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COURIER OF CHAOS

Dynamic Novelet

by Poul Anderson

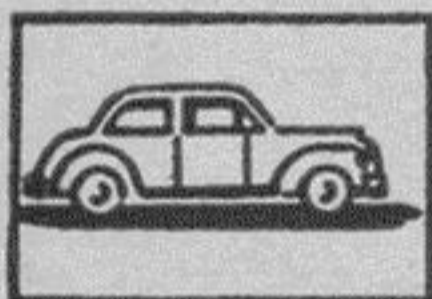
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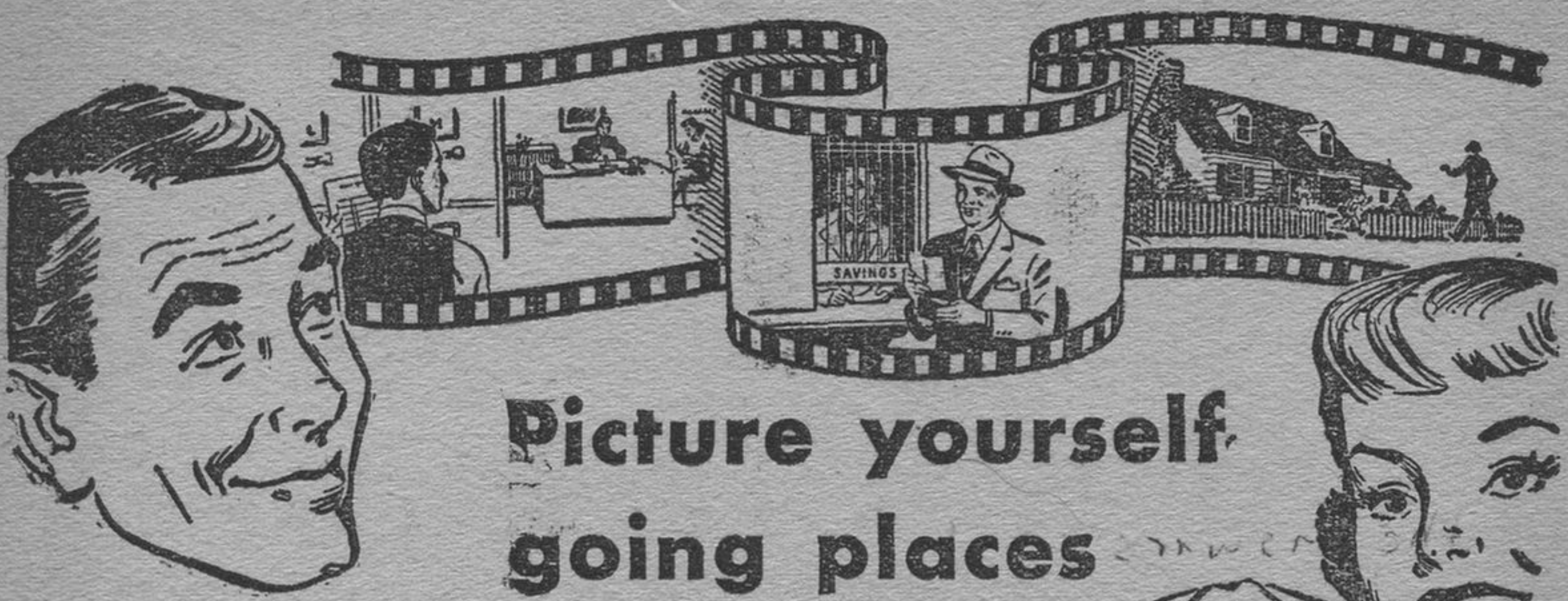
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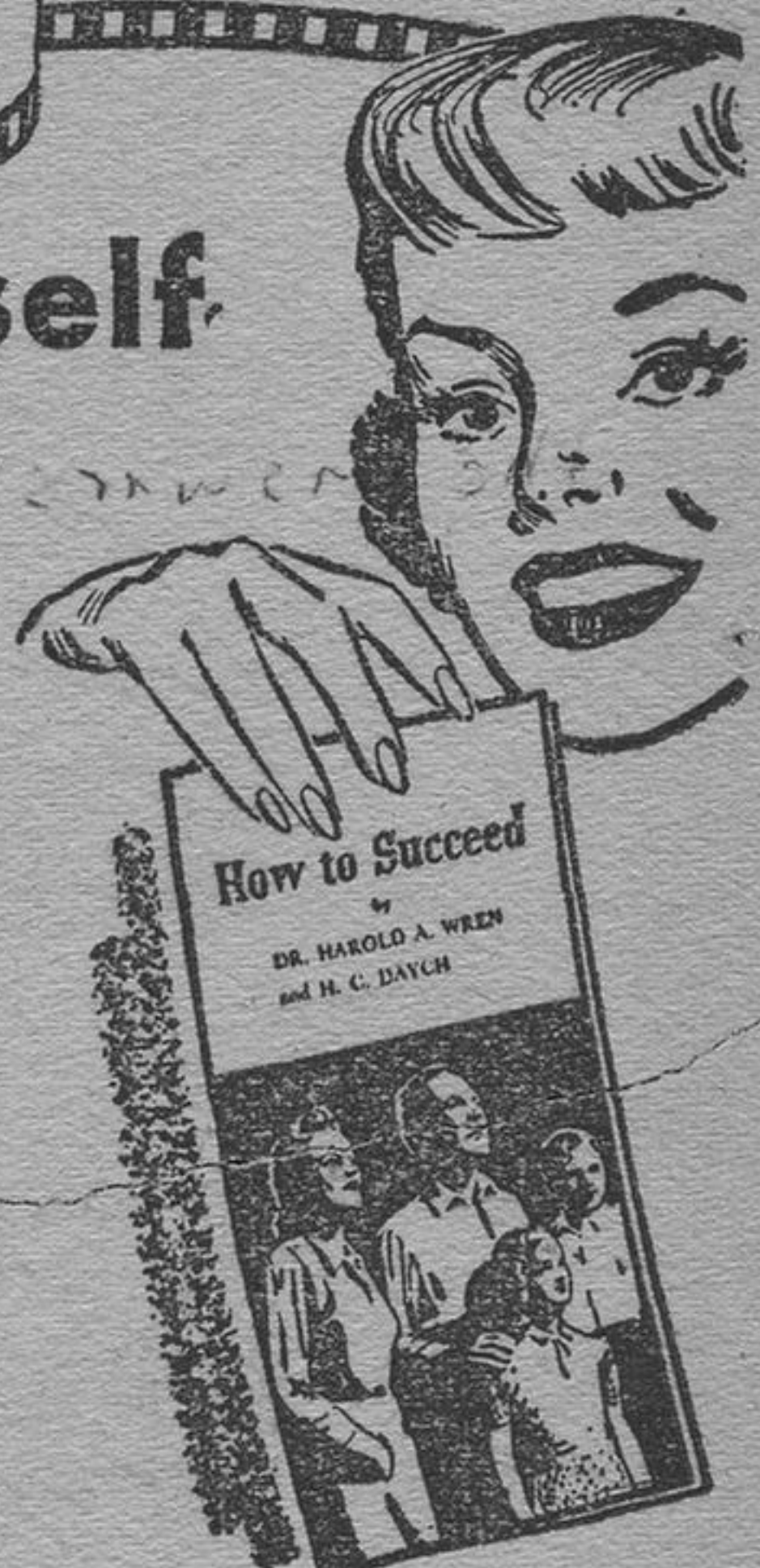
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FUTURE

SCIENCE FICTION

March
1953

Volume
3
Number
6

Robert W. Lowndes

Editor

FEATURE STORY

the answers

... AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE Clifford D. Simak 52

Hope stirs in the heart of the lone human when the expedition finds what appears to be the resting-place of his kind . . .

NOVELETS

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From millennia to come comes Ushtu on a mission as strange as himself.

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They didn't talk about weather; they did things about it!

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Anyone could discover the moon's secret, but no one could tell it.

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Carl Leland discovers that Earthlings don't know the meaning of complication!

A BIG MAN WITH THE GIRLS James MacCreigh & Judith Merrill 45

Now if Bart Mandell hadn't been just mildly jealous . . .

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Cover by Milton Luros, illustrating "The Moon Is Death".
Interior Illustrations by Tom Baecham, Milton Luros and Paul Orban

Next Issue On Sale March 1st

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\$10 TO \$15 WEEK SPARE TIME
"Four months after enrolling for NRI course, was able to service Radios . . . averaged \$10 to \$15 a week spare time. Now have full time Radio and Television business."—William Weyde, Brooklyn, New York.

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WANT YOUR OWN BUSINESS?

Let me show you how you can be your own boss. Many NRI trained men start their own business with capital earned in spare time. Robert Dohmen, New Prague, Minn., whose store is shown at left, says, "Am now tied in with two Television outfits and do warranty work for dealers. Often fall back to NRI textbooks for information."

1. EXTRA MONEY IN SPARE TIME

Many students make \$5, \$10 a week and more EXTRA fixing neighbors' Radios in spare time while learning. The day you enroll I start sending you SPECIAL BOOKLETS that show you how. Tester you build with kits I send helps you make extra money servicing sets, gives practical experience on circuits common to Radio and Television. All equipment is yours to keep.

2. GOOD PAY JOB

NRI Courses lead to these and many other jobs: Radio and TV service, P.A., Auto Radio, Lab, Factory, and Electronic Controls Technicians, Radio and TV Broadcasting, Police, Ship and Airways Operators and Technicians. Opportunities are increasing. The United States has over 105 million Radios—over 2,900 Broadcasting Stations—more expansion is on the way.

3. BRIGHT FUTURE

Think of the opportunities in Television. Over 15,000,000 TV sets are now in use; 108 TV stations are operating and 1800 new TV stations have been authorized . . . many of them expected to be in operation in 1953. This means more jobs—good pay jobs with bright futures. More operators, installation service technicians will be needed. Now is the time to get ready for a successful future in TV! Find out what Radio and TV offer you.

You Learn Servicing or Communications by Practicing With Kits I Send



Television Is Today's Good Job Maker

TV now reaches from coast-to-coast. Qualify for a good job as a service technician or operator. My course includes many lessons on TV. You get practical experience . . . work on circuits common to both Radio and Television with my kits. Now is the time to get ready for success in Television!

This Is Just Some of the Equipment My Students Build. All Parts Yours to Keep.

Keep your job while training at home. Hundreds I've trained are successful RADIO-TELEVISION Technicians. Most had no previous experience; many no more than grammar school education. Learn Radio-Television principles from illustrated lessons. You also get PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE. Pictured at left, are just a few of the pieces of equipment you build with kits of parts I send. You experiment with, learn circuits common to Radio and Television.

Mail Coupon—find out what RADIO-TELEVISION Can Do for You
Act Now! Send for my FREE DOUBLE OFFER. Coupon entitles you to actual Servicing Lesson; shows how you learn at home. You'll also receive my 64-page book, "How to Be a Success in Radio-Television." Send coupon in envelope or paste on postal. J. E. SMITH, Pres., Dept. 3CT National Radio Institute, Washington 9, D. C. Our 39th Year.

Good for Both—FREE

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A Department For Science-Fictionists



Down To Earth

THERE HAVE been requests for notes and comment upon our authors, and I realize that most of the readers who made this suggestion were thinking of biographical material. That is something I shall have to leave up to the authors themselves, and you shall have this whenever possible. Meanwhile, if you like, I can fill in with partial commentaries, such as the following:

Poul Anderson first appeared, to the best of my knowledge, in the March, 1947, issue of *Astounding Science Fiction*, with a story entitled "Tomorrow's Children", written in collaboration with F. N. Waldrop. It was a short novelet (dealing with horrifying mutations resultant from radioactive residues, following an atomic war) possibly written just after Hiroshima, and before science-fictionists realized that the theme wasn't very sound scientifically. Be that as it may, the tale was among the memorable of its kind, and Anderson has more than fulfilled early expectations. Your editor's nomination for his most significant contribution to science-fiction thought is his novelet, "The Double-Dyed Villains", also from *Astounding*, which was anthologized in a recent Gnome Press offering—with "The Helping

Hand" (also anthologized) another contender. "Double-Dyed Villains", you may recall deals with the problem of keeping the peace in a galactic civilization, and Anderson's approach is just the opposite of Dr. E. E. Smith's. Instead of a super-Galahad Galactic Patrol, the organization Anderson envisions operates on just about every possible level of fraud, deception, and skullduggery—except murder. The great secret of the Patrol is that the legend of its mighty sweeping power and blazing guns of justice is a myth—no Patrolman is permitted to kill, even in self-defense! But anything else goes, and cunning, backed up by the myth makes it possible for the Patrol to prevent war by playing planetary power-combinations against each other, preventing any one group capable of precipitating inter-world war from getting into a position where it can do so. The slogan is "Corruption is the price of Freedom". The other story mentioned above, deals with the deadly results of a technologically superior culture assisting one far beneath it on that level. Anderson's first appearance in our pages was with the well-received novelet, "The Long Return", which appeared in our October 1950, issue.

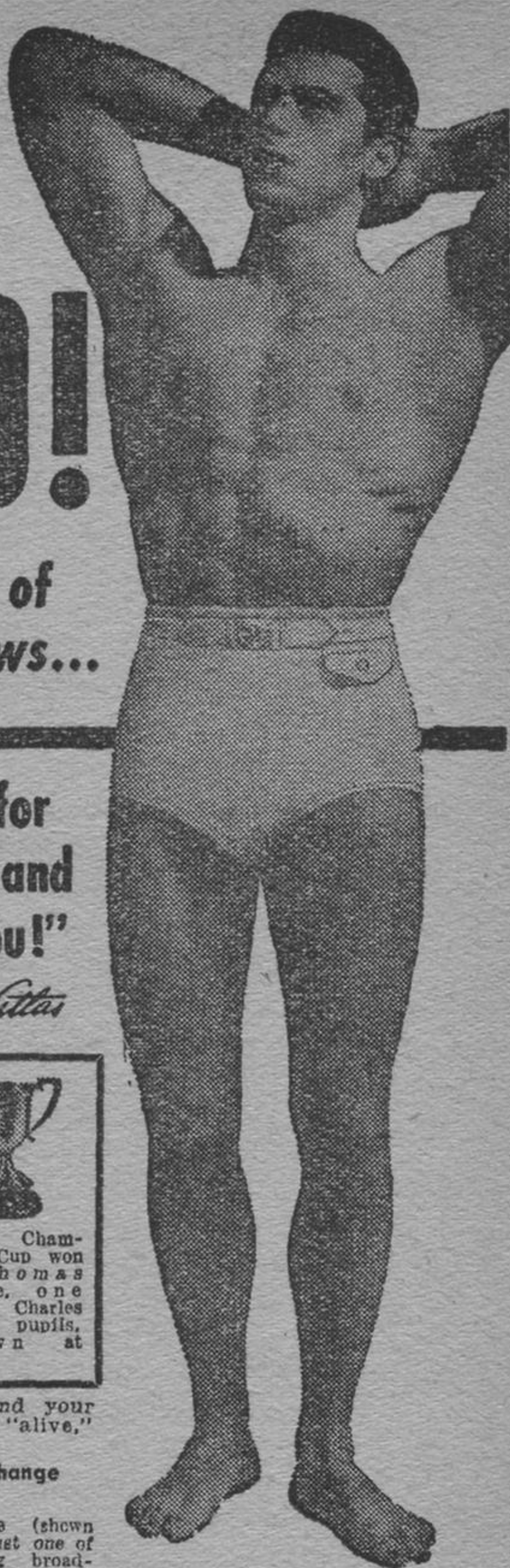
[Turn To Page 8]

NEW BODIES FOR OLD!

I've Made New Men Out of Thousands of Other Fellows...

"Here's what I did for THOMAS MANFRE...and what I can do for you!"

-Charles Atlas



GIVE me a skinny, pepless, second-rate body—and I'll cram it so full of handsome, bulging new muscle that your friends will grow bug-eyed!... I'll wake up that sleeping energy of yours and make it hum like a high-powered motor! Man, you'll feel and look different! You'll begin to LIVE!

Let Me Make YOU a NEW MAN— IN JUST 15 MINUTES A DAY

YOU wouldn't believe it, but I myself used to be a 97-lb. weakling. Fellows called me "Skinny." Girls snickered and made fun of me behind my back.

THEN I discovered my marvelous new muscle-building system — "Dynamic Tension." And it turned me into such a complete specimen of MANHOOD that today I hold the title "THE WORLD'S MOST PERFECTLY DEVELOPED MAN."

What is "Dynamic Tension"? How Does It Work?

When you look in the mirror and see a healthy, husky,

strapping fellow smiling back at you — then you'll realize how fast "Dynamic Tension" GETS RESULTS!

"Dynamic Tension" is the easy, NATURAL method you can practice in the privacy of your own room—JUST 15 MINUTES EACH DAY—while your scrawny chest and shoulder muscles begin to swell... those spindly arms and legs of yours bulge... and your whole body starts to feel "alive," full of zip and go!

One Postage Stamp May Change Your Whole Life!

Sure, I gave Thomas Manfre (shown above) a NEW BODY. But he's just one of thousands. I'm steadily building broad-shouldered, dynamic MEN—day by day—the country over.

3,000,000 fellows, young and old, have already gambled a postage stamp to ask for my FREE book. They wanted to read and see for themselves how I build up scrawny bodies, and pare down fat, flabby ones—how I turn them into human dynamos of pure MAN-POWER.



Atlas Champion Cup won by Thomas Manfre, one of Charles Atlas' pupils, shown at right.

ARE YOU
Skinny and run down?
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Lacking in Confidence?
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WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT
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So far as I know, "Cold War" is Harry Warner Jr.'s first appearance in a professional science-fiction magazine; he's well-known to the amateur press, of course, having issued general subscription fan-magazines, as well as publications for the Fantasy Amateur Press Association, for well over a decade. In any event, this novelet is a "first" with *Future*.

We can trace Raymond F. Jones back to the September 1941 issue of *Astounding Science Fiction*, with a short story entitled, "Test of the Gods", which didn't pretend to be anything more than an enjoyable yarn. Since then, he's turned out a generous amount of excellent stories, including the somewhat-flawed but thoroughly fascinating novel, "Renaissance"; and the well-nigh flawless "Son of the Stars", (one of the first set of Winston's Science Fiction Novels) which is to be considered "juvenile" only in that the publishers considered it slanted for a particular age-group, but is as "adult" in theme and treatment as one could desire. At this writing, I haven't tabulated the returns on his first appearance in this magazine.

IT'S NO SECRET that James MacCreigh is one of the many pen-names of Authors' Agent, Frederik Pohl, whom oldtimers in science-fiction will remember as a "fan", and the man who persuaded Popular Publications to issue *Astonishing Stories*, and *Super Science Stories*, getting both titles off to a good start as their first editor. Judith Merril is but one of the many authors with whom he's collaborated, one of the others being C. M. Kornbluth—who was co-author with Fred on that delightful novel, "Gravy Planet," which recently graced the pages of *Galaxy Science Fiction*. Judith Merril, who first appeared in our pages with the well-liked novelet, "Barrier of Dread", has also collaborated with C. M. Kornbluth on a pair of novels, "Mars Child" (first appear-

ance in *Galaxy*; due out in book form under the title of "Outpost Mars") and "Gunner Cade", (initially appearing as a serial in *Astounding*; now available in book form) and has other anthologized stories to her credit, as well as a number of anthologies under her guidance. A novelet by this team (Cyril Judd) leads off our current issue of *Dynamic Science Fiction*.

When H. B. Fyfe's delightful, "Bureau of Slick Tricks" appeared in the December 1948 issue of *Astounding Science Fiction*, most of us recalled him as author of a powerful short story entitled, "Locked Out", from the February 1940 issue—a simple, but effective tale of a man who accidentally locked himself out of his spaceship and found that getting back in was far from simple. Fyfe had had a couple of appearances in between, but the "Slick Tricks" series set him off on what looks like (and, we hope, turns out to be) an inexhaustible supply of yarns dealing with exquisitely odd beings throughout the galaxies and the trouble they give humans. Fyfe first appeared in *Future* with a short story entitled "Afterthought", (anthologized by Judith Merril recently) and from the reception you've been giving his tales to date, we don't think the present offering (one of our favorites, we might add) will be the last.

Clifford D. Simak is the elder author this time, for his first story appeared in the December 1931 issue of Hugo Gernsback's *Wonder Stories*. Storytone has changed in science fiction since then, and Simak has been among the many "oldtimers" who contributed to the change. The present piece fits more or less roughly into his "City" series (a volume of which was a recent Gnome Press offering) and can stand by itself, even though familiarity with other stories in the series will give it more weight. I want to talk a bit more about "And The Truth Shall Make You Free," so look below, please.

[Turn To Page 82]

Reducing Specialist Says:
LOSE WEIGHT

Where
It
Shows
Most

REDUCE

MOST ANY
PART OF
THE
BODY WITH

ELECTRIC
Spot Reducer

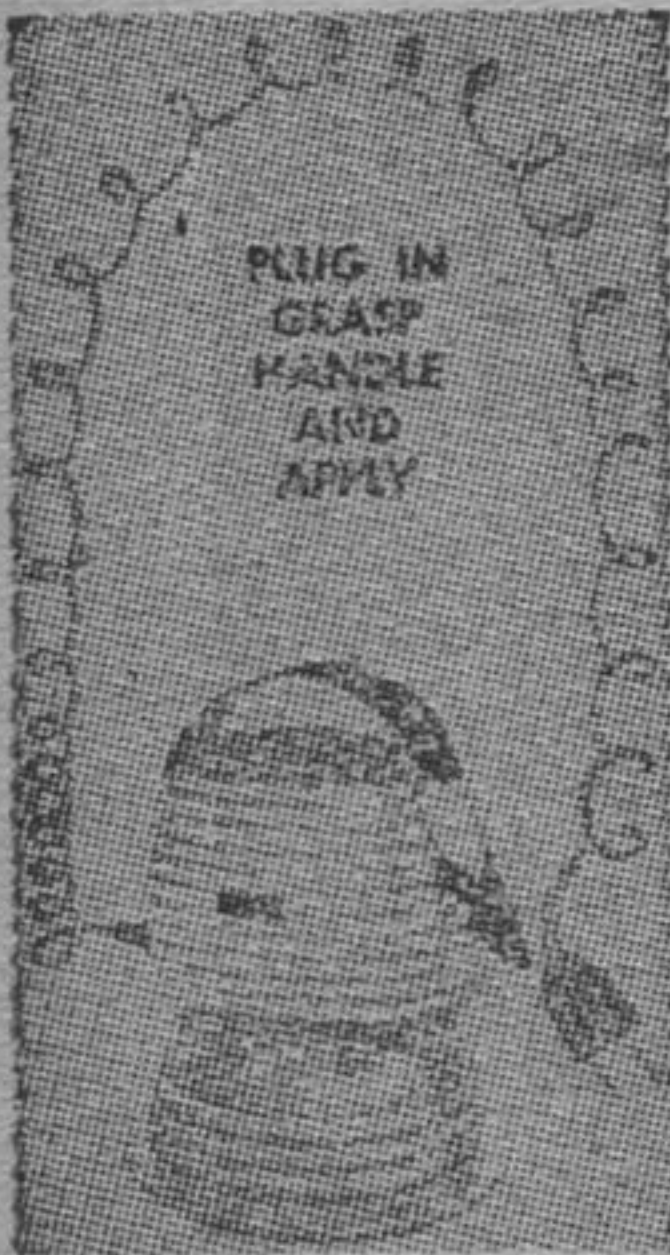
Spot Reducer

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Penetrating Massage

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or without electricity—Also used as
an aid in the relief of pains for which
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POUNDS and **INCHES SAFELY** Without Risking
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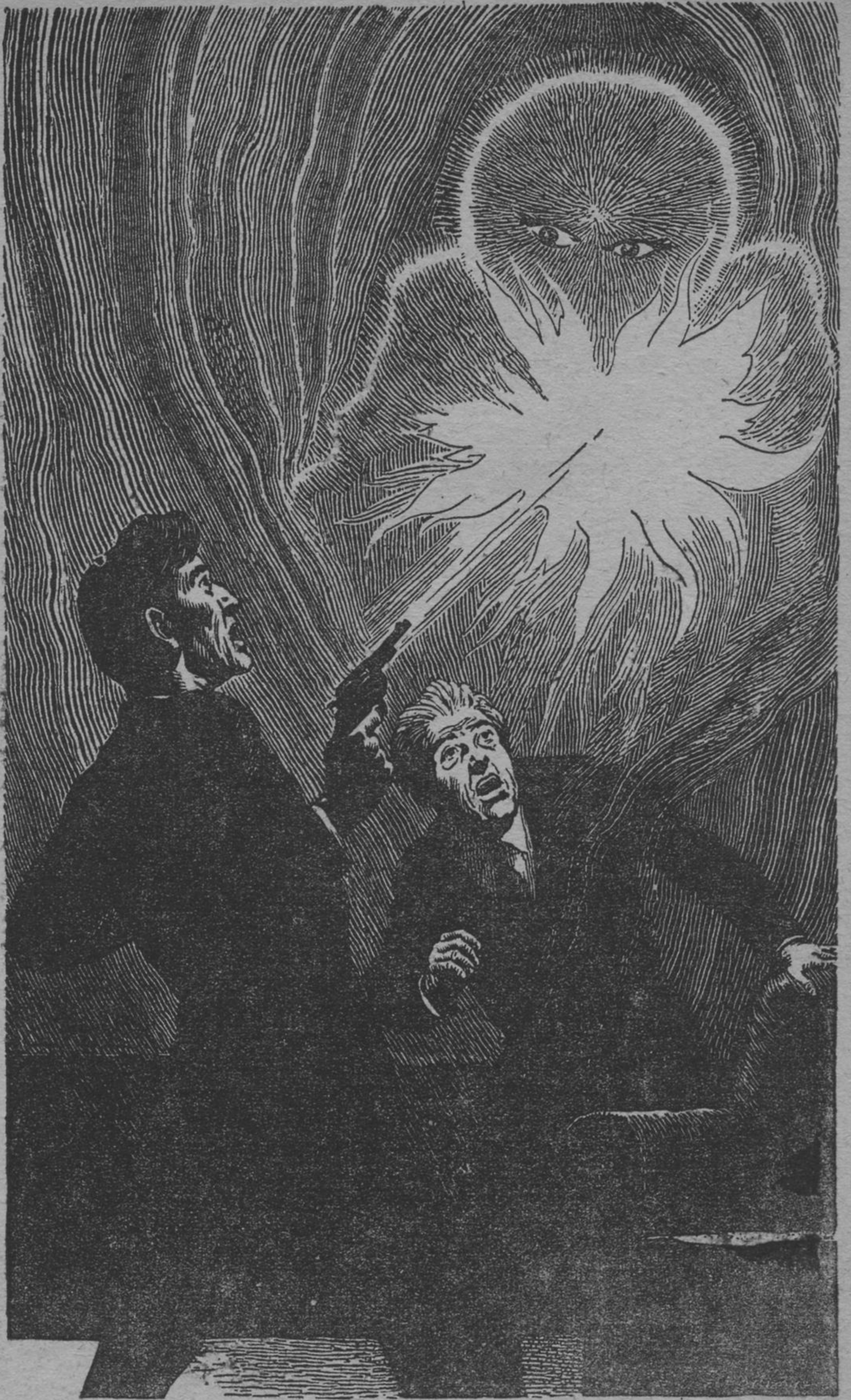
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The bullets struck the thing that was taking shape, and exploded in brief red flame.
(Illustration by Paul Orban)

COURIER OF CHAOS

Novelet Of Freewill Feedback by Poul Anderson

The world of the far past was a terrible one to Ushtu — but no more terrifying than Ushtu himself was to Earthlings . . .



THE OUTLAW said, "But if you have free will, in the sense of will as a casual factor itself, independent of casuality, there you have chaos. You have a future which is not uniquely determined by the past, and anything—*anything*—can happen."

"Not necessarily," replied the philosopher. "Naturally, you are prejudiced in favor of absolute determinism; and yet there is much that speaks for the belief in free will. Quite apart from direct experience, there are such items as the uncertainty principle—"

"Overrated," snapped the outlaw,

lighting a cigaret. The brief flare of the match threw his face into startling relief against the darkness of the room, gaunt and hook-nosed, a shock of red hair falling over the high narrow forehead. His eyes were never still; they prowled about among the clustered shadows. Every faint noise from the night and the city outside jerked them toward the heavily curtained window. In years he was a fairly young man, but life had aged him.

"Overrated," he said again. The words spilled out, harsh broken rhythm above the soft padding of his feet, up and down and around the room where the philosopher was a deeper shadow in the old, remembered armchair. "The uncertainty principle applies only to individual subatomic phenomena, not to the statistical lawfulness of the macroscopic universe."

"I can borrow an example from the physicist Darwin," said the philosopher. "Suppose you had an apparatus, or an atom, which emitted a single electron with equal probability of going in two directions. Since the electron can only go one of these two ways, its actual path is undetermined by its previous history; you might say it has free will, eh? Now in one of these possible paths you put an ordinary Geiger counter; in the other, an amplifying unit which the electron can trigger, and which in turn can set off a box of dynamite. Surely, the difference between a harmless click and an explosion which can destroy a whole town is important in the macrocosmos. No?"

The philosopher chuckled softly, quiet laughter which the outlaw remembered across a waste of years. It was as if the man stood before his class again, arguing on all sides at once, throwing out riddle and paradox in the hope of setting off a thought-reaction. Any genuine response would do—the philosopher had never cared very much what his students believed, so long as there was something going

on inside their skulls. He had always claimed that a final conclusion represented the death of intellect, and his stand had ultimately cost him his position. If he hadn't been too well known in the outside world, it might have cost him his life.

THE LITTLE red spark of the outlaw's cigaret waxed and waned, like a tiny fist beating against the gates of darkness. Strain shuddered in his words. He had fled to his old teacher for his life, and fled to this argument for his sanity; but his thin, tight-drawn calm was about to rip.

"That's different," he answered. "The electron's path is not determined by energy considerations. But you can't turn the predetermined course of the macrocosmos without expending energy to move atoms, can you? And since that energy is itself one of the determining factors, it follows that such a change of course—such an exercise of free will if you like—would violate the conservation law."

"No less a person than Clerk Maxwell thought otherwise," said the philosopher. "He suggested once that—"

"To hell with Maxwell!" It was rage against the world which shivered in the outlaw's voice. He had escaped from the State's torture cells too recently to bear much opposition. "I tell you that a universe containing free will would be a universe of chaos—your Darwinian explosions would be happening everywhere, all the time. And yet you've always maintained that there was a pattern to events, that life was going somewhere, toward some goal—"

"How by the—" He checked the string of obscenities which had come to his lips, drew savagely on his cigaret, and went on with a ragged sort of control: "How can you reconcile the two notions? The formulations of free will, and of a teleological universe, contradict each other."

"No, they don't." The philosopher

might have been smiling; you couldn't tell in the dark. "I've just said that Maxwell's philosophical speculations indicated a way for free will to exist; and in his purely scientific work on governors, one can perhaps find a hint as to the mechanism of teleology. The concept of feedback—"

Something seemed to break in the outlaw. He flung his lanky form into a chair and sat for a long moment without listening. When he spoke again, it was with a deadness in him:

"At that, sir, I might be inclined to go part-way with you—as far as the senseless chaos of uncontrolled free will. When you see Judgment Day coming, and man bringing it on himself—against all sanity—you wonder if there can be reason in the universe... You said once, didn't you, that history had shown a tendency for the better—that when things got too horribly bad, something happened to compensate, to bring the course of events back into line."

"That's true," nodded the other man; "you can find instance after instance. We don't live in the best of all possible worlds, but it isn't the worst either, and we do make progress. It's as if Providence had given us free will so that we could make our own destiny; and then—to insure that we wouldn't get out of control, that the ultimate destiny we achieved for ourselves would be the right one—had put a sort of governor on the cosmos too. A negative feedback, one might say, so that too great a wrongness would itself provoke compensating reactions. The idea of dynamic equilibrium is old in physical science; I don't see why it can't be applied to the human world as well."

The outlaw's grin, briefly seen as he dragged hard on the cigaret, was rather horrible. "There I beg to differ. I've seen things going to smash and I know that it's too late. They jailed and tortured and shot everyone who dared speak against it; outsiders were too cowardly to act while there

was still time—and now, my friend, the State has the conversion bomb and there's not a thing we can do to stop them."

After a moment he added, almost absently: "That's why I haven't committed suicide. The State will save me the trouble when it sets off that reaction, and throw a rather brilliant pyrotechnic display into the bargain."

A VERY LONG silence. Some few noises filtered in from the blacked-out streets, scrunch of footsteps on frozen snow, murmur of an automobile, once the high thin whistle of a jetplane overhead. It was cold in the room, the two men were poorly clad and their flesh shuddered.

"A moment of warmth," said the outlaw dreamily. "A great white light."

"Do you really think it will—kindle the atmosphere?" The philosopher's whisper eddied around the room, blended with the shadows and hunted under the ceiling. A timber creaked in the gathering cold.

"I do. That's why—*What the devil—*"

The outlaw was on his feet and backed against the wall, snarling as he clawed for his stolen gun. The philosopher moved his ponderous body more slowly, rising and backing away from the sudden radiance.

"Oh, no—"

A humming in the room; the walls seeming to quiver; a gust of wind as the sourceless pearly light thickened. The outlaw's gun barked twice. The bullets struck the thing which was taking shape and exploded in brief red flame.

"Lord in Heaven—"

"In Hell," croaked the outlaw. "They've sent a special messenger from Hell to get us."

His mind ran on, briefly, crazily: *No doubt, the Devil wants some pointers on up-to-date fiendishness. Well, he can't show me much I haven't seen already.*

The vision grew solid. They could hear the floorboards groaning under its weight. It had a tail and a round muzzled head; its hairless pale-gold body was clad only in a sort of harness, and a vague blue nimbus hung around it, limning it against the dark and throwing the human faces into dull relief. The eyes were large and luminous and very beautiful.

