

# FUTURE

JUNE SCIENCE FICTION 35¢

ANC.



New  
Stories  
by

IRVING COX, Jr.

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SAM MERWIN, Jr.

SAM SACKETT

EMSH-

# You Can Master the Power of Your "Sixth Sense"



## These Uncanny Experiences PROVE YOU Have a "Sixth Sense"!

Barred deep among the atoms of your inner mind there is a mysterious sixth sense which is capable of producing seeming miracles.

How often have you had the feeling someone was staring at you — then turned around and found that someone WAS staring at you? You hadn't seen that person. How did you know?

How many times have you been talking or thinking about a person — then suddenly he or she appears? You had no reason to expect him (or her). But your inner mind knew!

Do you ever have the premonition that something is going to happen — then, bingo! — that very thing DOES happen?

Have you ever started to say something at exactly the same instant that someone else started to utter the SAME words?

Have you ever had a dream — and then seen your dream become a reality, just as your inner mind had pictured it?

We've all had uncanny experiences like these. You can't possibly explain them unless you admit that you DO have a sixth sense and that mysterious power is developed to a higher degree in some people than in others.

Some years ago the noted "father of modern psychology," Will James of Harvard, made the astounding statement that most people use only 10% of their mental powers! The other 90% lies idle. Now, at last, science is making it easy for us to USE that vast reserve of brain power!

A few people seem to know instinctively the secret of harnessing this power. Others must learn. But once you learn the secret, NOTHING is beyond your power — NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE!

This doesn't mean we can all be Einstein, Edison or Ford. It does mean that we can have the happiness, peace of mind and feeling of security — plus the success in our chosen life's work — which we have every right to want and expect!

### Man Is Just Now Beginning to Learn the True Power of the Human Mind!

For almost a hundred years, scientists have known and talked about atomic energy. It is only recently that something has been done about it.

Likewise, the most amazing and mysterious powers of the inner mind were known to ancient sages, wise men, alchemists and philosophers. Their knowledge of these miraculous forces never died. It has been passed down through the centuries by a chosen few of each decade. Now these secrets are being brought to light for the first time. Now you and I can benefit by the previous knowledge of the inner mind — and learn how to put those forces to work!

### As You Think — So You ARE!

That phrase comes from the Bible. It is just as true today as it was 2,000 years ago! But NOW we have the means to think about the right thing! Now we know how much better we can make our lives by simply releasing and putting to work the tremendous forces which have been lying dormant in our minds!

Of course you'd like to have a better home, A happier, fuller life. More understanding, respect and affection from your family, friends and associates. Greater success in your life work. More genuine security and peace of mind in this troubled world!

You can have all these things in abundance — and! Nothing is impossible — nothing is beyond your reach — when you know how to use THE SECRET OF THE POWER WITHIN YOU.

Ben Sweetland, known to millions throughout the United States as Radio's Consulting Psychologist and who has contributed many works in the field of applied psychology — quite accidentally discovered the direct contact between the two minds of man — and how one can — at will — call upon his great mental powers.

The personal process "I" refers to the mental will. Sweetland has taught for years. When this word is added to another, it becomes an instruction to self. "The only difference between the go-getter and the no-go-do-well" — this psychological published in 1931, is that one thinks in terms of "I Can" and the other — "I Can't!" He taught his followers to hold to the thought "I Can" and in a large number of cases, they proved they could — they did things.

One great truth was definitely established. The words "I CAN" provided the direct path from the conscious mind to the subconscious mind; the use of them invoked the power to swing the door to the open seas.

Mary Jones was a lonely spinster — not beautiful — and resigned to a life of single loneliness. "I Can" helped the somber of happiness to smile on her. A large circle of friends — and a devoted husband came into being almost as though a magic wand had been used.

Jenny Smith had a good singing voice but lacked the courage to use it in public. "I Can" gave her direct contact with her source of power and she has since appeared on concert stages throughout the United States.

Jim Winters was a musician starting just enough to get by. Within days after gaining his "I Can" commitment he started to expand. Today he operates a business employing 30 mechanics.

### How You Can PROVE — at NO RISK — That This Secret Will Work Wonders for YOU!

Follow the simple, step-by-step instructions given as clearly in "I CAN." Notice the wondrous changes that

begin to take place in your spirit and personality AT ONCE. Feel the soul-satisfying glow of new self-confidence... the ability to DO all sorts of things you never thought you could before! Marvel at how real it is to sleep as peacefully as a kitten at night — free of worries, doubts and fears!

A truly glorious experience is in store for you! Prove for yourself — in 30 days or less — that YOU can experience a change in your whole life just as miraculous and wonderful as thousands of others have enjoyed. You risk nothing. But you have a whole new world to gain. Don't delay a single minute. Clip that coupon now.

### Your FREE GIFT — THE MAGIC MIRROR See for Yourself Why You Fail — Reveal Your Weaknesses — See Exactly How to Correct Them

Reflected in your Magic Mirror, you'll see yourself as others see you! This revolutionary new device enables you to look deeply into your inner being! Reveals all your weaknesses and your assets (including, perhaps, many you never knew you had). Tells how you can now use your assets to gain your goal in life. Shows you the way to the almost miraculous solutions to all of your major problems. THE MAGIC MIRROR is yours to KEEP — absolutely FREE — whether or not you decide to keep "I CAN."

### SEND NO MONEY! MAIL THIS COUPON TODAY!

CADILLAC PUBLISHING CO. Dept. C-163  
220 Fifth Ave., New York 1, N. Y.

Please rush my copy of Ben Sweetland's new book, "I CAN" — THE KEY TO LIFE'S GOLDEN SECRETS, in plain wrapper. When delivered, I will deposit with postman only \$1.95, plus five cents postage. I must be 100% delighted with actual results, or I will return the book within 30 days for a full refund.

FREE! Send me the MAGIC MIRROR — mine to keep even if I return the book.

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SAVE POSTAGE! Check here if ENCLOSED \$2.95, in which case we pay postage. Same GUARANTEE applies, of course.



## EDITORIAL

# TIME FOR A CHANGE

**D**URING the past few years, you readers have repeatedly asked for a number of changes in *Future Science Fiction*, among them being such items as better paper (which would allow for cleaner reproduction of the type and artwork); less advertising (which means more space for fiction and features); better reproduction on covers (which required a different type of cover stock and a four-plate engraving-process); trimmed edges, and a more convenient size.

We have not simply filed such letters in the wastebasket, or shoved them into a corner where they could be conveniently forgotten; but we have waited for a larger and more persistent volume of them, and for a growing audience of readers, so that we could feel reasonably sure that more than a small minority of you really wanted these changes.

Now, as we start volume five, we have decided to take action on your demands. It was impossible

to use the kind of paper you wanted, or to cut down on the ads, in the pulp size; we trimmed the edges, but many of you complained rightly that the pulp paper did not always produce a neat-looking trim. Newsdealers reported that the larger size was difficult to display properly, and checkups around the country showed that the magazine often was not placed in a prominent position; even where a dealer was willing to cooperate, it was often impossible for him to find adequate space.

More than any other type of reader, the science-fiction enthusiast seems to take pride (or feels distress) in the appearance of the magazines containing his favorite reading-matter. You can read the letter departments of magazines dated 1927, and find complaints and suggestions on such details; it isn't a new issue that has arisen since the "boom". And there can no longer be any doubt that the appearance of a magazine—cover,

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# Time For A Change

[continued from page 3]

artwork, paper, printing, etc.—plays a crucial part in attracting new readers. The "regulars" will stay with a magazine loyally so long as the stories satisfy them, but the potential new reader has to be "sold" on the strength of the packaging.

