, the tracks of an animal seemingly unknown at present in Scotland. The print, in every respect, is an exact resemblance to that of a foal of considerable size, with this small difference, perhaps, that the sole seems



a little longer or not so round; but as no one has had the good fortune as yet to have obtained a glimpse of this creature, nothing more can be said of its shape or dimensions; only it has been remarked, from the depth to which the feet sank in the snow, that it must be a beast of considerable size. It has been observed also that its walk is not like that of the generality of quadrupeds, but that it is more like the bounding or leaping of a horse when scared or pursued. It is not in one locality that its tracks have been met with, but through a range of at least twelve miles."

Illustrated London News, March 17, 1855: a correspondent from Heidelberg writes, "upon the authority of a Polish Doctor of Medicine," that on the Piashowa-gora (Sand Hill), a small elevation on the border of Galicia, but in (then) Russian Poland, such marks are to be seen in the snow every year, and sometimes in the sand of this hill, and "are attributed by the inhabitants to supernatural influences."

Since Fort never gained either time or space for the full expression of his ideas concerning these and number-

less other more baffling incidents, even in a volume of greater than a thousand pages, it is futile to attempt to summarize his expressions in a page or two of this book. All that may be offered, for the reader's edification, is his satirical comment: "It is my own acceptance that not less than a thousand one-legged kangaroos, each shod with a very small horseshoe, could have marked that snow in Devonshire."

Rupert T. Gould also sought elsewhere for similar prints but seems to have found only those discovered on Kerguelen Island, as mentioned on page 27. The original account was written up in May, 1840, by Captain Sir James Clarke Ross, when his ships, the *Erebus* and *Terror*, were lying off Kerguelen.

"Of land animals we saw none; and the only traces we could discover of there being any on this island were the singular foot-steps of a pony or ass, found by the party detached for surveying purposes, under the command of Lieutenant Bird, and described by Doctor Robertson as 'being three inches in length and two and a half in breadth, having a small and deeper depression on each side, and shaped like a horseshoe.'

"It is by no means improbable that the animal has been cast on shore from some wrecked vessel. They traced its footsteps for some distance in the recently fallen snow, in hopes of getting a sight of it, but lost the tracks on reaching a large space of rocky ground which was free from snow."

Kerguelen is a large, sparse, sub-antarctic island with little enough flora and fauna. One thing seems fairly certain: whatever hoofed creature was native to the place, or "had been cast on shore from some wrecked vessel," it was anything but a badger.

The general agreement in areas so dispersed as Devon, Scotland, Poland and Kerguelen Island is that whatever makes mysterious, single-file tracks is hoofed or has feet the treading-surfaces of which leave hooflike spoor. Witness after witness compares the marks with those of a foal, donkey, pony or ass. Though spread apart in space and time the phenomena have the puzzling aspect of prints left by a junior member of the equine species making short hops on one leg.

On January 10, 1945, when Rundstedt's push through the

Ardennes had failed to reach its objectives, snow lay in Belgium at depth varying between two and four feet. And it was there that this writer discovered strange prints very similar to but not identical with those already described. A drawing of the phenomenon, complete with measurements, was used as cover illustration for the fifteenth issue of *Doubt*, the magazine of the Fortean Society. Details published therein enable me to have the peculiar experience of quoting myself. All that is omitted from the following description is the harrowing tale of what I suffered struggling in rubber thigh-boots through that depth of snow.

"(The prints) were spotted on a snow-covered hill behind the Château de Morveau, near Everberg, partway between Brussels and Louvain, Belgium, at 10 a.m., on January 10, 1945. The snow varied from two to four feet in depth and I traced the prints for half a mile in a north-westerly direction until they entered a tiny wood or copse, where abruptly they disappeared. A thorough search of the copse revealed no hole, lair or tree where anything might have concealed itself

without leaving some evidence in the snow. I then traced the prints in the opposite direction, south-easterly, for nearly two miles, crossing several fields and a small stream, until they faded out on a hillside thick with wind-blown snow which had drifted over the prints for an unknown distance. But the sign did not reappear on the crest of the hill, nor was there any indication on the opposite sheltered side.