It stared at them with a puzzlement and a wonder that slowly changed to half-comprehending acceptance. Then it began to speak.



A GOOD MANY million years later, Ushtu stood looking at the great machine, feeling a tightness in his throat. His thought was jagged, vibrating with the tension inside him, he could not suppress the small final panic of embarkation.

"It is a long jump."

"Yes," replied Zanasthuwain slowly. "Yes, it is. But you needn't fear; we know it will work."

"Oh, I don't doubt that. It's just a question of more power—right?"

Zanasthuwain switched his tail in token of agreement. "The entire energy output of six hives. You can't deform world-lines that much without expending proportionately. But still, it's no different in principle from the time-hops we've been making for the past five thousand years or so. Only longer."

His thought was tinged with sympathy. "I understand how you don't relish the prospect of being cut off from the hive-mind—even for a short period—to be left completely to yourself in an era of which we know only that it was incomprehensibly alien to us. But it's just too great a distance for us to maintain a communicator-beam." He laid a clawed hand on

Ushtu's back. "Never fear; you won't be there long. We'll give you three days and then pull you back. This is just a preliminary survey."

This is a grossly inaccurate rendition of the subtle flow of thought which pulsed and swirled between them. A telepathic race, in which every mind has a subliminal bond to every other, in which at time of need each separate personality can sink itself into the great many-faceted mind which is the soul of the hive and outlives the mortal individuals comprising it—such a race has no more need for conversation, recapitulation, and argument among its members than a non-telepath has within his own consciousness.

And yet the non-telepath does indulge in that sort of thing. He argues with himself; he thinks back for the hundredth time over all the factors which led to his decision; he rehearses it again and wonders if he has done right after all—and finally plunges ahead to escape the torture of his own doubts. In a vaguely corresponding manner—only vaguely—the two personalities of Ushtu and Zanasthuwain (designations which are not quite personal names) re-examined the facets of a decision which had already been made. Deep within them, linking them, ran the strong still current of the hive-mind, the vast living potentiality which slumbered now and yet was more real to them than the physical world outside.

"I am—" Ushtu groped within the limitations of his individual consciousness of expression—"I have never been so cut off before; I don't know of anyone who has ever been."

"It seems to me," thought Zanasthuwain reflectively, "that the hive-mind knows of a few similar cases. We had brought it forth once to handle a certain difficult psychological problem; and it went into the very oldest race memories—older than any living individual—in search of data. I seem to recall something about individuals who had been temporarily

cut off, and had returned, to implant an aversion to the experience in the race-memory. But it was only a passing datum, and has not stayed in my personal memory very well."

"It will be lonely," thought Ushtu. "But three days—I guess I can stand that."

It did not occur to him to rebel against the decision of the hive-mind. That would have been rebellion against himself, and against the greater-than-self which was his own assurance of immortality. His body might die, but his mind—the pattern of memory and thought which was his essential self—would go on in the race-memory.

And after all—it was an interesting mission!

"You will find out as much as you can without exposing yourself to unnecessary danger," thought Zanasthuwain. "Later on, we can send whole teams of investigators; but we don't want to risk too many organisms the first time. We're sending you back to the approximate time of the Old Race's extinction—as near as we can gauge it—but I doubt if you will be able to find out much more this trip than their exact outward appearance, and a little about their thought patterns and technology. Indeed, no matter how many scientists we send back into their age, we may never understand them. They were too alien."

HE LOOKED out of the window at the bare desert landscape beyond—gaunt, wind-etched rocks, rusty dunes, and low gray scrub to a far horizon. Ushtu's eyes followed his; it was as if he saw the dim ghosts of that buried race wavering in the pitiless bright sun—as if a breath of ancientness and strangeness blew out of the weary land. He shivered a little and turned his gaze back to the comforting solidity of the timecaster.

"The climate was wet then, wasn't it?" asked Zanasthuwain.

Ushtu switched his tail. He—his own, physical brain—had been thor-

oughly taught by the hive-mind all that the race-memory contained of geological and paleontological conclusions. In like manner, Zanasthuwain was a physicist. And when the hive-mind was called forth, they were those sections of it which contributed most to such questions. But as individuals, they had little knowledge outside their own specialties.

"Wetter than now, at least," Ushtu replied. "As nearly as we can determine—though the evidence is damnably confused—it was the tail-end of a glacial epoch. Deserts seem to have been the exception, rather than the rule. Then, all at once—apparently simultaneously with the disappearance of the Old Race, and indeed the extinction of most land-life—the desert epoch begins. Indeed, it was much more the case then than now. Earth has gotten considerably greener and moister than it was right after the catastrophe."

"And that was—what?"

"Who knows? That's what we want to find out, isn't it? Some astronomical disaster, perhaps—"

"Improbable." Zanasthuwain grunted vocally to show impatience with the idea. "Considering the large fused areas also found from that time, I incline toward the theory that it was a total-conversion reaction which got out of hand."

"That's pretty fanciful," objected Ushtu. "We know that the Old Race was a highly-developed mammalian species, divided into several sub-types and distributed over all continents. We know that they worked with stone and cement, and there is reason to suspect they had progressed as far as metal. We know they were destroyed by the same catastrophe which wiped out all the higher forms of life and forced evolution to start afresh. And that is just about all we do know. To imagine that they had atomic energy—well, really!"

"It's only a suggestion," vibrated Zanasthuwain with a note of apolo-

gy. "And it does suffer from the logical drawback that any race which knew enough to trigger the total conversion of mass to energy would know enough to take due precautions. But—well—we have to hypothesize something."

"That," vibrated Ushtu, not without an eagerness overriding his fears, "is what we won't have to do much longer. We'll soon *know*."

The longest time-hop to date had been a million years, back to the primitive days of the race—theory and practice agreed that the past alone was attainable; the future could only be reached by the usual process of waiting. But the shining monster which loomed in this dim, cool chamber could hurl a mass an unthinkable time-distance; and then, by releasing the tensions artificially created, snap it back to present reality. Throw it back to the age of that mysterious species which had once ruled the planet, left its bones and worked stone for the future to puzzle over, and then died in the general extinction of the higher land forms. The hive-minds of Earth were more than merely curious about that disaster; they wanted to know for the sake of their own unaging lives. It might come again, some day.

"I am ready," thought Ushtu. He stepped up on the caster platform.

Briefly as the fleeting touch of a hand, another mind linked to his—Chutha the mother of his cubs. There was a tenderness in the caress which caught at Ushtu's throat.

"Go ahead!" he vibrated harshly.



FOR AN INSTANT it was all hollow, a terrible silence and fear where his nerves strained after that which was not there.

That which was not there— The community, the belongingness, the great race mind which gave meaning to all life, was not there; it did not exist, it would not evolve for fifty million years. Ushtu was alone.

Slowly he recovered himself, fought down the panic screaming in the lower depths of his brain, and looked with a stubborn will at his new environment. He had been chosen for neural stability, among other things; he could stand the isolation for three days.

There were metal missiles striking his force-shield and exploding into molten rain. They came from one of the two beings who crouched against the farther wall of what must be a room—crouched, and stared with madness in their eyes, and mouthed at him.

So—they had gotten as far as metalworking and chemical propulsion. Ushtu forced himself to an unnatural cold calm. This was the living Old Race; he had bridged the gulf of years and mystery—and now, by the Overmind, he was going to study them!

The paleontological reconstructions had been rather accurate—but then, there had been the assistance of occasional sculpture fragments. The nearly hairless skin of these creatures was unpigmented; (was that a general species characteristic, or peculiar to this variety?) and even in the dim light, Ushtu could see the pinkish color given by blood flowing beneath face and hands. Otherwise, their bodies were wrapped in garments which he judged to be of a woven vegetable fabric. But it pleased him that his own science had reasoned so closely. It gave him a feeling of confidence.

But their minds, that was the important thing; Ushtu had to enter their essential selves.

He opened his telepathy-centers to the full and let the shocking flow of gibberish pour into him. It was not to be expected that their normal pattern was sufficiently like his for im-

mediate communication. But the investigations of the Seventh Hive had revealed long ago (ages in the future, he corrected himself) that there was, of necessity, a certain basic resonance to be found in all intelligent life. Ushtu had to get past the mere material energy emitted by their nervous systems, down to the ultimate reality which was neither matter nor energy, but a pattern.

His first discovery was stupefying. These creatures were not sensitive to each other; they could not feel each other's patterns, and their communication could only be by physical means.

It was not an unknown phenomenon in his time, but it had never occurred to him that true intelligence was possible without telepathy.

Astonishment and repulsion were followed by pity. Poor beings! Poor animals, locked inside their own skulls, doomed forever to a loneliness beyond imagination. Ushtu thought of the living warmth which had bound him and Chutha together, and wondered what it was like to have a mate and never know she loved you.

But the pattern—he had to talk to them. Soon, before their panic drove them crazy.

There was a language-center. He felt it out, let its imposed structure sink into his own nervous system, and studied it for awhile. They used a vocalized symbolism, then. It occurred to him that the odd fragmentary signs carved on some of their work must have been—must *be*—a visual equivalent of the auditory language. A poor substitute for race-memory, but the best these pathetic monsters could do.

Ushtu's own vocal system a little-used evolutionary hangover, was not so unlike these beings' that he could not pronounce the sounds. His accent was harsh and strange, but they understood it when he spoke to them.

The whole process, from his emergence before them to his mastery of

their language, had taken perhaps one minute.

"Do not be afraid," he said. "I am not here to harm you, only to study you." No, that had bad connotations. "To get to know you, I mean."

The older, heavier being answered in a dry rasp. "Who are you? *What* are you?"

L YING WAS not a concept in Ushtu's world. "I am a scientist. I am from your future. Approximately fifty million years from now."

"*No!*" The redhaired being almost screamed the word.

"Yes," said Ushtu.

"But it isn't—isn't— No, stand back! I'll shoot!"

"Wait, Boris. O Lord, wait!" The philosopher shook his large, bald head and looked at Ushtu with slowly clearing eyes. "We've got to believe our own senses."

Yes, thought Ushtu with a new welling of pity, *yes, they've got to believe what they see and feel and hear. They're chained inside themselves and have no other reality.*

"Time-travel—you've conquered time and come back—" The philosopher passed a shaking hand across his eyes. "It's like a dream."

"It is real enough," said Ushtu. "And I assure you of my friendliness. What possible interest," he added reasonably, "could I have in harming members of a race which died fifty million years before I was born?"

He shivered a little. The raw damp chill of this age gnawed at him. It would be good to return.

"My—designation? Name?— I am called Ushtu," he said. "You are Boris Ilyitch Petrov, and Vladimir Rojansky, and your race is called men."

"How do you know?" whispered the redhead Boris.

"I am a telepath, you would say—though I cannot follow all your thoughts yet. But someone is coming."

"*What?*"

Ushtu was surprised at the immediate fear reaction of the two. "I can sense them," he explained. "I will stand out of sight here, so that they will not be alarmed by seeing me without warning."

"Someone—they must have heard me shoot—" Boris whirled toward the door, snarling. "The police—"

Ushtu felt terror and hatred leap from him; it made him slightly ill. He cast through his mind for the term "police." It was a hive—no, an *organization*—a band of men belonging to the State. The State was a sort of hive. But it was shocking, the connotations which "State" and "police" carried for these two men. Could they be deranged? He didn't know what passed for "sane" in this world, and what was pathological.

"Hide, Boris," snapped Rojansky. "I'll—"

"Hide? In a one-room apartment?" The redhead stepped to the door and flattened himself against the wall inside it. "No, let them in; and then—Maybe I can get them—"

The booted feet slammed to a halt and there was a thunderous tattoo on the door. "Open up in there!"

"All right, all right; I'm coming." Rojansky turned the key and stepped aside. As the first uniformed figure came through, Boris shot him in the stomach.

Ushtu's frozen horror melted in a burst of action. His mind surged out, grasping, heterodyning nerve currents, and the two beings who killed their own species swayed and crashed to the floor.

THE POLICE were on them in the instant. Ushtu had already gone out through the window. He crouched under it, feeling the savage teeth of the night on his bare skin, and listened to the violence in the room.

It was understandable, he thought in a flashing moment, that minds which had no communication with each other should sicken from time

to time—until the sufferer finally turned against his own hive. It would be necessary to apprehend such maniacs and cure them—or, if the means were inadequate, to dispose of them quickly and gently.

A policeman looked out of the window, directly at Ushtu's great lurking form. The scientist, who was becoming a little more familiar with human neurology, closed off the man's visual centers, so that this retinal image did not register on the brain.

It had been a mistake to reveal himself all at once, Ushtu realized, though hardly one he could have avoided. Perhaps his sudden appearance had been the final shock which drove two unstable minds into the abyss of madness. He would keep his presence secret for awhile, observe without being observed, and draw his own conclusions. Then, armed with some knowledge of what he faced, he could communicate with the State.

Boris and Rojansky and the wounded, moaning policeman were carried to a vehicle which had pulled up before the house. The men it carried wore a different uniform and were treated with a cringing sort of deference. The long, dark machine came to life and whispered down the nighted street.

Ushtu crept away from the house and, for lack of any other direction, followed the tracks of the car in the thin snow. He kept himself in the shadows, and the few passersby did not see him.

It was cold, bitterly, ringingly cold; the stars were a harsh blaze of unknown constellations above high whitened roofs; the night drew into itself with a shudder and wrapped darkness around the city. Snow crunched under Ushtu's feet and his breath smoked ghostly in the vague star-glow. He turned up his force-shield unit to let the excess heat warm him a little.

The city slept, but it was an uneasy sleep; his searching mind found a tight-

drawn fear wherever it scanned. Fear, unsureness, tension, there was something that walked behind every man and grinned at him when he looked around, there was a scarring sorrow and a sullen deep hate, the city was ill.

The city was mad.

Ushtu realized this with a crawl of revulsion. The city was not a hive; it was a senseless throwing-together of these mind-mute individuals—and yet, in some malevolent way, and city *was* alive. It was a part of the State, the almighty State whose agents tramped the hollow streets and knocked on doors in the middle of the night; and it seemed to Ushtu, from what he could snatch in fragments as he loped down the empty winter ways, that was somehow an enemy.

And yet what could the State be but a creation of these same beings whom it set at such unbearable frightened pitch? The State was not a hive, it was a myth, a word—how *could* it exist in all the whispered conversations and unvoiced thoughts, save as the dream-persecutor of a mad brain?

Was the whole of the Old Race insane?

But what was “sanity”?

Ushtu shook his head; he couldn't fight clear of the tangle.

Homesickness rose in him until he had to stop and force himself toward calm. The clean, bare windy loneliness of his deserts, dusty thorn trees above cool water, iridescent beauty of a great crater from the ancient cataclysm, and always and everywhere the living reality of his race—unborn! He was a ghost from the future haunting a world fifty million years in its grave, and he sobbed the needling air into his lungs and groped for a warm lucidity which was nowhere.

Alone—no being in all the universe had ever been so lonely.

A measure of control returned. It was beginning to get light, a wan gray stealing into the southeastern sky and flowing between the tall featureless houses. He had to find concealment.

That was not hard. Ushtu entered

the basement of a large tenement, using his magnetic beamer to open doors and lock them after him, and curled up beside the grateful heat of the furnace. Thereafter he only had to blank the sense perceptions of the janitor. Between catnaps, he let his telepathic sense range the city.



BY NOW, USHTU could follow human talk at considerable distance without having to hear it, and could even catch occasional unvoiced thoughts. It was astonishing how much information he could gather, and how much he could reason out from it. But it didn't help much; these creatures were simply too different.

They were not the hag-ridden paranoiacs he had imagined—not quite. There was warmth in them, love and laughter and hope against all reason—a mother and her cubs; a female and her mate; an artisan bent over his work and joying in it; someone singing; a wistful tenderness, which yearned for a realization that was forever denied. You could like these beings, and you could admire the gallantry with which they met their cruel world.

For it was a harsh and mordant existence; it was as if the cold of the retreating glaciers still lay in the heart of the land. It was not alone that most of them were poor—poorly fed, poorly clothed, poorly housed, living out a drabness of days and never reaching the bright dreams which grew dimmer every year. It was that they were afraid. Underneath everything, always with them, inside them, between them, was nightmare.

They were afraid of the State and of its agents. They were afraid of other States—somewhere out in the world—readying the means to annihilate them for some senseless pur-

pose. They were afraid of death, pain, starvation, sickness—a million dooms hovering on the edge of possibility. They were afraid of each other—neighbor watched neighbor and wondered if he was a spy, wondered if he might bear secret witness against them, wondered what had become of those who had been awakened at midnight. And—such was their adaptability, for good or ill—most of them were not really conscious of the horror of their lives; most of them accepted it as utterly natural and inevitable, and found what cheer they could.

Ushtu began to realize certain potentialities of purely sensory communication. It permitted the making of statements which one knew did not correspond to facts—a sort of verbal protective coloration. But then how could you know what "truth" was? How remote from reality could you not get?

And yet—and yet—this tortured, harried, frightened huddle of animals had come of the forests, naked and ignorant and defenseless; and in less than ten thousand years they had broken the atom and were dreaming of outer space.

Ten thousand years! There had been no significant change in the life of the hives for almost a million years, Ushtu remembered. What might the Old Race not do? Driven by its own loneliness, rising above its bitter limitations, it could reach out for the stars; and on the day when the sun grew cold, its story would only be beginning.

Only they wouldn't do it. Sometime soon, within this very epoch, they would be gone—annihilated without leaving a memory; smashed; burned; and forgotten.

A horrible sense of the vastness and unsureness of the universe grew in Ushtu. For their own sake, for survival, the hives of his race had to know what had extinguished these crazy and sorrowful and magnificent beings, so that Ushtu's people could protect their

own unchanging contentment against it. His mission was more than curiosity—it was a matter of life itself.

He wondered about the first two humans he had ever met. The thoughts he had received from them, compared to the average he had now experienced, were sharp and strong—neurotic, but hardly mad. They had tried to kill the agents of the State, yes—but was there not a possibility that those agents had been the ones in need of death?

If the two were still alive, it would be helpful to talk with them again. As the short winter day drew to a close, Ushtu reached his decision. He would find the rebels.

USHTU OPENED the locked, barred door and entered a cell so small that his bulk crowded the man against the farther side. The muted glow of his force-shield was the only light. The guards, past whose unseeing eyes he had walked, were outside the great cell-block; such of the other prisoners here as were not already asleep, drowsed off at Ushtu's command. He was alone with the one he had come to find.

Boris' gaunt, blood-smeared face looked dully at him, its lines etched against a thick moving darkness by the luminance of the projector. When he spoke, his voice was toneless: "So you have come again. It wasn't a dream."

Ushtu squatted on the dank floor, balancing against his tail, and did not meet the human's eyes. There was too much accusation in them.

"I suppose it was you who paralyzed us," went on Boris in the same flat murmur. "Otherwise we'd have had a small chance to fight clear."

"I was unfamiliar with conditions of this period," replied Ushtu. "The shock of seeing murder attempted, led me to action which was perhaps a mistake. But where is the other, Rojansky? I could find you by your char-

acteristic thought-pattern, but his is not in this building."

"No, they'd have taken him somewhere else," said Boris. "He's internationally known, you see—they can't do just anything to him, as they can to an obscure physicist like myself. Furthermore, he's got a weak heart; if he died under questioning, it could be awkward. So—" He shrugged. "They've probably got him locked up somewhere outside the city for future consideration."

"But you—have they—you have been hurt," stammered Ushtu.

"Oh, not too much—yet." The crooked grin was rather ghastly. "I've lost a few more teeth; maybe one of my kidneys has worked loose, and of course I'm groggy. But they're pretty sure I'm not part of any wide conspiracy, so they probably won't bother with many more interviews before they shoot me."

"But what have you done? Why do they treat you so?"

Boris shrugged. "I'm an enemy of the State."

"That much is clear," said Ushtu dryly. "Why?"

"Oh—it's a long story." The voice was tired. "I'd always doubted the necessity of a lot of things the State did. I wondered why the other nations of the world were such uniformly bloodthirsty monsters and—well, I asked questions here and there. You can still find out things, if you're discreet, and know how to approach the people who have the information.

"Meanwhile, as a promising physicist I was put to work on atomic energy—military, of course; we haven't any other kind. My job for awhile was to read foreign scientific journals; in that way, I became familiar with a physics which wasn't colored by 'social utility.' Among other things, I ran across some calculations about the total conversion of mass to energy.

"It can be done; we know that. As much as a kilogram of matter can be almost instantaneously converted to

pure radiant and kinetic energy. Our own military project had nearly completed such a bomb. A continent-buster, eh?"

"These calculations, however, indicated that it was anything but safe. It was known that such an intensity of energy would start all sorts of reactions in surrounding matter, but our scientists assumed that the effect would be rapidly damped. This work I studied showed—to my satisfaction, at least—that there was a high probability of setting off a chain-reaction in the atmosphere. It would take about one minute for that process to damp itself and die out—but meanwhile, the reaction would have flashed around the Earth. A brief flame everywhere; a bit of sun in every man's living lungs; and then—the end!"

BORIS SAT quietly for a moment before resuming: "Naturally, I called the attention of the authorities to this. I was promptly told to shut up. The project would go on; their own men assured them that this warning was pure propaganda. According to the political physics which is taken for truth here, such a chain-reaction is impossible. I saw their calculations, and it was some of the sloppiest mathematics I've ever encountered. The basic assumptions were tailor-made to give the desired results, and— Oh, the devil with it." His curse was flat and tired. "I tried to alarm my colleagues; I was arrested for sabotage. By a combination of luck and desperation, I escaped, and went to my old professor and friend, the only man I could trust—and then you came."

"But wait," objected Ushtu. "Nobody can be so mad as to take even the chance of destroying the whole race and himself with it. A suicidal maniac simply couldn't handle the responsibilities of office—"

"You're not human," said Boris; "you couldn't understand us. A human who hasn't been trained in the most rigorous kind of logical thinking—and no politician or commission-

er ever has been—can convince himself of anything. He can rationalize the wildest desire, if only his own welfare depends on it.

“And in this case, it does. The country is seething with unrest. In nearly two generations of Party rule, things have gone from bad to worse; privation has increased; tyranny has harshened, and the old excuse of being ringed in by a hostile world has grown weak. For although it is true that the nations outside hate and fear our government—know it for the aggressor and troublemaker and despotism it is—yet they have not attacked. They have been waiting for a long time; they have fought back one tentative aggression—by our puppets—after another, but they have not attacked us.

“If the dictatorship is to survive, it must have war, and soon. But victorious war is required, and I think the State realizes its own growing weakness. Hence this wild conversion-bomb project. If, when they launch the next war, it goes against them, they can unleash the one weapon they know their enemies can't and won't have. For even if the foreign physics turns out to be correct—what will the men of the State have to lose?”

USHTU SAT wordlessly, not moving at all, meshed in his own dark thoughts.

Could all this hideous failure of a race be blamed on its non-telepathic communications, on the resultant solipsism and insanity, and possibility of falsehood and self-deception? Or was there more?

For the human kind had potentialities Ushtu could not begin to grasp. With the exception of the timecaster—and the general background of scientific knowledge, not very much beyond that of man today, which made it possible—there was nothing the great hive-minds had evolved in a million years of their civilization that the Old Race had not achieved in a

few hundred. But more than that—this was a people who lived.

Locked into an eternal loneliness, groping through blind night, and driven with a demon energy Ushtu could hardly imagine, the Old Race lived and felt and perceived with an intensity that the placid hive-minds, and the one-sided half-individuals comprising them, could neither know nor understand. This Old Race—these human beings—laughed and wept, thought and worked and played, sang and loved and hated with all of themselves; and out of that unending storm rose an art and music and literature which would not be matched till the stars were ash.

Their failure was enormous. But it was simply because their triumphs could have been as great.

“And you are really from the future.” Boris smiled with one side of his mouth and shook his weary head. “Odd that I don't feel surprised, that I accept it as utterly natural. I suppose that on the eve of Judgment Day, strange visions are only to be expected.”

Ushtu was still silent, still thinking.

“You aren't even remotely human,” said Boris. “So apparently we *did* wipe ourselves out; do you know anything about it?”

“Nothing,” said Ushtu, gently. “The paleontological evidence is too slight. We know that it happened at the close of this epoch—but of course we couldn't date it closer than some thousands of years. It could happen tomorrow—or ten millennia hence, for all we know.”

“Tomorrow is a little closer.” The man's voice was bleak. “If human-kind weathers this crisis, I rather imagine they'll have learned some decency and common sense. But your very appearance proves that they did not weather it.”

A brief and desperate appeal flickered in his eyes. “It—you know more about the nature of time than we do—

I don't suppose it's possible to change the past?"

"No," said Ushtu quietly. "It is not only an empirical but a logical impossibility. An event cannot both have happened and not have happened; that would be a self-contradiction."

"Quite so, quite so. *'The moving Finger writes, and having writ...*' So much for the old professor's ideas about free will." Boris sighed a little.

"However—" Ushtu groped slowly toward a conclusion— "However, Boris Ilyitch, consider that we do not *know* the predetermined course of the immediate future. Suppose, for example, that your race does survive this period. It could easily have another ten thousand or so years of life before its ultimate extinction."

"And by that time, perhaps—there may at least be men on the other planets then, or out among the stars, to carry on the race when Earth is burned—"

Boris' shoulders sagged. "Dreaming! Dreaming!"

USHTU'S eyes lit with a slow, physical radiance. "Not so. For it may be possible to accomplish just that!"

"Eh? What? What do you mean?" The human straightened with a jerk.

"I have done you a wrong, it seems," said Ushtu in gathering decision, "and would like to make amends. Nor do I wish to see you and your people suffer unnecessarily. Finally, if you do survive for a number of centuries yet, you will doubtless accomplish things behind the abilities of my own race—whose time-observers can copy them from you. So it is best, I think that this conversion-bomb be eliminated."

"But—but—"

"If you have analyzed the situation correctly," said Ushtu, "destruction of the bomb plant—I imagine it is a large and complex installation, not soon replaceable—will leave this State constituting no insuperable threat to the rest of humanity."

"Yes—yes, that— Why, when they find out what has happened, the Unit-

ed Nations can take steps—and there is potential rebellion all over the land, needing only such a spark to touch it off—" Boris began suddenly trembling. "You can't do it! You're one against half a world! There—there isn't enough *energy* in the two of us to do it—"

"The mind is not composed of matter of energy," said Ushtu calmly. "It is a pattern only, a non-material reality borne by material—much closer to the old concept of the 'soul' than your present-day psychologists seem to realize. Accordingly, the material energy which you measure as accompanying thought, willing, and similar processes, is only a by-product; the true action of the mind does not involve energy transfer at all. And where energy considerations are not uniquely determinative of the outcome of a process, the mind-pattern can force the result to be one rather than another of the possibilities. That is the true meaning of the concept 'free will.'"

He stood up, a sudden gigantic loom against the dark. "We need not worry about merely material disparity, my friend. What counts is doing this job *right*."



USHTU'S mind surged out, feeling, seeking, probing into the tortured depths of the human souls around him. In moments, he had located a guard on duty who hated his work, feared the State, and hoped for a miracle.

The turmoil of many years crystallized all at once into decision. There was a great peace within the guard. "Excuse me," he said to the man across the chessboard; "Nature calls."

He went through a door, doubled around the cell-block, and entered it from the rear. He had known that the

new prisoner was a scientist; overheard fragments of the savage interview earlier in the day had stirred his doubts, and now he had suddenly decided that he must ask this man a few questions of his own.

"Petrov," he whispered outside the door. "Dr. Petrov."

Boris moved forward, grasping the bars of the cell. Ushtu was not seen, but it was he who led the five minutes' colloquy. At the end of it, the guard unlocked Boris' door.

"Let us go," he said quietly; "and may Providence go with us."

Whether the Deity walked beside them or not, Boris couldn't say. But Ushtu was there, spreading sleep and unawareness like a veil around them, himself invisible to all but the one man. The other prisoners slept; there was no outcry. When the rebels came to the outer sections of the jail, the various guards—by the most improbable of miracles—did not look toward the exact corners where Boris and Ushtu stood. They passed their colleague when he said he had an errand—then, equally improbably, they all happened to be looking the other way when his two companions slipped by them.

The three came out into a night that was hard and cruel with frost, wind and clouds blowing from the boundless east and snow whirling down empty streets. They shuddered in the cold, and ran most of the way until they found a car parked outside a building. There was a military chauffeur in it. Ushtu made him sleepy, as Boris and the guard Yakov approached; he did not rouse until powerful arms were about his neck, and then it was too late.

The car roared down the ways of the city in a blur of desperate haste, out toward the airport. It braked before the main gate, and the ordinarily-suspicious guards posted there let the two men and the unseen monster through—simply on their word that they had urgent business. Perhaps the fact that one of the men was in the

uniform of the secret police had something to do with it. Or perhaps—

This was no night for flying, but a military jet was warming up inside a hangar. The chief mechanic had suddenly decided that this was as good a time as any to flee the country, and had therefore ordered his subordinates to ready the machine for testing. But when a man in secret police uniform appeared and commandeered the jet, no one protested—though, ordinarily, they would have been wary and referred the matter to higher authorities.

Boris, who—as a reservist—had had some experience, took the controls and the jet whistled into the sky. When it was over the clouds, into the high chill clarity of the stars, he pointed eastward toward the great conversion-plant. He was one of the few who had been told its location; he had even been there before.

Yakov, not seeing or knowing of the creature riding with them, could not believe that it had gone so easily. He sat and gaped while Boris poured fuel into the jets and clove a track of thunder.

"Why did I do it?" he mumbled. "I must have been crazy. *How* did we do it?"

HALF AN hour later, the jet swung low above the sprawling dark mass of the plant. "We'd better hurry," said Boris, and his face twitched with strain. "They have plenty of anti-aircraft protection down there."

"Yes," muttered Ushtu. "One moment."

He strained forward, a thing of shadow and half-lights and unhumanity, riding the sky of a world which had died before he was born. His sensitive perceptions groped their way, feeling the very atoms bursting down below him, analyzing, computing, reaching a final chill result.

A bomb, even a small bomb, which fell precisely on *that* point would break a circuit and so close a switch that—a certain container having also

been shattered—would touch off a plant over the steppe. "Now!" he said.

The bomb arced downward. Boris sent the jet leaping for safety.

In the moment of the bomb's falling, Ushtu thought a great deal. There was no real reason why he should suddenly have hearkened back to his own age, his home; the dear bright deserts and the tawny mountains storming a cloudless heaven; the hives and cubs and Chutha his beloved, and the deep wonderfulness of belonging. But he did so think, and the memory of home was a blind fierce ache in him; and perhaps he cried out when the bomb fell.

The sky flamed livid. For a moment the stars were gone; the heavens were a bowl of incandescent brass, and a blue-white hell of radiance stamped the winter plains against a shuddering horizon. Nomads a hundred miles away saw the column of light rising on the edge of the world, and howled to the angry new god, and groveled in the snow before him. Then came the darkness, and the pillar of smoke and dust and roiling fury climbing and climbing till it blotted out Orion and surged between the constellations. After it were the thunder, and the heaving of tormented earth, and seismographs jerking halfway around the planet.

We can never know if Ushtu had the briefest instant of awareness before he was gone, if he realized that he and his world had served their purpose; and if, in that great anguish, he still thought back to his home and to Chutha. Is it possible that a being can know itself as part of a self-annulling casual chain?

More likely he was unaware of oblivion; for, after all, he had never really existed.

Boris and Yakov looked at each other with a dawning wonder, high up in the sky above the ruins of a tyrant's dream. Then they aimed the jet for the nearest border.

"IF YOU doubt that Providence can change the course of events,"

said the philosopher, "you need only look at the fantastic series of apparent accidents, coincidences, and plain miracles which made it possible for you to stop man's race toward suicide. I do not wish to deprecate your achievements, Boris, but—well, consider. It was improbable in the first place that, after escaping to me, you should—in a moment of hysteria—shoot at some imagined enemy and thus bring the police down on us, and that we should be too paralyzed by the disaster to make any effective resistance. But the sudden decision of your friend Yakov to free you is an impulse which he himself has never been able to explain. It violated all common sense, and that (through the most incredible sequence of 'breaks'—drowsiness, carelessness, rebelliousness, on the part of one man after another) you two should have been able to escape and steal that jet, simply shows that destiny—or luck, if you prefer—overrides all common sense. Eh? And that your wildly-dropped bomb should have hit just where it would ruin the whole business, and incidentally kill a number of key men who happened to be nearby, makes us believe in guardian angels, no?"

"Of course, the events which followed and led to our ultimate liberation were logical enough—but just that crucial instant in which you figured can hardly be explained except as some kind of superhuman aid."

"But I thought you said once that divine intervention implied sloppy initial planning on the part of the Deity," objected the physicist.

"Quite so. I don't believe in the old-style 'miracle', no." The philosopher drew contentedly on his cigar. "On the other hand, if man is given free will, some sort of divine control-system is necessary, to keep our finite intelligences from making too big a mess of things."

"There you go again," complained the physicist. "I've already told you

that free will is an illusion, arising from our imperfect knowledge of psychology—that among other things it violates the principles of causality and of conservation of energy.”

“Clerk Maxwell thought otherwise,” said the philosopher mildly. “He suggested once that there come crucial times when two or more events are equally possible. Like the Darwinian electron I once mentioned to you. Universal causality is a notion which science, ever since Heisenberg, has had to abandon; and mere energy and momentum considerations do not uniquely determine the outcome of all situations.”

“IT IS HERE,” said Maxwell, that free will might find its place. Without itself expending energy, the mind may be able to act as the determining factor, to settle which of the several possibilities is to be realized in actuality. Are we to use atomic energy to destroy ourselves—as our late rulers seemed to want—or to build a liveable world, as the U.N. is now trying to do? I don’t think a mere momentum-energy analysis—even electron-by-electron—will reveal what the actual decision is to be; the individual particles are not subject to causality. No, you have to add an extra factor, and that factor I choose to call free will.”