Can there be any better argument for the proposition that *your* letters, requests and comments are important than this present issue of *Future Science Fiction*? You're all *Oliver Twists*; you all want more; and the best way to get what you want and to retain what you have, is to write and tell us your wishes. The Readers' Preference Coupon in the back has played an important role in the past years; it is there for your convenience if you haven't the time to write, or do not feel like writing a letter,—but still want to put your vote in.

Would you like to see *Science Fiction Quarterly* in the pocket-size format?

Shall we retain the departments we now have? Would you like to see other features substituted for any of these departments? Do you like the cover? Do you like interior artwork in this issue? When we have a majority of opinion on such questions, we will follow it.

Most important of all, we want your continuing comment upon the stories. I haven't spared time in the past trying to get the best available to us, and I think you regulars already know that I won't relax on this matter, in the future. Even if every one of you wrote in and said, "All the stories are great", I still wouldn't feel that now was the time to take it easy, and coast along on your praise. Fortunately, there is no danger of such agreement on ultimate excellence; I can rest assured that I'll continue to be spurred on by readers who feel that there's room for improvement—my own feeling, at all times.

RWL



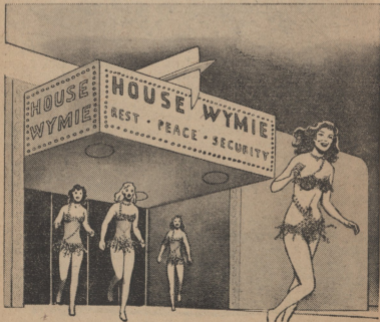
NOVELET

# PEACE ON EARTH

*Peace, security, brotherhood, all was possible, and all had come to man—but at what price?*

By IRVING COX, JR.

illustrated by EMSH







**S**TEWART had trouble starting his car, but he had expected that. Three months ago, the time-loss would have been a major disaster; now, he matter-of-factly pushed the coupe to the crest of the hill—the incline was enough to turn over the motor.



For fourteen miles the road twisted through a dry stream-bed. Stewart sat relaxed behind the wheel, at peace with himself. He smiled when he remembered how tense he had been on the way up to the cabin three months ago: driven by worry and fear; his mind cluttered with a dozen half-finished schemes; his lashing determination to double the seventy thousand net he'd made the first quarter.

The trail opened on a secondary highway, a narrow ledge cut in the face of a mountain. As Stewart made the turn, he caught a glimpse of himself in the rear-view mirror. He wore dusty boots and jeans; he was naked above the waist, burned brown by the sun; his face was lean and hard; his hair had become bleached gold.

For three months he had been alone in the Sierras, fishing unnamed mountain lakes, hiking uncharted meadows alive with deer. For three months he had been without news of the outside world; he had seen no fellow-man. And Stewart suddenly realized that he had missed nothing. The daily crises would be the same; the blazing headlines would not change; the politicians would still scream their fragile, semantic lies.

Thirty miles from the cabin the secondary road joined U. S. 50. Stewart turned west. He might have observed that something was wrong, if he had not grown so ac-

customed to solitude. He passed only three other cars on the road; the thriving, foothill town of Auburn was nearly deserted.

Stewart saw his first newspaper when he entered Sacramento. The headline screamed across eight columns,

*SOVIET DAY IN S. F.*

The sub-head was even less comprehensible,

*Soviet Friendship Fleet Anchors in Bay;*

*Moscow Congress Ratifies U. S. Constitution.*

Stewart glanced up at the street sign. M Street, the mall leading to the state capital building, had been renamed Marx Boulevard.

He looked for a gas station. None was open. The Sacramento streets were empty. No, not entirely; an old man sat sunning himself in Capital Park.

Stewart jerked on a plaid shirt and leaped out of his car. "What's happened?" he demanded. "Where is everyone? All this nonsense in the papers—"

"Ain't nonsense. 'Spect you ain't been around much, Bub," the old man answered. "Most of the people's gone up to Frisco for the p'rade."

"What parade?"

"To welcome the Commies. The President's come out to make a speech. They're sayin' Malenkov will fly over for the Grand Ball tonight."

Stewart tried to say something; but the words wouldn't come.

"Say, where you been these past few weeks, Bub?"

"Up in the hills," Stewart's voice was a weak whisper.

The old man cupped his ear. "What's that? Payin' bills? Nobody's got no bills no more, not since the Wymies come. Say, you sure look like you needed a treatment. Their new House up on K Street ought to be open."

"House? What sort of House? Who—"

"The Wymies built 'em. All over; everywhere." The old man made an expansive gesture and smiled; he took a thin, pink inhalator from his pocket and sniffed it luxuriously. His aging body sagged deeper on the park bench; his eyes glazed; his face became vacant, expressionless, as innocent as a child's. "My booster," he muttered, vaguely offering the capsule to Stewart. "Try a snort, Bub."

Stewart knocked the inhalator aside and rudely pulled the old man to his feet. "Who the hell are the Wymies?"

"Friends, Bub." The old man nodded toward the sky. "Come from up there." His eyes slid shut and he began to snore placidly.

STEWART went back to his car. He drove to K Street, looking for the House of the Wymies. He had no difficulty locating it. The

low, plastic-walled building filled half a block where once the Senator Theatre had stood. The structure was pink, glowing like a polished gem in the sunlight. Above the marquee was a large neon sign, "House Wymie." Smaller green letters offered "Rest, Peace, Security." Six beautiful women served as doorkeepers. Except for a fringe of pink beads across their breasts and loins, they were nude.

Stewart brought his coupe to a stop, and the women ran to open the door and help him out. Their hands were as soft as powder pads, yielding, sensuous, inviting. Stewart shook them off stubbornly. "What is all this?" he asked. "Who are the Wymies?"

"House Wymie is their gift to you—peace and comfort, security eternal." The soprano chorus was like the whisper of a summer wind across a field of grain, but the women looked at Stewart with dead eyes. "You came to us of your own free will, sir; we give to you freely, the peace of House Wymie."

They drew open the lobby door. Stewart went inside.

He was engulfed in silence—the silence of death, the silence of eternity. The green carpet was a forest down beneath his dusty boots. The air was cold, indefinably fragrant. He breathed deeply; he could not help himself. His muscles relaxed; his body went limp.



He felt like a swimmer trapped too far from shore. If he exerted himself, he could make it to safety—but he was tempted to sink into the warm, green embrace of death. The choice was his.

The choice was his! That was the key to understanding House Wymie. Stewart knew he could turn back; nothing forced him to remain in the cold silence of the plastic building—nothing but his own lack of will and the flaccid weariness of his body.

The choice was his. Yet, involuntarily he moved down a dark corridor, carried like a twig on the crest of a surging stream. He entered the dark auditorium, lit by narrow, fluorescent tubes close to the ceiling. He fumbled into a seat and sank gratefully into the soft, foamy cushions; arms from the chair closed around him, embracing his body tenderly, suggestively.

Colored light began to swim across a screen that was very far away. As the color grew brighter, the screen seemed to expand; gradually it moved closer, until the abstract pattern of light seemed to be playing its sensuous drama within Stewart's mind.

Suddenly the swirling light had meaning. It was fulfillment. Fulfillment of every secret dream Stewart had ever had—good and evil, lust and nobility, torn from his own soul; infinite wishes



granted with the open-handed largeness of a fairy-tale godmother.