"The prints measured about two and a half inches in length by one and a half wide, were spaced in pairs one behind the other to form a single file, the distance between prints of one pair being about nine inches, and between pairs twelve to fifteen inches. (This means they were not regularly spaced print by print, but alternated in nine and twelve-fifteen inch gaps.) They ran in a dead straight line, one print immediately behind the other without slightest misplacement to left or right. Judging by their depth whatever made them was at least the weight of a good medium-sized creature such as an Airedale.

"Due to heavy frost and lack of further snow, the prints remained visible for

two days, during which time I drew the attention of several people to them, including one Arthur Davies of Sheffield, and Victor Beha of London, as well as some local Belgians. Unfortunately all were singularly lacking in curiosity, Beha jesting that they must have been made by a gyroscopic rat—probably as good a guess as that of any dogmatic expert. The Belgians could not think what they might be, never having seen the like before. Three cameras were available, all empty, and not a film to be got for love or money, otherwise I could have recorded this phenomenon for all time.

"The tracks looked to me somewhat like those of a large goat, and there were goats aplenty in that part of Belgium, but goats don't step leaving single-line spoor. Unfortunately, the prints were not as dramatic as the ones seen in Devon—they didn't run for miles and they didn't traverse rooftops."

At that time the evidence definitely created the impression of small hoof-marks, though at this date I do not know why I thought of a goat rather than a pony or donkey. There was nothing to show that the hoof was cloven. Pos-

sibly my thoughts were influenced by the local multiplicity of goats. All I do know is that I witnessed something baffling and sufficiently like earlier phenomena to be worth noting and recording.

To return to the prints seen in Devon; eye-witnesses confessed themselves mystified not only by the one-legged appearance of the tracks but also by the way they jumped "unsurmountable" obstacles. The line of prints, they declared, meandered through or over all sorts of "inaccessible" places such as rooftops, haystacks and enclosures surrounded by high walls. But had the witnesses seen sparrow-tracks doing the same they would have thought nothing of it. Any bird could do it with no trouble at all. This phase of the matter is mystifying only if it be assumed that the track-maker is an animal.

Some years ago a Shropshire friend of mine followed a single file of bird-prints across the snow in his paddock, through a hedge and into a field where eventually he caught up with a lame jackdaw which was hopping on one foot and fluttering its wings. He took the bird home, tended to it. In the end it be-

came the family pet and something of a household tyrant.

This petty incident, plus consideration of the real "unsurmountability" of obstacles in Devon, moves me to suppose that the Satanic foot-prints could have been made only by one or more winged creatures either hoofed or having strong, heavily webbed, concave feet that in given circumstances—such as presence of snow—leave prints deceitfully like those of hoofs. Creatures that waddle as they walk, placing one foot before the other.

If this none too satisfactory theory should happen to be correct it will prove difficult to gain positive identification of the culprit or culprits until such time as it or they may be caught red-handed doing it again. But it would be a mistake to place the blame on life-forms native to the localities in which strange prints have appeared. The quality of this mystery is that the prints are unfamiliar.

Given that some kind of bird is responsible for such tracks, we must accept that it may have been a rare visitor of a kind not yet known to science. One from anywhere in the world, from Poles to Equator, inexplicably trans-

ported hundreds or thousands of miles from home.

The mysterious misplacement of living creatures is nothing new. Time and again they have turned up far from natural habitat, appearing as incongruous in their surroundings as would a hyena in the Isle of Man.

Daily Telegraph, July 9, 1938—TROPICAL SNAKES IN POND. "Water snakes of a kind found only in tropical regions have been discovered in a lake covered with lilies and iris in the grounds of the home of Miss A. Bevis, Sarisbury Green, Hampshire."

A six-year-old bear was shot near Oloron Sainte-Marie, France. Ribbon fish were found hard aground in Scotland and South Africa. Turtles native to the Gulf of Mexico, known as Kemp's Loggerheads, ambled along beaches of the English Channel and Ireland. Nick, a brindle bull-terrier, vanished from New Brighton, Cheshire, swam, flew or walked across seventy-five miles of ocean and blandly popped up at Groudle, near Douglas, Isle of Man. It is a wonder he did not encounter an out-of-place hyena there. There is an irresistible theory to explain this dog-feat, namely,

that Nick was in league with Old Nick.