“But in that case,” said the physicist, “your Providence has opened the gates of chaos. For then, men can do everything, and will quite likely go astray from whatever divine plan was set up. Seriously, how can you reconcile your belief in free will with your belief that the physical universe has a definite purpose—a destiny?”

“Because my study of history has convinced me that we are going somewhere, and that whenever things look too hopeless some improbability turns up to save us,” replied the philosopher. “Think of your own fantastic

experience, as only one example among many. Eh?”

“No, I don’t believe that Providence has to intervene personally to save us from ourselves. But I do think that . . . He . . . has installed a—a governor, a negative-feedback system on the universe, so that outrageous departures from the plan necessarily provoke their own corrective measures. We have free will—we have to save ourselves—but we’re guarded against utterly ruining ourselves, too.”

“That’s a form of teleology, isn’t it?” asked the physicist.

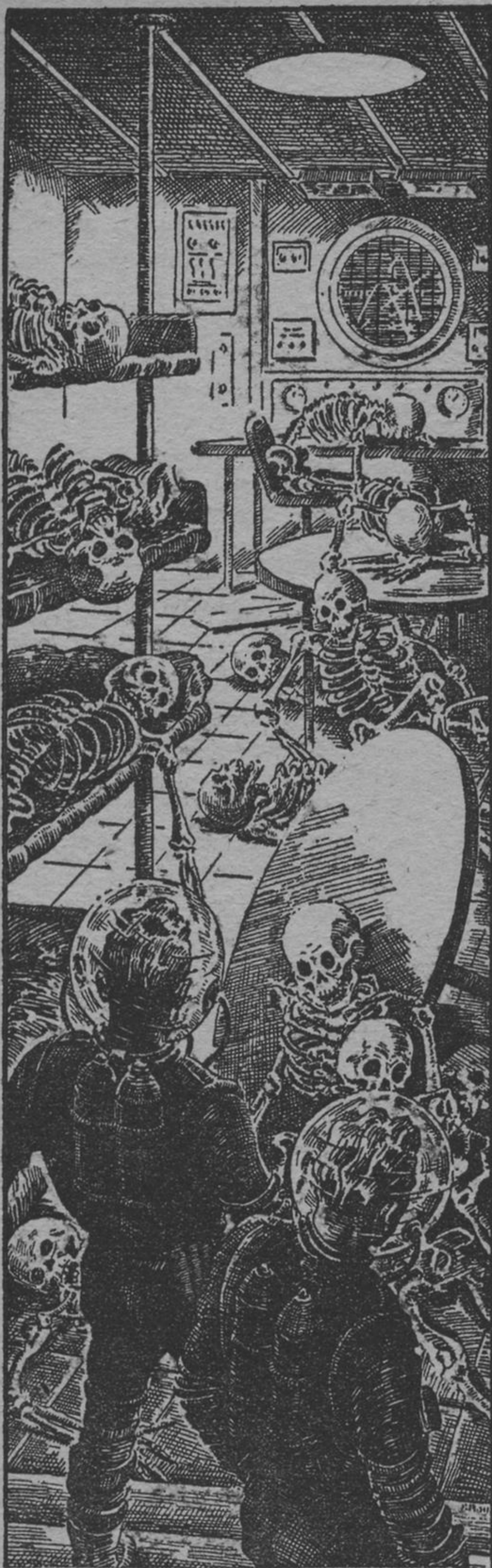
“Not quite,” said the philosopher. “Teleology is, roughly, the idea that the future can have causal influence on the past. My own beliefs don’t require such an assumption.

“Though at that,” he murmured thoughtfully, “the concept does open some fascinating speculative vistas. It would then be possible for man to do any old thing, and for non-destiny futures to evolve. But the governor of destiny would begin to operate; and these same futures would influence the past in such a manner that they themselves could never come into existence. That could be the actual principle of the feedback, you know: any chain of events not in accordance with the overall destiny must necessarily alter its own past and thus annul its own existence.”

“Now,” snorted the physicist, “you’re going too far. You’re indulging in self-contradiction. A thing either has happened or it has not happened; logic does not admit any intermediate kind of half-reality. These hypothetical, self-annulling futures of yours never have, and never can have existed.”

The philosopher nodded with a curious gentleness. “Yes,” he said quietly, “yes, you must be right there; they never existed.”





In the bunks lay scores of human remains...

THE MOON IS DEATH

by
Raymond F. Jones

(illustrated by Murphy)

Someday, someone would take those deadly stones back to Earth, unless...

YOU DON'T know what age means until you've seen the Moon at close range. It's not like the friendly face of an old man who's lived a good, full life; it's the white skeleton of a desert traveler, lost and picked clean by the buzzards. Ten thousand years ago.

They sent two of them down the first trip. McAuliffe and Joe Siddons. McAuliffe was a geologist, and Joe was an electromagnetic field man. Joe supposed that sort of combination was as likely to find the trouble on the Moon as any other, but he would have preferred someone nearer his own line. There was nothing for Mac and him to talk about. Just the trip itself, and

neither of them wanted to talk much about that.

It should have been at least a five-man party, Joe told himself. He knew the kind of hassle that could spring up on these two-man patrols, and he didn't relish the idea of any argument with Mac. The geologist was a big, broad-shouldered man who looked more like a stevedore than a pebble chaser.

Joe was big enough to take care of himself in most corners he was liable to back into, but he didn't want to stir up a hassle with anybody just now. He wanted to find out why nobody had ever come back from the Moon. He wanted to know what had happened to his closest friend, Dr. Radon Harcourt, who had been with Expedition Five.

Mac was handling the controls of the small rocket jumper. His eyes stayed on the glaring sector of the Moon's disc that lit up the forward port. Joe felt of his straps, and glanced to starboard where the hovering space station provided a jump-off point for this Moon investigation.

He consulted the chart on the panel and pointed ahead of them. "A little to starboard, Mac. That's the Caucasus Mountains over there. Base Five is somewhere along the foot of them at the edge of Mare Imbrium."

Mac glanced at the chart for himself and corrected their fall. Above him, the television screen showed the row of officers watching from inside the space station itself, watching every move made by the two men in the rocket. Listening to every word they said.

Buzzards, Joe thought.

He shook the animosity out of his mind. This was a poor way to begin. Nobody could be blamed for Harcourt's death; not yet, anyway. And nobody had forced him and Mac to come on this trip. They had volunteered to try for a Moon landing.

Men had been trying for twenty years or more. The first rockets nat-

urally aimed for the Moon; they didn't come back. The flash equipment, the mass of radio components—nothing had ever come out of the Moon to show that the expeditions had landed with the men alive.

There had been eight expeditions altogether before they finally gave up. By that time the atomics were ready, and Mars was as close to a man with a reactor pile as the Moon was to one with a rocket. Men had actually landed and returned from Mars without ever having walked upon the face of the Moon—as far as anyone knew.

The Moon was a jinx, they began to say. Men refused to sign for any new attempts on Earth's own satellite, while they grasped eagerly for a chance at Mars again, or Venus.

But another Moon trip was finally organized. Expedition Five they called it, because it was the fifth under current operation or consideration. In it were three of the largest atomic ships, and almost two hundred men. Including Radon Harcourt.

None of them were ever seen again.

They had landed; that much was known. There had been messages telling of routine exploration, describing the cold, dead surface of the satellite. But within hours, almost, there came news of some kind of disaster. There were frantic, garbled reports of a division among members of the expedition. And then silence.

IT WAS DECIDED that something had to be done. This was a challenge that could be ignored no longer. The Moon had to be opened to exploration and its mystery solved. For this purpose, a space station, of the type built in an orbit around earth, was erected and towed into place in a Lunar orbit. A thousand specialists were poised to demand an answer concerning the fate of the vanished men.

There were no precedents. Two-man crews in small jumper-rockets were arbitrarily decided upon to open a line of attack. Where hundreds had failed,

perhaps two could find a simple answer as to why. McAuliffe and Siddons were the first to go, selected by lot from among the volunteers available.

They were eight miles up now, skimming the barren plain of Mare Imbrium. Joe put his eye to the telescope, searching for evidence of Base Five.

"Got it," he said suddenly. "Three ships in a triangle with the huts in the center. That's it."

"All right, turnover," said Mac. His fingers punched down.

Joe steeled himself against the side-wise tug and roll of the rockets as they turned the ship, halting its forward motion in an upward arc, then lowering it slowly on the tail jets. Mac steered carefully to bring them close to the deserted base. The jets blasted a cloud of pumice dust higher than the ship, and the rocket settled into the shallow crater.

Mac switched off the igniters. "End of the line, and nobody's ever made the return trip. Why do you suppose we were damn fools enough to get into such a predicament as this?"

"There's no predicament, yet," said Joe. "As of now we could push the buttons and go right on back to the station."

Mac looked carefully out the port at the dismal, aged Moonscape visible now as the dust cloud settled. "I wonder if it wouldn't be a good idea to do just that," he said. "Just to break the luck of this damned place!"

Their first task was to set up the television transmitters which would keep the base area under surveillance of the officers aboard the space station. They would explore the area in full view of the men aboard the station. When they entered one of the huts, or the abandoned space ships, they were to be out of sight no more than twenty minutes. Their absence for a longer period would be the signal for the launching of a second rocket-jumper, whose occupants would go directly to the spot where Mac and Joe

were last seen. And if this did not serve to locate the difficulty, other tricks were in reserve.

In their weighted suits they climbed down the fin ladder and scrambled up the side of the shallow depression blasted by the rockets. Straight ahead were the crags of the Caucasus Mountains, a sunlit bone heap.

AT A DISTANCE of a hundred feet from the rocket, they turned. Joe spoke. "Joe Siddons reporting to Commander Ormsby. We have rigged the television cameras and are proceeding toward Base Five. Are we in view? Is the alignment satisfactory?"

"Very good," said Ormsby. "Proceed according to plan."

The men turned and slogged forward, dust foaming about their feet. Joe could imagine how it was up there on the station—the men crowding the television screens, the relief rocket standing by for emergency—

Mac was a dozen feet away from him, and Joe paused, looking ahead to the bony crags rising out of the plain. The aura of infinite age and desolation was all but tangible. It soaked through the plastic of his suit, and seemed to eat at his bones. Mars was the Garden of Eden beside this.

The Moon was a thousand times older than Earth, he thought.

He saw Mac, ahead of him, stop abruptly and kneel in the dust. The geologist gave a coarse shout over the phones. And then as Joe hurried to him, he lifted a bulky object that had been half buried.

It was a space-suited figure lying face down, arms outspread as if the man had fallen as he walked.

"Take his arm," said Mac.

Gently, they turned the corpse on its back. Joe brushed the face plate until the slanting rays of the sun lighted the dark cavern of the helmet.

His hand grew still, and the breathing of both men came to a deep pause as they glimpsed the remains of the man who had died in the suit. The

head was a shining skull; scarcely a trace of leathery flesh remained. The depths of the eye sockets were naked and white.

"He looks as if he's been here for a million years," breathed Mac. "A corpse doesn't look that way when it quick-freezes—as it would out here. It doesn't look that way anywhere, after only six months."

"Maybe the alternate heating by the direct rays of the sun, and the cooling at night—" said Joe. "We've never seen a man dead on the Moon before."

But he didn't believe it, and neither did the geologist. "It's not the way he ought to look," said Mac.

They got to their feet, leaving the figure where it lay. Joe reported briefly what they had found.

"No signs of physical violence?" said Commander Ormsby.

"None that are obvious," said Joe.

"It will require laboratory tests, of course, to determine if the suit was defective or tampered with, and whether death came by disease or poison. Unless you find something of much greater significance, make it a point to bring the corpse with you when you return."

"Yes, sir," said Joe.

When we return, he thought. He looked up at the pinpoint of light that was the hovering space station, and at the green disc of Earth, visible on the horizon. He felt cold and lonely and very, very old.

"Come on," said Mac. "Let's make a quick tour through the base and get it over with."

He was feeling it, too, Joe thought, and they had only been on the Moon's surface a few minutes. How had the men felt after days of watching each other die here, as they must have watched?

THEY MOVED on. Ahead were the guardian pillars of the three ships; they were huge—six or eight times the height of the little rocket-jumper. The

two men could see the outer lock doors hanging open on two of the ships, but the third was shut up as if prepared for flight. Joe wondered if there had been a wild, last minute attempt to get away that failed.

In the center of the triangle were the pressurized huts, set up for the expedition's work. Only two of them had been erected before disaster hit—the barracks hut and the Commander's headquarters.

They chose the barracks hut for initial inspection. The building was of the familiar Quonset type, hermetically sealed and equipped with air locks at either end and two on each side. These were for quick exit or entry of the expedition's full complement of men, in case of emergency.

The locks on the nearest sides were sealed. "Do you suppose there is still an atmosphere?" said Mac. "Could the machinery be operating yet?"

Joe spread his hands. "There's no reason why not. I don't imagine they deliberately turned it off—not even the last guy alive in there. Let's try the other side."

They found one lock open on the opposite end, out of sight of the television cameras. Joe queried Ormsby. "We can make an entrance of the barracks through the lock. Do you wish us both to enter, or should one remain in sight?"

"The two of you may as well go ahead," said the Commander. "Your transmitters won't work inside the huts, but do not break communication for more than twenty minutes. Remember, the second jumper will be dispatched if you do not appear within that time."

The two men crawled through the two-foot opening into the outer chamber of the lock. They drew it shut and clamped it against the pressure that might appear when they opened the inner door. Mac approached the valve panel and twisted the handles sharply. Snowy mist fell to the floor as air hissed from the pipes.

"Air," said Joe, "and warm, to boot—or it would have become completely dry long ago."

When the hissing ceased, and the film of snow vanished from the floor, Joe undogged the inner door and stepped through into the barracks hall. Mac followed. His sharp intake of breath and muttered curse came over the phones.

The room was a mess. In the bunks lay scores of human remains. Others were sprawled upon the floor, hunched over the tables, or slumped in the few chairs available. And every one was reduced to a gleaming skeleton. Like the one they had found outside, these had only scraps of leather clinging to the bones, showing that flesh had once clothed them.

THE TWO men advanced slowly down the length of the barracks. "It's like a catacomb," murmured Joe. "You'd swear they had been here for centuries, instead of six months. Just like the guy outside."

Mac glanced at a thermometer hanging on the wall and started to unscrew the helmet of his suit. Joe touched his arm. "Better not; it might be some kind of disease that hit them."

"Germs couldn't have been lying dormant here on the Moon since Jupiter knows when."

"They could," Joe insisted. "Spores out of space, even. We'll know when the lab men get on this. But we had better stay tight in our suits until we get back to the station and get thoroughly disinfected."

"Then I vote that we get back. We've found what we came to find," said Mac.

They continued walking slowly to the end of the charnal house of the barracks. The skeletons lay in every conceivable attitude, but it seemed to Joe that the predominant one was helpless collapse in the very midst of some activity. And it seemed that they

had been stricken almost simultaneously.

He searched anxiously for some clue to the remains of his friend, Dr. Harcourt. But he knew it was hopeless until the clothing and immediate possessions of all of them could be examined minutely. The skeletons were anonymous in death.

"Suppose we look in on the Headquarters hut next?" said Joe. "The log might tell how this thing started."

Mac nodded, but he was scarcely paying attention to Joe's words. His eyes had been caught by a group of figures slumped about a table near the far wall of the room. Or, rather, by the objects on that table.

He moved closer. There was a small pile of round stones. They were like water worn pebbles, varying in size from peas to walnuts, with a few that ranged as high as three inches in diameter. They had the smoothness of milky quartz, but their outstanding characteristic was a faint yellow phosphorescence.

Mac picked up one of the largest stones and turned it over in his hands. "A strange type of formation to be found on the Moon. I wonder where they were collected. It looks as if the men gathered them as souvenirs rather than as part of any systematic sampling."

He dropped the glowing stone into the pocket of the spacesuit. "It will be interesting to make a chemical analysis when we get back to the station. I doubt that the luminescence comes from any form of radioactivity."

Joe glanced at the watch dial in the side of his helmet. "We've got to get out. Eighteen minutes since we contacted Ormsby."

They hurried past the strewn skeletons, and into the airlock once more. Outside, they stood in view of the television eye and sent a call to the station. Joe gave a quick report on conditions in the barracks.

"Still no violence?" said Ormsby.

"None," said Joe. "It must have been disease—spores that may have been dormant for perhaps hundreds of thousands of years. Everything that comes back from the Moon will have to be thoroughly disinfected. We intend to inspect the Headquarters hut next."

"We will arrange the disinfection," said Ormsby. "Select any papers at Headquarters, which you believe might throw light on this matter."

It was all set now, Joe told himself as they pushed through the pumice dust to the other hut. Nothing but disease germs. No mystery. Just a freak of nature that had almost licked man's attempt to gain the stars.

Did he really believe that? he thought. Did he really believe it was all as simple as that? The aura of age crept about him and clung coldly to the suit in which he was a solitary prisoner. It wasn't that simple. It couldn't be, he admitted in panic. But if not that, then what was it?

He paused and turned as his companion suddenly bent down and began pawing the dust lightly with his fingers. "What the devil are you—?"

Mac straightened and held up an object triumphantly. "I thought I felt them as we walked. The stones—the Moonstones, if you please—they're all over here, down in the dust."

JOE BENT down and felt around for himself. In a moment he had found three or four of the polished stones. "No wonder they were picking them up for souvenirs! They're as plentiful as shells on a beach. How do you suppose such a formation happens to occur?"

Mac turned the pebble over and shook his head. "That's one I can't figure out. Probably it will be very simple when we know the answer, but right now I'd hate to be the one to suggest that there was once an actual lake here that might have polished them with its washing!"

In the Headquarters hut they found

the body of Commander Maxwell, leader of Expedition Five. He had been at his desk with the log of the expedition open before him. His fingers had scrawled final, unintelligible lines even as he died.

Mac reached for the book eagerly, while Joe jerked open the drawers of cabinets and desks in the room. There was nothing in these but records of equipment and personnel and schedules of the expedition's objectives.

Mac gave an exclamation as he read. "Three and a half days," he said. "That's all it took, from the time of their landing until this—" He gestured toward the skeletal remains of the Commander.

"Did he have an idea what it was?" said Joe.

"No. A score of men were hit by the end of the first day. Maxwell says it seemed to shrivel them and take all their strength. By the beginning of the third day, all but a handful had it, and they had to quit the work of the expedition completely, with only these two huts erected.

"Then they split up. Some of them tried to capture one of the ships and return to earth. That's what we heard in the last garbled radio reports. Maxwell thought it was disease, all right, and gave orders that no one was to leave, carrying it home. Two or three dozen men were killed in the battle that followed. Evidently Maxwell won."

He slipped the book into one of the sealed specimen bags and deposited it in a pocket of the suit. "That seems to be it. From here on, it's up to the medicos."

As they turned to go, they spotted one of the Moonstones resting on top of a cabinet. "Everybody seems to have been collecting them," said Joe.

They reported again to Commander Ormsby and made their way toward one of the atomic ships for their final inspection before returning to the station in the rocket jumper. They chose the ship with the closed ports because it was evidently the one which had

been the scene of the final struggle to get away.

IT TOOK a few moments to open the unfamiliar seals, which automatically closed the inner doors of the locks before permitting the outer hatch to open. Once inside, the men observed that the ship, like the huts below, had retained its warm atmosphere intact. They stepped into the corridor that led to the spiral stairway stretching the length of the ship's axis.

"Why don't we split up?" said Mac, impatiently. "We've found all we need to know. Just a quick glance through the ship will be enough for Ormsby, and then we can get back to the station."

"Suits me," said Joe. "I'll go up and take a look at the control room. You see what things are like on the engine deck."

Mac grunted agreement and turned away while Joe climbed the stairway. If Mac thought he knew the answer, why was he so anxious to get away? Joe wondered. Why were they both so anxious? He tried to shrug off the unpleasant apprehensions that clung to him.

Without pausing he passed the numerous corridors that turned off to the intermediate levels. On one deck he glimpsed a fallen spaceman with a knife in the skeleton hand. On another level three of them were huddled near the stairway, a sub-machine gun beside them. It *had* been a battle; what an ending for the expedition that had started so magnificently!

Abruptly the stairway ended, and he was looking down a corridor toward the control-room of the vessel. Even there, he could see a partial view of a figure slumped over one of the control tables. A sub-machine gun lay on the floor beside him. Evidently he had defended himself on the lower levels and come up here, dying at the very moment he was about to set the ship in motion.

Joe picked up the gun and moved it out of the way. And then he observed something else. At the feet of the man was a large sack, heavy with the weight of Moonstones inside it.

Joe whistled softly to himself. Why would anybody have bothered with so many of these at a time when every moment counted in their attempt to escape? He wondered if it were possible that the stones would have some great intrinsic worth back on Earth. Apparently the dead man had thought so, anyway.

As he came closer he saw that the man had slumped and died while writing some notes, even as Commander Maxwell had done. And then Joe stared at the sprawling script in the notebook.

It was the handwriting of Dr. Radon Harcourt.

There was no mistake. Joe was sure he would know that hasty, running hand in hell itself. With regret, and deep reverence, he looked upon the skeletal features that lay twisted inside the spaceman's crash helmet. He felt a sick longing to do some final thing for his old friend.

He lifted the notebook from beneath the finger bones and began reading. If anyone of the expedition had truly found the cause of the tragedy, it would be here in these pages.

"*I am alone,*" Harcourt had written. "*Davis and Galloway dead. I can't make it any longer. I can't get down to the engine room now. No one of this expedition will take the ship back to Earth, but someday someone will come and find a way to take the stones—and death—to Earth.*"

JOE FELT a swift coldness at the back of his neck. He glanced down at the heavy sack on the floor, and flipped the pages to an earlier entry.

"*I understand what it is now,*" Harcourt wrote. "*They all think we are dying of some mysterious disease. Maxwell is trying to whip our biologists into a solution. As if they could*

find the antidote for a new illness that is fatal within hours!

"But we can't blame Maxwell; we're all in a panic. What they won't believe is that we're dying of senility. Our own natural life-processes. I've tried to tell them, but they won't believe me. I understand what is happening. I am an old man; I have aged fifty years in the last twelve hours.

"It is the stones. I found it out by watching the men as they picked them up. I didn't know at first, but it wouldn't have done any good, anyway. Just being on the surface of the Moon is enough to be afflicted by them.

"The time-magnets, I call them. I cannot explain them, but I know what they do. They hold a time-field just as a block of steel will hold a magnetic field. When any life, or mechanical motion, comes within very close range of these concentrated time fields, the stones begin to discharge that field. It's like a magnet discharging when thrust into a flame.

"They must have come out of space—and how fortunate that they did not strike Earth when they came! Through the ages they have partially discharged and made the Moon the ancient thing that it is. All of us have felt this incredible age here. The Moon can not grow any older! And the mass of this field remains undischarged. It has made us old men in a day, and we are dying of old age even as we try to move about our tasks."

There was more, but Joe put the notebook down. His face was sweaty, and he took off the helmet of the suit. There was no need to fear germs in the atmosphere now, he thought. He peeled off the outer shell of the space-suit and sat in the inner lining, staring at the skull of his dead friend. Then he glanced at his image in the polished metal rim of the control panel. His cheeks were thinner and more hollow. There were leathery lines in his forehead, which hadn't been there

when he shaved that morning in his quarters aboard the station.

Old.

He had felt it out in space just looking down at the Moon. He had felt it crossing the dust plain to the base. He had felt it in these ancient corpses that littered the barracks and ships. Six months! These men had died ten thousand years ago.

The sweat kept rolling down the lines of his face. It was Harcourt's last scrawled entry as he died that held Joe's mind. Some day men would find a way to take the stones to Earth. Like slow cancer they would begin to discharge their eternal fields of time from wherever they were; only an ancient miracle had kept them from Earth in the first place as they crashed out of space.

Joe knew it would happen. No matter how careful they tried to be, men would find a way. They would shield the stones; they would experiment with them; they would take them to Earth. And death would creep over the planet.

He had to keep it from happening.

Harcourt must have had the same thought. That was why he had seized control of the space ship, which was evidently the only one ready for immediate flight. He had stood armed with the machine-gun and killed them—or held them off until they died in their own old age.

But there was something else.

Why had Harcourt lamented his failure to reach the engine room? What purpose could he have had there? And why had he brought the sack of stones aboard the ship himself?

Perhaps he hadn't brought them, Joe thought. They might have been captured from some of the others who had taken them aboard. But Harcourt would not have bothered to bring them to the control-room.

There was something missing. A piece he didn't see.

HE THOUGHT of Mac, and knew what Mac would do. Mac was a geologist; he couldn't let the stones alone. Even now he carried one in the pocket of his spacesuit. Mac would try to take them to Earth, Joe thought. He would scoff at Harcourt's warning and surround himself with so-called precautions.

But the stones would get loose. They couldn't be allowed to reach Earth *ever*.

Joe glanced at the dial in the helmet. Fourteen minutes since they had reported to Ormsby; deadline for the next report was six minutes away. What could he do? What could anyone do, he thought in agony, to assure that the stones would never be taken to Earth?

There had been some plan in Harcourt's mind; Joe was sure of it. He couldn't get the missing piece to fit. The engine room. The sack of stones.

But Harcourt had died. The siege in the control room had cost him too much time, and he couldn't carry out whatever plan he had. Yet what plan could possibly exist for making sure the time-magnets would never menace earth?

Joe felt a desperate, choking sensation rise in his throat as he looked again upon the skeleton of Harcourt and heard the distant sound of Mac's moving up through the ship. He guessed that the geologist had tried to contact him by radio, which had been disconnected when he removed his own helmet.

It didn't matter. He and Mac had nothing to say to each other. Soon, they would have nothing to say to anyone, ever.

Motion.

Motion or life, Harcourt had said. These would discharge the time-magnets as a flame would destroy a steel magnet. Enough motion would draw out all the time field and disperse it—

Suddenly, Joe saw it; he knew what Harcourt's desperate plan had been.

He knew how it was possible to free the Earth from the menace that had circled it through the eons in its own satellite.

Mac's steps were loud on the circular stairway now. Joe glanced at the time. Three minutes. There was no time to argue with Mac, to explain to him, to try to convince him. And in the end, he would probably never be convinced.

Joe picked up the sub-machine gun that Harcourt had used. He sat with it in his lap waiting as Mac's footsteps sounded in the ship. The geologist reached the top of the stairway and lumbered impatiently toward the control room. Joe met him as he came in from the corridor.

THE MACHINE-GUN made a ragged thunder within the metal room. And then it seemed infinitely quiet as Mac crumpled to the floor; blood streaming through his shattered helmet.

Wearily, Joe put the gun down and gathered the sack of stones that had lain at Harcourt's feet. Stepping over Mac's body, he dragged the sack down the corridor and began the descent of the spiral stairway. Ormsby would even now be giving orders for another rocket-jumper to leave the station. But it would take a full twelve minutes for the ship to make a landing. He should be able to make it.

It took him eight of those minutes to get the sack to the engine room. It must have been a terrific feat, he thought, for Harcourt to get them to the control room in the first place. It must have been necessary to protect them while fighting off the crewmen in the lower levels.

At last Joe reached his objective and permitted himself a moment's rest. He stood on the engineers' catwalk overlooking the massive reactor which provided power for the ship.

Motion, he thought again. There was motion in its ultimate state. Or would be—with the sudden influx of

accelerated time-field. Not merely a fraction of a percent of the fissionable material would contribute to the blast; probably close to one hundred percent of the mass would explode at once. In that terrific blast, every time-magnet on the Moon should discharge its field. He wondered just what would happen to the Moon itself. If it contained a percentage of native radioactive materials—

Suddenly Joe felt himself trembling. A weakness was creeping through his limbs. He glanced at his own hands, shocked by what he saw. The skin was withered, and dry, and half-transparent—like the flesh of an old, old man.

He understood. The terrific field from the bag of stones was discharging through him. He laughed a little hysterically as he realized he was dying now of old age. He had never supposed that a spaceman would live so long!

And then he hurled the bag of time-magnets with all his feeble, waning strength. He watched it tumble straight down upon the ship's reactor.

ON EARTH the explosion was observed. It awoke the sleeping inhabitants of a hemisphere and sent hysterical masses screaming to their cathedrals.

The observatories were shaken with the fury of the inquiries, but they had no answer nor any explanation for the disaster which shattered the Moon and destroyed the space station circling near it.

And shortly they knew that they would never have an explanation; for that was the night when the Moon turned to blood and hung in the sky, a crimson glowing reminder now that man would never set foot upon the half-molten surface of his satellite.



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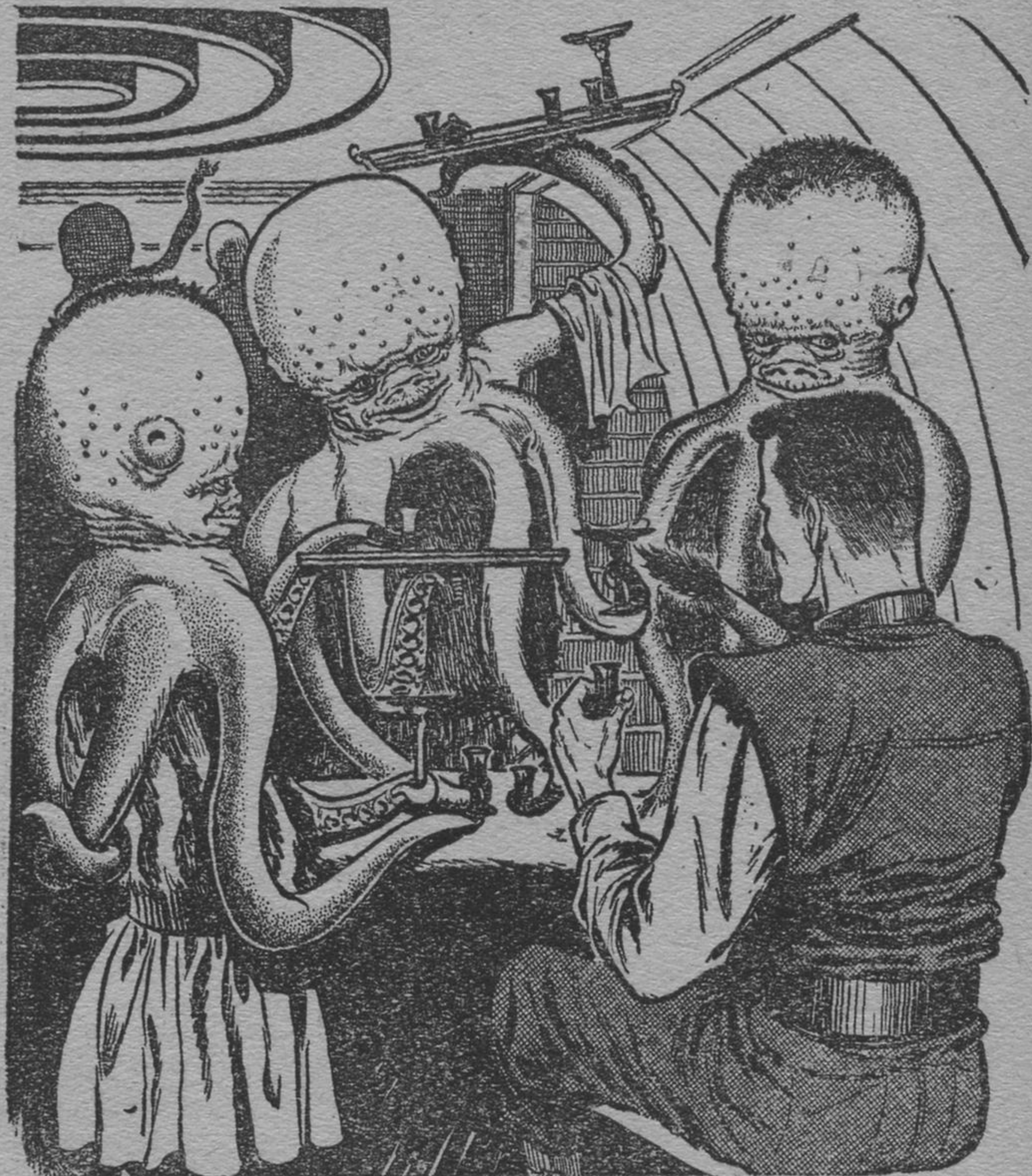
DYNAMIC
Science Fiction

ROMANCE

by H. B. Fyfe

Life for Vrydans was a very complicated thing, as Carl Leland was more than ready to admit . . .

(illustrated by Luros)



The Vrydan waiter was a marvel; he never mixed an order up, and managed to serve all without spilling.

THE VRYDAN driver yelled shrilly, and the lumpish, many-toothed hulk plodding along on ten stumpy tenacles drooped to a halt between the shafts of the wagon. Immediately, the dust-cloud raised from the

unpaved main street of the town swirled lazily about the occupants. Carl Leland choked and coughed.

"Why did I ever let them talk me into leaving Terra for this job?" he growled.

He mopped his face with a large handkerchief and removed his cap to beat out the dust against his thigh, revealing a headful of crew-cut bristles. Zuahnu, the Vrydan overseer of the farm project they had been inspecting, watched him solicitously.

"The dust irritates your breathing-organ, Leland?" he inquired, preparing to step to the ground. "As I said this afternoon, there are many such examples to show how much more simple than we you are, in physique as well as social custom."

"Yes, I remember," said Leland.

He wished he could forget. Or, better, that he had never learned the little Vrydan he could understand. Ever since he had come to the planet as a co-ordinator for the farming and hydro-electric projects the Terrans were helping the natives develop, it seemed that hardly a day passed without some Vrydan boasting that life here was more complicated than Terrans seemed to realize.