Stewart's satisfaction was profoundly complete; for the first time in his life he was absolutely safe, absolutely secure. He felt no envy, no hate, no greed; for was he not the master of all things? And all things were his.

Infinite security and contentment: all his, in this fantasy fulfillment which was more vivid than reality. All his, at the price of—?

It was quite clear what the price must be: ambition, initiative, responsibility. He would never face failure again—but, without risking failure, he could never experience achievement. The price for absolute security was the substance of Stewart's personality as an individual.

The choice was his.

**F**EAR CRAWLING in his throat, Stewart fought free of the chair. When he stood up, the pattern of color vanished, but the effect lingered in his brain, sapping his will. He struggled to return to the lobby, against invisible currents that pulled at his body.

Then he saw his first Wymie—tall, graceful, almost human in form. The alien's head was enormous, egg-shaped, bald. His thin, willowy body was clothed in a spangled cloak. A veiled blankness swam in his pink, saucer-eyes as he extended stick-like arms toward Stewart in a gesture of welcome.

"Friend, you return the wrong way," the Wymie purred in a gentle, deep-throated voice. "The auditorium is merely a beginning. Let me show you the other dream rooms."

"No!" Stewart shrank against

the pink wall, but the Wymie made no attempt to touch him. \*

"You have nothing to fear, friend; we give you rest, security—"

"And you rob me of my soul!"

The pink eyes glittered. "You prefer the confection, then?" The Wymie offered Stewart an inhalator like the one the old man had used in the park. Stewart pushed it aside.

"As you wish, friend. Accept House Wymie or reject it, of your own volition. Before you leave us, may I have your personal data for our files? The doorkeepers have examined your vehicle registration; they inform me that your name is Andrew Stewart and your home is San Francisco."

The Wymie took a small pad from an inner pocket of his cloak. "Now, if I may have your age, and your place of occupation—"

In terror Stewart pulled open the lobby door. He drove furiously out of Sacramento along the highway to the coast. Slowly his fear slackened. When he was able to think clearly again, he deduced a shadowy explanation for what had happened.

For three months Stewart had been in the Sierras, out of touch with men. Sometime during that period the Wymies had landed on earth—aliens from Mars, Venus, or perhaps another solar system.

They had appeared to come in peace; they had been received as friends. Then they opened their dream-houses and enticed men to sacrifice their souls. The invasion had apparently been world-wide, for the Soviets had also bought the dream. The greed of human conflict had died with individual ambition and initiative.

The Wymies had given the world peace.

Peace on Earth...at the cost of the soul of man...

But surely, Stewart thought, he was not the only person who had escaped. There would be others. He must find them; they could organize a counter-revolution...

San Francisco was thronged. People jammed the streets from curb to curb; Stewart could not move his car beyond the bridge-ramp. Fortunately he saw an empty cubicle in a parking lot. He looked for an attendant, but found none. He went back to lock his car; a passer-by laughed at him.

"What's eating you, Mac? We ain't locked anything since the Wymies came."

STEWART edged through the crowd to Market Street, where the parade was underway. Marine bands, Legion bands, high school majorettes marched in the bright sun, doing homage to the visiting Soviet naval units. The Russians

rode in streamer-decorated Cadillacs; the Chairman of the House Un-American Activities Committee shared a convertible with the Commanding Commissar. A delegation from the D. A. R. carried three enormous portraits of Malenkov, Lenin and Marx, while many of the Soviet sailors wore huge "I Like Ike" buttons.

Here and there, scattered through the crowd that lined the parade-route, Stewart saw Wymies in their spangled coats. They watched the festivities emotionlessly. When one of the aliens came close to Stewart, he shouldered the Wymie aside rudely; the stick-arm shot out and soft, cold fingers closed on Stewart's hand.

"You dislike us, friend?" the soft voice purred.

Stewart turned aside with a sneer of disgust.

"Friend, you need a treatment. There is a House not far from—"

"No, thanks."

"But House Wymie is our gift to your people! Rest, peace, security; come, friend, let me show you the way."

"I said, no!" When the Wymie moved toward him again, Stewart's fist shot out. It sank into soft, boneless flesh, and the invader collapsed. A small knot of people, distracted from the business of watching the parade, swarmed around them. Their white, balloon faces stared at the fallen Wymie

with terror. In dead voices, the men muttered, "He hit a Wymie; he hit a Wymie!"

In a moment, Stewart thought, the mob would turn on him. He slipped away, clinging close to the buildings. Looking back, he saw that one of the men was following him; Stewart tried to move faster, but that was impossible in the press of the mob.

He found an open door and slid into a deserted cocktail-lounge. A tiny restroom window opened on the back alley. With some difficulty, Stewart squeezed through it. But as he turned toward the street again, he saw his pursuer at the mouth of the alley. "Wait, friend," the man called, burlesquing the Wymies.

Stewart clenched his fists.

"So you don't like Wymies?"

"No."

"Ever had a treatment?"

"Just one—a couple of hours ago," Stewart said.

The stranger's eyebrows arched. "And you came out of it—like this?" He held out his hand. "Put her there, buddy; I ain't never met a guy who came through it alone." The man fumbled in his pocket for a cigarette; while he lit it, he studied Stewart thoughtfully. "You know, I think the boss can use you."

"Boss?"

"We're putting together a little organization—"

"Against the Wymies?"

The stranger laughed. "Sure, you could call it that."

"What about you? Why haven't the treatments—"

"Never took one; I knew better. You might say, we've been in this Wymie racket for years—only on a smaller scale. They've really got an organization." He laughed again. "Look us up tonight, buddy, at the *Gaiety*, down in the Mission District. Can't miss the joint. Ask at the bar for Herm Schultz."

STEWART did not return to the parade. He went to his own apartment, in a hillside-building overlooking the bay. San Francisco was blessed with one of its rare, clear days. From the view window of his living room Stewart could see the flag-draped Soviet fleet lying at anchor close to the Presidio. He stood in front of the window thoughtfully pulling at his underlip. He felt lost and helpless. Something had to be done—but what? How?

Lynn Sinclair. The name came abruptly into his mind; and he knew he had the answer. Sinclair was the crustiest, most viciously cut-throat individualist Stewart had ever known. Of all men, he was the last who would become a victim of the Wymie dream.

Stewart couldn't telephone; he'd had the service cut off when he went away. Sinclair lived out on the peninsula; Stewart would have

to wait until the streets were clear so he could use his car.

He showered and dressed leisurely. As he laid aside his boots and jeans, Stewart felt a sense of loss. The business tweed somehow symbolized his resumption of the shackles and the strain of civilization.

At sunset, the city festivities moved indoors. A B-36 winged into the naval airport, bringing Malenkov for the opening of the ball. The now-jovial Georgian ruler led the Grand March in partnership with the President's wife—or so the morning newspapers subsequently reported. Descriptions of his uniform glowed with saccharine clichés.

The climax of the friendship ceremony came when the G. P. U. Chief presented the Order of the Red Star to the National Commander of the American Legion, along with a commemorative plaque designating all U. S. war veterans as Soviet Heroes. The Secretary of State conferred American citizenship upon all active Communist Party Members. In a special sideshow of their own, the K. K. K. merged with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

As soon as the streets were relatively clear, Stewart was able to take his car from the parking-lot; the attendant had returned from the parade. Stewart offered him a

bill, but he rejected it with an ingratiating smile. "No charge on holidays, sir." Then he saw the dent in Stewart's fender; his face quivered with horror. "We've damaged your car! Let me—"

"That happened months ago."