Daily Telegraph, June 28, 1938—AFRICAN TURTLE IN KENT. "While working on the Royal Military Canal, at Kenardington, Kent, Mr. F. Gill saw a turtle basking in the sun and managed to catch it. Measuring eleven inches from head to tail, it is similar in appearance to a tortoise, but much faster in movement." The thing was identified as an African mud-turtle.

In 1931, according to the *New York Times*, the police of Mineola, Long Island, mustered their resources and set up a hue and cry after a hairy ape, four feet tall, seen wandering loose by several people. Armed citizens joined the hunt, poked and pried all over the area. Apelike footprints were found, complete with the offset thumb characteristic of the species. This was in June and the pursuit continued unabated into mid-July when several more startled folk reported seeing the creature. No ape was found.

Data of this description can be piled up to formidable proportions but it might be fitting to terminate the subject with the statement that a queer skull was dug up in the Isle of Man. It was sent

to the Department of Vertebrate Zoology of Liverpool Museum, where Douglas A. Allan, Ph.D., D.Sc., identified it as the skull of an adult hyena.

The complete unfamiliarity of prints found in Devon and elsewhere points directly to something that had strayed far from home, some creature or creatures whose spoor may have appeared quite commonplace to Naga headhunters or Eskimos or even the penguins at the South Pole.

Evidence suggests that the print-maker was bipedal and put one foot directly before the other, leaving a single line of prints. It was winged. And it had splayed, concave feet as perfectly adapted to its own harsh environment as are those of the camel.

It is this writer's suspicion that in the north or south polar regions, or both, lives a rare bird not yet known to science. Like the albatross, it

has powerful wings and is capable of long, sustained flights. But like the road-runner of the Great American Desert, it prefers to walk.

Normally, this bird forages through polar wastes, chasing surefootedly across fields of snow, scampering up the roof-like tilts of glaciers, flapping over walls of ice and haystacks of bare rock. Once in a blue moon it is swept far from its usual hunting grounds or is enticed abroad by the spread of snow. Then it lands, mooches around a while—and scares hell out of every decent Christian for miles and miles.

This is all theory, of course, backed by nothing save that it fits the facts. I offer it mostly in the hope that some day ornithologists may discover my bird, give credit where credit is due, and graciously name it "Russell's snow-runner."

THE END

SOMEBODY UP THERE TYPED ME

(Continued from page 72)

—the fatal one: Just suppose, he thought; just suppose that all of the people in the cosmos are no more than characters in some super-cosmic novel

that some super-cosmic editor is reading?

What would happen to us if he rejected the manuscript?...

THE END

ACCORDING TO YOU ...

Dear Editor:

I just read the June issue of *Fantastic*. Shocking! Do you realize that not one of your stories or articles has a moral point? Neither do they teach a lesson.

I laughed, I cried, I lived, I died—but—I didn't learn anything. Except for the fact that: *Fantastic* is an entertaining magazine. Really went nuts over "The Madder They Come" and "Terror In Cut-Throat Cove."

Fantastic I love you. Will you marry me?

Kell D. Robertson, Jr.
727 W. 3rd St.
Mesa, Arizona

• *Of course we'll marry you. Bring your own license.*

Dear Editor:

The only thing fantastic about "The Cheat" and "Snake Pit" is the fact that they were printed in *Fantastic*. Why?

Since the man at the drugstore insists that he is not running a public reading room, the only way I can read my favorite form of fiction is to buy a magazine and take it home. The only way I can decide which magazine I want to buy is by glancing at the table of contents and through past experience with that particular magazine.

When you include such stories as the two mentioned you not only obtain my money under false pretenses but, even worse, you cheat me out of some of the precious few minutes a day I can use for reading. I keep reading, hoping that the final paragraph will have a fantastic twist. Wasted time. When I want to read "straight" fiction I'll buy a magazine that features that type of story. When I want to read fantasy or science fiction I suppose I'll have to start buying some magazine other than *Fantastic*.

"Snake Pit" was indeed "like a bucket of ice water right in the face." I was expecting a fantasy story. I got a fact story. Out here in Oklahoma we have rattlesnake roundups every spring. What's fantastic about that?