I guess I can add two and two as well as these squids, he thought. *They sound so patronizing. Why, I can't imagine! They had a pretty barren, moth-eaten world here before the Terran Space Commission decided we needed it for an outpost.*

Zuahnu jumped down to the baked mud sidewalk, his two walking limbs bending smoothly under the impact. Leland thought of the number of small bones, resembling his own backbone, and resolved to ask sometime whether Vrydians often suffered from broken legs.

He'll probably tell me how complicated it is, he thought.

"We beat them all to town," piped the driver, clambering proudly down after Leland.

"Excellent, Tivam," said Zuahnu. Then his shrill Vrydan voice rose in a shriek. "*Kroee!* Here we are! Look at what prime stalks we harvested!"

Leland watched as Zuahnu, waving a sample brought from the farm, strode over to the Vrydan who had just emerged from one of the buildings. He compared them curiously.

Both were about five feet tall. The features on their nearly spherical heads, though distorted in appearance and arrangement, paralleled his own in general function. Their roundish trunks were supported by flexible legs—modified tentacles, really—and tapered to a smooth junction of the neck and upper tentacles.

Of the latter, Kroee had five but Zuahnu had six, about the maximum as Leland remembered. That was another question he meant to investigate someday. There was great individual variation among the Vrydians, in color of fur and minor features as well as number of tentacles. Perhaps the patterns in the feathery fur were artificial, Leland thought. The portions of Kroee revealed by his kilt were vertically marked in broad, blending stripes of golden and dark brown. Zuahnu was a dull, dirty shade of pink, except for bright red patches atop his head and at the ends of all his limbs. The farm crew now arriving varied in like manner.

Looks like some Terran crossroads on Saturday night, Leland thought, glancing up the street.

ALL HE needed to feel himself back on old Terra, he decided, were a few ancient cowboys with sixshooters. The street of the little town was unpaved, and although the buildings ran mostly to baked mud, the atmosphere was comparable. It was a boomtown, knocked together since the Terrans had started the dam and irrigation project nearby.

"If I had a sixshooter, whatever they were," Leland muttered to himself, "I'd shoot the place up!"

Behind him, he heard the commotion of the other wagons from the farm project unloading. Zuahnu had been so pleased by the day's harvest from what had recently been near-desert that he had declared a holiday.

"Now the squids will crowd into these...these saloons," growled Leland, fumbling for the exact translation, "or cafes, or whatever they are, and slobber over those impossible sweets till they all break out in rashes under their fur!"

Until the Terrans had made their now-famous bargain—expert agricultural help in return for spaceport room and the right to mine Vrydan metals for repair work—the planet had been relatively barren. Even now, the Vrydan idea of carousing was to load up with weird delicacies of staggering caloric content. Leland supposed it was only natural on a world so short of food that the population never grew very large.

As for himself, the bright side was that the Vrydan cafes occasionally served a sort of ale, because of its nutritional value. All through the hot day, Leland had been thinking of it.

"Hi, Leland!" shrilled Kroee, moving forward with the pulpy stalk Zuahnu had brought him gripped at the tip of one tentacle. "Was your inspection interesting?"

"You know very well it was *I* who was on display," retorted Leland. "I already have enough information for my reports. You just like to have the farm workers see a Terran on the job where you ought to be inspecting yourself."

Kroee crinkled the flesh around his little eyes in an expression Leland had learned to associate with amusement. "As area director," he answered, "I would be foolish to number each stalk cut down by the choppers; whereas the presence of the Terran co-ordinator is an inspiration."

Leland tried to scowl but found himself grinning instead. He had grown fond of Kroee during the months they

had worked together. The Vrydan glanced up the street, now swarming with visitors, plus villagers who had popped out to see the excitement. "I have been saving a table and a seat," he said, waving to the door behind him.

L E L A N D followed Kroee and Zuahnu into the cafe with the driver, Tivam, trailing behind. Inside, the latter dropped off to greet an acquaintance as Kroee led the way to a rear corner. "It is indeed a fine sample, Leland," he said, tossing Zuahnu's stalk onto a tiny table of polished green stone.

"Did your Terran projects grow as good?" asked Zuahnu.

"Well, on Terra," explained Leland for the hundredth time, "I was not in charge of co-ordinating such a large project. I was concerned only with my own lands."

Actually, he thought, I'm just a farmer a long way from home. Oh, big-time, big-business, scientifically mechanized, but still I was just a farmer.

He tore at the bristles on his scalp as Zuahnu made the expected remarks about even Terrans abandoning some of their simplicity when they came to Vryda. It was a habit he had not lost, although he knew the Vrydians noticed little difference between a bare and short-haired skull.

And here I am, trying to make friends with the natives on one hand while I try to keep the engineers and the soil experts untangled with the other, Leland reflected.

"You, Leland, will have some ale?" inquired Kroee as a server stopped beside their table.

Leland assented as he sat down. Kroee and Zuahnu dawdled fondly over the list of dishes, and the Terran looked about. The cafe was filling up and he could see more customers through the wide windows flanking the entrance. Tivam had been dragged off to join a group standing around another of the narrow tables. Leland wondered how the Vrydians could enjoy

eating standing up, and was grateful to Kroee for supplying the empty metal box he was using as a bench.

After the server departed with the order, the two Vrydan officials examined the crowd complacently. "They deserve a few free hours," said Zuahnu, waving at the hubbub with one delicately furred tentacle; "I did not expect such good results with a mixed crew."

"Mixed crew?" repeated Leland.

"The yield was so great," explained Kroee, "that I had to get him extras from other projects, who had never before worked together. What a squeal I had with the government assignment office!"

Zuahnu made a noise like a muted siren to express his understanding.

"You, being a Terran," continued Kroee, "would not believe the trouble it is to have a few workers shifted from one place to another quickly. The stonehead in charge offered all sorts of arguments, but I assured him the crop would rot."

"Good for you!" approved Leland mildly.

"In the end, he sent them on my promise to help straighten out their records later for the Records Office."

"Seems like a lot of red tape," Leland remarked.

After he had more or less succeeded in explaining the expression, they agreed that it *was* a lot of red tape.

"It must be strange to live in a society where it is not necessary to keep such detailed accounts," said Kroee.

"Oh, we have a certain amount of it," said Leland.

"But not, surely, as complicated as ours? We are carefully recorded and kept track of from birth on."

Leland sighed, fingering the top of his head. "No," he admitted resignedly, "not as complicated as yours."

THE SERVER ended that line of talk by delivering the orders. Le-

land's amounted to half-a-dozen ales, the sort of thing, doubtless, that helped give Terrans such a peculiar reputation on Vryda. He was thirsty, however, and the ale was served in cups that would have been small for wine. The Vrydans reveled in the pleasures of taste—but in modest quantities, because anything edible was expensive on Vryda.

Kroee and Zuahnu had ordered a kind of spiced fish, which arrived in miniature saucers mounted on long stems. The server produced a thin-necked jug, poured a coating of heavy Vrydan honey over the odorous portions, and left Leland's companions to admire the result. The Terran screwed his eyes shut, tossed off two of his ales, and looked carefully away.

The establishment was by now reverberating to Vrydan noises of cheer and goodwill, all a trifle shrill to Terran ears. Some of the farm workers, who knew a few Terran sounds, paused in their chatter to greet Leland respectfully. Others exhibited friendliness by fluttering tentacle-tips at him. For a moment, the Terran had a recurrence of the feeling that he was watching a scene in a nightmare, but that passed. After several months on Vryda, he was acquiring the knack of looking at the tentacled Vrydans as persons, whatever their appearance.

"Your pardon," said a gray-furred fellow with six tentacles, "but may we not invite you to our conversation for a few moments?"

Leland thought he recognized the speaker as a foreman he had met that morning. He glanced inquiringly at Kroee.

"By all means," advised the latter. "You are popular, because they see what your science is doing for us."

I suppose part of my job is diplomacy, Leland thought as he was escorted over to a table near the front of the cafe.

As a representative of a civilization that hoped to benefit from the current agreement as much as did the Vry-

dans, it behooved him to make himself as pleasant as possible. The metals of the planet were important to Terran spacemen, perhaps not so much for abundance or quality as for being strategically located between Sol and a region of stars now being explored.

He was introduced, in Vrydan with gestures, to the party of four standing around the table. The dialect was slightly strange to Leland, who considered he was doing well enough to speak any Vrydan whatsoever; but he was made welcome by a flurry of tentacles. One of the party was dispatched to fetch the metal case he used for a bench.

"They wish me to make clear that we are honored," said gray-fur. "I am known as Yilo. We would be happy to hear of Terra and your opinions—oh, here comes your seat."

The box was passed along a chain of tentacles to a place of honor. Leland seated himself with a sigh for his tired feet. When a server arrived with their orders, he discovered that Yilo had signalled an extra portion for him.

"Six stemmed saucers without even a tray," murmured Leland. "What a hit *he'd* make in a Terran restaurant!"

"You said?"

"Oh...er, I mean that on Terra I was not accustomed to such experiences in flavor. We live more simply, you might say."

Yilo thumped a tentacle-tip on the table in pleased agreement, and repeated the remark to the others in their dialect. Leland managed to taste the sweetish concoction without making a face, and pretended to be nursing it along as did the Vrydans. He was relieved to find that the main ingredient was not fish.

TWO NEW arrivals created a diversion as they were introduced. Leland gave up trying to remember outlandish names, and contented himself with looking as pleasant as possible.

Silly, he thought. Can't expect them

to interpret Terran facial expressions, but what else can you do?

One of the newcomers said something that attracted a good deal of repartee. He was apparently invited forthwith to join the party, and squeezed into a place at the table although his friend continued on to another group. One of the original four exclaimed piercingly, and glided off in a different direction.

Leland hoped his facial expression had not been misinterpreted by some alien standard. He gazed longingly back to where he had left his ale, but Kroee and Zuahnu were talking so animatedly that it was hard to attract their attention.

"Now that I come to think of it," muttered Leland, "the whole place is buzzing!"

He peered about the cafe. Most of those present were from the farm project. Everywhere, squealing voices mingled with muted excitement. Tentacles gestured nervously. Leland considered going over to ask Kroee what was in the air, but just then the Vrydan who had left the table returned.

Leland recognized him by the horizontal, cinnamon-colored bands in his fur, but was surprised that he brought with him two new individuals. The table was already as thickly surrounded as if it had held a pair of dice instead of refreshments.

The Terran turned to Yilo, expecting the ordeal of more introductions, but the latter was intent on the newcomers. Whatever the discussion, it resulted in one's gliding away, waving a tentacle toward the group from which he had come and to which he seemed to be returning. With the one who remained, Leland counted seven plus himself about the crowded table.

"What is happening?" he asked Yilo.

"Ah...I will explain later," the other answered hastily, and turned back to the heated discussion.

Leland felt his face stiffening.

What the hell! he thought. *They*

asked me over here and now—oh, well, why get sore about it? The whole snaky bunch is a nightmare—squids trying to act like people!

He wanted to leave, but could not see himself rising in indignation from the midst of this interwoven gathering. It was too ridiculous. Still, they might have some consideration. Having been invited to talk, he resented being ignored.

He glanced around again, and was struck anew by the undercurrent of excitement all through the cafe. "Why—they're all staring this way!" he muttered.

STARTLED, he looked covertly at the others to see if his words had been noticed. Probably not, he decided; the Vrydans were not good at picking up low tones. They still conversed rapidly, as if over some problem or difference of opinion. Three or four continually babbled at once. Leland's ears ached.

Then he noticed a bustle at another table across the room. He thought he saw the Vrydan who had stopped with a friend a few minutes before, only to leave after a brief talk. He was pointing toward Leland's table-mates. Several with him seemed to be urging one of their number to join Yilo's group.

"What's all the excitement, Yilo?" Leland demanded.

This time, he was not even noticed; he leaned back and sought for an excuse to leave.

He saw Kroee and Zuahnu beckoning. Glancing about, he thought it extremely unlikely that he would be missed.

Leland slid his feet around to the side of the metal box and rose unobtrusively. A Vrydan who had been leaning on the table with one tentacle arched over the Terran's shoulder edged impatiently into the vacated space.

"A dozen more they don't!" he thought he understood Zuahnu to say to Kroee as he reached them.

The two officials had their money

pouches upon the table. Little stacks of silvery coins were lined up opposite each other. Four long-stemmed dishes, empty, had been shoved aside. Leland wondered what the wager could be.

"How are they making out?" asked Kroee, as soon as he noticed Leland standing there.

"Who?"

"Yilo and all of them over there. Will they get it set up?"

"What do you mean?" snapped Leland. "How should I know what they're doing?"

"Well, you were right there in the middle of it!" shrilled Zuahnu. "Tell us! There is money changing pouches over this!"

"Yes! speak!" urged Kroee. "It is no secret. Everyone in the cafe is—*Whee!* Zuahnu! There goes the eighth over to them! Do you still say a dozen more?"

Zuahnu shoved his stack of coins defiantly forward, but Leland thought he looked a bit doubtful. The Terran saw that the reluctant Vrydan had finally approached Yilo's table. He was being questioned eagerly.

Then a forest of triumphant tentacles shot into the air. The stranger was welcomed boisterously into the group. Someone else broke away to hustle out through the street door as if on an urgent errand.

Here and there on the small tables, coins were pushed to and fro, swept into pouches, or stacked in support of other gleaming columns.

"Will someone please tell me—" Leland began plaintively.

"Presently, presently!" Kroee twiddled a tentacle tip at him absently. "Sit down, Leland! I will order fresh ale."

Leland sighed. "All right," he said in resignation. "I'll be back in a minute; I left my box over there."

He threaded his way between the stone tables and their occupants to the cluster of natives with Yilo. These were too engrossed with each other to notice his approach.

"Would you mind?" he asked loudly, tapping a four-tentacled Vrydan on the tapering bulge corresponding to a shoulder.

The fellow looked around impatiently, and squealed at him in a dialect of which Leland failed to catch a single word.

Another of the ones rushed into this district for the harvest, he thought.

He looked back to Kroee, but the latter was again engaged in counting coins with Zuahnu. Leland saw one visage in the watching crowd that was familiar.

"Tivam!" he called to the driver with whom he had ridden into town. "Come over here and get them to let me have my bench, will you?"

TIVAM OBLIGINGLY hurried over. Leland explained his trouble with the dialect, Tivam explained in a shrill chatter to the four-tentacled one, and the latter squirmed out of the way.

Tivam reached under somebody's tentacle, the tip of which was pounding emphatically upon the table, and fished out the crate. He was about to hand it to Leland when one of the talkers noticed and pounced upon him with an indignant squeal.

"Here! What are you doing with that?" demanded Yilo. "That is for Leland, the Terran. Put it down!"

"It's all right, Yilo," interrupted Leland, reaching over for the box. "I just asked him to pass it to me."

"Oh, you are leaving already? It has been a pleasure to talk with you, a pleasure which I respectfully hope to continue at another time."

"The pleasure has been mine," Leland lied with a reasonably straight face. "Now, if you will excuse me and my friend—"

"I thought I did not recognize him," said Yilo, examining Tivam.

Leland sighed and performed a curt introduction. Having gained complete possession of the box, he spent each ensuing second in the vicinity but grudgingly. Tivam, to his annoyance,

acted as if he enjoyed attracting Yilo's attention. Leland backed off, leaving them engaged in rapid chatter.

He was halfway back to Kroee, twisting in and out with the box to avoid jabbing the other revelers, when a gigantic sigh swept the cafe.

It was succeeded by a dead silence.

Startled, Leland gaped about guiltily. No one, he was relieved to note, was paying any attention to him. Uncomfortably conscious of the padding of his feet upon the hard floor, he slunk back to his friends' table and sat down.

Yilo uttered a clipped exclamation. He swept the stone table out of his path with a single snapping tentacle, and led the way to the door. Tivam and the other six surged after him, but every other Vrydan in the cafe sat still until the group had passed through the door and into the street.

Then there was a general shifting, as everyone left glided toward the front windows, resuming vocal activity.

"Kroee!"

LELAND heard his own voice straining alarmingly toward the pitch of Vrydan speech, and paused to control himself.

"Oh, yes," said Kroee. "I must explain for you."

"If it is not too much trouble," choked Leland.

He went through the motions of running his fingers through his hair, and stopped himself.

"It might be difficult to comprehend," said Kroee, "especially the odds against it. It is another example of the comparative complexity of our life, and why we keep such detailed individual records."

He had been edging toward the front of the cafe as he spoke, and now stretched to peer over the heads of those at the windows. With his Terran height, Leland could see out. The little clump of Vrydans headed by Yilo plodded purposefully through the dust of the street. Few onlookers appeared openly on the sidewalks, though

Leland detected motion at many windows.

"One person just came out of another building to wait for them," he told Kroee. He looked again, recognized the cinnamon-colored bands in the fur, and added, "He was with them before."

Kroee and Zuahnu looked at each other significantly.

"They have done it!" squealed Zauhnu.

"You see," explained Kroee, "they are grouping themselves for an act which, while not exactly illegal, is so difficult to arrange without the Records Office that the government has come to look sourly upon amateur attempts."

"It can be a very annoying situation," said Zuahnu, "which is why everyone is amused at seeing the government by-passed."

Leland saw the ninth Vrydan picked up by the marching octet. All of them bunched together and set off down the street at a determined pace. They charged around a corner out of sight.

"You have told me of the extremely simple forms of love and marriage on Terra," said Kroee. "Imagine how complicated it would be had you not evolved such a standardized physique, so that only two sexes are necessary to carry all your types of genes!"

"That is why so many of us bet against them," Zuahnu put in. "With-

out filing applications at the local Records Office, the odds against gathering all nine sexes by chance out of a limited group of strangers—well, *you* estimate them!"

He and Kroee slowly followed Leland back to their table.

Nine! thought the Terran, groping dazedly for his box. *No wonder they have such a low population! It's the cause, not the effect of so much unimproved land.*

He noted the amused crinkling around Kroee's eyes, and drained one of his tiny cups of ale.

"One aspect is highly amusing," said the Vrydan. "They were on the verge of failure until *you* got Tivam into the conversation. I *must* remember to tell Yilo later!"

"What a story of co-ordination," shrilled Zuahnu in delight. "It took a Terran to arrange it! This will be told for decades!"

Leland groaned, and signalled a passing server. "I'd rather you kept it very quiet," he said.

"But why? Surely your Terran friends will be pleased at the favorable publicity!"

"I'm afraid they wouldn't call it co-ordination," said Leland. "As in so many other things, Terrans have a simpler word for my part in the affair. Order me another dozen ales, will you, Kroee?"



Philadelphia in 1953

As most science-fictionists know, there's an annual convention for fantasy and science-fiction fans all over the world; in 1953, it will be held at the Bellevue Stratford Hotel, Philadelphia, Pa., September 5th, 6th, and 7th. The Philadelphia Science Fiction Society will administer the convention this year, but it is being sponsored by science-fiction clubs, and enthusiasts everywhere.

Membership in the Convention Society costs one dollar, and the membership card is the bearer's ticket of admission to the three-day shindig. Members receive full and frequent reports of arrangements to date, up to the time of the convention itself, including vital information on accommodations in Philadelphia during that period. The person to write to is Tom Claeson, 3731 Spruce St., Philadelphia 4, Penna.

a BIG MAN with the girls

Jealousy can sometimes lead to very important discoveries!

by James MacCreigh
& Judith Merrill



(illustration by Luross)

BART MANDELL was not, really, a jealous man; he'd been around enough to know it didn't pay. But he'd been around enough, too, to understand Sally.

She was a sweet kid: pretty as a sweet-pea from the neck up, and absolutely terrific all the way down. Faithful, and loyal, and loving, too. But a party girl, always on the move, fast on her feet and quick with a quip. Not the sitting-home type at all.

Which explains why Bart decided that two hours' sleep would have to do him.

He hadn't seen Sally for forty-eight hours—not since the search began;

that was just about twenty-eight hours too long, and the last time he called she'd sounded pretty much indifferent to whether she ever saw him again. He had eight hours and that was all, before he had to go back out with the search-party again. So he caught a fast, couple of hours of sacktime, washed the sleep out of his system in the sharp spray of the shower, and started down to her house.

The street was lit up like a carnival. It was crazy; here the whole Army was on twenty-four hour duty, with the National Guard working alongside, and the cops out, too. The city—the whole world, maybe—was in danger,

and folks who weren't actually out hunting were having themselves a time. He couldn't figure out where the stuff had come from so quickly, but every store along the street had souvenirs and gadgets for sale; maps of Mars, toy rocket ships, and mechanical Martians with green skin and red eyes. Kids were peddling illustrated reprints of the government White Paper on Mars. The bars were full, and even the ice-cream parlors were doing a land-office business.

And all the time, out there in the woods, grim parties of sleepless men were beating the bushes for some sign of the invader.

Bart strode angrily down the street, pushing his way past the meandering groups. His uniform gave him right-of-way, fortunately for the revelers.

He was almost at the side-street where Sally lived, when he realized he had forgotten the flowers.

There was no florist nearby. He stopped at a hastily-constructed sidewalk stand, picked out the biggest and fanciest of the toy rockets, sourly paid three times what it was worth, and turned off to Sally's.

He had to wait at the door just a minute too long when he rang. Then she opened up, and he found out why—she had an apron on, and the house was full of the nicest smell in the world, french fries frying. She stayed in his arms just long enough for him to work himself up to the kind of kiss he really wanted to give her, then she pulled away.

"The potatoes!" She turned and ran out to the kitchen, bronze curls bobbing as she ran. Bart closed his mouth, stopped gasping, and followed her, just in time to see her slide two inches of steak into the broiler.

"You are," he said, watching her, "beyond any possible doubt, the most wonderful woman on any planet, let alone on Earth."

The corners of her mouth tilted, and she caught her lower lip with her teeth just in time to stop a full-fledged smile. Bart watched the even white

edges press down on the full redness of the lip, and decided he wasn't very hungry after all.

"Oh," he remembered, "I brought you a present." He went back to the entry, and got the package he'd dropped to get his arms free when she opened the door.

She unwrapped it while the steak sizzled and the potatoes crisped. "Why, that's sweet," she said, but Bart failed to note much enthusiasm.

"Look." He showed her how the nose unscrewed, and then set the hollow metal tube down on its rocket nozzles on the kitchen table. "You use it for a vase," he explained. "You can put flowers in."

"How cute! Listen, why don't you take it in and put it on the table? Take the jonquills out of the green pitcher and put them in here."

He felt a little better "Sure thing," he said. He didn't even try to kiss her on the way out.

THE TABLE looked wonderful, set just for two, in front of the fireplace. Bart whistled while he transferred flowers and water to the shiny souvenir rocket, and placed it carefully off-center on the table. He didn't want it getting in the way of the view. He stood back to survey the effect, and saw that the fire was laid, ready to be lit.

Nice touch. He walked around the table, knelt down, and scratched a match on the hearthstones, then stopped, staring, while the match flared in his fingers.

He dropped the match. So that was why she hadn't gone into rhapsodies over his present!

The rocket on the hearth was a good two feet tall—almost twice as big as his—and a really beautiful job. Shiny, silver-colored metal, not cast, but seamed along the sides...even a miniature air-lock standing open. Bart leaned closer, and saw that the surface was not as new and shiny as it had looked at first; it was scarred and dented in spots. But it was a

beautiful job. He glowered at the hunk of tin he'd brought.

Who...?

Bart ran through a quick review of the men he knew Sally knew, but none of them were quite the rocket-buying type. Seemed like there was some new competition in the field.

He touched the gleaming toy; it was warm.

Bart struck another match savagely, and lit the fire, then jumped up and paced over to the window. He stared out gloomily. Some joker had been there all afternoon—most likely, had brought Sally the rocket. He turned on his heel, and started back to the kitchen. Even an unjealous man could be pushed too far.

Sally saved him from the biggest mistake he could have made. The minute he showed his face in the kitchen door, she shoved a tray at him, smiled enchantingly, and said, "Take it in there, will you?" He carried the laden tray back to the other room, and cooled down on the way.

Bart Mandell, after all, was not *really* a jealous man. And he certainly knew better than to make a scene because some other character came visiting.

IT TOOK a little while to get back in the mood, but the salad was good, and the steak was better. Sally sat across the table, smiling and sparkling. The fire flickered, then roared, then settled down to a cheerful dance of flame and smoke and sparks. The shadows deepened, and the other man's present was not so obtrusive any more.

Bart helped her with the dishes. It was one of the things he'd learned, hither and yon. Nothing less likely to make a girl answer kindly next time you call up, than if her most recent memory of you is the dirty dishes you left behind. They stood close together in the bright kitchen, and when they went back to the living room, there was peace and intimacy between them.

Except, that is, when Bart decided

it was time to ask a casual question.

He added some wood to the fire, and before he stood up again, he said, "Nice gadget you've got there," pointing to the rocket on the hearth.

"Hmm-mh. Come sit down."

"Something new?" He was very off-hand.

"Hmm-mh."

"Haven't seen anything like it anywhere," he pursued, though he knew she was stiffening up.

"Most likely not," she said briskly; "do you want the radio on?"

That settled that. It was another man, or she would have told him.

"Sure," he agreed. "But wouldn't you rather go out? I thought we might take in a show." It was the last thing in the world he'd thought of. All he wanted right now was to sit in the dim room with Sally as close to him as she'd get.

"I don't know," she said. "Why don't we just stick around here? You must be worn out."

She was a sweet kid. Bart relaxed. After all, the other guy was gone; he, Bart, had the center of the stage now, and he might as well make use of it while it lasted.

"Not so bad," he told her. "I felt knocked out before, but something around here seems to be good for me."

"The steak maybe?" she teased.

"Could be." He fiddled with knobs on the radio, flicked past the news he wanted to hear, and found some music. "Like that?" He turned and held out his arms. She floated into them, and for a half an hour he forgot about the search, the Army, the Martian, and everything else.

Then the music gave way to news again, and Bart went to change the station, but Sally passed another miracle. "Leave it, why don't you?" she said. "Don't you want to hear?"

He did, but he *knew* she never did. She sure was working overtime tonight to keep him happy. Guilty conscience, maybe. He flicked the thought away almost quickly enough.

"...latest opinion from authorita-

tive sources," the commentator said breathlessly, "is that the Martian invader space ship must have landed under cover of the dark, before the search began. One officer at the search headquarters believes that the Martian disembarked and sent his ship back into the sky on automatic controls while he is reconnoitering our defenses. The search for the Martian is spreading throughout this area. Civilian volunteers are being called on now to assist the armed forces, fire and police departments, already engaged in an intensive dragnet search.

"To summarize: there has been no trace of the Martian spaceship since it stopped broadcasting, and RDF installations lost it fifty-six hours ago. They have never been detected by radar. Government heads of all countries are conferring today on an island in the Pacific, formulating a world-wide cooperative policy in case of hostile activity on the part of the Martian. The search in this area, where the alien ship is believed to have put down, is being intensified.

"Stay tuned for further news..."

THE MUSIC came on again, but Sally didn't want to dance. She turned to Bart with a frown furrowing her lovely forehead. "I just don't understand it, Bart. I thought the Martians were supposed to be so friendly just like us, and all."

"That's what we all thought from the first radio messages," he told her. "Maybe they are; who knows? It's just that everybody got scared when they stopped broadcasting and the radar couldn't pick them up. That means they've got some kind of a screen that can stop us from tracking them, and naturally we don't like that. So we want to find out where they—I mean *he*—landed. That's all. Nothing to worry about really."

There was plenty to worry about. The Martians were too smart; that's what it came down to. Two years of communication with them...but they

were the ones that started it; they were the ones who learned Earth languages, first English, then Russian; they were the ones who could build a spaceship to come and visit.

From their own descriptions they sounded just like human beings. But they were too smart; they could have figured out what people looked like, and just said they were that way. They could have...oh, anything.

There was no sense in getting wrought up about it, and there was certainly no sense in getting Sally worried. In two more hours he'd have to leave and go out hunting Martians again; that was enough for him to do. Meanwhile, he was going to relax.

"Come on, honey." Bart slid an arm around her waist, and moved his feet in time to the music, not really dancing, just doing enough to give him an excuse to hang onto her. "You stick to the steaks, and let Old Uncle Bart chase Martians. It'll work out better that way."

She smiled up at him, and he stopped pretending to be dancing.

It was a superior sort of kiss, but after only a very short eternity, Sally broke and stayed that way. They wound up in separate chairs in front of the fireplace, watching the flame-pictures, and Bart decided it was probably the next-best thing. It was quiet and peaceful, and as long as he stayed at arm's length Sally was very sweet.

Once or twice he almost went to sleep, but he kept himself awake trying to figure out what had got into his girl. She didn't want to go out. She didn't want to dance; she listened to the news; she asked serious questions.

He added it all up, and the answer was too good to be true. When he had to leave at eleven-thirty, he wandered off down the street in a happy daze. Could Sally, the party girl, the on-again, off-again girl—could Sally have made up her mind? She sure was acting like a lady with honorable intentions. Bart smirked and smiled, and

somehow found his way back to the barracks.

He really *wasn't* a jealous man, because he'd already forgotten about the model rocket on the hearth and the other guy who got there first with the most.

THEY WENT back to the woods at midnight, a truckful of weary G. I.'s, none of them caring much whether they ever got to see a Martian. They were dropped at a godforsaken spot in the wilderness, completely unidentifiable in the dark, and given the coordinates to aim for. For three hours they beat through the bush, cross-country, to the next highway, where they met another truckful of men coming out of the dim stretches on the other side of the road, just as discouraged as they were.

Somebody passed out coffee and doughnuts; they had fifteen minutes to sit around and wish the coffee was hot. Then they all got loaded in a couple of different trucks. They were driven about a mile further down the road, then dumped out and ordered back through the woods again. In the greyest dawn on record, they fought their way through the tangled undergrowth toward the road they'd started on. Nothing happened except twigs snapping in their faces, brambles scratching their hands, and roots tripping them up. They met no living creatures more alien or dangerous than a million murderous mosquitoes. When they came out on the highway the bag was still empty.

Captain Connors was waiting with the trucks, his face grey. While he conferred with the non-coms, Bart edged closer to listen. A sergeant was saying, "He got away clean, Cap'n. If there was anything bigger than a chipmunk in these woods we'd've found it."

The captain shook his head. "The Martian couldn't get away," he said worriedly. "He's still in this area. Got to be. If we can't find him, there's

only one answer; somebody's hiding him."

The first sergeant grunted in a shocked tone. "Hiding him? What kind of a rat would hide a monster like that?"

"He might not be a monster; he might be quite good-looking."

"He's a Martian, ain't he?" the first sergeant grumbled.

Bart didn't hear the captain's answer, because just then the order came to mount the trucks and the noise drowned it out. But it is doubtful that he would have heard anyhow...

SALLY WASN'T expecting company.

She was wearing a printed wrap-around sort of dress, and a bright colored scarf on her head. Peeping out from the edges of the scarf, Bart could see a few tightly bobby-pinned loops of lovely bronze-colored hair. She had no makeup on; she must have thought it was the laundryman at the door.

The funny part was it didn't make a bit of difference, Bart thought. She took his breath away just as thoroughly as she did when the glamour aids were intact.

"Hi," he said weakly. "We just got in from patrol. I thought maybe you'd give a soldier a cup of coffee." He almost added, "Or you could marry me instead." But there was a little matter to be cleared up first.

"You could have called first."

"I would have, if I'd been sure you'd say yes."

She hesitated, looked down at herself, and then the damage had already been done. "All right," she relented. It was hard to believe, but her smile was even prettier without lipstick. "Come on in. But you can't stay."

She led the way to the kitchen, Bart trying to figure a way to get another look at that toy rocket in the living room. Then he decided it wasn't necessary.

There was a new toy now, perched on top of the refrigerator. Bart knew for sure it hadn't been there last night. He remembered taking the cubes out

of the box, and putting them on top there while he looked for glasses.

It was one of the little toy robots this time. This one was extra-small, not more than an inch-and-a-half high, Bart realized when he got up to take a closer look. And it wasn't a robot; there was a tiny manikin inside, dressed in a miniature space-suit affair. Attached to the arm of the suit was a weird-looking machine, higher than the figure itself, and covered with minute dials and meters.

"Come and get your coffee," Sally called, but there was an edge of apprehension in her voice.

Bart reached out to pick up the toy, and instantly Sally was at his side. "Leave that alone!" she said sharply.

"Something special?" he asked, trying to look surprised.

"Yes," she said shortly. "Something special; now come drink your coffee if you want it, and leave that alone."

Bart turned back to the table. That little figurine was just the right size. It went with the rocket all right. And it had the same kind of fine workmanship in it. Bart wondered how you started this kind of a showdown.

"You're certainly acting peculiar, Bart Mandell!" Sally said.

HE LOOKED straight into smouldering brown eyes. "You're being a little strange yourself," he told her. "I'll tell you what I think," he said bluntly. "I think they're looking for that Martian in the wrong place."

"What are you talking about?" She was very haughty.

"About your new toys; that's what I'm talking about!"

"There is no need to scream at me," she said icily. "I can hear you perfectly..."

"Well, then, listen a while," he interrupted, lowering his voice. "That rocket you've got in the living room—and this little gadget here on the refrigerator—I want to know where you got them."

"I don't think that's any of your business!"

Bart got up and advanced a step, towering over her.

"Sally," he said angrily, "this is a serious matter. The United States Government is involved in this. If you can prove to me where you got those things, I'll apologize or anything else you want. But *you have to answer me.*"

"Bart, you've gone out of your head! If you want to know, *nobody* gave them to me! I got them for myself!"

"Where?"

"If you were the last man on Earth, I wouldn't tell you! Now will you leave politely before I... Bart, stop that!"

Halfway to the refrigerator he stopped and turned back.

"Sally, can you honestly say to me that you don't know anything about the Martians?"

"What in the world would *I* know?" All wide-eyed innocence, but just a bit too much of it; after being so angry.