"But let us repair it, sir. I feel definitely responsible. There's no charge; absolutely no charge."

Stewart jammed the car into gear and it shot out into the street. Sweetness and light, overflowing everywhere: the personality of the world had been transformed into a bland, tasteless pudding.

Anger made Stewart reckless. His coupe banged into the rear-end of a slow-moving truck, and a huge driver, who looked as if he might have made a hobby of weight-lifting, swung out of the cab and surveyed the wreckage.

"My gracious!" he cried. "You've broken your headlight. I'm terribly sorry, sir; it was all my fault. I should have been in the right-hand lane."

Stewart backed his car away. "She drives O.K."

"But you mustn't drive with one light out; it's against the law. Let me fix it for you."

Stewart ground his teeth together. "Don't bother!"

"But, really, it'll only take a minute and—"

Stewart pulled his coupe into the stream of traffic.

IT WAS A twenty minute drive to the Sinclair estate. Behind its forbidding hedge, the house glowed with light. The outdoor Lynn Sinclair himself answered the door. He was in the process of dressing. He wore tuxedo pants, and a partially-buttoned formal



floodlights over the tennis court and the pool were on. The driveway and the parking-area were cluttered with cars.

For a moment Stewart thought Sinclair was entertaining. But Sinclair belonged to the horsey, station-wagon set, and the automobiles in his yard were all rattle-trap antiques. Scores of people were picnicking on the lawn; scrawny, underfed, slum children played in the pool.

shirt. He pumped Stewart's hand enthusiastically.

"Andy, boy! So you're back—and looking fit as a fiddle, too. Sorry I've got to receive you like this, but the servants are out. Wanted to see the parade, you know; I'm going to take in the ball myself."

"Then I won't keep you for—" "Nonsense, my boy. Come in; let me make you a drink."

Sinclair took Stewart into the

library. The room, which Stewart remembered as the showplace of the estate, was in chaos. Sinclair was a collector; his library of first editions was priceless. Now, the books were piled haphazardly on the floor.

Sinclair gestured apologetically toward the confusion. "The children like to play in here," he explained. "Poor, little tykes from the city. I've more or less turned the house over to them; they seem to enjoy it so much." He kicked aside a castle, constructed from a set of Bancroft, and made his way to the telephone. He rang a number; after a moment, he said, "Of course; he's here now." Pause. "Be right over? Fine." Pause. "He'll wait; I promise you that."

Sinclair hung up and filled two glasses from a dacter and handed one to Stewart. "Now tell me all about it, Andy." He relaxed in a leather chair, after pushing a Shakespeare folio to the floor. "Did you enjoy the vacation? Catch many fish?"

"Lynn, isn't it more to the point for you to tell me—"

"Don't worry another minute, Andy; I handled all your accounts myself. You've cleared about ninety thousand, I think. Of course, there was that Johnston deal, but I figured it was my mistake, so I made it up out of my own pocket."

"Frankly, Lynn, I don't give one damn about any of that right now.

I want to know about the Wymies. Who are they? Where do they come from?"

Sinclair took a pink inhalator from his pocket and sniffed at it delicately. Stewart's heart sank. If they had caught Lynn Sinclair, the world was lost.

"Want a snort, boy?"

"No!"

"Don't know what you're missing," Sinclair sighed. "The Wymies are our friends, Andy; they made their first landing about two weeks after you left, I guess. The ones we have with us now come from a planet of the Sirius system, I think."

"There've been others?"

"A dozen or more different species. The first Lord Commander came from a world which has a chlorine atmosphere; he had to keep on a breathing-mask while he negotiated the treaty."

"What treaty?"

"The Wymies represent a kind of galactic civilization; they're grooming us for membership."

"Like hell they are! Don't you realize, Lynn—"

"Their worlds are far superior to ours. It's quite a compliment, really, and quite a responsibility."

"They're enslaving us, Lynn. These Wymie Houses—"

"Simply educative centers. The Wymies are teaching us their techniques of adjustment; it's marvelous, Andy."



Stewart snatched the pink inhalator from the older man. "Lynn, it's a drug!"

"The government had it analyzed before we signed the treaty. It's perfectly harmless; good for you, as a matter of fact."

**C**LENCHING his fists, Stewart began to pace the cluttered floor. "The Wymies have invaded our world; can't you understand that? They've used a new kind of weapon. It's made us peaceful and happy, yes; but we've become obedient little slavies, too. We've no drive any more, no push, no ambition—"

Stewart's voice trailed off. As he turned toward the hall he saw a Wymie standing in the doorway. The alien moved slowly into the library, holding out his stick-hand.

"Meet Kori-Tra, Andy," Sinclair said. "He's the Integrator for Frisco; I called him when you came."

"I had word from our Sacramento office about you, Mr. Stewart," the Wymie explained, "and I monitored all your friends here. We're so anxious to complete our data—"

Stewart glared at Sinclair. "So you betrayed me, Lynn!"

"Of course I didn't, Andy; but I do like to co operate with our new friends, whenever I can."

"You used the wrong word, Lynn; it's obedience, not co-operation."

The Wymie laughed cozily. "Surely, Mr. Stewart, you find the world a better place than when you went away. Men have learned to live together without jealousy or greed; we've wiped out war."

"That's not co-operation."

"No?" Kori-Tra's egg face was contorted, but what his emotion was, Stewart had no way of knowing. "Tell me, friend, what does co-operation mean to you?"

"It's based on the conscious action of rational minds. It must be logically accepted—a mutual sacrifice of self-interest to common or group-interest—a working agreement freely arrived at by adult intelligences."

"Yet the net result would be the same as ours, Mr. Stewart."

"Possibly; but men haven't used their rationality to build your nightmare. They've lost their individuality; you've made them automatons, puppets—"

"An intriguing argument, Mr. Stewart," Kori-Tra broke in crisply. "Friend, I want to ask you to help us do a little experiment." The Wymie offered Stewart a pink inhalator. "Use this, please, and see if your reaction is—"

"Do you think I'm a fool?"

"It is important to us both, Mr. Stewart."

Stewart edged backward toward the door. "Perhaps it seems childish stubbornness to you Wymies, but I prefer to remain exactly as



I am—untreated and unenlightened."

Again the strange expression passed over the alien's face. "I'm afraid I must insist, Mr. Stewart; hold him, Mr. Sinclair."

Stewart had expected that. He whirled and drove his fist into the older man's jaw. The Wymie raised his thin arms imploringly, "For your own good, Mr. Stewart!"

Stewart saw other Wymies waiting in the hall. He broke open the library window and fled across the lawn. His car was hemmed in by late-comers who had come to enjoy the hospitality of the Sinclair pool. He saw Wymies behind him, tripping daintily over the grass.

Then Stewart remembered the genial trustfulness of this new world. He selected a car at random; as he expected, the key dangled in the ignition-lock. Unfortunately, the vehicle was nearly twenty years old—a junkheap held together with tape and baling wire.

With the accelerator pressed to the floor, Stewart drove back to San Francisco. Sometimes, on a down grade, the speedometer reached forty-five. Lynn Sinclair had been no help, but Stewart had one chance left. He drove to the *Gaiety* and asked for Herm Schultz.

**S**TEWART was taken through a dingy hall into a bare, airless

back room. Four men were sitting around a wooden table; one of them was Schultz. He sprang up and shook Stewart's hand warmly. His introductions were frenzied. But the little, greasy-haired man he called the boss—his name was Carlos—seemed very unimpressed; he studied Stewart with beady eyes.