If your budget is low or good science fiction scarce, I suggest that you look through your back issues and reprint the best stories of the war years. A lot of us were unable to stroll down to the corner drugstore for magazines in those days and many of the younger fans weren't reading, either.

Here's a little problem I find intriguing: it's pretty generally

agreed that the universe is expanding; since the universe, by definition, includes all there is and there is nothing outside the universe, just what is the universe expanding into? Where is the room for expansion coming from?

John Haliburton, Jr.
Box 308
Allen, Okla.

• *You send me the answers to the last two questions in your letter, John, and I'll shoot back answers to the others you asked.*

Dear Editor:

I am prompted into writing you concerning the May issue of *Fantastic* by reading the letters from readers. I rarely read science fiction and only picked up this issue because the newsstand had run out of mystery magazines which I had not already read. Mystery and detective stories are my usual diet in the field of escapist reading material.

However, I did get this issue and I read each and every story in it. This fact somewhat surprised me because at the rare times in the past when I have picked up a science fiction magazine I hardly ever could wade through more than two or three stories. Perhaps my infertile brain is unable to cope with the world of supersonic jet propelled radioactive solar-powered airships manned by little green men with horns and tails and possessing telepathic minds and the inevitable ray-gun. Better I should stick to Florian Slappey, Private Eye. Not as elevating, perhaps, but far more understandable. I found, much to my surprise, within the covers of *Fantastic*, none of the little green men, however, but an assortment of very easy to grasp human beings, with human traits and frailties. The closest your magazine came to being what I had thought of as science fiction was in "The Illegitimate Egg," which I found very refreshing and amusing, and in "Progress Zero," which although it did deal with a being from another planet, still confined itself to the realm of the plausible. I certainly enjoyed Henry Slesar's style of writing in "The Invisible Man Murder Case." All right. That's another reason I bought the book. It hinted there was something about a "murder case" within. However, now that I have become a member of the clan and shall look for your magazine every month, could I offer a suggestion? Please don't pay any attention to those twerps who write to you and find fault with the "new policy" you speak of. I don't know what the old one was but I certainly approve of this one. If they want to read about the little green men, let them buy one of the countless publications featuring him. And by twerps I cite as one of the biggest, your Mr. Jack Jones who was so gracious

in letting you know his highly intelligent views (in his own opinion, at any rate) on just why your magazine is going to fail. Your whole editorial staff must have quaked in its collective boots at his admonitions.

One thing is bothering me. I am wondering where it was that Lawrence Kingery ("Snake Pit") saw rattlesnakes as big around as the calf of a man's leg. I have seen quite a few rattlers in my 27 years, having grown up in Arizona, and I have even shot a couple, but never have I seen one that big. I have seen them a good six and eight feet long, that is true, but never that big around. It was a very sickening story.

I think Mr. Finlay is your best artist. I am discouraged to see that Mr. Jack Jones agrees with me on this point. I do not agree with him, however, that you should "get rid of those other hacks" or that you should "work Finlay to the bone."

Barbara Coons
P.O. Box 958
Solana Beach, California

● *We'd like to have you pick up a copy of the current Amazing Stories, Barbara. It's all science fiction but you'll find that doesn't necessarily mean little green men. There are also big blue men and medium-sized yellow ones. Seriously, we feel the novels we've been featuring lately are examples of the fine writing science fiction is producing.*

Dear Ed:

New *Fantastic* format is terrible! You say it's the readers who do the actual editing. Well, who asked you to change policy, anyway? Add my vote to those who want a s-f magazine again.

How about reeling off a yarn like "The Black Blockade" from the good old days and put some spark back into the mag?

Phil Schrag
25 Shore Rd.
Pelham, N. Y.

● *Watch for the Reader's Ballot next month, Phil, and be sure and mark your preferences and send it in.*

Dear Editor:

I have been reading your magazine for almost twenty years and in all that time I have seldom made any complaints. But now I have a few words to say about the June issue of *Fantastic*. I may be unduly romantic but I like a story "boy meets girl, boy gets girl" type. "The Thing Beneath the Bay" was the only one of that type in this

issue. I am not saying the other stories weren't good, but I didn't care for the endings. When you do get good stories with unhappy endings please hold back to just one or two a month so as to keep your many readers in a happier frame of mind.