"Just where you've got him hidden, that's all you'd know!" Now *he* lost his temper. "And why, that's what I don't understand. *Why?* Good Lord, Sally, I could stand anything but this! I wouldn't mind so much if you were seeing some other *man* behind my back. But a Martian! Sally, have you no discrimination? Don't you realize he's dangerous? Don't you understand that the whole world is looking—"

Sally laughed.

It was the wrong thing to do. She laughed, and pointed a shaking finger at Bart, and choked out, "Oh, you look so *funny.*" She subsided a little, while he stood rooted to the floor, keeping himself in control. "Bart, you look so funny when you get mad. Now *let's* be sensible and stop fighting. Let's go out on the porch and talk a while, and then..."

He whirled around and reached out. Just before his hand closed on the miniature space suit, he heard her say, "Bart, stop! You'll hurt him!" Then he knew he was right.

CAPTAIN CONNORS took some convincing.

The first result of Bart's effort to call him with the news was the arrival of an MP, with instructions to bring in some drunken soldier. The MP came, and saw, and listened. Most especially he listened to Nong Kay, the one-inch high Martian, talking with the aid of his two-inch high metal larynx—the gadget with the knobs and buttons.

The MP went away with his story, and after a while a sergeant came, and went through the routine again. *He* called the captain.

Captain Connors listened, not only to the diminutive "Martian monster" but also, at great length, to Sally. She explained again how she'd found the spaceship on her lawn the morning before, and took them out to show them the scorched spot where the rocket exhaust had burned away the grass.

It was still too hot to touch when she found it, but she had had no idea what it was. Captain Connors had a hard time believing that; but Bart knew Sally, and he knew it was true.

She'd taken it indoors just out of curiosity, with the help of several thicknesses of pot-holders. She left it on the hearth to cool off...and when she came back in the door was open, and the little mannikin was outside, with his voice-box.

"He was real cute," Sally told the captain, looking up at him earnestly out of those big brown eyes. "And polite, too; he thanked me for taking him in, and explained all about why he turned off his radio the way he did."

"That would take some explaining," the captain said grimly.

"Not from Nong's point of view, sir," Bart said. "You see, he didn't know..."

"I think you can let the young lady tell her own story." The captain looked at Sally again, and Bart began to burn. Sally, flushed and excited, was all too easy to look at.

"Well, the poor little fellow!" she said indignantly. "How would *you* feel if you suddenly found out the folks you were going to visit were—well *hundreds* of times bigger than you were? You might get scared, too! So he landed in the woods, and... Bart, you better explain. I'm not sure about the rest of it."

Bart managed not to smirk at Captain Connors. As simply as he could, he relayed what Nong Kay had told him about taking a quick and frightening look around at the fierce beasts—squirrels!—and giant trees, and then hopping over to Sally's lawn, in the middle of a human settlement. Then, when Sally told him how everyone was hunting for him, he begged her to keep him hidden for a few days, until he had a chance to find out what he was getting into. It was all that simple.

The captain listened, not too patiently, nodded his understanding, and went away, after shaking Sally's hand just one moment too long. Nong Kay and the "model" rocket went, too, on the seat of the Army car—right next to the captain. Bart, not having received orders to do otherwise, stayed.

He put his time to good use, too.

Captain Connors came back, minus his small chum. He rang the bell, and stood on the porch, hat in hand, his eyes so fully occupied with Sally in the doorway, that he never even noticed Bart standing behind her in the hall.

"We're having an official welcoming for the little fellow," the captain said, "and I thought perhaps you ought to be there ma'am. I'd be glad to escort you..."

Bart Mandell was not a jealous man, but he knew when a good thing was going too far...and he knew it was wise to put one's foot down early.

"That's all right, sir," he said as respectfully as possible, pulling the door open a little farther. "Anywhere my brand-new fiancée goes, I will be delighted to escort her myself."

...AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE

But, as with other freedoms, it's a good idea to inquire, "Free of what, or for what?"

by **Clifford D. Simak**

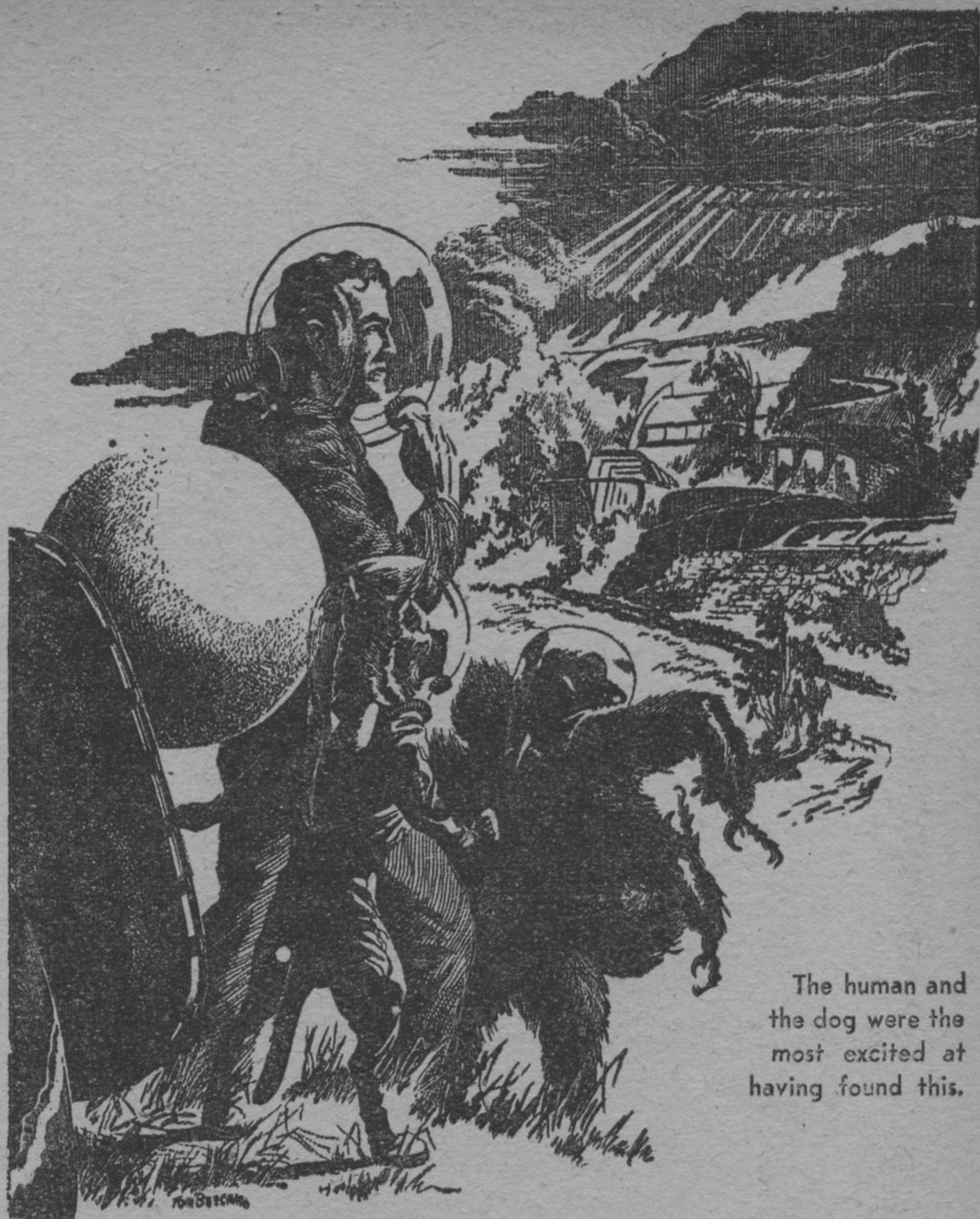
(illustrated by Beecham)



THEY KNEW when they stepped out of the ship and saw it. There was, of course, no way that they could have known it, or been sure they knew it, for there was no way to know what one might be looking for. Yet, they did know it for what it was—and three of them stood and looked at it, while the fourth one floated and looked at it. And each of them, in his brain or heart or intuition—whatever you may name it—knew deep inside himself a strange conviction that here finally was the resting-

place (or one of the resting-places) of that legendary fragment of the human race that, millenia before, had broken free of the chains of ordinary humans to make their way into the darkness of the outer galaxy. But whether they fled from mediocrity; or whether they deserted; or whether they left for any one of a dozen other reasons was a thing that no one now might know; the matter had become an academic question that had split into several cults of erudite belief, and still was fiercely debated in a very learned manner.

In the minds of the four who looked, however, there was no shred of question that here before them lay the place that had been sought—in a more



The human and the dog were the most excited at having found this.

or in a haphazard fashion—for a hundred thousand years. It was a place. One hesitated to call it a city, although it probably was a city. It was a place of living, and of learning, and of working, and it had many buildings; but the buildings had been made a part of the landscape and did not outrage the eye with their grossness nor their disregard for the land they stood upon. There was greatness about the place—not a greatness of gigantic stones heaped on one another, nor the greatness of a bold and overwhelming architecture, nor even the greatness of in-

destructibility. For there was no massiveness of structure, and the architecture seemed quite ordinary; some of the buildings had fallen into disrepair, and others were weathered into a mellowness that blended with the trees and grass of the hills on which they stood.

Still there was a greatness in them, the greatness of humility and purpose—and the greatness, too, of well-ordered life. Looking at them, one knew that he had been wrong in thinking this a city—that this was no city, but an extensive village, with all the

connotations that were in the word.

But most of all there was humanness—the subtle touch that marked the buildings as ones that had been planned by human minds, and raised by human hands. You could not put your finger upon any single thing and say, "This thing is human"; any one of those things you put your finger on might have been built or achieved by another race. But when all those single things you might put your finger on were rolled into the whole concept, there could be no doubt that this was a human village.

Sentient beings had hunted for this place, had sought the clue that might lead them to the vanished segment of the race; when they failed, some of them had doubted there had been such a segment—for the story was one that was based upon little more than myth, with the records that told of it often in dispute. There were those, too, who had said that it mattered little if you found the missing fragment, since little that was of any value would come from a race so insignificant as the human race. What were the humans, they would ask you—and would answer before you had a chance to speak. Gadgeteers, they said, gadgeteers who were singularly unstable. Great on gadgets, they would say, but with very little real intelligence. It was, they would point out, only by the slightest margin of intelligence that ever they were accepted into the galactic brotherhood. And, these detractors would remind you, humans had not improved much since. Still marvellous gadgeteers, of course, but strictly third-rate citizens who now quite rightly had been relegated to the backwash of the empire.

THE PLACE had been sought, and there had been many failures. It had been sought, but not consistently; there were matters of much greater import than its finding. It was simply an amusing piece of galactic history—or myth, if you would rather.

As a project, its discovery had never rated very high.

But here it was, spread out below the high ridge on which the ship had landed; and if any of them wondered why it had not been found before, the answer was simple—there were just too many stars; you could not search them all.

"This is it," said the Dog, speaking in his mind; he looked slantwise at the Human, wondering what the Human might be thinking; of all of them, the finding of this place must mean the most to him.

"I am glad we found it," said the Dog, speaking directly to the Human; and the Human caught the nuances of the thought, the closeness of the Dog, his great compassion and his brotherhood.

"Now we shall know," the Spider said; and each of them knew, without his actually saying so, that now they'd know if these humans were any different from the other humans—or if they were just the same old humdrum race.

"They were mutants," said the Globe, "or they were supposed to be."

The Human stood there, saying nothing, just looking at the place.

"If we'd tried to find it," said the Dog, "we never would have done it."

"We can't spend much time," the Spider told them. "Just a quick survey, then there's this other business."

"The point is," said the Globe, "we know now that it exists, and where it is. They will send experts out to investigate."

"We stumbled on it," said the Human, half in wonderment; "we just stumbled on it."

The Spider made a thought that sounded like a chuckle, and the Human said no more.

"It's deserted," said the Globe; "they have run away again."

"They may be decadent," said the Spider. "We may find what's left of them huddled in some corner, wondering what it's all about—loaded down with legends and with crazy superstitions."

"I don't think so," said the Dog.

"We can't spend much time," the Spider stated again.

"We *should* spend no time at all," the Globe told him. "We were not sent out to find this place; we have no business letting it delay us."

"Since we've found it," said the Dog, "it would be a shame to go away and leave it, just like that."

"Then let's get at it," said the Spider. "Let's break out the robots and the ground-car."

"If you don't mind," the Human said, "I think that I will walk. The rest of you go ahead; I'll just walk down and take a look around."

"I'll go with you," said the Dog.

"I thank you," said the Human, "but there really is no need."

So they let him go alone. The three of them stayed on the ridge-top, and watched him walk down the hill toward the silent buildings; then they went to activate the robots.

THE SUN was setting when they returned; the Human was waiting for them, squatting on the ridge, staring at the village.

He did not ask them what they found. It was almost as if he knew, although he could not have found the answer by himself, just walking around.

They told him.

The Dog was kind about it. "It's strange," he said. "There is no evidence of any great development; no hint of anything unusual. In fact, you might guess that they had retrogressed. There are no great engines, no hint of any mechanical ability."

"There are gadgets," said the Human. "Gadgets of comfort and convenience. That is all I saw."

"That is all there is," the Spider said.

"There are no humans," said the Globe. "No life of any kind; no intelligence."

"The experts," said the Dog, "may find something when they come."

"I doubt it," said the Spider.

The Human turned his head away from the village and looked at his three companions. The Dog was sorry, of course, that they had found so little—sorry that the little they had found had been so negative. The Dog was sorry because he still held within himself some measure of racial memory, and of loyalty. The old associations with the human race had been wiped away millenia ago; but the heritage still held—the old heritage of sympathy with, and for, the being that had walked with his ancestors so understandingly.

The Spider was almost pleased about it—pleased that he had found no evidence of greatness, that this last vestige of vanity that might be held by humans now would be dashed forever. The race must now slink back into its corner and stay there, watching the greatness of the Spiders, and the other races, with furtive eyes.

The Globe didn't care. Floating there, at head-level with the Spider and the Dog, it meant little to him whether humans might be proud or humble. Nothing mattered to the Globe except that certain plans went forward; that certain goals were reached; that progress could be measured. Already the Globe had written off this village; already he had erased the story of the mutant humans as a factor that might affect progress, one way or another.

"I think," the Human said, "that I will stay out here for a while. That is, if you don't mind."

"We don't mind," the Globe told him.

"It will be getting dark," the Spider said.

"There'll be stars," the Human said. "There may even be a moon. Did you notice if there was a moon?"

"No," the Spider said.

"We'll be leaving soon," the Dog said to the Human. "I will come out and tell you when we have to leave."

THERE WERE stars, of course. They came out when the last

flush of the sun still flamed along the west. First there were but a few of the brighter ones; then there were more, and finally the entire heavens was a network of unfamiliar stars. But there was no moon. Or, if there was one, it did not show itself.

Chill crept across the ridge-top and the Human found some sticks of wood lying about—dead branches, and shrivelled bushes, and other wood that looked as if it might at one time have been milled and worked—and built himself a fire. It was a small fire, but it flamed brightly in the darkness; he huddled close against it, more for its companionship than for any heat it gave.

He sat beside it, looked down upon the village, and told himself there was something wrong. The greatness of the human race, he told himself, could not have gone so utterly to seed. He was lonely—lonely with a throat-aching loneliness that was more than the loneliness of an alien planet, and a chilly ridge-top, and unfamiliar stars. He was lonely for the hope that once had glowed so brightly; for the promise that had gone like dust into nothingness before a morning wind; for a race that huddled in its gadgetry in the backwash of the empire.

Not an empire of humanity, but an empire of Globes and Spiders; of Dogs; and other things for which there was scarcely a description.

There was more to the human race than gadgetry. There was destiny somewhere, and the gadgetry was simply the means to bridge the time until that destiny should become apparent. In a fight for survival, the Human told himself, gadgetry might be the expedient, but it could not be the answer; it could not be the sum total, the final jotting down of any group of beings.

The Dog came and stood beside him, without saying anything. He simply stood there and looked with the Human down at the quiet village that had been quiet so long; the firelight flamed along his coat and he was a thing of

beauty, with a certain inherent wildness still existing in him.

Finally the Dog broke the silence that hung above the world and seemed a part of it. "The fire is nice," he said. "I seldom have a fire."

"The fire was first," the Human said. "The first step up. Fire is a symbol to me."

"I have symbols, too," the Dog said, gravely. "Even the Spider has some symbols. But the Globe has none."

"I feel sorry for the Globe," the Human said.

"Don't let your pity wear you down," the Dog told him. "The Globe feels sorry for you. He is sorry for all of us—for everything that is not a Globe."

"Once my people were sorry like that, too," the Human said; "but not any more."

"It's time to go," the Dog said. "I know you would like to stay, but..."

"I am staying," said the Human.

"You can't stay," the Dog told him.

"I am staying," the Human said.

"I am just a Human, and you can get along without me."

"I thought you would be staying," said the Dog. "Do you want me to go back and get your stuff?"

"If you would be so kind," the Human said. "I'd not like to go myself."

"The Globe will be angry," said the Dog.

"I know it."

"You will be demoted," said the Dog; "it will be a long time before you're allowed to go on a first-class run again."

"I know all that."

"The Spider will say that all humans are crazy. He will say it in a very nasty way."

"I don't care," the Human said; "somehow, I don't care."

"All right, then," said the Dog. "I will go and get your stuff. There are some books, and your clothes, and that little trunk of yours."

"And food," the Human said.

"Yes," declared the Dog; "I would not have forgotten food."

After the ship was gone, the Human

picked up the bundles the Dog had brought; in addition to all the Human's food, the Human saw that the Dog had left him some of his own as well.

2



THE PEOPLE of the village had lived a simple and a comfortable life. Much of the comfort paraphernalia had broken down, and all of it had long since ceased to operate; but it was not hard for one to figure out what each of the gadgets did, or once had been designed to do.

They had held a love of beauty, for there still were ruins of their gardens left; here and there one found a flower, or a flowering shrub that once had been tended carefully for its color and its grace. But these things now had been long forgotten, and had lost the grandeur of their purpose—the beauty they now held was bitter-sweet and faded.

The people had been literate, for there were rows of books upon the shelves; but books went to dust when they were touched, and one could do no more than wonder at the magic words they held.

There were buildings which, at one time, might have been theatres; there were great forums where the populace may have gathered to hear the wisdom, or the argument, that was the topic of the day.

And even yet one could sense the peace and leisure, the order and the happiness that once had held the place.

There was no greatness. There were no mighty engines, nor the shops to make them. There were no launching-platforms, and no other hint that the dwellers in the village had ever dreamed of going to the stars—although they must have known about

the stars since their ancestors once had come from space. There were no defenses, and there were no great roads leading from the village into the outer planet.

One felt peace when he walked along the street, but it was a haunted peace—a peace that balanced on a knife's edge; while one wished with all his heart that he could give way to it, and live with it, one was afraid to do so for fear of what might happen.

The Human slept in the homes, clearing away the dust and the fallen debris, building tiny fires to keep him company. He sat outside, on the broken flagstones or the shattered bench, before he went to sleep and stared up at the stars, and thought how once those stars had made familiar patterns for a happy people. He wandered in the winding paths that were narrower now than they once had been, and hunted for a clue; he did not hunt too strenuously, for there was something here which said you should not hurry, and you should not fret, for there was no purpose in it.

Here once had lain the hope of the human race, a mutant branch of that race that had been greater than the basic race. Here had been the hope of greatness—and there was no greatness. Here was peace and comfort; intelligence and leisure, but nothing else that made itself apparent to the eye.

Although there must be something else, some lesson, some message, some purpose—the Human told himself again and again that this could not be a dead end, that it was more than some blind alley.

ON THE FIFTH day, in the center of the village, he found a building that was a little more ornate and somewhat more solidly built—although all the rest were solid enough, for all conscience's sake. There were no windows and the single door was locked and he knew at last that he had found the clue he had been hunting for.

He worked for three days to break into the building, and there was no way that he could. On the fourth day he gave up and walked away—out of the village and across the hills—looking for some thought, or some idea, that might gain him entry to the building. He walked across the hills—as one will pace his study when he is at loss for words, or take a turn in the garden to clear his head for thinking.

And that is how he found the people.

First of all, he saw the smoke coming from one of the hollows that branched down toward the valley where a river ran, a streak of gleaming silver against the green of pasture grass.

He walked cautiously, so that he would not be surprised—but strangely, without the slightest fear—there was something in this planet—something in the arching sky, and the song of bird, and the way the wind blew out of the west—that told a man he had not a thing to fear.

Then he saw the house beneath the mighty trees. He saw the orchard and the trees bending with their fruit, and heard the thoughts of people talking back and forth.

He walked down the hill toward the house—not hurrying, for suddenly it had come upon him that there was no need to hurry. And just as suddenly, it seemed that he was coming home; that was the strangest of all, for he had never known a home that resembled this.

They saw him coming when he strode down across the orchard, but they did not rise and come to meet him. They sat where they were and waited—as if he already were a friend of theirs, and his coming was expected.

There was an old lady—with snow-white hair and a prim, neat dress, the collar coming up high at her throat to hide the ravages of age upon the human body. But her face was beautiful—the restful beauty of the very old who sit and rock, and know their

day is done, and that their life is full, and that it has been good.

There was a man of middle age or more, who sat beside the woman. The sun had burned his face and neck until they were almost black; his hands were calloused and pockmarked with old scars, and half-crippled with heavy work. But upon his face, too, was a calmness which was an incomplete reflection of the face beside him—incomplete because it was not as deep and settled, because it could not as yet know the full comfort of old age.

The third one was a young woman and the Human saw the calmness in her, too. She looked back at him out of cool grey eyes; he saw her face was curved and soft, and that she was much younger than he first had thought.

HE STOPPED at the gate, and the man rose and came to where he waited. "You're welcome, stranger," said the man. "We heard you coming since you stepped into the orchard."

"I have been at the village," the Human said; "I am just out for a walk."

"You are from outside?"

"Yes," the Human told him, "I am from outside. My name is David Grahame."

"Come in David," said the man, opening the gate. "Come and rest with us; there will be food, and we have an extra bed."

He walked along the garden path with the man and came to the bench where the old lady sat.

"My name is Jed," the man said, "and this is my mother, Mary; the other of us is my daughter, Alice."

"So you really came to us, young man," the old lady said to David.

She patted the bench with a fragile hand. "Here, sit down beside me and let us talk awhile. Jed has chores to do, and Alice will have to cook the supper. But I am old and lazy, and I only sit and talk."

Now that she talked, her eyes were

brighter, but the calmness still was in them. "We knew you would come, someday," she said. "We knew someone would come; for surely those who are outside would hunt their mutant kin."

"We found you," David said, "quite by accident."

"We? There are others of you?"

"The others went away; they were not human and they were not interested."

"But you stayed," she said. "You thought there would be things to find. Great secrets to be learned."

"I stayed," said David, "because I had to stay."

"But the secrets? The glory and the power?"

David shook his head. "I don't think I thought of that—not of power and glory. But there must be something else. You sense it walking in the village, and looking at the homes; you sense a certain truth."

"Truth," the old lady said. "Yes, we found Truth."

And the way she said it, "Truth" was capitalized.

He looked quickly at her and she sensed the unspoken, unguarded question that flicked across his mind. "No," she told him, "not religion. Just Truth; the plain and simple Truth."

He almost believed her, for there was a quiet conviction in the way she said it, a deep and solid surety. "The truth of what?" he asked.

"Why, Truth," the old lady said. "Just Truth."

3



IT WOULD be something more than a simple truth, of course, it would have nothing to do with machines, and it would concern neither power nor glory. It would be an inner truth—a

mental, or a spiritual or a psychological truth—that would have a deep and abiding meaning, the sort of truth that men had followed for years and even followed yet in the wish-worlds of their own creation.

The Human lay in the bed close beneath the roof and listened to the night-wind that blew itself a lullaby along the eaves and shingles. The house was quiet, and the world was quiet except for the singing wind. The world was quiet and David Grahame could imagine, lying there, how the galaxy would gradually grow quiet under the magic and the spell of what these human-folk had found.

It must be great, he thought, this truth of theirs. It must be powerful, and imagination-snaring, and all-answering to send them back like this—to separate them from the striving of the galaxy, and send them back to this pastoral life of achieved tranquility in this alien valley; to make them grub the soil for food and cut the trees for warmth; to make them content with the little that they had.

To get along with that little, they must have much of something else, some deep conviction, some inner knowledge that had spelled out to them a meaning to their lives, to the mere fact and living of their lives, that no one else could have.

He lay on the bed, pulled the covers up more comfortably about him, and hugged himself with inner satisfaction.

Man cowered in one corner of the galactic empire, a maker of gadgets—tolerated only because he was a maker of gadgets, and because the other races never could be sure what he might come up with next. They tolerated him, and threw him crumbs enough to keep him friendly, but wasted scant courtesy upon him.

Now, finally, Man had something that would win him a place in the respect and the dignity of the galaxy. For a truth is a thing to be respected.

Peace came to the Human, but he would not let it in; he fought against it so that he could think, so that he

could speculate. First, he imagined that this must be the truth that the mutant race had found, then he abandoned that idea...

Finally the lullabying wind and the sense of peace and the tiredness of his body prevailed against him and he slept. The last thought that he had was: *I must ask them. I must find out.*

But it was days before he asked them, for he sensed that they were watching; he knew that they wondered if he could be trusted with the truth and if he was worthy of it.

He wished to stay; but for politeness sake he said that he must go, and raised no great objection when they said that he must stay. It was as if each one of them knew this was a racial ritual which must be observed, and all were glad when it once was done and was over with.

He worked in the fields with Jed, and got to know the neighbors up and down the valley; he sat long evenings talking with Jed, and his mother and the daughter, and with the other valley folk who dropped in to pass a word or two.

He had expected that they would ask him questions, but they did not ask; it was almost as if they didn't care, as if they so loved this valley where they lived that they did not even think upon the teeming galaxy their far ancestors had left behind to seek, here on this world, a destiny that was better than common human destiny.

The Human did not ask them questions, either; he felt them watching him, and he was afraid that questions would send them fleeing from the strangeness of him.

But he was not a stranger. It took only a day or two for him to know that he could be one of them, so he made himself become one of them; he sat for long hours and talked of common gossip that ran up and down the valley, and it all was kindly gossip. He learned many things—that there

were other valleys where other people lived; that the silent, deserted village was something they did not fret about, although each of them seemed had no ambition and no hope beyond this life of theirs, and all were well content.

THE HUMAN grew content himself, content with the rose-grey mornings; with the dignity of labor; with the pride of growing things. But even as he grew content, he knew he could not be content—that he must find the answer to the truth they had found and must carry that truth back to the waiting galaxy. Before long, a ship would be coming out to explore the village and to study it; and before the ship arrived, he must know the answer. When the ship arrived, he must be standing on the ridge above the village to tell them what he'd found.

One day Jed said to him. "You will be staying with us?"

David shook his head. "I have to go back, Jed; I would like to stay, but I must go back."

Jed spoke slowly, calmly. "You want the Truth? That's it?"

"If you will give it to me," David said.

"It is yours to have," said Jed; "you will not take it back."

That night Jed said to his daughter, "Alice, teach David how to read our writing. It is time he knew."

In the corner by the fireplace, the old lady sat rocking in her chair. "Aye," she said, "it is time he read the Truth."

4



THE KEY HAD come by special messenger from its custodian, five valleys distant; Jed held it in his hand now, and slid it in the lock of the door, in the building that stood in the center

of the old quiet, long-deserted village.

"This is the first time," Jed said, "that the door has been opened, except for the Ritualistic reading. Each hundred years the door is opened, and the Truth is read so that those who then are living may know that it is so."

He turned the key and David heard the click of the tumblers turning in the lock.

"That way," said Jed, "we keep it actual fact; we do not allow it to become a myth.

"It is," he said, "too important a thing to become a myth."

Jed turned the latch and the door swung open just an inch or two. "I said Ritualistic reading," he added, "but perhaps that is not quite right; there is no ritual to it. Three persons are chosen; they come here on the appointed day, and each of them reads the Truth and then goes back as living witnesses. There is no more ceremony than there is with you and I."

"It is good of you to do this for me," David said.

"We would do the same for any of our own who should doubt the Truth," said Jed. "We are a very simple people and we do not believe in red tape or rules; all we do is live.

"In just a little while," he said, "you will understand why we are people."

He swung the door wide open and stepped to one side so that David might walk in ahead of him. The place was one large room and it was neat and orderly. There was some dust, but not very much.

Half the room was filled to three quarters of its height with a machine that gleamed in the dull light that came from some source high in the roof.

"This is our machine," said Jed.

And so it was gadgetry, after all. It was another machine, perhaps a cleverer and sleeker machine, but it was still a gadget and the human race still were gadgeteers.

"Doubtless you wondered why you found no machines," said Jed. "The

answer is that there is only one and this is it."

"Just one machine!"

"It is an answerer," said Jed. "A logic. With this machine, there is no need of any others."

"You mean it answers questions?"

"It did at one time," said Jed. "I presume it still would if there were any of us who knew how to operate it. But there is no need of asking further questions."

"You can depend on it?" asked David. "That is, you can be sure that it tells the truth?"

JED SAID soberly, "My son, our ancestors spent thousands of years making sure that it would tell the truth. They did nothing else. It was not only the lifework of each trained technician, but the lifework of the race. And when they were sure that it would know and tell the truth—when they were certain that there could be no slightest error in the logic of its calculations—they asked two questions of it."

"Two questions?"

"Two questions," Jed said, "and they found the Truth."

"And the Truth?"

"The Truth," Jed said, "is here for you to read. Just as it came out those centuries ago."

He led the way to a table that stood in front of one panel of the great machine. There were two tapes upon the table, lying side by side. The tapes were covered by some sort of transparent preservative.

"The first question," said Jed, "was this: What is the purpose of the universe? Now read the top tape, for that is the answer."

David bent above the table and the answer was upon the tape: *The universe has no purpose. The universe just happened.*

"And the second question..." said Jed, but there was no need for him to finish, for what the question had been was implicit in the wording of the sec-

ond tape: *Life has no significance. Life is an accident.*

"And that," said Jed, "is the Truth we found; that is why we are a simple people."

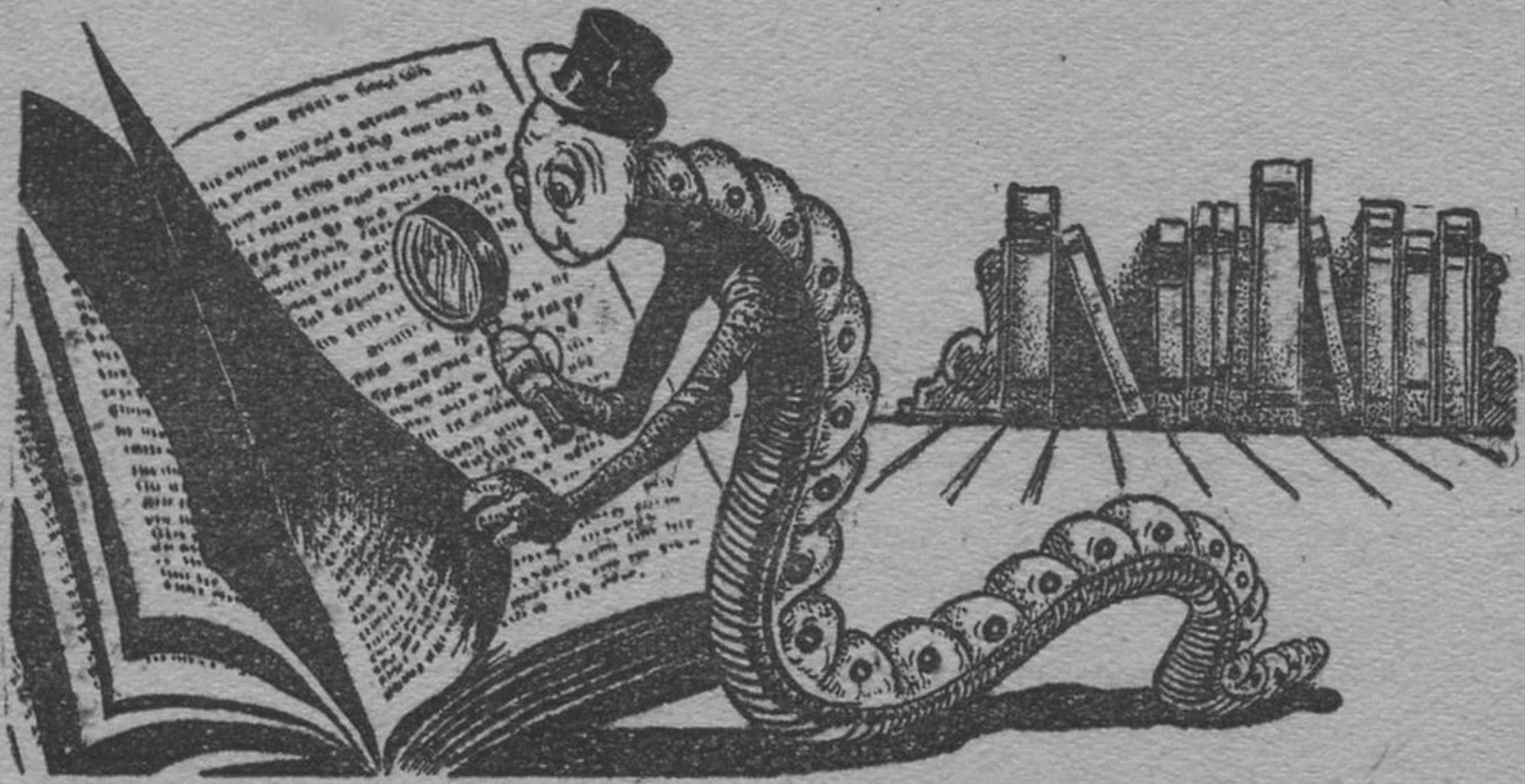
David lifted stricken eyes and looked at Jed, the descendant of that mutant race that was to have brought power and glory, respect and dignity to the gadgeteering humans.