"Herm tells us you're immune," Carlos said. "O. K., Stewart, consider yourself in; you can stop playing games now. I suppose you've just had sense enough to keep away from Wymie joints, like we have."

"Immune?" Stewart repeated.

"Herm says you left a Wymie House of your own free will."

"I did."

The beady eyes glittered. "Think it over, fellow. I can add a clever Joe to my outfit. We've never had a Wymie treatment; you haven't, either. Admit that, and we'll go on from there. If you go on lying to us—"

"I told you the truth."

"We can prove it, Stewart; you know that." After a moment, Carlos' eyebrows arched. The three men seized Stewart, pinning him against the wall. Carlos took out a pink inhalator and jammed it into Stewart's nostrils. "Goodbye, Mr. Stewart," he whispered. "Enjoy your Wymie dreamland."

Stewart held his breath, fighting the hands that held him, but he could not break away. At last he

was forced to gasp for a lungful of air. He had a very brief sensation of sensuous exhaustion; of vague dreams, half-remembered. It passed quickly and he stood leaning against the wall and glaring at Carlos.

"Just what you thought you'd prove by that—"

"He's O. K.," Herm Schultz whispered.

"So he is." Even Carlos seemed a little awed. "If you knew you were immune, Stewart, why didn't you simply show us—" Suddenly Carlos began to laugh. "But you didn't know, did you? All right, fellow, let me give you a breakdown on this Wymie deal."

Stewart pulled a chair up to the wooden table. Carlos sent to the bar for beer. They sipped it while they talked.

"The Wymies, Stewart, have the sweetest drug-peddling racket in the universe. We've been pikers; they make all the people on a planet addicts. I used to do some pushing myself, but my business has been shot to hell since the Wymies came. As soon as they put up their Houses, I spotted the gimmick—one peddler always knows another. That's why we haven't tried the Wymie Houses.

"For a long time I couldn't figure out how they made their deal pay off. The Houses are free, see? Where's the dough in that? Then I got the angle: they'll take it

out of us in trade. We'll build cars and T-V sets, and so on, and they'll sell them on some other world."

CARLOS finished his beer and fished out a cigarette. "There's only one thing wrong with the junk the Wymies peddle. Sure, one whiff of it turns most of us into addicts; but every once in a while a guy walks out of the Wymie House before the treatment's finished, and after that he's immune. When that happens, the poor guy always disappears after a couple of hours. The Wymies hunt him down, of course. You've been lucky, Stewart; damn' lucky. And so are we, because you're going to help us muscle in on their racket."

"This is too big for that, Carlos. The Wymies are aliens—invaders; they're conquering our world. It's up to us to stop them."

"Cut the flag-waving; I'm not interested."

"And I'm not interested in your petty—"

"But you are, fellow." Carlos smiled. "Because, if you don't help me, I'll turn you over to the Wymies." He ground out his cigarette fastidiously, with the toe of his shoe. "We're not asking much, Stewart. Just one city; they'll still have the rest of the world. Frisco; that's all I want; I'll even give them a percentage of the gross."

"What makes you think you can make any sort of deal with Wymies?"

"That's where you come in. Up to now we've been stymied because they have everything in Frisco protected by inhalator bombs. But you, Stewart—you're immune."

"Carlos, you've got to think of more than yourself! Mankind is being enslaved. If my immunity gives us any advantage—"

"We'll start operations tonight. Nobody knows how long we'll have you around, Stewart; we got to use the breaks when we get them."

"Listen, Carlos! It's far more important to—"

"You're wasting time, Stewart. I look out for Carlos; nobody else. First we'll bomb a couple of their joints. After that..."

Stewart listened in dull agony, while Carlos outlined his efficient scheme of terror, seeing no way out for himself. He gained nothing—either for himself or for mankind—by helping Carlos; but; but if he refused, Carlos would turn him over to the invaders. He wondered how many other men were immune; he tried to think of some way of contacting them, arousing them to action against the Wymies. If he could do that...

"Better still, we'll plant a bomb in the ballroom before the big dance breaks up," Carlos decided;

"that'll show the Wymies we mean business."

Then the solution came to Stewart. He asked quietly, "Are they broadcasting the Grand Ball?"

"Every network, on a worldwide hook-up. Brother, this friendship day is a big league operation."

"Sounds good enough for me."

"Beginning to see this my way, Stewart?"

"I guess I am, Carlos."

STEWART and the four men drove to Market Street in a big sedan. Stewart decided that Carlos must have learned his racketeering from watching fourth-rate thrillers on T-V. The streets were still crowded; they had to park three blocks from the ballroom. Carlos carried the bomb; the others packed a small arsenal of assorted revolvers.

They sent Stewart alone into the foyer to make sure it was clear of inhalators. "How'll I know?" he asked.

"The Wymies usually put them up over doorways," Carlos explained. "Long capsules, like fire extinguishers. They spray the air with a fine mist. It has a funny smell; you can't miss it."

Stewart reported the foyer uncontaminated. They went inside. Through a wide archway they looked in on the dancers. At the far end of the room, the orchestra sat in a band shell; banked on the

platform was a battery of microphones.

Herm Schultz whispered, "They got inhalators spraying the floor, boss."

Stewart saw clusters of narrow, metal tubes fastened to the columns of a colonnade which encircled the dance floor.

"I don't like this setup," Herm whined; "let's drop our bomb and get out of here."

"It won't do us any good if we put it out here," Carlos snapped. "We've got to show the Wymies that we can get in, even where they're protecting the joint with inhalators." He cradled the bomb in his hand. "I want this baby to go off on the dance-floor; Stewart'll put it there for us."

"You'll be killing our own people," Stewart said; "not Wymies."

"What difference does that make?"

"The Wymies are up front by the bandstand; if I—"

"I give the orders, Stewart."

"But the effect would be the same, wherever I leave the bomb!"

"Not quite. If we kill any Wymies, maybe they won't cut me in on their territory." He slipped the bomb into Stewart's hand. "Put it in the center of the floor, fellow; nowhere else. Don't forget—we'll be watching you from the hall." Stewart saw the gleam of a re-

volver in Carlos' hand. "I'm not in the habit of missing."

STEWART entered the ballroom. Carlos' stereotyped threat hadn't changed his plan; it simply added a new hazard. In any case, Stewart saw no possibility that he would get out of it alive; but if he could reach the microphones, he might make his sacrifice worthwhile. What he said would have to be brief and to the point. He was still unsure of the specific phrasing; but he must make it a rallying-point for others who were immune.

He moved slowly along the edge of the floor. Through the colonnade he saw Carlos and his three cohorts keeping pace with him in the outer hall. Stewart reached the middle of the room; Carlos gestured pointedly.

Stewart paused and drew a deep breath. The air was faintly perfumed, as it had been in the Wymie House in Sacramento.

Then he went toward the bandstand as rapidly as he could. Carlos motioned him to turn back; his revolver was in his hand. Stewart pushed up the platform steps; the band blared a brassy-sweet rendition of "Margie."

Fifty or more Wymies were standing at the front of the auditorium, watching the festive display of their handiwork. One by one they glanced at Stewart. They

whispered together. Unobtrusively, in pairs, they began to close in upon him.

In the wings Stewart saw Carlos. He gestured once again, furious, with the muzzle of his revolver. When Stewart ignored it, Carlos leveled the weapon and took careful aim.