Newton W. Hooton
13 Buckingham St.
Cambridge 38, Mass.

● *"The Thing Beneath the Bay" is getting so much praise we suspect the author's friends are at work. Hope he has scads of them and they all become new readers.*

Dear Editor:

Received June issue of *Fantastic* today and think it's the second best I ever read. The Valigursky cover is the best one I have seen. The stories were tops. "Hungarian Rhapsody" was terrific.

Paul Shingleton, Jr.
Dunbar, W. Va.

● *You make us wonder which issue you considered the absolute top number one best, Paul.*

Dear Editor:

"The Thing Beneath the Bay" in the June issue of *Fantastic* is probably the best story ever to appear in the magazine. It mixed just enough religion and science fiction to make the story exciting and mysterious.

"Terror In Cut-Throat Cove" was also very good, but it did not have the same strange, interesting setting of the other story. On the whole, the book is the greatest I've ever read and I'm not ashamed to admit it, but couldn't you cut down a little on the width and concentrate on the thickness and reading material in the magazine?

Henry Wolff
36 Hawthorne St.
Brooklyn 25, N. Y.

● *How about a short note explaining what you mean by width?*

Dear Editor:

I am fairly new to the reading of *Fantastic*. But I have just finished "The Thing Beneath the Bay" and I just had to write and tell you of the thrill and pride I experienced in this story. It's something new in science fiction and I heartily approve. I sincerely commend your magazine for printing this story. From what I have

seen before, you took a chance. I for one, and I don't think I'm alone, think it was worth it. Let's have more of the same calibre. I believe it is needed in this day and age of the world and science exploiting into the unknown. We need to be reminded that this is all of a great plan and we are being watched, guided and helped by the greatest scientific mystery of all. The mystery we have come to accept and forget.

Stories of this type make us think. Perhaps some readers will come to the conclusion and be very annoyed and perturbed by its ending. But I believe that is only because they desire to keep this basic truth as far from entering their lives as they can. How else can the world explain its actions.

I am not a subscriber to your magazine as yet. My husband is in the Army and right now we are headed for Europe. When we get settled I will send in my subscription.

Mrs. John P. LaRue
US Army Hospital, Fort Lawton
Seattle, Wash.

• *We'll be waiting for your subscription, Mrs. LaRue.*

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EXCHANGE

COLLECTOR. Looking for postmarks from all over the world. Now has 39 states and 12 foreign countries. Write: Mrs. Marlene Frenchman, R. R. #1, Wann, Oklahoma.

SCIENCE Fiction enthusiast, age 25, wishes to exchange tapes $\frac{3}{4}$ and $7\frac{1}{2}$ speed. Richard Deming, 896 Whittier Ave., Akron 20, Ohio.

LIKES Stamp collecting. Is a science-fiction beginner, 14 years old. Jeffrey Lee, 225 Maple Avenue, Riverhead, N. Y.

COLLECTS Pictures of jet planes and stamps. Eric Yenson, 270 Main St., Jeppe, Johannesburg, South Africa.

PEN PALS

WORLD-FAMOUS Fine artist wishes correspondence with female fans. Leo Volinsky, 19 Rockland Street, Orangeburg, N. Y.

X-RAY Technician in Air Force Medical Service. Wants letters from really interested science-fiction fans. S/Sgt. Lowell M. Schuman, AF17408293 4454th U. S. A. F. Hospital, Ardmore AFB, Okla.

ENTHUSIASTIC Science-fiction fan wishes to make new friends through correspondence. Will answer all mail promptly. Marijane Johnson, 1011 E. Hoffman, Spokane 22, Wash.

HEP Cat, 28 years old, 158 lbs. of fun, looking for young people to share his hobbies. Invented instrument that looks like a flying saucer. C. H. Hoey, Box 117, 218 East 86th Street, New York 28, N. Y.

COLLECTOR Of 200 science-fiction magazines and paperbacks. Interested in astronomy, flying saucers and journalism. Wants lots of pen pals, Sheri Marshall, 2737 Hampshire Rd., Cleveland Heights 6, Ohio.