"I am sorry, son," said Jed; "that is all there is."

They walked out of the room and Jed locked the door and put the key into his pocket.

"They'll be coming soon," said Jed, "the ones who will be sent out to explore the village. I suppose you will be waiting for them."

David shook his head. "Let's go back home," he said.



Readin' and Writhin'

MILTON LESSER'S "Earthbound" was the one title in the first set of Winston science fiction novels that I was unable to report upon last time, and it is the one, I am afraid, which comes closest to what you think of when you hear the word, "juvenile". Not that it's poorly done (it reads well enough on its own level) but that I got an immediate feeling of bored familiarity with the space-cadet background; and once the hero was washed out, took off to avoid having to face his father, and was then approached by a shady character who offers him a job which is an obvious spotting-position for space-piracy—well, is there any need to go on? Perhaps some of the younger youngsters will like it, but I can't recommend it to anyone else.

If all the books had been on this level, then perhaps Lesser's competent entry would stand out better; unfortunately for the author, three of the first five were well above the average "good" novel slanted to the adult population, and the Jones novel outstanding. I hope that the sales figures encourage the publishers to continue aiming high, but cannot make any predictions. (While it is true that many teen-agers sneer at anything labelled "juvenile", and seek out adult science-fiction, this is a reaction mostly to be found amongst the steady science-fiction readers; the "new fans" who've already become addicted to *Astounding Galaxy*, etc. But, as has been noted before, this is not the market with which Winston is most concerned; it's a specialized, limited clientele,

already well covered by other publishers.)

ONE OF THE first new authors to be introduced to science-fiction readers by Hugo Gernsback (and this meant readers of *Amazing Stories*, for the most part) was David H. Keller, MD, whose first-published tale, "The Revolt of the Pedestrians" appeared early in 1928. It was a hit with the readers, and Keller became a regular contributor to the magazine; when Gernsback brought out *Science Wonder Stories*, the first dozen issues each contained either a short story or serial-installment by his favorite.

Dr. Keller is not so much a writer as a teller of tales; what was once touted as the Keller "style" in science fiction pretty well breaks down to a simple, straightforward, conversational manner of relating stories. There is little artifice, but now and then, when the doctor feels a story vividly; when the story is short and of the proper nature for this manner of telling; when it has been thoroughly worked out in the telling; we can see some art in the finished product.

There are limitations in the style itself, and the limitations of any author who restricts himself to the tale-telling approach reveal themselves rather quickly. What science-fiction needed in the late twenties and early thirties was the human touch, the straightforward approach, the concentration upon people and their reactions to strange and wonderful events—rather than scientific discussions, sociological stage-settings, and cataclysmic happenings, cluttered with pasteboard props labelled "hero", "heroine", "villain", etc. Keller is a complicated enough human being himself, and has had enough and varied experience with humans in his career of general practitioner and psychiatrist so that his simplicity of approach does not become mere simple-mindedness—as is frequently found in the case of people who just sit down and write and write and write about "real people", etc.

Where his method fails, however, is in the inability to create characters other than his handful of prototypes. It is refreshing to read *one* story where all the characters talk and act in a convincingly straightforward manner, even the most pathological of them (and Keller can present very frighteningly convincing psychopaths); but an entire collection of the same sort of

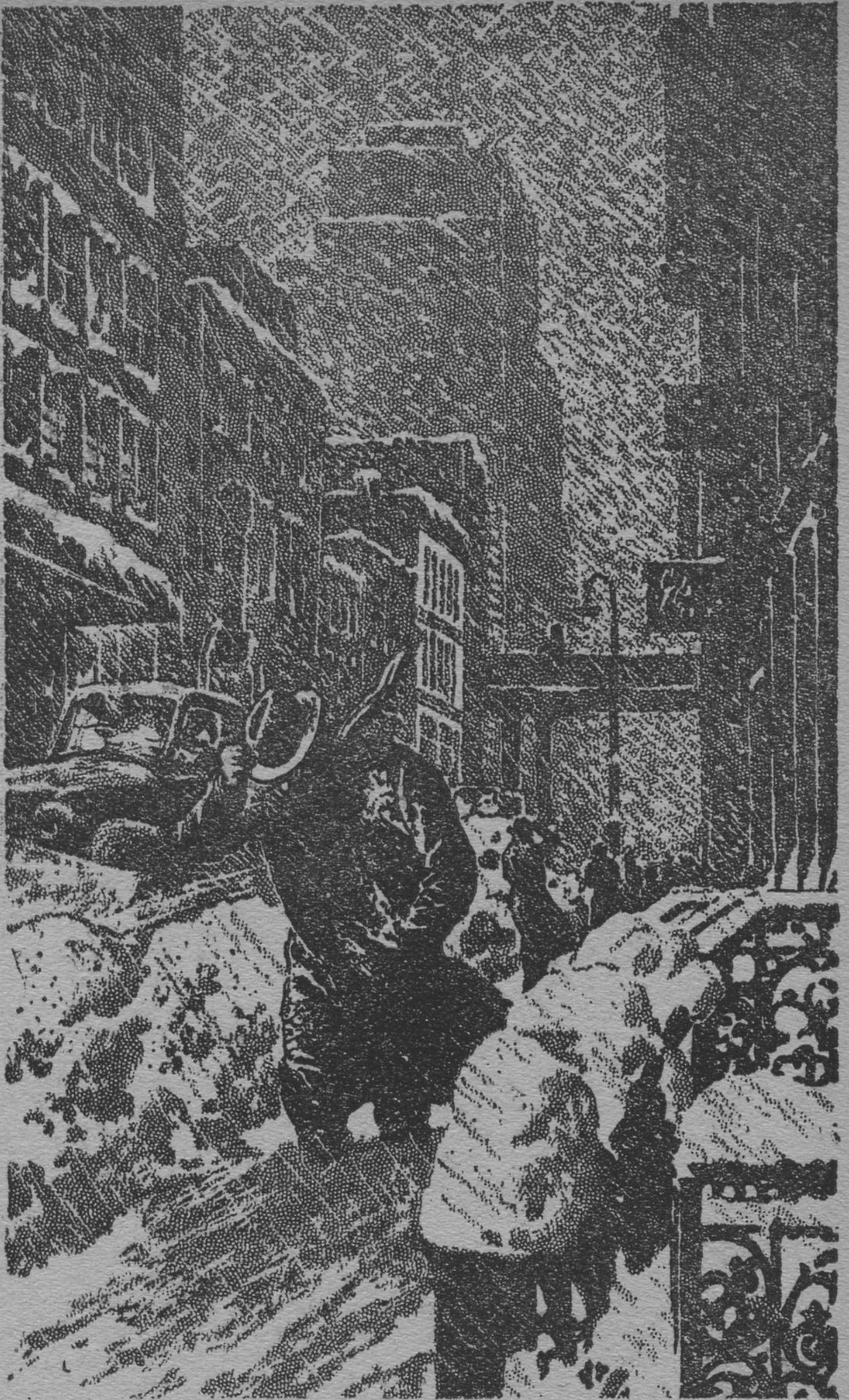
thing palls when you try to read more than a couple at a time. The oversimplifications of cause and effect, with their one-to-one relationships give you a never-never-land feeling, after awhile, despite the very real power in many of the tales. "Revolt of the Pedestrians" and "Free as the Air" are examples of this. And much of Keller's "science" is suspect, at best.

When he deals with the terrifyingly believable madmen and women in his clinical fantasies, Keller hits a level rarely achieved in the horror story; when he deals with pure fantasy and whimsy, as in the "Cornwall" stories, there is true individual delight. Taken all in all, I would recommend "Tales From Underwood", which Arkham House labels "A Collection of the Best Fantastic Stories of David H. Keller", and sells for \$3.95, but take them in small doses.

A SMALLER package contains two short novels, "The Solitary Hunters" and "The Abyss", offered by New Era Publishers, Philadelphia, for \$3.00 the copy. I must confess to ambivalence about this volume; there are numerous small irritations, such as a jacket and interior illustration which gives away the core of the "Solitary Hunters", numerous typographical errors, and infelicities which should have been remedied by a bit of judicious editing. One of the two novels is otherwise available only in 1934 issues of *Weird Tales* (January to March; each installment was voted first-place by the readers, which set a record at the time) and "The Abyss" has not appeared heretofore.

I would say that this volume is for confirmed Keller-addicts, for those who can tolerate the doctor's most incredible oversimplifications and extrapolations-to-utter-absurdity for the sake of the very solid punch he can pack into a story nonetheless. "The Abyss" packs a wallop in spite of the clinkers, and the under-writing helps it, rather than hinders. So, if you have a special fondness for Keller (as I admit to having myself) then this volume is worth three Eisenhower dollars sheerly on the grounds of non-availability otherwise; if you haven't, I'd suggest borrowing a copy first, to see if you want to own it. In either event, "The Abyss" is something to experience.

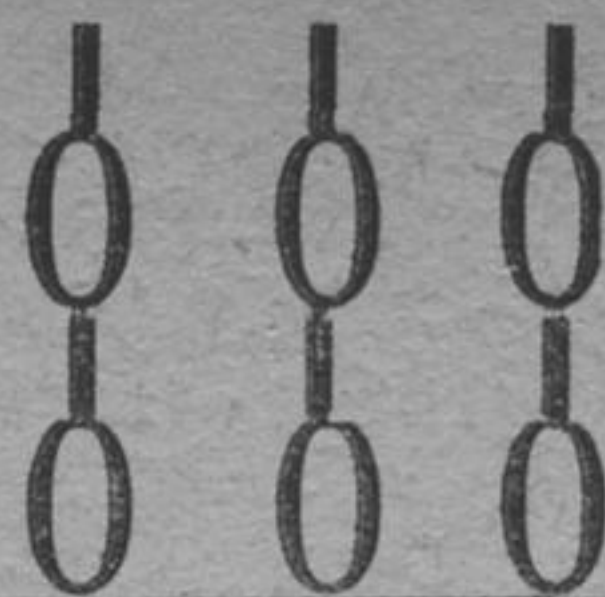




Snowplows fought their way up the street, and a few pedestrians battled along the sidewalk...

Novelet Of Days To Come

(illustrated by
Paul Orban)



COLD WAR

by Harry Warner, Jr.

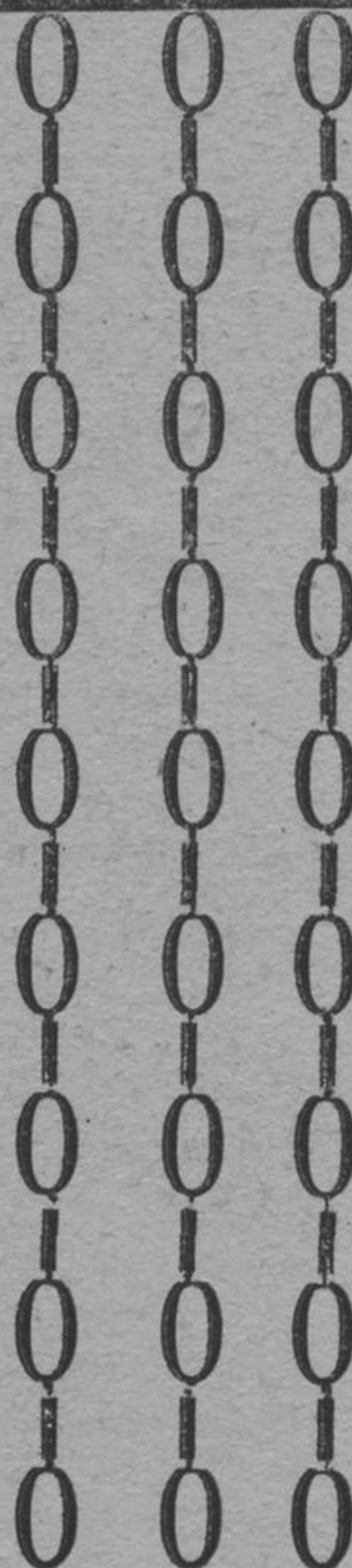
Weather-control was a necessity in these times when arctic temperatures swept over the world and Ted Foreman couldn't understand why his plans weren't even being considered. It all pointed to one conclusion...



THE HOWLING of the wind outside rose above the hum of voices inside the big reception room. His fingers drumming on his knees, Ted Foreman felt the cold creeping through the thick walls and heated air of the International Weather Observers' Chicago headquarters.

"Mr. Foreman?" A black-haired girl, dictation notebook tucked under one arm, stood before him. "The chief will see you now."

Ted followed the girl through a



labyrinth of inner offices. Her trim figure battled for his attention with the fascination of the isobar-filled maps on which technicians were working, the statistics that were pouring in on teletypes, the automatic calculating equipment that was pouring forth data.

"Mr. Foreman, Mr. Clark," the girl said, as they reached an office that was larger than the others.

"Don't go, Miss Cole," Clark said; "you'd better take notes on our conversation."

Ted stole another glance at the girl, then snapped his mind to attention on the authoritative-looking, bespectacled Clark.

"...So if my math is right," Ted finally concluded his long explanation, "we could do something about this climate. If we can just make a start on weather-control procedures, it will start off a cumulative process. Nature would help us. If we broke up some clouds, the sun would get to work on ice; we'd be starting back toward the sort of climate that makes life worth living."

Clark rose, turned his back to Ted, and stared out the window. Snow was beating against the double thickness of glass with silent, persistent fingers. The neighboring skyscraper, only a half-block away, was barely visible through the storm, and the wind continued its persistent, unsatisfied whine. Finally Clark turned back.

"You might as well go and start transcribing your notes," he told the girl. She snapped the notebook shut, and disappeared back into the labyrinth.

"It would take a long time to check your math, young man," Clark said, again sitting down. "But you've overlooked two very important things."

Ted pressed his lips tightly together, feeling that this was a decisive moment.

"The first thing," Clark ticked it off on his fingers, "is that you're not

the first person to have the idea that weather-control might be possible as an antidote for this perpetual arctic climate. I'd estimate that we get the suggestion a hundred times a month."

Ted pointed to the thick sheaf of papers he had just been exhibiting. "You mean that my calculations just duplicate..."

CLARK INTERRUPTED. "You've gone further than most people; most of the letters we get just suggest starting mammoth fires, or something equally ridiculous. But you're overlooking something else.

"Number two, our organization is strained to the very limit to do the work to which it is assigned already. We can't spare the men to tackle any weather-control theories; if we did, our predictions and analyses would suffer. You know what that would mean—more famine than we have now, because of crop failures; another cut-back on transportation; a dozen other things. Even though we're supported by all the big governments in the world, the governments can't afford to give us more money or more men. They're having a hard enough time keeping us going at our present size, with the world's economy disrupted by the change in the climate."

"But it wouldn't be such a big job to test out my theories," Ted insisted. "I've got documentary evidence that there was pioneer weather-control work done years ago, back in the 1940's."

"Documentary evidence?" Clark leaned forward, suddenly alert.

"I found a couple of references to cloud-seeding and rain-making in an old reference-book in a second-hand store. Funny thing—I hunted up later editions of the book, and they left out all mention of those experiments."

"I'd like you to send me that book," Clark said. "I'm very much interested in it." Then he stood up.

"You aren't interested in anything else from me?"

"I'm afraid not. Good day."

Ted yanked the zipper on his briefcase shut viciously, slammed his hat onto his head, and resisted the impulse to hurl the briefcase at Clark. He was striding out of the office when Clark's voice came from behind him: "You'll never find your way out of this maze; ask Miss Cole to show you out."

Not turning around, Ted waited a moment until the girl slipped to his side. Her pencil was stuck behind her ear, and she looked at him anxiously: "Any luck?"

"No, and that's an understatement." Grim-faced, Ted walked beside her, retracing their previous confusing route. "He told me that I'm an extra-smart crackpot."

"I'm so sorry," the girl said in low, sympathetic tones. "I'll bet my old boss would have given you more consideration."

"Did they send him to Siberia for suggesting the use of blue pencils, instead of red pencils, to mark weather maps?"

"Well, he used to have the job that Mr. Clark holds. But—all of a sudden they transferred him to the Cape Cod observatory. That's just about as cold and icy as Siberia used to be."

Clutching at straws, Ted suggested: "If you think it would do any good, maybe you'd give me his name and address and I could write to him."

"His name is Dr. Hermann Dietrich," the girl told him. They were back in the reception room by now. "But it wouldn't do any good to write to him. Your letter would be referred back to here by his secretary before he even saw it, because it concerns experimentation—and that's not in his division."

They stood by the reinforced glass window, watching snowplows fight their way up a wide Chicago street like tiny toys, twenty stories below. Here and there an ant-like person

battled his way desperately along the sidewalk, battling the gale and knee-to-waist-deep snow.

"Look," the girl whispered. "I can forge you a pass into the Cape Cod observatory, if you're willing to go to the trouble of getting there. I have a feeling that Dr. Dietrich might be interested, if you can see him personally."

"You've never seen me before," Ted said, looking straight into her eyes. Her gaze held his for a long moment. "Why do you want to do this for me?"

"I guess I just like to help young men with good ideas," she replied after a brief pause. "Wait here." She scurried away.

Ted returned to the chair he had occupied a half-hour earlier, wishing he had asked about her first name.

TED REMEMBERED, as a boy, when autos still ran all winter in Chicago. But that was before the climatic changes had reached their peak. Back in his boyhood, airplanes flew in January; people ventured out without earmuffs in February; and below-zero readings were rarities.

But as Ted grew up, the climate grew worse. After the North American temperature averages had gradually climbed during the first half of the 20th century, the world's climate had taken a turn for the worse—before the 1950's were ended. Sensational Sunday-supplement articles about the approach of a new ice age had given Ted an interest in the weather that he had never lost.

By 1965, Chicago had winters when snow covered the ground without a break from early November until mid-April. The last major airline ended its regular schedules in North America, five years later, because of storms nine months in the year. Two of the ten years that followed 1970 resulted in world-wide famines, because of crop failures.

The United States had been luckier

than the rest of the world. Europe and Asia, still recovering from war's effects, had barely avoided mass starvation. Improvements in hydroponics, and advances in the science of nutrition, had kept most of the people alive.

The war—which had threatened to engulf the entire world during the '50's—was forgotten by the '70's, as the nations converted munition plants to greenhouses, and drafted young men and women to labor in the fields during the shortened summer. No army could have marched through the ice and bitter cold during most of the year, in any event.

The United Nations, turning its attention from dope-addiction and disarmament, had gone to work on the fight against the weather's effects. The International Weather Observers was the new organization that had resulted, fighting a losing action against the inexorable advance of the ice-caps that were creeping southward through Canada and northern Europe.

As a schoolboy, Ted had taken temperature readings every day, comparing them with the official reports the following day. In college, weather had become a full-fledged hobby, with emphasis on efforts to predict the coming day's weather more accurately than the IWO. In his spare time as a hydroponics engineer, he had developed revolutionary theories about the possibility of man's changing the climate back to more temperate conditions.

A LONG HOUR passed before the girl returned. Ted's eyes widened when he saw that she was bundled into the fur-lined overcoat that was now standard street wear for women. "Quitting time, Miss Cole?" he asked.

"It's Carla Cole," she replied, rapidly. "Button up your coat and pull up your boots; I'm going to have to tag along with you to the railroad station."

Ted clambered into his clumsy, thick coat, pulled the hood down over

his head, and snapped fast the buckles on his hip boots. Carla explained in guarded tones as they rode the elevator: "I got into hot water quick. One of the supervisors happened to see me typing out a pass into the Cape Cod observatory for you. He started to ask questions, and then I realized that I'd forgotten something very important. Just one person is never given a pass into the place; it's always two people—one of them from the IWO if the other is an outsider. The supervisor was sitting there watching me, so the only thing to do was include myself on the pass. I told the supervisor that Mr. Clark had ordered it that way. And when Mr. Clark hears what I've done—" She made a very wry face.

Ted opened the huge double-door of the building, and they walked out into the street. A sweep of super-chilled gale clutched them, the instant they left the lee of the building. Carla staggered at the force of the grasp of the wind, and Ted grabbed her around the waist, to keep her on her feet.

"It's worse than ever today!" she shouted in his ear, above the whine of the gale. They bowed their heads and began to inch their way forward down the street, keeping close to the protection of the building.

"You'd better go back," Ted suggested.

"It'll be stormier indoors!" she said. "No, I'll go along to the station with you; if they've put out a stop order on the transportation, I have credentials that might get you on the train."

"What'll happen to you after that?" Ted asked.

"We'll worry about that when we come to it."

TED'S HOTEL was only two blocks away, but they felt as if they had trudged for miles when they finally reached it. Carla sank exhausted into a chair in the lobby while Ted grabbed his valise, checked out, then accompanied her to the railroad station. It was a mile away, but down-

wind and easier walking. The snow was less than a foot deep most of the way.

Ted and Carla threw back their hoods and loosened their coats in the railroad station, which seemed warm even though the rules about fuel conservation kept its temperature down to 60. Then Carla headed for a telephone-booth. Through its glass panel, Ted could see her lips pucker into concentrated lines, then her eyes narrowed in worry. She finally emerged, somewhat subdued: "I tried to get through to the Cape Cod observatory; I thought that I might talk to Dr. Dietrich and tell him the truth. He's a fine man, and I think he'd let you in. But he's out at a sub-station somewhere where there isn't a phone for the outside lines."

"Let's wait until he comes back, then," Ted suggested. "There's no hurry."

"Yes, there is." Carla produced an official-looking document from her purse. "This pass is good only for this afternoon's train. It involves transportation to the observatory, entrance into the observatory, and everything else. If you don't use it properly it's worthless."

Ted studied the pass, then decided: "I'll go, anyway. Maybe you can get hold of Dietrich before I reach Cape—"

Carla's fingers clutching his arm hard interrupted him. She pulled at his arm in the direction of a gate.

"Come on," she whispered. "We've got to get aboard the train; that supervisor just came in and he's looking for me."

Ted followed the tattoo of her feet across the concrete of the station floor. A moment later, they were aboard.

"I can't face that man now," Carla said desperately. "If he looks for me on the train, I'll hide somewhere. You keep the pass out of sight so that he doesn't spot you; he doesn't know your face."

But the train pulled out before the supervisor came in sight.

"I've needed a vacation for a long time," Carla said ruefully, "and it looks like I'm getting one now."



THE TRAIN fought its way eastward all night. Sitting bolt upright in the uncomfortable seats of the day coaches, Ted and Carla tried to catch sleep. Austerity regulations had long ago done away with pullman service on railroads.

Time after time, the train's wheels shrieked in an upward keening, as the train stuck on iced rails or snowdrifts. Each time, there was a delay until the special crew, equipped with flame-throwers, cleared the way. The temperature aboard the train dipped to the freezing-point, because the fight against the icy rails cut the power available for the train's heating units.

Nearly two days later, the train halted to let Ted and Carla off at a tiny station that was its closest approach to the observatory.

No one was on duty in the station, and the scene around resembled a cartoon of pioneer days in Siberia. There was a layer of snow on the ground, reaching almost to Ted's shoulders. Leafless trees stuck up in dead-looking fashion through the snow.

They struggled to fit snowshoes over their hip boots, then clambered up steps that had been cut into the packed snow at the edge of the rails, and found a snowtaxi that had apparently been left for just such unexpected travelers.

"You just cut across the fields, and keep the high hill to your left," the friendly conductor aboard the train had explained to them. "The observatory is so big that you'll find it even if you got a couple of miles off course."

Ted helped Carla into the cramped single seat of the snowtaxi, climbed behind the controls, and gingerly tested the jets. They weren't smooth, but the skeleton-like snow vehicle leaped ahead willingly with a jerk that nearly threw him from the seat.

"A fine driver you are," Carla laughed; "I'm glad you don't have to go up any mountains."

Ted, struggling with the controls, had no time to answer. It was his first experience with one of these snowtaxis, whose flaming rear-jets made them impossible for city use, but represented the only fast travel method in rural regions. The snowtaxi insisted on moving faster than he liked, and its skis constantly skidded giddily sideways, throwing them down grades and off course.

"I don't like the looks of that sky," Ted muttered. "It would be easy to get lost out here if it started to snow."

"Don't worry. You won't get a speeding ticket." Suddenly Carla's voice sobered. "Isn't it awful out here, though?"

The land might have been the Antarctic, except for the cable-carrying pole that occasionally poked out of the snow, a rare abandoned farmhouse built before the climate made this area unlivable in the winter, and a few trees.

"Over there," Carla pointed with a pudgy, gloved hand. "Isn't that part of the observatory?"

TED SQUINTED at a black tower that arose behind a snow dune, then shifted the course of the snowtaxi slightly toward it. "It looks like it," he said. "I didn't think they'd need towers so high, though."

"It looks like one of those towers you drew a picture of on your plans."

"Damned if it doesn't. It might be a radio relay-station, or something."

Ted jammed desperately on the rudder of the snowtaxi as a fence loomed up suddenly before them, ghost-like and almost invisible for lack of contrast between its pale, heavy wire and the snow fields.

"*'Blow, blow, thou winter wind,'*" Carla hummed nervously as they followed the fence. They might have gone a mile when little lights began to twinkle in the distance. Ted slowed the snowtaxi, as the lights neared and a gate became visible.

"No one's allowed inside," a huge guard in IWO uniform, bars on his shoulders, said. The guard shivered a little, looked longingly at the little kiosk from which he had emerged, but stood solidly before the closed gate. "You'll have to keep moving."

"We're expected," Ted lied fumbling with gloved fingers to get the credentials from a pocket.

The guard looked at the papers, went inside the kiosk, and used the telephone. When he emerged, the gate began to swing open. "Take it slow," he warned. "The inner works start about a half mile inside this fence. They're so well camouflaged that you might ram them without seeing them."

Throttling down the snowtaxi to minimum speed, Ted and Carla watched wonderingly as they headed toward a long, low line of buildings. More towers poked up on the more distant horizon, circular structures like enormous igloos stood to their left and right, and there were tracks of vehicles crisscrossing everywhere on the snow.

"What in the world do they do with all those buildings and towers and things?" Carla asked. "Are they filled with thermometers?"

"It's got me beat," Ted said, wanting to scratch his head, but fearing frostbite. "I think I know something about weather-recording methods, but I don't see why they'd need all that stuff."

Again he braked violently the snowtaxi, just in time to avoid collision with a new fence that loomed up before them. This one was made of wood, painted to blend perfectly with the snow, and was a dozen feet tall.

A barred gate was only a hundred yards away. They stopped there.

"What do we do now?" Ted won-

dered. "There's no horn on this contraption." There was no sign of life around the gate, no guard-sheltering kiosk.

"Yell," Carla suggested. They did, Ted's baritone blending with Carla's soprano.

FINALLY a panel swung open in the center of the gate. The head and shoulders of a fur-clad man poked through. The tip of a rifle barrel was visible in his hands.

"We're here to see Dr. Dietrich," Ted told him, shoving the pass under his nose.

"Identification papers, please," the guard demanded.

"I have mine; I'm with the IWO. Mr. Foreman is a weather expert," Carla countered.

"This place is restricted to IWO people," the guard insisted. "You can come in," and he pointed to Carla. "He can't."

"But I have important information for Dr. Dietrich," Ted argued.

"No exceptions." The guard started to swing shut the panel.

"What do you expect me to do?" Ted demanded.

The gate swung open slightly and the guard poked his head through the opening. "You, buster, can go over the snow to grandmother's house, for all I care." A thick arm shot out, grabbed Carla around the waist, and pulled her inside the fence. The gate snapped shut as Ted darted toward it. There was a loud, final click, and Carla's protesting voice dying away in the distance.

Ted pounded on the high barrier with his fists, tried to pry open the panel, and shouted. There was no response.

Beating his hands together to try to keep warm, he felt his temper boiling up to the danger point. He wasn't going to leave Carla to face the music alone; and he wasn't going to leave this place until he learned exactly what all those towers and igloos did.

Ted tried to build a rampart with

the snow to permit climbing over the wall. But the snow was too dry and powdery; it crumbled, each time that he neared the top of the barrier, collapsing and almost burying him.

Then, as the sun sank, Ted drove the snowtaxi slowly around the entire wall. It was a circular journey that took perhaps an hour. The vehicle had no speedometer, but Ted estimated the circumference at ten miles, at least. He yelled each time he passed a gate, and was ignored.

Light was beginning to fail, but Ted wanted to try something before giving up and going back to the outer wall. He selected a spot which was directly between two large cluster of towers. Then he stopped, jumped out of the snowtaxi, and began to dig clumsily into the banked snow, with his padded gloves. Miniature avalanches of snow attempted to fill the hole as fast as he scooped it out. But he gave a satisfied grunt, four feet down.

Huge cables, thick as his arm, were uncovered by his excavations. They ran close to the ground, wrapped in thick insulation, obviously carrying a heavy power load between the towers.

Ted climbed out of his ditch with effort, bewildered. He was no power-engineer, couldn't guess at the power that would be carried by cables of such size; but he knew that such giant amounts of juice would be useless for mere recording and observing instruments.

He knew that this weather station was more than it was supposed to be. Some project of unknown nature was being conducted here.

THE SUN had eased down behind a snowy hill, and the temperature was becoming perceptibly lower. Ted's hands and feet felt as if he had received injections of novacain in each limb. Already the outlines of the mysterious structures were blurring with approaching night.

Suddenly a multi-colored brilliance appeared on the snow around Ted.

He wheeled, and stared at the spectacle in the northern sky. Giant waves of color, reddish and yellowish, flowed out of the north, silently bursting as they neared the zenith, then coming back in new tidal waves of color.

"The northern lights!" Ted told himself. Reading about them was one thing; seeing them was something awesome. They were infinitely brighter these years than they had been before the climate worsened. But Ted had never seen them in open country, undiluted by city lights.

"There's nothing to do standing out here," he told himself. "If I can get to a town, maybe I can get into this place by phone..."

But when he wheeled the snowtaxi, preparing to return, Ted found himself in a new world. The northern lights, reflecting from the snowfields, made it impossible to say where the horizon lay. The aurora now covered the entire city. The huge fence seemed to run in all directions, moving like a living thing in the shifting, unnatural light. Ted drove a few hundred yards, in what might have been the direction to the outer fence. Then he stopped, confused.

His numbed hands could barely control the vehicle, and he no longer was certain in which direction lay the invisible outer and inner walls. He felt a moment's panic, and pounded an unfeeling fist against the throttle of the snowtaxi; it darted off like a bullet. Stubbornly refusing to yield to an impulse to turn, he held his course for ten full minutes. He encountered nothing but weirdly colored snow and once a ghostly pole that loomed suddenly before him and flashed by, only feet away.

"I've got to stop and think," he told himself, braking recklessly. If he'd collided with that pole, it would have taken two men to pick up the pieces. "Ten minutes should have brought me to one wall or the other, if I was going straight. So this thing is probably skidding enough to cause me to go in circles. I could pass within fifty feet

of a guard and not see him in this glare."

He forced himself to sit stock still and try to think. The sudden quiet was strangely soothing. He sank into a lassitude in which he didn't even think. A little warning voice within his brain tried to signal the rest of his body: *This is the feeling that comes over a person who is freezing to death.*

SINKING into reverie, Ted wished only one thing: that all his work on the weather control possibilities hadn't been in vain. Drowsily, he reflected that it would be ridiculous for the man who had decided to change the climate to fall a victim to a chilly Massachusetts night.

As if he were watching an actor on the stage, Ted realized that he was forcing his arm under his heavy coat, groping with stiffened fingers for his cigarette-lighter. He touched it, but he could not force his mitten to pull it out; it slithered like a live eel into the depths of his pocket.

Clenching his teeth, Ted worked his fingers out of the mitten. Even under the coat, the cold pounced on the bare flesh greedily, and its sharp bite snapped Ted back to full awareness. Convulsively, he clenched the lighter and pulled his hand out to full exposure.

The hand was purplish and looked lifeless. But with his other hand, Ted forced a thumb down onto the button. A tiny tongue of flame appeared at the light's wick, paled by the aurora's glow. Instantly Ted eased the lighter down to the seat of the snowtaxi. The flame wavered, almost went out, then licked at a shred of torn upholstery. It spread over the upholstery like ink spilled on a blotter. Ted half-tumbled out of the little vehicle, an instant before its interior became a mass of flame.

Crouching in the snow beside the snowtaxi, he prayed that the heat would be sufficient to ignite the fuel. Its welcome warmth increased, then faded as the upholstery was consumed.

But a *whoosh*, and a brighter, steadier column of flame signaled the ignition of the fuel supply.

New pain swept through Ted's half-frozen body, as the warmth penetrated it. It took the last dregs of his will-power to remain close to the burning vehicle, knowing that the numbing absence of sensation would return if he moved a few feet more distant into the treacherous cold.

Thanking the scientists who had made jet fuel non-explosive, only a couple of years ago, Ted estimated that he had a half-hour to live. When the fuel was exhausted, the flames would die out; there was nothing to burn on this snowless plain.

But the flame was still bright when a new, artificial light came shining across the snow. Ted saw a combination of snowplow and station wagon moving into his direction. It stopped in a cloud of blood-colored snow. Ted felt himself lifted into its cheerfully lighted interior, then blacked out.

"Good thing they spotted that fire from the tower," the driver told the attendant as they drove toward the inner wall.



THE JABBING of a needle into his arm brought Ted back to half-consciousness. Dream-like voices were talking about him, with frequent references to "authority" and "unauthorized" entrance. He forced his eyes open, and a white-uniformed, elderly man with a hypodermic swam out of the dizzy mists.

"I guess I'd better say thanks to someone," Ted muttered drowsily. "Who do I see about it?"

The doctor waved his hands vaguely. "All I know is, they were already alerted for a prowler, and then someone saw a light out there. Old Man

Dietrich got excited and sent out searching parties."

Ted winced as he sat up. His joints felt as if they had been borrowed from Rip Van Winkle, but the agonizing ache of the cold had been driven away by the injections. He stretched cautiously, then suddenly thought of something: "That briefcase... I pulled it out of the snowtaxi. Did they find that, too?"