The dance came to an end. Polite applause rippled over the audience. Stewart seized a microphone and he began to talk. How much time did he have? Five seconds? Ten? One point seemed very important. People who were immune had to be warned to conceal their immunity. Just like the addicts, they must continue to patronize the Wymie Houses, so the aliens could not isolate them. After that, they could begin to organize a counter-attack against the invaders.

How much he said, Stewart never knew. Carlos' gun cracked, and flaming pain stabbed Stewart's shoulder. Waves of unconsciousness closed over his mind. Grasping a microphone stand, he slid slowly to the floor.

He had a vague impression that the Wymies had done nothing to stop him. Instead, they had surrounded Carlos and the other three men, and dragged them out into the drugged mist that sprayed the ballroom.

Stewart had failed. He might have said something to save man-

kind, but he had been prevented—not by the action of the invaders, but by the greed of man himself. Unconsciousness came to him on a flood of seething, helpless bitterness. . . .

HE OPENED his eyes. He lay strapped on a padded shelf in a metal-walled, cylindrical room which seemed to be moving. A pliable, transparent substance, like soft rubber, lay over his wound.

A Wymie came and hung above him, floating in the air.

"You gave us more trouble than any of the others," the Wymie purred, and it seemed to Stewart that the alien was amused.

"Why don't you kill me and be done with it?"

"The Galactic Federation, Mr. Stewart, has a perverse affection for life in all its forms."

"The master's consideration for his slaves!"

"Our foolish comedy of cross-purposes would have been quite entertaining for us both, if you had not been so badly wounded." The Wymie shifted his body so he could look into Stewart's face. "Let me set your mind at rest.

"The Galactic Federation is a very old organization, Mr. Stewart. By our standards, your civilization is still in its infancy. Yet you've made tremendous technological strides—one of the most rapid rational revolutions we've observed

anywhere in the universe. But you gave us quite a problem. Your people were on the verge of attempting spaceflight, but they were not sociologically ready to join the Federation. Your concepts of conquest were very dangerous to us. Theoretically, we should have wiped out your planet—but that we could not do. So we came to your world, Mr. Stewart, as friends; and we set up the Wymie Houses."

"To enslave us," Stewart broke in. "To rob us of incentive, and—"

"Quite true, I'm afraid; but also very necessary. We imposed the appearance of co-operation on your world. With the illusion of complete personal security, your people would give up their desire to conquer the stars. You see, your motivation is all wrong. Your people dream of finding eternal security sometime, somewhere. You fight your wars to gain that end. Yet the only security of such an order which life ever finds is death. It takes an adult mind—a Galactic mind—to realize that, and to substitute a more mature goal.

"A few of your people rejected our hypnotics—as you did, Mr. Stewart; your so-called immunity is no more than that. When you first entered the Wymie House you were conscious that you had to make a choice. You chose one thing; most of your people, another. By our standards, Mr. Stewart,

you then became a citizen of the Federation.

"We're taking you to the new world now; a Centaurian planet very much like your own. You'll find other earth-people there—more than a hundred thousand—and the number is growing steadily; but you may be surprised at *who* they are, these adults of your world. Not many of the men you call great, I'm afraid; simply ordinary people who discovered the secret of growing up."

"What of the earth? Will we ever go back?"

"Perhaps. The Federation has high hopes for the new generation, Mr. Stewart. The children will grow up in a world of brotherhood, and co-operation, and friendship. All the cliches your people give lip-service to will be real; all your spiritual idealism. There will be no inconsistency, no semantic frustration, no social double-talk. We've given your children the fertile soil where adulthood can thrive. Consider the technical progress your people have made in the past thousand years; many of our Federation planets have done no more in fifty thousand. Who knows tomorrow? Your people, Mr. Stewart, may one day grow up to rule the Galaxy."

"As adults," Stewart said slowly; "not as conquerors."

"Yes, Mr. Stewart, as adults."





# HAIL TO THE CHIEF

SHORT NOVEL

By SAM SACKETT

**Henry Logan was on the inside of the government he'd always dreamed of...and yet, he rebelled...**

## PROLOGUE

**T**ENRY LOGAN paused, panting. He could no longer hear the bootsteps of his pursuers. It was a good thing that he had reached so high a position in the Government; he knew the passages of the immense Administration Building better than anyone else except the Chief himself. Otherwise he would never

illustrated by FREAS

have escaped the relentless guards. Logan wasn't young any more, and he had never been much of a runner.

He leaned against the wall and breathed deeply. This wall was not made from beautiful marble, like those the public saw; it was plain concrete, built as part of a honey-comb-defense against even a direct H-bomb hit on the Administration Building. He was getting into the outer perimeter of the Center—that region where the Chief stayed. Only a few dozen people besides himself, except for the Personal Guardians who surrounded the Chief, had ever gone into the Center; only a few hundred even knew it existed. The rest were content to accept the elaborate maze of marbled halls that surrounded it, and the impressive offices that lined them, as the whole of the Administration Building.

But Logan knew that, although he had got into the Center, his job was not yet over. The corridors in the Center were an ingeniously-constructed labyrinth, designed to lead astray even those who knew them well. They, and the lead-layered walls of the building, were dotted with booby-traps—some activated from controls in the Chief's quarters, others from triggers which an unwary invader might stumble against wholly accidentally. Even when he succeeded in pene-



trating deeper into the Center, to the Chief's quarters, there was the still tougher task of fighting past the Personal Guardians.

But the Chief had to be killed.

That was a job that only one man could do, and it was a job that could not be done by any one of the hundred younger men who were willing to do it. Only Logan had the knowledge—knowledge too intricate and detailed to be transferred to anyone else by any means short of an actual impression of his neural circuits upon the other's brain tissues. One little man—five feet three and weighing 120 pounds, with graying hair and tortoise-shell glasses—was called upon to challenge the greatest concentration of power in the history of the human race.

And Henry Logan had taken up that challenge.

He looked around him in the silence. Just plain gray walls stretching into the distance—that was all there was to be seen. He checked on his armament. He had a .38 pistol in a shoulder holster; he had practiced drawing it for months, and had spent tedious hours in target practice with it. He carried extra clips for it in three coat pockets and on his hip. Daggers were strapped to his left forearm and right leg; he had been thoroughly trained in their use. Under his shirt he wore a light but sturdy

bullet-proof vest, especially designed for him. He looked—and he smiled at the idea—surprisingly dangerous for a former political science professor who had joined the Government, ostensibly as a minor figure in the Office for Foreign Affairs.

LOGAN WANTED a cigarette badly, but he was afraid that somewhere behind the concrete wall there was an apparatus analyzing the odors of the air—or perhaps breaking down its chemical content. Perhaps even now electronic computers were informing the Chief that in such-and-such a compartment of the Center the amount of water vapor and carbon dioxide in the air had risen slightly as a result of his breathing. Or perhaps the sound of his panting had already been amplified into thunder in the Chief's ears.

Well, it was the chance he had decided to take. And if his progress was reported on, the only thing to do was to keep moving.

Logan looked back at the heavy door he had come through. On the outside, it was a section of a marble corridor; inside it was heavily insulated with lead and steel. As a safety-measure, he bolted it from the inside.