ENGLISHMAN, 26-year-old wishes to correspond with Americans interested in s-f movies, photography, literature. Eric Stockley, 261 Manchester Rd., Higher Ince Wigan, Lancashire, England.

LONELY Chinese girl living in Hong Kong wishes to correspond with men ages 20-35 all nationalities. Betty Lam, 75 Baker St., 1st Floor, Hung Hom, Kowloon, Hong Kong.

SOLDIER, 23, Interested in science fiction, electronics, theoretical science, music, photography and golf. 4139094 S.A.C. Reeve J. A. Base Electrical Section, R.A.F.M.B., Seletar, Singapore 28.

STAMP Collector and chess player, 21 years old. Hoping to hear from s-f enthusiasts, also earth-type girls. Sanford Greene, 63 Parkview Road, Elmsford, N. Y.

AGE 27. Unmarried, wishes correspondence from all sharing these interests: classical music, theory of numbers, physical sciences, bio-chemistry. Walter H. Breen, 311 E. 72nd Street, New York 21, N. Y.

WOULD Enjoy getting acquainted with my fellow Amazing readers through correspondence. Dolores Tangora, 5 Venna Avenue, North Haledon, New Jersey.

WANTED

LOOKING For title of pocket-sized book about discredited professor or scientist named Mike, hired under weird circumstances on space ship which turns out to be real thing. Laura & Ralph John, RFD #3, Cahrdon, O.

UNITED States mint stamp collector looking for Jack Finney's book "Invasion of the Body Snatchers." Richard Beauvais, 17835 West Roosevelt Ave., Milwaukee 14, Wis.

WANTS Correspondence on scientific facts. Am archaeology, Indian lore and flying saucer enthusiast. John Thrush, 134 Addison Rd., Scot Pleasant, Md.

MEMBER Of Civil Air Patrol interested in meteorology and UFO investigation, wishes reports on sightings from other enthusiasts. Robert E. Wallace, 7 Virginia Rd., Arlington, Mass.

OFFER \$100.00 each for March and April 1923 *Weird Tales*. M. J. Miller, 1348 Lakeland Avenue, Lakewood 7, Ohio.

FOR SALE

PERSONAL Collection of 370 science-fiction magazines and books in good and excellent condition. 5 for \$1.00. Joseph Miner, 1655 N. Richmond St., Chicago 47, Ill.

SCIENTIFCTION, Fantasy Books, Magazines. Gerry de La Ree, 277 Howland Ave., River Edge, N. Y.

MISCELLANEOUS

BOY, 13, Wishes to tape correspond with people all over the world. Vincent Iacoboni, 19 Cottage Street, Leominster, Mass.

INSTRUCTION

YOU Can have heaven— here and now. My literature suggests how. David OrNSTEEN, Duquoin, Illinois.

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Men Turn to Murder,
Lust and Depravity!**

WHEN "NO BLADE OF GRASS" ran serially in the *Post* the editors wrote, "This is a book unlike any we have ever published—a story of human degradation, violent deed, horrible fascination.... Once you've started it, you *MUST* finish it!" Here is a picture of how normal human beings—THE PEOPLE YOU KNOW—might react IF ALL THE RESTRAINTS OF CIVILIZATION WERE TO BREAK DOWN OVERNIGHT!

Slowly and relentlessly world harvests have been destroyed by a virus that attacks vital crops—wheat, rice, corn, etc. Whole populations die of starvation... China, Japan, India and finally all of Asia! Finally, in England, rumor gets afoot that THE CITIES ARE TO BE ATOM-BOMBED so that the remaining population can survive!

**What Would YOU Do
In This Situation?**

Panic runs rampant. John and Ann Custance and a party of nine manage to break out of blockaded London. They hope to find safety up north. As they begin their perilous trip, they see a world gone mad. With death staring them in the face, people return to the age of the brutes—and stop at nothing: not murder, rape, nor depravity!

You watch in horror as Ann faces a fate that every woman prays to avoid. Olivia Bucklev cannot bring herself to believe what her eyes tell her is true! Men and women abandon decency and commit unspeakable crimes.

—Continued on other side



**NO BLADE
OF GRASS**

by John Christopher