As if he had pronounced a magic formula, the door opened and a shriveled little man bobbed into the infirmary, briefcase in hand.

"We thought you'd be looking for this," the little man said. He waved his hand in dismissal to the doctor, who gathered up his needles and left. "Do you feel well enough to leave us?"

"I guess so," Ted said, standing up, and hoping the room would stop describing circles. "Are you Dr. Dietrich?"

"No, I'm Mason, just an assistant. He wanted me to tell you that your plans are very interesting, but your basic ideas have been suggested many times before; he fears they're impractical."

"What does he know about my ideas? Have I been raving while I was out?"

"The girl explained all that to him while you were being treated; she did an excellent propaganda job."

Ted yanked a sheaf of papers out of the briefcase, saying: "But she couldn't have shown you how my calculations run. You see, so much energy expended here would have enough effect on natural forces to multiply itself..."

"No, no," Mason interrupted. "I have no authority even to listen. Dr. Dietrich has already made his decision, and he's the boss; you'll have to come this way."

Ted resignedly picked up his fur jacket and boots, and followed Mason into a long hallway, feeling less tottery. His eyes searched the side passages, catching tantalizing glimpses of giant machinery bulking in the dis-

tance. Men armed with charts and data sheets were scurrying everywhere.

"I'm afraid that you'll have to let me blindfold you from this point forward," Mason said, producing a black cloth. "You're really fortunate to be allowed out of here without a jail-sentence; it was accidental that you got inside, so we'll be lenient."

Anger flashed into Ted's face and he backed away from Mason. "No, you don't," he warned. "I'm not a spy in a military installation, and you're not going to hide anything from me. Where's Miss Cole, anyway? I've got to see her."

"She's already left; we escorted her out an hour ago. She didn't say where she would wait for you."

TED REFUSED to budge from the spot, and his hand clenched into a fist when Mason raised the blindfold again.

"Do you want me to call the guards and use force?" Mason asked. "I'm a busy man and we have rules here."

"Look," Ted said, suddenly lowering his voice to a confidential tone. "Not as an official but as a man of science—don't you think that all this equipment here could be converted to the purpose that I'm fighting for? I've seen enough already around here to know that you have more than just an observatory here. Now, if you promised to look seriously into my idea, I'd not raise much of a stink on the outside about the danger of other nations boring into the United States through secret weapons at what's supposed to be an observatory."

"You're crazy!" Mason flared up. "You're so wrong. You'll never convince anyone in authority of that because it isn't true. Now, put on this blindfold, or you might not get back outside again—"

Red lights suddenly flashed from concealed places in the walls, and two burly men in uniform came dashing down the corridor to them.

"The girl's lost!" one of them

cried, out of breath. "She jumped out of the snowtaxi, halfway to the station; she was out of sight before we could get out the searchlights."

Ted's stomach turned over at the thought of Carla undergoing the agonies of the arctic cold. Mason paled, and ordered: "Get flares, quick. And guns. Who else can help to search?"

"No one's available," the other man said. "We checked that before coming here. That storm-center over eastern Canada needs so much attention that all the men are—"

"Shut up!" Mason turned to Ted, and snapped: "Do you feel well enough to help hunt?"

Ted nodded. Surprisingly spry, Mason made a dash down the corridor, the blindfold forgotten. Ted followed him at a run, paying no attention to the bulletin boards and offices that lined the walls.

Someone thrust a rifle into Ted's hands at the outer gate and helped him to fasten his heavy clothing. Mason was ordering: "Turn on the neon tubing all along the fences."

A guard at the gate pulled a switch obediently. Then Ted was clambering into a snowtaxi, larger than one he had burned, and Mason was instructing him: "It's still four hours to dawn. This snowtaxi leaves a luminous trail on the snow that will show you the way back until dawn, and the lights on the fence will help you keep your bearings. There's just about enough fuel to last until dawn. Come back when the sun's rising, even if you haven't found her."

FOLLOWING instructions, Ted kept the snowtaxi's compass on a red mark, between southeast and east, to reach the outer gate. He was not even forced to slow at that gate, the guard swinging it open as he sped up.

Ted could see the phosphorescent-like trail that the snowtaxi had made on its previous trip out, when it had started to take Carla to the station. He followed the thin lines, straining his eyes as the northern lights

flared and dimmed the marks on the snow. Through the rear view mirror, he could follow the brighter trail that his own vehicle was leaving.

Ted wondered about the purpose of the gun, while following the trail. Did the men in the station think that highwaymen might kidnap Carla in the middle of this wilderness?

The trail he was following suddenly veered sharply, about five miles out; that would be the point at which Carla had escaped from her escort. Ted braked the vehicle, clambered cautiously out, and looked around. His eyes had accustomed themselves slightly to the weird light of the aurora, and his body was warmed by the heated vehicle.

"What would I do if I were trying to shake off those men, like Carla?" Ted asked himself. Hiding would be her first thought, he believed. But there wasn't any promising hiding-place amid the gently-rolling snowfields.

Ted climbed back in the vehicle, began to cruise about slowly, playing the searchlight in every direction, and leaving a brilliant flare at the point of Carla's escape. It took him only a minute to find the footprints.

They were made by boots, and must be Carla's, he realized. He shouted her name a couple of times, but everything around was silent.

Ted followed the footprints carefully, leaning out of the side door of the vehicle to watch them. Smaller markings ran alongside of them, and Ted wondered where Carla had found a stick in this wilderness to help her progress.

The bootprints were growing larger now, but more of the smaller marks were joining them, myriads of them.

Suddenly above the noise of the wind he heard a human's voice. It was a shout, desperate and lonely.

Ted shouted back: "Carla! I'm coming!" The frigid air pained his throat as he yelled.

The distant voice responded, end-

ing in a shriek. The trail was twisting now, and the vehicle was skidding in the effort to follow it. Ted cut off the jets, leaped out, and plunged into the snow to follow the track on foot.

"Where are you?" He yelled back. A new noise replied and a small figure was racing over the snow toward him.

"Carla!" Ted shouted. Then the name died in his throat. The figure wasn't Carla; it was an animal that snarled and leaped at his throat.

TED TWISTED violently and the fangs raked the fur of his coat. The animal tumbled into a snowdrift, inches away, and rolled to its feet, tensing for a new leap. As it sprang, Ted realized that it was a wolf.

He swung the rifle barrel viciously, catching the wolf full in the face. It yelped, rolled in the snow, and Ted clubbed it to death.

"Where are you, Carla?" he shouted, cocking the rifle.

"Up here!" came an answer from above him. "Look out! Behind you!"

Ted wheeled; another wolf was racing toward him. He fired, missed in the uncertain light, then pulled the trigger again and the animal rolled at his feet.

A tree poked through the ground near him. Ted ran to it, and looked up, Carla's coat was ghost-like against the sky's unnatural light.

"Drop, I'll catch you," he shouted.

"Oh, Ted," she moaned, half-climbing, half-falling to the ground. "The wolves almost caught me; I was getting numb up there, and thought I was going to let go."

Supporting her with one arm, keeping the rifle ready with the other, Ted helped her to the snowtaxi. As they reached it, a chorus of yelps broke out on the horizon. Ted paled as a mass of gray forms dashed toward them. He tossed Carla into the snowtaxi, jumped in after her, slammed the door, and turned on full power to the jets. The vehicle wheeled crazily, cut across the

very path of the pack, then outdistanced them rapidly.

Carla recovered rapidly in the vehicle's heated interior.

"I jumped out of that thing because I thought we were close to a town, and I wanted to try to get help for you," she explained. "Then I realized that I was lost, and the wolves came."

"They must live on garbage and scraps from the observatory," Ted answered. "There's certainly nothing else out here."

He cruised about until he picked up his luminous trail, then followed it back to the station. The sky was brightening with the normal light of dawn when they zoomed through the outer gate unmolested. As they approached the inner fence, Ted asked: "Do you feel strong enough for some more trouble?"

"I'm all right." Carla smiled. "Are you expecting more?"

"I'm going to cause more," Ted said grimly; "hang on tight."

He pushed viciously at the throttle. The snowtaxi pushed ahead violently as they approached the inner gate. It swung open barely in time to avoid a crash.

Ted braked and swerved at the last possible moment, as they came to a long, low building. The vehicle darted along the side of the structure, hugging its dark wall.

"I'm sure of one thing," Ted told Carla. "This place isn't just an observatory. It doesn't look like a military installation, but there's no telling what this IWO *really* conceals. I'm starting to suspect that they're bluffing me about my weather-control ideas. I think they're already controlling the weather, right here at this observatory!"

Carla stared at him. "You mean that someone is causing this new ice age?"

"Yes. I don't know whether it's a fifth column that wants to weaken this country; or the antics of a bunch of weather-experts who want to become world dictators—or what. But it all

fits in. The way I got the runaround with my ideas; changes in all the scientific publications to leave out all references to experiments with weather-control in the current editions; the secrecy around this place."

"Then we'd better get out of here before we're caught, and tell people on the outside what's going on."

"I want proof, first; some kind of documents. Maybe we can kidnap someone working here who is willing to spill the beans. See that porch down there?"

CARLA LOOKED at the projection from the building, and nodded.

"I'm stopping there. They don't have much of a protection-force inside the walls, and probably won't know where we are just now. We may be able to wander around indoors for a little while before they spot us."

The two crawled stiffly from the vehicle and crept toward the steps. It was full dawn now.

This door opened to their touch. But as they walked through, a guard in a blue and gold uniform woke from a doze in a chair beside the door, and tugged at his holster.

Ted leaped. His fist met the guard's chin as the guard's weapon was leveling toward them. The guard collapsed, moaned once, then lay still.

"Tear some strips from his shirt and tie him," Ted ordered, pocketing the pistol. Looking around, he saw no other sign of life in the big office where they stood. It contained desks, and an enormous switchboard.

Ted shoved the bound, gagged guard into a dark corner behind the switchboard. Then, revolver in pocket but one hand on it, he led Carla to the inner corridor.

The long corridor was only dimly lighted and empty of men. Ted suspected that this might be a barracks for the station's personnel, accounting for its quietness at this hour.

Two hundred feet down the corridor, he found what he wanted. An

elevator was set into the wall, its door open. They entered.

"Look at that control-panel," Ted pointed. "This building is only a couple of stories high above the ground, and there are a dozen floors to choose from. This thing must go down pretty deep; we might find the heart of this layout."

He punched the bottom knob. The elevator sank noiselessly; when its door opened again, an unbelievable sight was revealed.

STRETCHING before them for hundreds of yards were giant machines that might have come from gargantuan power-plants. The air was heavy with the scent of ozone. Overall-clad workmen moved rapidly but noiselessly, tending the machines on rubber soles. Lights flashed on machines and control panels like a forest of Christmas trees.

"We've hit the jackpot," Carla breathed, staying close to Ted as they emerged from the elevator. "This must be the power-plant."

Ted forced himself to stop staring like a yokel at the machinery. "Act as if you're used to being down here," he told Carla. "It's a good thing that only the guards wear uniforms in this place; we might not be spotted until we learn some things."

They walked confidently through the maze of mountainous equipment, the workmen looking curiously at Carla but ignoring Ted. Ted halted before an instrument panel.

"If I only had a camera!" He pointed to the names on the panel.

Toronto, Norfolk, Atlanta, a dozen other major cities of the continent were listed. Beside each was a temperature, a barometric reading, a humidity figure, and wind data, together with a date. Each date was three days in the future.

Carla tugged Ted to another panel. "Look at this one," she breathed. It was a twin of the other, but the dates were four days in the future.

"They can't be forecasting equipment," Ted said; "they'd be built like calculators. These look more like powerhouse-controls. They're weather-control machines!"

"Ah, there you are!" a voice said behind them. Ted started, and his hand shot to the pocket containing the gun.

"I'm Dr. Dietrich," the tall, slender man with iron-gray hair said as Ted turned. "Hello, Carla," he added.

Ted pulled the revolver half out of his pocket, then shoved it back inside. "Take us to your office. Quick, and don't signal anyone."

Dr. Dietrich looked for a long moment at Ted's grim face, glanced uncertainly at Carla, then shrugged his shoulders.

"It's this way," he told Ted, threading a path between the machines. "But you're being very foolish; you can't get out of here, because the place is alerted."

"I'll worry about that later," Ted replied.



THE OFFICIAL led them on an interminable trip through the vast underground building. Carla, looking frightened, whispered to Ted: "This place must run for acres."

"It's tunneled under the countryside," Dr. Dietrich replied, as if he were a guide for sightseers. "Only the two upper stories are above the surface. Ah, here we are."

He paused before a kiosk-like structure that stood in a cleared space, like a lonely tepee on a prairie. Ted motioned him inside.

"Keep your hands in plain sight, and sit down," Ted ordered, once inside. Ted looked around curiously. A switchboard with dozens of jacks

stood on the desk that occupied the room's center. Charts on rollers, most of them opened, lined the walls. The charts were covered with the waving lines and symbols of weather maps that Ted knew so well. A few filing cabinets completed the furnishings.

"I have living-quarters upstairs, you understand," Dr. Dietrich said in friendly fashion. "Now, may I ask precisely what you intend?"

"You're controlling the weather from this place," Ted said.

"Ah—are you making a statement, or asking a question?" the official replied. "You seem to know enough about control possibilities to make it useless for me to lie. This is the central control-station for this hemisphere."

"Why are you doing such a thing?" Carla burst out, eyes flashing. "When I worked for you, you seemed like the nicest person in the world. Now you're bringing mystery to the whole world by doing things to the climate."

"I want you to dictate a statement telling the truth to Carla," Ted ordered. "Sign it, stamp it with the IWO seal, then get us out of here safely."

"If I don't?"

"Then I'll shoot my way out, and I can still cause you people a lot of trouble outside, even without a signed statement."

"All right." Dr. Dietrich pointed to the desk. "I'll talk slowly enough for you to type what I say, Carla."

"It's really very simple," the official began. "Of course, I wouldn't be explaining this to you if I thought you'd carry the information to the outside world."

"This is one of a chain of weather-control stations, big and little, throughout the world. The weather experts learned quite a while ago how to do more with the weather than the old simple tricks of simply causing it to rain. They learned how to encourage cloud-formation; methods of diverting air-masses to create storms and high winds, and ways of setting cold fronts into motion. They kept

that knowledge quiet at that time because they weren't sure about the legal status of weather-control, and they didn't want to worry with complaints from farmers whose beans were nipped by frost.

"It was easy to convert gradually the big observatories into control-stations. Then we got to work to make the climate colder and stormier. It was hard to begin, but the nice thing about weather-control is that nature takes up the job after you've given her a hard shove in the right direction."

Dr. Dietrich paused and Carla's fingers stopped flying over the keyboard. "Is that enough?" he asked mildly.

"Yes. Sign it," Ted snapped. The scientist used a pen, then a heavy IWO seal.

TED FOLDED and pocketed the document. Then he took the IWO seal, unhooked the rear of the switchboard, and with the seal smashed the interior of the switchboard. A few feeble sparks flew, and Dr. Dietrich assumed a pained expression.

Taking the key from the door's lock, Ted motioned Carla outside. Standing at the door, he warned Dr. Dietrich: "Don't worry about being rescued. If they don't miss you, I'll come back and let you out after I've arranged for a government investigation of this place." He slammed shut the door and locked it from the outside.

Ted and Carla walked rapidly across the floor, calculating their chances. "He can't use that switchboard to signal," Ted said, "and maybe it wasn't a telephone switchboard anyway. I've never seen anything quite like its inside."

"I didn't like the calm way he took everything," Carla mused. "That thing he signed is dynamite; he must have something up his sleeve."

Again they went unmolested through the heavily laboring machinery, up the

elevator to the ground level, and back to the door through which they had entered. The little waiting room was still empty, and the guard was muttering feebly behind his gag.

Ted and Carla walked outside, and almost instantly loosened their clothing which they had buckled securely before leaving the building. It was almost pleasantly warm outside. The snowtaxi still stood at the side of the building.

They clambered in, and Ted got the snowtaxi into motion. It operated sluggishly, because the top layer of snow was thawing.

Drawing his bearings from the bright sun, Ted aimed for the railroad station. "We won't stop there," he explained, "because we'd be caught like sitting ducks if we got on a train. We'll follow the tracks in this thing until we come to a town, and I'll start telephoning people I know."

Ted shoved the throttle open another notch, as the vehicle slowed in the slush.

"Are there any oars in this thing?" Carla smiled. "I always did like canoeing."

Ted didn't answer. Carla plucked at his unbuttoned coat. "What's wrong?"

"I'm worried," he said, turning a grim face toward her. "This is low ground, and there are hills over in that direction. If it doesn't get colder soon..."

"You mean we can't climb the hills in this slush?"

"Worse than that. I'm afraid... duck!"

Ted pointed to a speck on the horizon behind them, and crouched low in the seat.

"A helicopter. They're looking for us." He jerked the vehicle to a stop in a puddle beside a dead tree. The helicopter grew bigger, then veered as it rose in the sky, and passed out of sight to their left.

"We'd better hurry," Carla suggested. "They're just as likely to spot us sitting as moving... What's wrong?"

TED WAS yanking desperately at the throttle. His feet danced on the foot-pedals.

"We're stuck," he muttered; "that's mud under us, not ice."

"I'll get out and try pushing."

"Sit still! Don't you see what's under us?"

Carla looked carefully over the vehicle's side. Where a puddle of water had stood only minutes before, a river-like current of icy water now rushed. The snowtaxi swayed a little from its tug.

"Here comes that plane again," Ted said. Carla ducked dutifully out of sight. Ted began to imitate her, then straightened and grabbed again at the controls of the snowtaxi.

The vehicle jolted wildly, then began to slide along. Carla relaxed for a moment, believing that Ted had gotten it to moving. Then her face whitened, as the rocking of the snowtaxi told her that it had merely broken loose and was floating along at the mercy of the current.

Ted fought for balance as the careening thing tried to throw him from the seat. His right arm encircled Carla, supporting her.

"Jump and swim!" she screamed.

"No use," he gasped. "We'd sink like shots in these coats. We'd freeze if we took them off and jumped in; that water's cold!"

Hanging to the wildly careening vehicle with one hand, Ted pulled from his pocket with the other revolver. Water was splashing into the seat beside them as he aimed into the air and pulled the trigger. Nothing happened. Desperately, he jerked again and again at the trigger.

The fourth time, the weapon fired. But instead of the report of a bullet-firing pistol, there was an uncanny whine and a bright ball of fire that emerged from the muzzle, soared high into the air, glowing redly even in the bright light of morning.

"You're aiming wrong!" Carla shouted, mistaking his intentions; "the helicopter's over that way."

"I'm not trying to hit anything. I

thought this might be a signal-pistol instead of a regular gun." He fired again and again, and three balls danced in the sky, close together.

The helicopter began to change direction, heading their way.

"Good thing we didn't try to shoot anyone with this," Ted remarked, almost light-hearted with rescue in sight.

But a scream from Carla answered him. Her face was a mask of terror and her hand shook as she pointed to a point just ahead of the drifting snow-taxi.

The snowfield fell away into a deep hollow that was now a frigid lake. The vehicle went noiselessly over the edge of the slope, half-fell, half-floated down the incline, and hit bottom with a titanic splash.

Water spurted through the bottom of the snowtaxi, like the bursting of a high-pressure hose. Ted threw both arms around Carla as the vehicle somersaulted and overturned.

THE ICY water into which they were thrown was like a slap in the face. Somehow Ted struggled to the surface, clinging desperately to Carla. She was limp until their heads rose above water, then began to kick and struggle like a madwoman, screaming hysterically. Ted felt her pulling him down.

He shook the water from his eyes, grabbed her hair with his left hand, and with his right fist, hit her on the jaw. She went limp.

Supporting her with one hand, Ted could have paddled to safety in normal conditions. But the heavy clothing was pulling him down like a weight, the current was moving them along at a dizzy pace, and the near-freezing temperature of the water was numbing Ted's fingers already.

He kicked desperately, praying that his feet might hit mud or ice on which he might stand and rest for a moment. But the new river was deep.

Twice his head went under the surface, and twice a trick of the current enabled him to come up for air. But

his breathing was labored, Carla's dead weight threatened to slip from his grasp, and things were growing dark around him.

There was a roaring in Ted's ears. Unable to see clearly, he attempted to unfasten his coat, get rid of its weight at all costs. The roaring was louder, and as he fumbled for the coat's fastenings, a snake slithered around his waist.

Ted clawed desperately at the snake. It tightened inexorably, pressing a vise-like grip around him, pushing the little breath left to him out of his body. There was nothing in Ted's universe but the numbing water, the grip around his waist, and the roar in his ears, with the automatic clutch of his arm around Carla.

Then the snake began to pull him upward toward the roar. Ted fought for breath, looked up, and saw through exhausted eyes the helicopter hovering overhead, a rope descending from it, and the loop of the rope around his body. Someone in the hold cautiously but steadily pulled Ted and Carla toward the helicopter.

AN HOUR later, wrapped in heavy blankets and sipping scalding coffee, Ted and Carla again faced Dr. Dietrich, this time in his living quarters at the observatory.

"It's all your own fault," he told Ted, without malice—merely explaining. "That switchboard happened to be the basic control-panel for the whole plant. When you wrecked it, our equipment went crazy; this all-out thaw got started before I could get out and alert the place."

"But why did you save our lives?" Ted asked bitterly. "You created misery for the whole world; you could have saved yourself some trouble by letting a couple more people drown."

"Now you're getting doubtful about us again," Dr. Dietrich chuckled. "You think we're evil, but you aren't so sure. As a matter of fact, we operate on the basic law of doing nothing that will cost lives. When we upset the

weather, it makes people uncomfortable and they keep busy trying to survive the cold and the storms; but we never make it so bad that they'll die."

"You admit that this is a conspiracy?" Carla asked.

"I wouldn't call it that," the official answered. "I kept trying to find a way to explain to you two and ask you to join us; but you were always in hot water, from the beginning to the end around here."

Ted laughed hollowly at the thought of joining this outfit. Dr. Dietrich raised a finger toward him.

"Listen to me for a minute," the official insisted. "Haven't you ever heard of choosing between the lesser of two evils? That's what has been done, and the secrecy has been necessary to save the world from itself. Think back a few years. Isn't it true that there hasn't been a serious war since the climate started to get worse?"

Ted and Carla stared at him.

"About forty years ago, scientific organizations all over the world saw how their discoveries were being misused in war. The scientists decided to do something about it. They strengthened their organizations, to prevent the rest of the people from knowing precisely what was happening; then they messed up the weather, simply to give man something to do besides fight wars.

"When crops started to fail, and transportation got knocked out, the politicians and the generals couldn't fight wars; there was no way to move men and the soldiers were needed to produce food. The newspapers couldn't get one country upset about the actions of another country, because all the countries were too busy keeping warm and dry and fastening down the roof in the gales.

"Finally, we reached a point in

weather-control where we have a more direct control. If some nation decides to act belligerent, we simply clamp down fogs and gales on that country until it behaves."

DIETRICH smiled. "The governments know what we scientists are doing but they're helpless to do anything about it. If one of these weather stations were sabotaged, there are plenty of others to pinchhit. And our own weapon prevents the scientists from getting too dictatorial—if we make conditions too bad, we'll all starve or blow away.

"It's really the old story all over again. Give man something important to do, and he'll be too busy to fight his neighbor. We didn't have a Civil War in the United States until most of the continent had been explored and civilized. They're working on rocket-ships now; as soon as we get to Mars in them, colonizing that planet will keep earth people so busy that we can probably let the weather here go back to normal."

"I want to believe it," Ted said slowly, "but it sounds terribly wild."

"Then you can both come to work for us here," Dr. Dietrich said, "and learn the proof. You know more about the science already than a lot of the people at the station; and I've always wanted Carla back as my secretary."

The thaw was over outside, and snowflakes were again tapping at the window. Carla turned to Ted. "Let's stay," she proposed.

Dr. Dietrich turned and walked discreetly out of the room. Ted answered: "I think he's right. And I've just remembered some more of that poem, the second line. It goes:

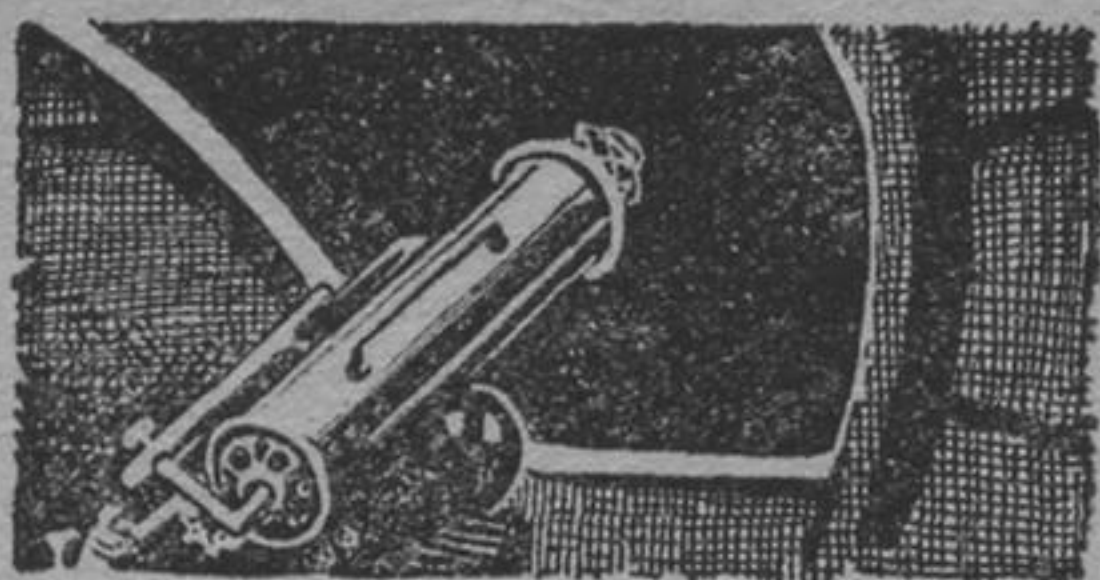
*"Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
Thou art not so unkind...."*



Coming Next Issue

THE WORLD IS YOURS

An Ironic Novelet by Harry Warner, Jr.



Down To Earth

(continued from
page 10)

CONTEST

"And The Truth Shall Make You Free" is an ironic story, and its conclusion is by no means a brand new idea—but nonetheless effective. However, I have the feeling that there are alternative attitudes possible under the circumstances that obtain at the end of this story, and I'd like to hear from those of you who have ideas on the subject.

Recently, we ran a contest in *Science Fiction Quarterly*, sending an original cover painting to the winner. And, since this present cover of *Future* is one that no science-fiction fan should have to feel queasy about—after all, there's no promiscuous display of flesh on it—it struck me that it might make a good prize to offer.

Now I haven't any "answer" to the problem, all laid out for you to see if you can duplicate; I have my own ideas, but yours are probably as good—if not better—than mine, so the best letter discussing the conclusion to which humans come in the Simak story, and offering an alternative which fits the facts he has given, will bring Mr. Luros' original to the author thereof.

Let's put the rules down as simply as possible.

1. Your letter should offer an alternative to the attitude that the people in Simak's story derived from their discovery of "the Truth". We have to assume, for the sake of discussion, that this "Truth" is actually so.

2. Your letter can be as long, or as short as you like; you may enter as

many letters as you like; they need not be typewritten, so long as they are legible—although typewritten letters are preferred.

3. I'll do the initial screening, publishing the best contenders in our July issue; you pick the winner in your votes.

4. Contest closes February 27, 1953; all entries must have reached me before 5 P.M. on that date.

5. Other "winners" will be picked through the regular system of your voting for the "best-liked" letters in "Down to Earth", and will receive originals of their choice, from this present issue of *Future*.

6. Naturally, I won't include any entries from my sisters, cousins, aunts, etc., for your final selection. (Don't know why they should be discriminated against, but there seems to be a bit of feeling against the idea of any relative of an employee of the firm sponsoring a contest coming out as the winner, no matter who judges said contest.)

Letters

NOSTRADAMIAN INTERLUDE

Dear Bob:

As Mr. Roberts has been so kind as to refer me to the beginning of Section 13 of Nostradamus' Letter to Henri II for the source of his letter to FSF (Nov. '52, p. 8) I will undertake to analyze the "prophecy". Unfortunately I don't have the original French, but only the translations by Mr. Roberts and two other Nostradamians. The full quotation of this and the two following sentences (Roberts) is:

"Then the beginning of that year shall



see a greater persecution against the Christian Church than ever was in Africa, and it shall be in the year 1792, at which time everyone will think it a renovation of the age. After that the Roman people shall begin to stand upright again, and to put away the obscure darkness, receiving some of its former light, but now without great divisions and continual changes. Venice, after that, with great strength and power will lift up her wings so high that she will not be much inferior to the strength of ancient Rome."

The section goes on like that. "That year" is located in the preceding section, not by its number *anno Domini*, but by an astrological description: "Following a conjunction of Jupiter and Mercury, with a quadrin aspect of Mars to Mercury..." etc. The first sentence is also translated by Ward to read:

"Then will be the commencement that will comprehend in itself what will long endure, and in its first year there shall be a great persecution of the Christian Church, fiercer than that in Africa, and this will burst out in the year one thousand seven hundred and ninety-two; they will think it to be a renovation of time."

And by Lamont: "In the beginning of that year, however, there will be a greater persecution against the Christian Church than ever was in Africa, which will last until the year 1792, at which time everybody will think it a renovation of Age."

These translations differ considerably, which may be attributed to two facts: that Master Michal's original language was ambiguous, as it usually is and that the translators have taken liberties with the original, as many of them do. In particular there is a question as to whether the original contains a phrase about "a commencement that will comprehend in itself what will long endure," and whether the persecution

of the Church will begin or end in 1792. In the latter case the prophecy was falsified by events. If the French could equally well be translated either way, it proves nothing about Mike's prescience to pick the translation that happens to fit a pre-conceived thesis best.

Besides, there have been many persecution of churches between Mike's time and ours, and many events that could be described as a "renovation of the age", or at least which so seemed to contemporaries; not only the French Revolution with its new calendar, but also the English revolutions of 1645 and 1688, the American Revolution, the Russian Revolution, the adoption of the Gregorian Calendar, the publication of Newton's *Principia* or Darwin's *Origin of Species* or the main works of Harvey, Freud, and lots of other important discoverers, the invention of the steam-engine, the telegraph, and ten thousand other things, etc. etc.

Therefore, since Mike did *not* say that there would be a republican revolution in France in 1792, and a new calendar, but merely made some vague assertions about nothing in particular, which could be applied to any of many events, there is no evidence that he foresaw the French revolution and its consequences—at least nothing that discrimination and tough minded adherent of the scientific method would accept as evidence.

And if the first sentence were a true prophecy, then why shouldn't the others be too? But if you take "after" to mean "shortly after", the second sentence isn't true. The Romans (that is, the Papal Army) were routed by Napoleon, who extinguished both Rome and Venice as independent states. But does somebody say "Rome" really means the modern Italian nation? Heads I win, tails you lose. Then what about Venice? Ah, says the Nostradamian, wait another thousand years and Venice will...

In other words, if you make a prophecy in obscure language without a time-limit, it is practically certain to be fulfilled if you wait long enough. As King Henry IV of England once said: "One of these days I am going to die, and all the astrologers, who have been forecasting my death, will be proved right, and all the hundreds of things they have prophesied wrongly will be forgotten."

Nobody is obliged to disprove any of

Mike's alleged prophecies. If I say: "In the year of the Elephant, a new Caesar shall consult the Great Thaumaturge for aid in depriving the Carthaginians of their wigs," how could you possibly prove that when I wrote this sentence I did not foresee some true future event? The burden of proof is on the affirmative, and Mike's vaticinatory gift cannot be proved, in any scientific sense, save by much plainer examples than any of the hundreds that have been offered by the twenty-odd Nostradamians who have written books and articles on the subject.

—L. Sprague de Camp

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

As Mr. de Camp expresses it, "Facts are stubborn things", and the fact remains that all the translators and commentators on Nostradamus (including Mr. de Camp) unanimously agree that the date 1792 AD would be of the utmost decision in bringing into being "a new order of the ages."

In every case where Nostradamus quotes dates, he invariably uses the Julian calendar, as used by the Christian church, and I see no reason why he should make an exception in this particular event. In looking through my collection of First Editions of Nostradamus' writings, I find the following in the 1649 Lyons edition, in the original archaic French:

"& Commencant icelle annee sera faite plus grande persecution a L'Eglise chrestienne, que n'a este faite en Affrique, & durera cette cy jusques a l'an. . . Mil sept cens nonante duez. . . que l'on cuidera estre UNE RENOVATION DE SIECLE."

Dr. Theophile De Carencieres, a French refugee born and raised in the native Provence of Nostradamus, translated this quotation into English in 1672 to express the prophecy that 1792 AD would bring into being a political revolution that would have a profound effect, and that the chief impact would be against the Christian Church.

Now, consider 1792 as the year that the French Revolution was finally accepted by the people, and that the chain reaction created in the European scene eventually superseded the "Divine Right" monarchical governments with free democratic institutions. Moreover, the excesses and persecutions of the atheistic followers of the "Goddess of Reason" against the church were without parallel.

The remarkable thing about this prediction is that it was made in the year 1558 by Michael Nostradamus in his book, "Complete Prophecies of Nostradamus", and is only one out of the more than 1,000 prophecies quoted and commented on by me in my latest book. Nostradamus needs no defense from me. . . his power to transcend space and time and instill spiritual understanding to a groping, materialistic humanity is without peer. Science today takes the position that the so-called supernatural phenomena produced in the past should really be assigned as "paranormal", meaning outside the scope of normal physical law, on the theory that the supernatural may be natural enough when understood. Prof. Gardner Murphy, chairman of the psychology department of the college of the City of New York, and foremost researcher in Extra Sensory perception, is quoted in the *Readers Digest* as follows:

"There is enough well-authenticated evidence, even when studied with a cold and critical eye, to show that the paranormal is not only a legitimate field of inquiry, but one of great importance, from which we are likely to learn a great deal about ourselves."