Logan moved slowly, keeping his eyes roving around him. Ahead of him, a surprising distance ahead, he could see the gloomy dead end

of the hallway. He could not see any passages, either to the right or the left; but he knew that they were there, ready to open responsively to the sure and subtle pressures of those who were familiar with them. Logan did not have a thorough acquaintance with this particular corridor—although they all looked so much alike that it was hard to tell them apart. But he was close enough to the inner workings of the Center to be able to spot the signs of secret passages. To a casual observer a crack between two slabs of concrete might not look any deeper than any other crack. But Logan was no casual observer; he was one of the few real intimates of the Chief, and he had trained himself to sense these slight differences.

There was danger, though; at any point Logan might meet with a trap. He had to be constantly on his guard.

He continued forward cautiously, scanning the ground for a sign of anything dangerous, scanning the walls for any sign of a way farther into the building. He knew that he had to go into the interior, and also down until he was below the surface of the ground. It was hard to tell which way led into the interior, considering the intricate plan of the building; and the uneven floors in the Center also made it difficult to tell just how far down he was getting. Logan's

wrist-compass and his thorough knowledge of the dimensions of the building helped him with the first problem; he had to rely on his sense of balance and a pocket-level for the second. He was, he knew, going on a tangent to the perimeter of the Center; and he was also, he believed, on a slightly downward incline.

Suddenly he paused. The concrete block immediately in front of him looked suspicious. Was it a trap? Were those just deeper shadows? Or were they really cracks, showing that this block was independent of its fellows and capable of responding to human weight? He could not be sure. He might be wrong; he might be afraid of nothing—but he couldn't take the chance. Logan walked backward a few steps, ran, and jumped over the suspicious block. The exertion made him pant harder.

Again he pressed forward, slowly and cautiously. At the rate he was going, it would take a long time for him to reach the Chief. Another man, on another errand, might have become discouraged at the thought of the patient hours of caution and vigilance that would be required of him—a long, grueling mental and physical strain and then, at the end, exertion of the most strenuous kind. But what Henry Logan was going to do would have to be done. The Chief must be destroyed; government

*must be returned into the hands of the people.*

## I

LOGAN had been a professor of political science at one of the nation's large universities. He had a reputation as one of the most brilliant scholars in his field, but the small enrollment in his classes showed that he was not popular with his students.

The most recent contribution to his reputation was his book on the political theories of John Stuart Mill, which ended with an impassioned avowal of Mill's idea that in any election the votes of educated people should be weighted more heavily than those of the masses.

Logan had written in that final chapter, *"For democracy, in the last analysis, is the best form of government only by default. So many of the world's great thinkers—Plato, Mill, Czar d'as—have agreed that the best government is rule by an enlightened oligarchy, that it would be presumptuous to argue that any other system is better in theory.*

*"In practice, however, it has always been found that power corrupts even the most high-minded of men, and that the most benevolent of despots loses his benevolence when placed in a position*

*of political dominance. From tyranny, therefore, the political scientist must turn to democracy. The masses are, in theory, incapable of self-government. They are wilful, ignorant, and capricious; they do not know what they want. But no man or group of men knows what they want better. Weak and ineffectual as democratic government has always been, it must remain the mature selection of political thinkers until some new genius in the science of government invents some new form, uniting the theoretical attractions of Plato's Republic with practicability."*

That paragraph was buried in a work of interest only to teachers. But Logan knew that the influence of his ideas would not be confined to teachers alone; once you have convinced the teachers of a nation, it is only a little while before you have convinced their students. And Logan hoped that that paragraph would have the effect of leading teachers to discuss in their classes the desirability of replacing democracy with some more efficient system, one that would give more influence to educated men—like Logan.

Its effect was different. About a week after the book appeared, a man came to see Logan. Logan never learned his name, and never saw him again. But he came into Logan's office at the university and said, "Professor Logan, the

President has empowered me to offer you a position in the Office for Foreign Affairs."

Logan looked up from the papers he was grading, surprised. "Why me?"

"Because of your book on John Stuart Mill."

The professor leaned back in his chair. "I hardly expected the book would appeal to President Morrison."

The man remained standing by his desk, looking down at him.

Finally Logan, to break the silence, said, "What kind of position is it?"

"It's confidential nature prevents me from telling you at this time; ostensibly, you would be named Assistant Under-Secretary for Latin American Affairs."

"I don't know anything about Latin America," Logan snapped, picking up his red pencil again.

"The title is only ostensible; it will give you an excuse for being seen in the Administration Building."

"See here," Logan said. "What the devil is all this? I don't know you. I don't understand what you're talking about. I'm busy. If you can't say what you mean, get out of my office."

**T**HE MAN reached into his coat pocket and drew out some tickets. "A compartment has been reserved for you on the 10:53 train

tonight. You will be met at the Capital and taken to see the President; he will explain in greater detail what your duties will be."

"I'm not interested."

The man put the tickets on Logan's desk and left the office. Logan threw them in the wastebasket, marked an F on the test paper he had been grading without bothering to read the rest of it, and picked up the next one. He glanced over the first answer and wrote a sarcastic comment at the end of it.

Then he got up and paced the room. Service with the Government, he mused, would certainly be attractive. There would be an assured salary—and probably a higher salary than he would ever receive in the academic profession. He fished the tickets out of the wastebasket and looked at them carefully.

"Poo," he said, and threw them back into the wastebasket. "Assistant Under-Secretary for Hogwash." He re-seated himself at the desk and glanced over the second answer. His left hand clenched as he read. "Stupid idiot!" he muttered.

He steeled himself for the third answer, but somehow he could not face it. Every day—for how many years?—he had poured the fruits of his intellect on the classroom floor for a set of fools. He had examined the strengths and weak-

nesses of the various systems by which man had attempted to regulate himself, for boys interested only in football and hot rods, and for girls interested only in boys. He was giving them the finest part of himself.

Logan got up, took the tickets out of the wastebasket, and went out of the office. He left the papers scattered on his desk, just as they were. He did not drop into the chancellor's office to explain his departure; he went straight home, bathed, shaved, dressed, packed, ate at a near-by restaurant, and read in Czardas until it was about ten o'clock. Then he took a taxi to the station, waited until the train came in, took his place in his compartment, and went to sleep.

When he woke up, he was in the Capital.

**H**E GOT OFF the train, and was met by another man whose name he never learned. This one was much taller than the first, and his height made Logan feel at a disadvantage. "Follow me," the man ordered and set off at a brisk pace through the crowd.

Logan set his bag down and stood looking after the man's retreating back. A woman following him bumped into him. "Excuse me," she said; Logan said nothing.

After a while he saw the man turn to look for him. When the

man found Logan he came striding back for him. "Come on," he said. "What are you waiting for?"

Logan took his time lighting a cigarette.

"Come on," the man said.

"Who are you?" Logan asked.

"That's of no importance. I've been assigned to pick up Professor Logan at the depot and take charge of him; you're Professor Logan, aren't you?"

"Yes," Logan admitted.

"Well, come on, then. Here; I'll carry your bag." The man picked up the suitcase and stood waiting. "Let's go."

"What's the hurry?"

"After you've worked for the Government a little while you'll find out what the hurry is. Come on, let's get moving."

Logan followed the man out to a waiting automobile, chauffeur-driven, which bore the insignia of the Office for Foreign Affairs. The man climbed in after Logan and closed the door.

Logan said, "See here, I don't like these high-handed tactics of yours."

"What you like and what you don't like are of no importance yet."

"You're as insolent as a college freshman."

"What I'm like is of no importance; the important thing is that you have been chosen."

"Yes, but chosen for what?"



"I'm not at liberty to tell you."