And just to show Mr. de Camp that old "Mike" really had what it takes to be a top-flight science-fiction writer, here is his prediction made in 1558 describing the use and discovery of atomic energy.

Century Ix quatrain 44

Migrez, Migrez de Geneve trestous
Saturne d'or en fer se changera
Le contre RAYPOZ exterminera tous,
Avant l'advent le ceil signes fera.

(Leave, leave, go forth out of Geneva,
all

Saturn of gold, shall be changed into
iron,

The contrary of the POSITIVE RAY
shall exterminate all,

Before it happens the heavens shall
show signs.)

In this startling prophecy, Nostradamus foretells the advent of atomic power. . . . He specifically notes the break up of the League of Nations, with the flight of their headquarters from Geneva; in the second verse he states that the Industry and Gold of national resources shall be converted to the uses of war. In his phraseology, Iron is synonomous with Mars or war. In the third verse, we really see the key word. . . .

[Turn To Page 86]

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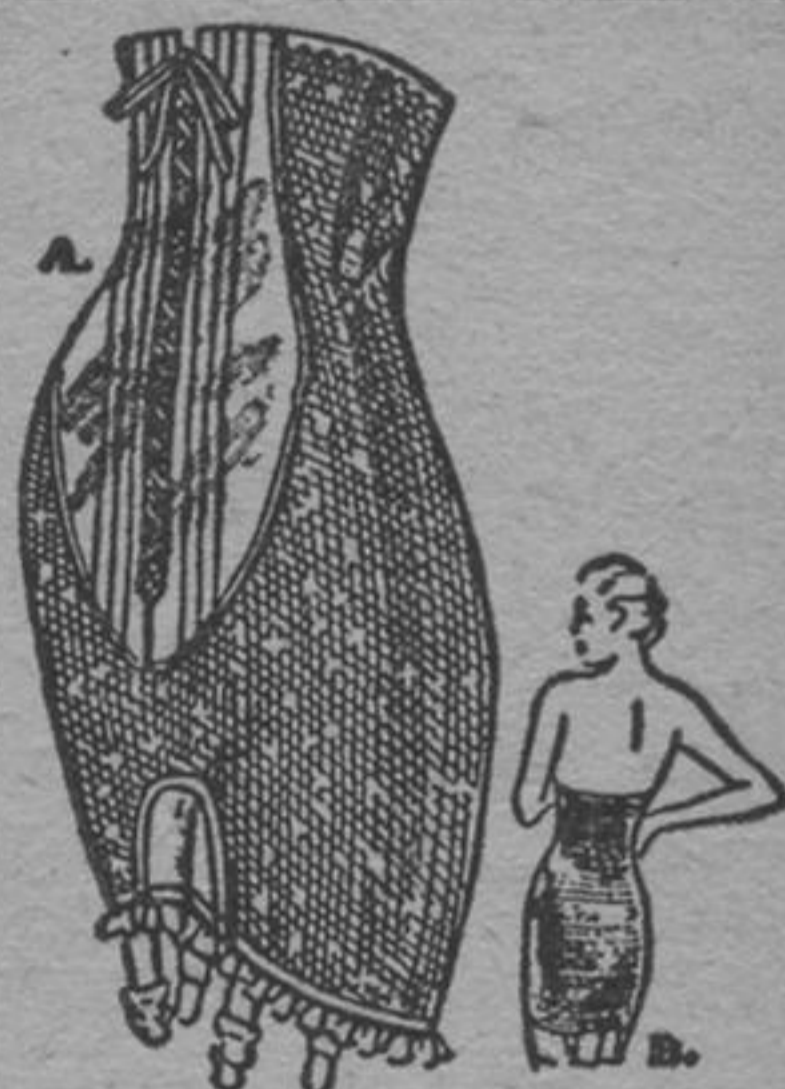
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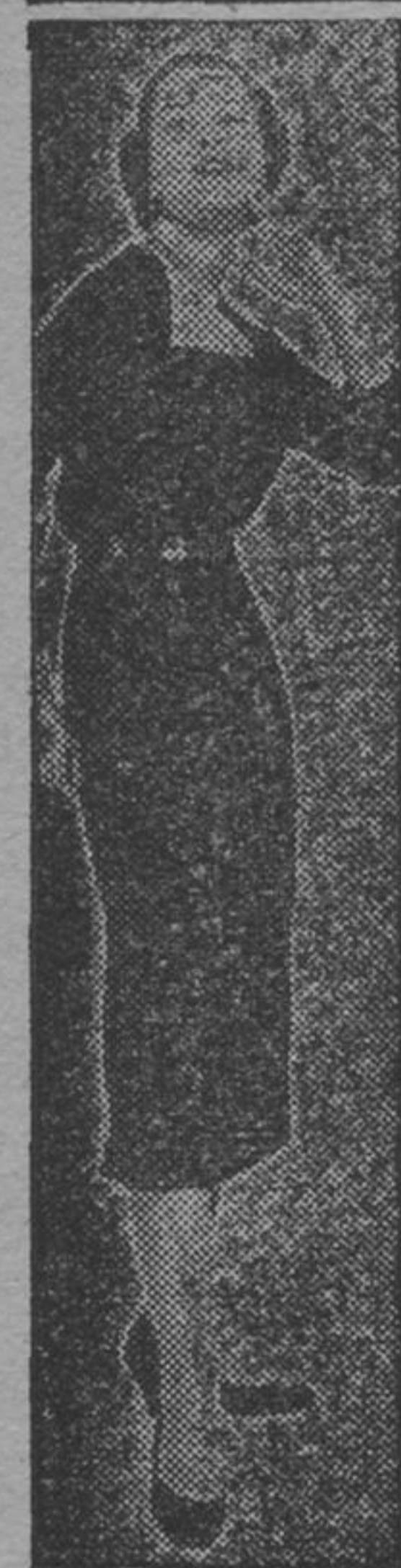


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RAYPOZ... as the clue to the whole story. "Raypoz" is a cipher code word invented by Nostradamus, and does not exist in any known language. If we examine the two syllables of this word and transpose them, we get the reading, "The opposite of the Pos-Ray, or the neutron, shall exterminate everything."

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—Henry C. Roberts, 380 Canal Street, New York, NY

(Assuming that the translation is accurate, I suppose the quatrain listed could be taken for a prediction of atomic energy among other things, but I can't see your interpretation of the final sentence. Seems to me that the "heavens shall show signs" is well-enough accounted for the mushroom-cloud of the atomic bomb explosion—if we accept that over-all interpretation in the first place. My main objection to translations of Nostradamus that I've seen, so far, has been gratuitous interpretations of religious "significance" over and above the event supposed to be prophesied; that's spreading it too thick for my taste, and I enjoy good fantasy.)

THAT INTANGIBLE QUALITY

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

First, either "Doomsday's Color-Press" or "We Are Alone" is worth twenty cents of my money. With both, I get bargain rates. Knowing something of not only the cost

[Turn To Page 88]

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of paper and bindery work, but linotype operator and pressmen salaries, I don't see how you do it anyway. A few cents, one way or the other, can mean the difference between a break-even and building up a vital reserve. I've no objection to paying a quarter for *Future*; I do for other magazines of like genre that have less to offer.

But back to the yarns. Both of these have that intangible quality that keeps me reading the SF magazines. Extrapolation on a basic premise. I know the howl, that SF is to entertain, not educate. I've no fight with that objective, but it seems to me that proponents of entertainment alone have overlooked the X-factor in progressive education, that is, that we are best instructed when interested—entertained. "We Are Alone" illustrates very effectively the theory that a great many of today's ills are traceable to impulses and emotions that we are unable to face ourselves, and in the suppression to subconscious, have them burst out in disguised forms.

Now for "Doomsday's Color-Press." There, Mr. Lowndes, is a *real* story. It pin-points, under the guise of fiction, a condition that we don't have to go into the future to see operating. The applied posi-

tive roots of the semantic concept labeled "Kiersten Equation" in the story is one of the highest paid business in the United States today—advertising. You can supply your own countless examples of not only building a demand for a specified brand of a life essential, but the creation of a desire for a non-essential so strong that it becomes essential through advertising.

The negative roots are, at least partially, exemplified in the national campaign in progress as this is written. People seemingly demand not only that a candidate for office state his views on questions of import, but must needs demean his opponent in the process. Isn't it just possible that both candidates could be sincere patriots and differ only in the how the objective (the best for our country) is to be attained: Or even in what that best consists of! Concretely, say I prefer white bread. That doesn't make the wholewheat which you may prefer an unpalatable, non-nutritious—nay, even noxious foodstuff. It is inconceivable that any literate individual in the world today could be free of either root—positive or negative, of the Kiersten equation.

[Turn To Page 90]

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FUTURE Science Fiction

Jones, in his story, makes us newly-aware of this, and thus not only entertains but educates. More than any other single facet of writing today I believe that SF accomplishes this end in providing not only escape (entertainment) but at its best a fairly intelligent escape.

But here I am dubbing in my soap box as an editor's swivel chair. I suppose we fans are just individual soap-box editors. It's unfortunate that our soap-boxes are too often flimsy cardboard rather than good, solid pine.

—Alice Bullock, 812 Gildersleeve, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

("Education", of some kind is likely to be a by-product of any kind of intelligent reading matter; thus, what I insist on as the "intelligent entertainment" aspect of science-fiction can't help but include a certain amount of education. This, however, is quite different from the kind of fiction resulting from an initial determination on the author's part to instruct, edify, and uplift, etc.

You remind me of that old Will Rogers' version of "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court". Will tells King Arthur—played by William Farnum, if I recall rightly—that advertising was a powerful form of magic, which made a man buy something he didn't want, with money he didn't have!)

LETTERS READ FIRST

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

Each new issue of *Future* is royally received. The letters column is the first thing I read. Some of the more interesting letters are short information pieces in themselves. I wish you'd leave the person's preferences on the reader's coupon and not take up precious space with one individual's ratings of stories. This way, other matters can be discussed in the "Down To Earth" department of a more serious, provocative and even controversial nature.

Future being a democratic magazine I'm sure you won't mind my mentioning another publication here. It's a new fanzine called *Fantastic Worlds*, 1942 Telegraph Ave., Stockton, Calif. It sells for 25c a copy or dollar for four issues; comes out quarterly. The first issue, Summer 1952, carried a highly informative and enlightening

[Turn To Page 92]

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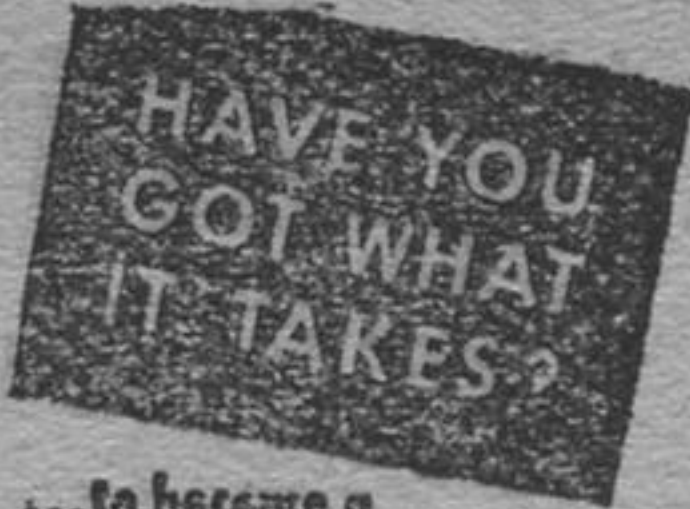
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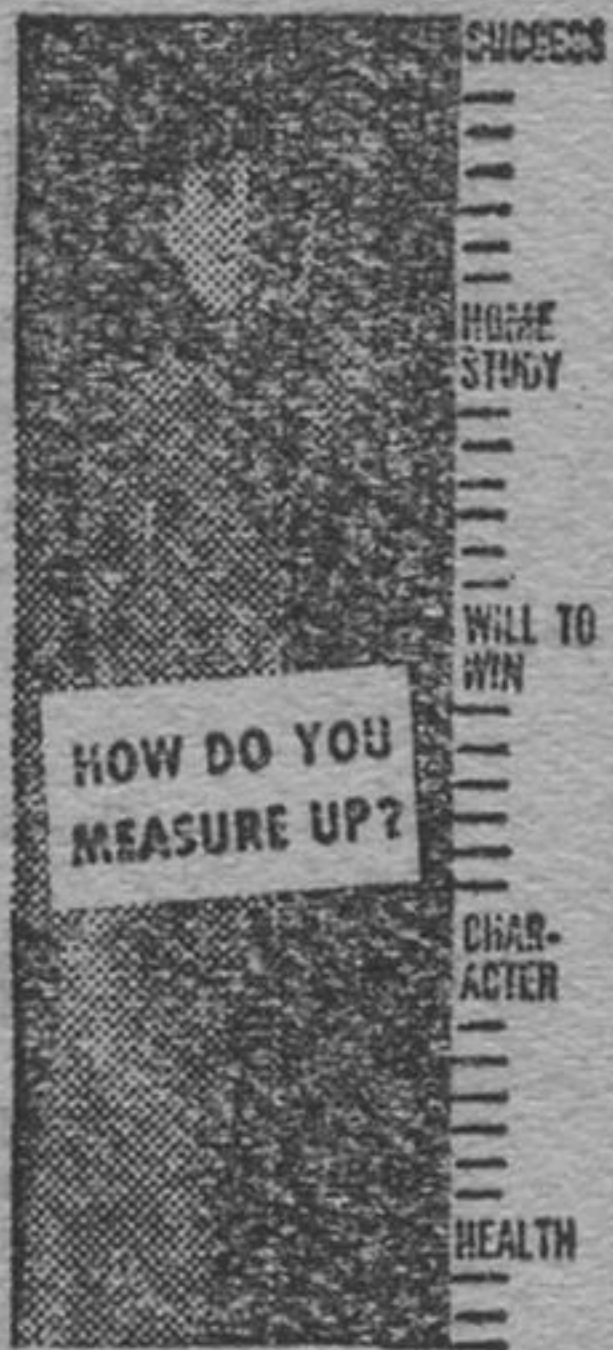


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FUTURE Science Fiction

story of the first fantasy publishing house, "The Arkham House Story" by August Derleth, author of over sixty books and familiar to all STF readers.

Edward (Ed) W. Ludwig is editor of *Fantastic Worlds*. He's a freelance writer, has been published in a few topnotch STF magazines, has dreamed of bringing out his own fanzine for about three years. This writer recently placed "The Fallacy Of The Evil Eye" with him and is currently working on the handwriting analyses of five top STF authors for an article in a future FW. One of the authors wrote your November lead story "Doomsday's Color Press"—Raymond F. Jones. The others are L. Sprague de Camp, Edward E. Smith, Jack Williamson and Richard Matheson. Quite a collection for one issue! Later we hope to analyze the handwritings of five top STF editors and you will be on that list. Hope you'll oblige.

I'm delighted to see *Future* has lived up to its name. Even the letter column shows an above-average reader intelligence: the discussions on Dianetics, Mme. Blavarsky, Nostradamus, et al show it.

Please try to include one factual article in each issue. It helps break up the monotony of the stories. Articles on the occult; unusual and flamboyant personalities; founders of great movements; brief biographies of famous STF authors like Jules Verne, H. G. Wells up to our modern day ones would be interesting.

Though I have little time to write like I once did, as my other literary activities and lecturing keep me on the go, I just had to pen this to you. (It's 3 a.m.!) My new classes at the American Hypnotism Academy keep me quite busy but I love it. Keep up the good work!

*Leo Louis Martello, Hypnotist-Graphologist,
49 West 85th Street, New York 24, N. Y.*

(If your handwriting analysis avoids the usual soothing syrup, it will be a refreshing change. Trouble is, most people just want to be assured that they aren't

[Turn To Page 94]

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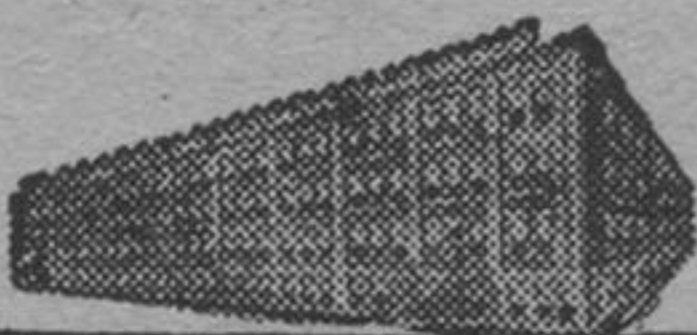
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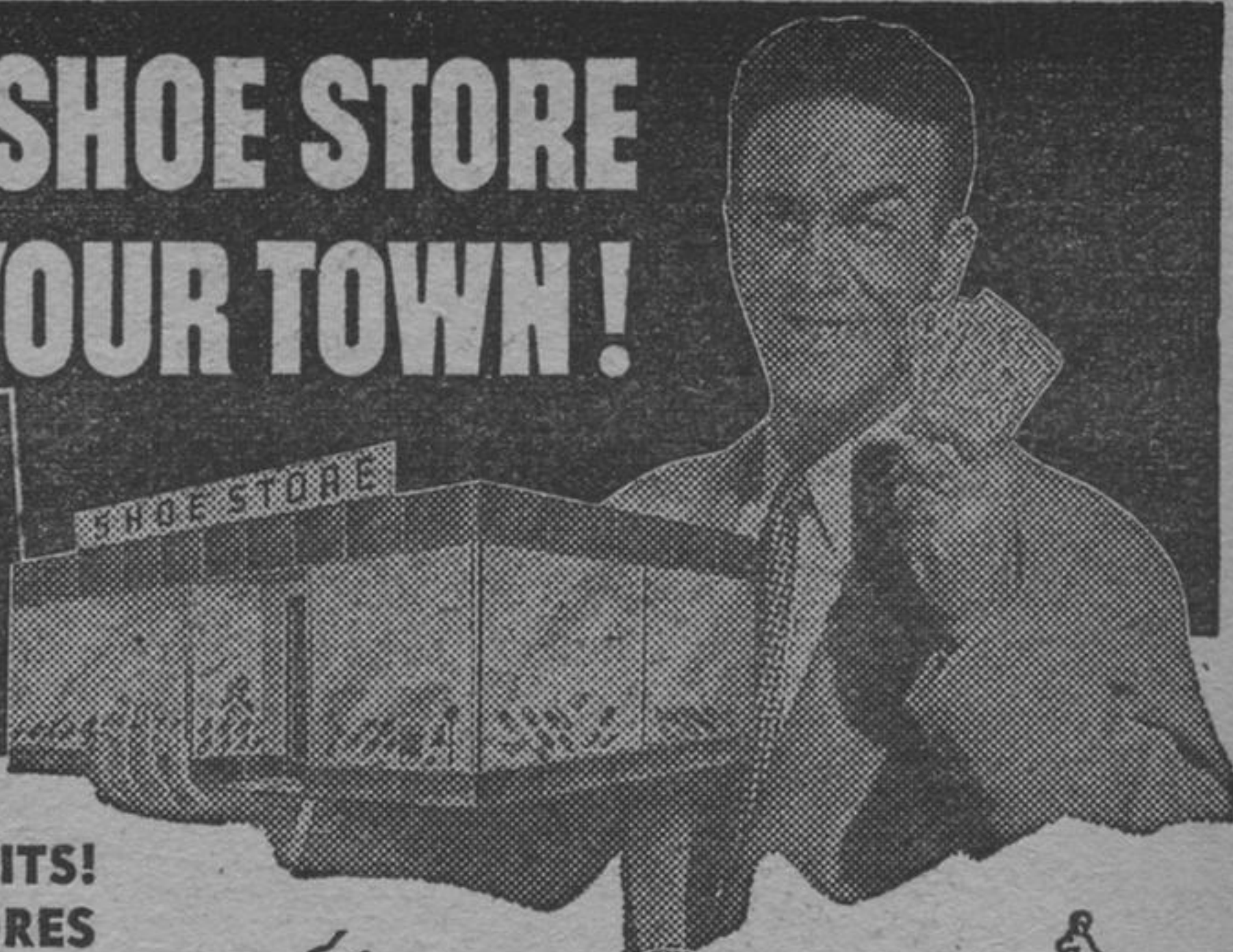


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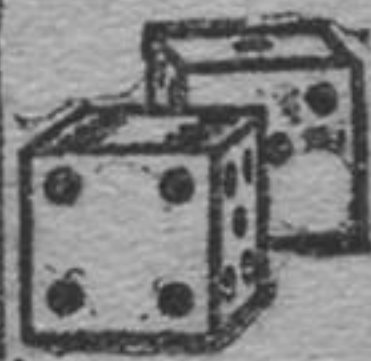
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FUTURE Science Fiction

the sadsacks that they really know they are.)

THE BLURB WAS RIGHT

Dear Mr. Lowndes

I just finished reading the November issue and noted with some satisfaction that my letter rated a second place. Thanks! My choice of originals is (1) the Illo to "Because of the Stars". Nice Job! (2) "They Shall Rise" almost equally as good!

Now to the November issue.

"Doomsday's Color-Press" by Jones is a very well-done, thought-provoking piece of work. This is one of the cases where I am inclined to agree with the blurb at the head of the story. I surely *do* hope this is fiction! There are so many events in the world today which almost make anyone think that some malignant "Myrna Doring" is doing their best to set men at each other's throats. Decidedly a good piece of work!

"We Are Alone", Sheckley. So so. Only so-so. Somewhat thought-provoking theme, but weak development.

"Legion of the Lost", Coppel. Ditto. With a little development and polishing here and there, this could have been worked into a first-rate yarn.

"The Winning of Wooha". The writer is evidently an entomologist! Nuff said!

"... And Found Wanting". Good smooth writing. Pretty fair entertainment.

The November cover was decidedly good. It attracts attention by its symbolism, yet the semi-nude "beauties" that have been so much the rule on STF covers were conspicuous by their absence. This is all to the good. This cover symbolised the theme of the leading story very effectively, which the nudes seldom do. The illustrations on the interior of the magazine show decided improvement too. Keep up the good work!

—David A. King, 326 Lane C, The Anchorage, Clearfield, Utah.

(The two covers by A. Leslie Ross on *Future*—July and November, 1952—seem to have won readers' favor, generally. Some did not care for them, but, at least, we enjoyed the absence of complaints about girlie flesh abundantly displayed. The forthcoming cover will be a Ross job, too.)

COMPARISON FAVORS CHANGE

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

Along with many other, I find myself writing this enthuasuastic epistle on *Future*.

"Doomsday's Color-Press" was a fine story, a novelet of fearful possibility indeed. During the first half of the story my thoughts were that you, like *Fantastic*, had decided to include a yarn other than s-f but after finishing the tale my conclusion was that it was science fiction all right, par excellence.

This story leaves a certain trace of fear in one, as to how much the commies may have developed this same thing in our world at present. A good communist propagandist in some high office of journalism could be altering news pieces and putting depressing elements into them, or be substituting a depressing bit of news for a good bit.

I hope you have many more *Future* stories as good as this one.

Judging from the picture of the cover of the new *Dynamic Science Fiction* on page 84, this magazine has already picked up one bad quality from *Future* and SFQ, and that is the excess of printing on the cover.

I compared the first issue of *Future* with the present one, and as far as cover appearance, you have come a long way.

The first issue was half lettering. The other half was murderously filled with one of those old type Earle K. Bergey babe, brawn, and bem paintings.

In contrast, the present issue listed only one story on the cover. Even with all that blue area on the left side, you valiantly resisted the urge to fill it with lettering!

—Naaman Peterson, 1471 Marine Drive, Bellingham, Washington.

(Alas, true, and so carried away were we by our sense of having conquered the forces of darkness that we let type be sprinkled all over the cover of the first *Dynamic Science Fiction*. Eternal vigilance, and all that, we muttered to ourselves thereafter.)



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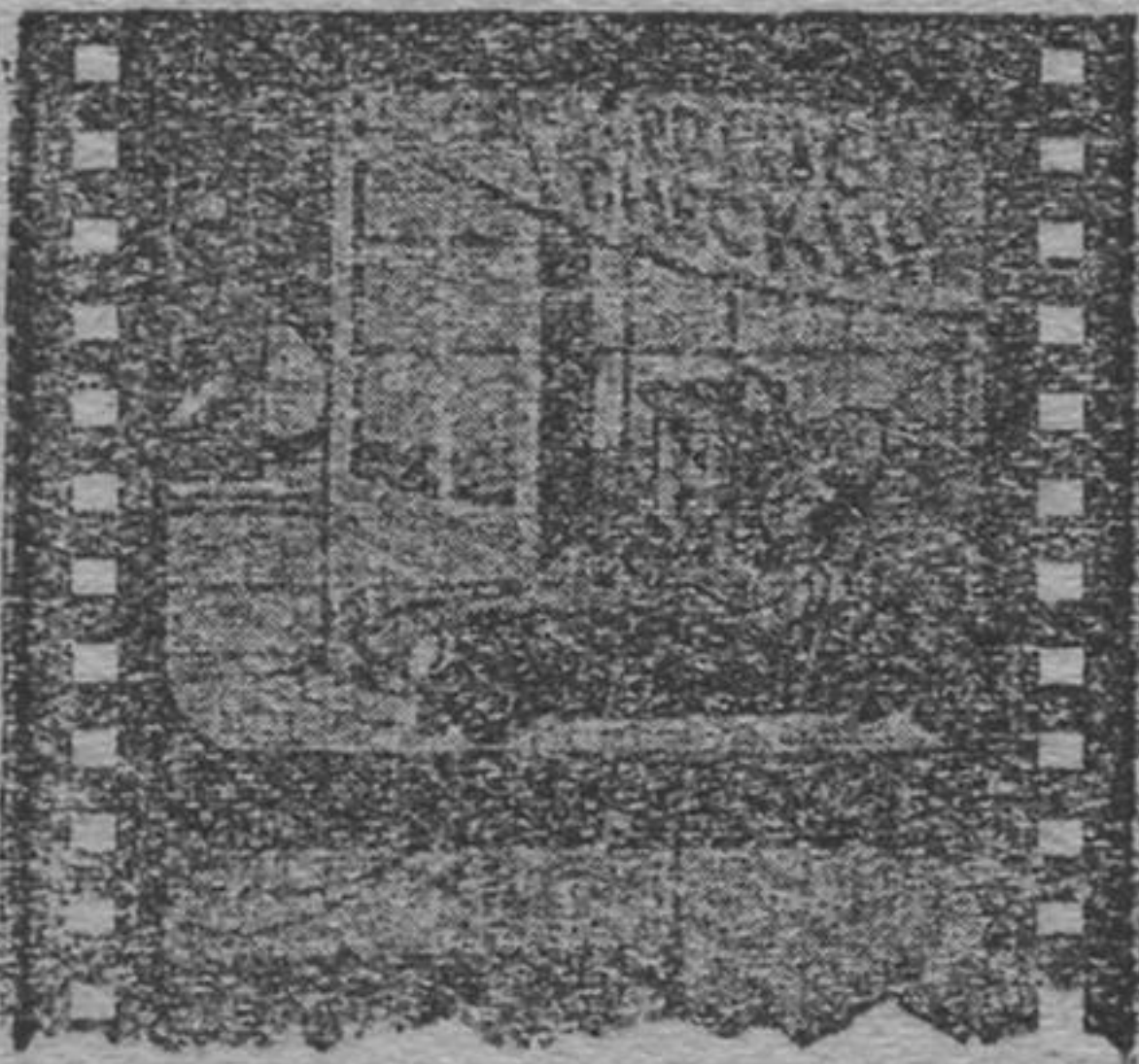


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FUTURE Science Fiction

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Future Science Fiction, published bi-monthly at Holyoke, Mass. for October 1, 1952.

1. The names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, Louis H. Silberkleit, 241 Church Street, New York 13, N. Y.; Editor, Robert W. Lowndes, 241 Church Street, New York 13, N. Y.; Managing editor, Robert W. Lowndes, 241 Church Street, New York 13, N. Y.; Business manager, Maurice Coyne, 241 Church Street, New York 13, N. Y.

2. The owner is: (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a partnership, or other unincorporated firm, its name and address, as well as that of each individual member, must be given.) Columbia Publications, Inc., 241 Church Street, New York 13, N. Y.; Louis H. Silberkleit, 241 Church Street, New York 13, N. Y.; Maurice Coyne, 241 Church

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5. The average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed, through the mails or otherwise, to paid subscribers during the 12 months preceding the date shown above was: (This information is required from daily, weekly, semiweekly, and triweekly newspapers only.)

LOUIS H. SILBERKLEIT
(Signature of Publisher)

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 1st day of October, 1952. Maurice Coyne (My commission expires March 30, 1954). (SEAL)

REMEMBERED WORDS

Rusty Silverman, Phillip Brantingham, and Norman J. Thompson are the readers whose letters in our November issue were picked as tops.

Rusty, you let us know which original from that issue you want, please, and it's yours. The other two winners should select alternates: Brantingham one alternate, and Thompson two. And please get those requests in before we lose track of things, huh? Thanks.

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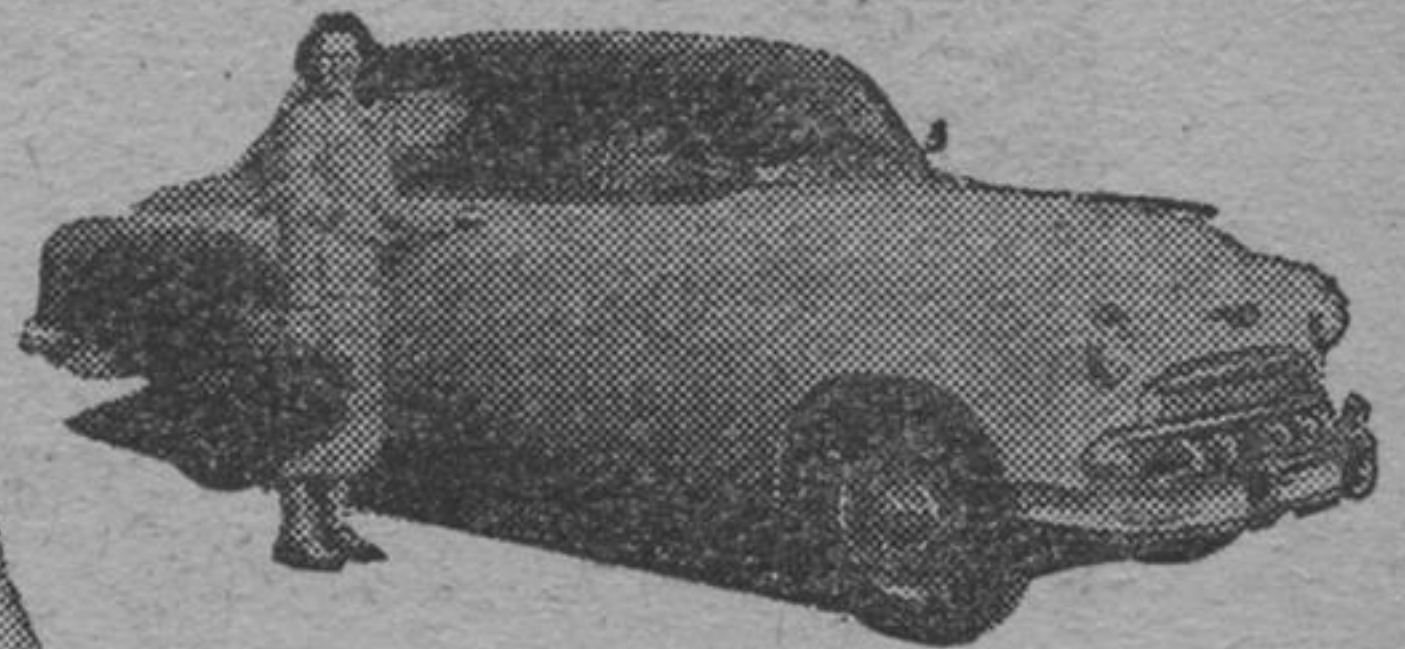
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THE RECKONING

A Report on Your
Votes and Comments

Over 70% of you picked the Jones novelet for first place, but there was just enough dissent to make the point-score higher than I'd expected. Sheckley received no vote lower than third place (and only two of those), even those disliking Jones nominating him for the number two spot. So, Robert emerges the only contender without boos from the cash customers. The Coppel story apparently found you pretty well in agreement—it was the only one to receive no first-place votes—so I must apologize and strive to mend my ways. (Most of the objections were on the grounds of the story being better suited for a fantastic-tale magazine.)

The returns on the question of running series of novelets which add up to a single book-length novel (not, mind you, just a series of novelets dealing with the same characters) show that there is a very slight edge in favor. Thanks for voting; I take this to mean that you'll be willing to consider one if I can find one that's really outstanding. (The opposition need not worry about my rushing into type with the first one I can find, merely for the sake of doing it.)

Here's how the stories for November came out:

1. Doomsday's Color-Press (Jones)	2.00
2. We Are Alone (Sheckley)	2.20
3. The Winning of Wooha (Winterbotham)	3.38
4. . . . And Found Wanting (West)	4.00
5. Legion of the Lost (Coppel)	4.50

Send your coupon to FUTURE SCIENCE FICTION, c/o Columbia Publications, Inc., 241 Church Street, New York 13, New York.



★

Number these in order of your preference, to the left of numeral; if you thought any of them bad, mark an "X" beside your dislikes.

- 1. Courier of Chaos (Anderson)
- 2. The Moon Is Death (Jones)
- 3. Romance (Fyfe)
- 4. A Big Man With The Girls (MacCreigh & Merril)
- 5. . . . And The Truth Will Make You Free (Simak)
- ★ —6. Cold War (Warner, Jr.)

Who are your nominees for the three best letters in "It Says Here"?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

General Comment

.....

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