Logan flounced back in the seat and sulked. After a while, he said, "What did you mean by saying that what I liked and didn't like were of no importance *yet?*"

"I'm not at liberty to say."

Logan was silent for a while. Then, as the car drove on and on through the streets of the Capital, he asked, "Are you at liberty to tell me where we're going?"

"No."

Finally they left the Capital and roared along a highway North. Logan squirmed. "I thought I was being taken to the President."

"You will see the President later."

"Where are we going now?"

"I'm not at lib—"

"Oh, hush up. See here, you can't kidnap me like this. I demand to know where I'm being taken; otherwise stop the car and let me out."

The other man said nothing. The chauffeur drove on silently. For a wild moment Logan thought of leaping at the men, but the foolishness of the idea deterred him, and he merely sat sulking in his corner of the back seat.

**A**T LENGTH they pulled up before a three-story white frame building that looked somehow, from the road, like a military academy.

The man said, "All right, get out."

Logan looked at him and was about to speak, but thought better of it and followed orders, clutching his suitcase tightly. "Is the President here?" he asked.

"No."

The man led him to the front door. It was opened by another man, whose face was vaguely familiar to Logan from newspaper pictures. The second man said, "Come in, Professor Logan."

Logan entered. The man who had brought him from the station did not come in; he got back in the car and drove off again. Logan saw him once more, in a corridor of the Administration Building, but the man either did not see him or chose not to recognize him.

The second man said, "Professor Logan, I'm Arthur Friedlander."

Of course! This was the Director of the Division for Economic Aid in the Office for Foreign Affairs.

Logan said, "I'm glad to meet you, Mr. Friedlander, in spite of the circumstances in which I have been brought out here."

"Those conditions were necessary," Friedlander said, "as I hope you will be permitted to see later. First you will have to take certain tests which will determine your fitness for Government service. I am requesting that you take all of them voluntarily. I am afraid

that I shall have to warn you that you will be forced to complete them once you have started them. I hope you will not object, because it has been determined that you are peculiarly fitted for the responsible position for which you have been selected."

Logan listened to this carefully. There was something wrong. Tests? He had never heard of anyone taking tests to determine his fitness for government service. He had himself often advocated standards for the election of government officials, to be enforced also on candidates for public office, but no one—he thought—had ever paid attention to him. He was curious about these tests; they bothered him. The other thing that bothered him was the curious official language that Friedlander used—very carefully chosen so as not to say anything. "It has been determined." Who determined it? Why the passive voice? "The responsible position for which you have been selected." What was it? Why all the vagueness? Friedlander was trying hard to keep something hidden.

Logan asked, "What is this position?"

"I'm not at liberty to tell you yet."

The same answer. He might as well give up. "All right," he said; "I'll take your tests."

"Fine," Friedlander said. "Have

you had breakfast yet?"

"No," Logan admitted.

"We'll start them after you've eaten. They're rigorous, and you'll do better if you take them on a full stomach."

And the breakfast was good, Logan admitted. Country sausage—his favorite dish—and eggs fried just the way he liked them—how did they know even these intimate details about him?

But he put the question out of his mind as Friedlander rose and said, "Are you ready, Professor Logan?"

Logan rose and crushed out his cigarette. Friedlander led him into a large room, furnished only with a plain, heavy wooden arm chair, fitted with arm clamps and a head clamp; a microphone; a motion-picture camera; and half a dozen flood lights. Logan frowned and turned to Friedlander, but the Economic Aid chief had disappeared.

"Professor Logan?" The voice made him whirl around. It belonged to a young, good-looking man in a turtle-neck sweater. Logan found out later that his name was Fred Hansen.

**H**ANSEN came over and shook Logan's hand. "Let me explain the procedure to you, Professor. You will be seated in that chair. Instruments will record your blood-pressure, pulse, body temperature, and involuntary muscle-



twitches while you are being asked a series of questions. In addition, an electroencephalograph will record your brain-pulsations. The whole questioning procedure will be filmed in sound, including both my questions and your answers. The camera will be trained on you for the entire time. When the questioning is over, the film and records will be carefully studied—your expressions will be analyzed from still pictures made from the film as well as watched in action, and the records will be compared with the questions and answers to determine your exact reactions.”

“It seems remarkably complete,” Logan observed.

“It is; won’t you sit down?”

“What if I don’t?”

“That decision is not mine to make, and so I cannot tell you what will be determined. Possibly, nothing will happen to you. But if the decision *were* mine, I’ll tell you frankly that I certainly would take some steps to prevent your telling anyone what you have seen so far.”

“Will you tell me what this is all about?”

“Not until after the questioning.”

Logan looked the younger man hard in the face. “Very well,” he said; “I’d rather die in any other way you could think up than from curiosity.” And he sat down in the big chair.

Hansen busied himself strapping the professor into the chair and adjusting the arm and head clamps. When he had finished, he stepped back without a word and turned on the flood lights. Logan was soon perspiring and wished he had thought to take off his coat; it was impossible to do so now, strapped in as he was. Hansen then pressed a button, and another young man came in from an adjoining room. Silently he took his place behind the camera and started it. Hansen walked back and forth out of camera range and began firing questions.

“What is your name?”

“Henry Logan.”

“How long have you been a citizen of this country?”

“I was born here.”

“How old are you?”

“Fifty-one.”

They started innocuously enough, those questions. But then they began getting tricky.

“Who was the greater man, Hamilton or Jefferson?”

“Why—I suppose really Hamilton, because—”

“Do you attach any credence to Czardas’ theory of dynamic social structure?”

“Why, of course, that’s basic to the whole—”

“Why have you never run for political office?”

“Well—”



"Faster! Why have you never run for political office?"

"Damn it, I never thought about it!"

**T**HE SWEAT was streaming down his face, now, and he was stiff from having sat in one position so long. It was as if he had died and gone to the particular hell of people who give examinations. And Hansen kept on without relenting.

"Why have you never married?"

"I don't know; I suppose I never found anyone—"

"Of what political party are you a member?"

"I don't belong to one. I think they're—"

"For whom did you vote in the last election?"

"Morrison."

Logan sat looking at the hands crawling around the face of his watch. It was amazing how slowly time could pass, when your body ached and you were soaking in your own perspiration and somebody was hammering questions at you one after another. Finally he asked, "Can't we take a rest?"

"No. Come on; answer the question."

"I can't remember what it was."

"You're just stalling for time."



Can Mill's idea of weighted voting be reconciled with the theories in his essay 'On Liberty'?"

"Of course."

"Do you feel that John Adams has been over—or under-estimated by historians?"

"Underestimated."

"Would you bear arms for the Government if requested to?"

"If they wanted me to."

Logan had shut his eyes against the glare of the lights now, and the whole experience was sinking into a monotonous pattern. It had been years since he had first entered the room, and Hansen had been firing questions at him continually, without a let-up. He began answering them automatically, without thinking.

"What is your favorite color?"

"Blue."

"If you were asked to denounce your best friend as a traitor, would you do it?"

"I don't know."

"Come on, answer the question: Would you do it?"

"I guess not."

"Do you consider patriotism a virtue?"

"Rightly directed, yes."

And still the questions kept steadily on—until suddenly there was a silence. The questions had stopped. Logan raised his head and opened his eyes. Hansen was loosening the clamps. Logan strug-

gled to get up, but his stiff body refused to function. He fell sprawling on the floor at the foot of the chair.

Hansen and the other young man helped Logan to a couch. They gave him a glass of water, which made his dry throat feel better. The questioning, all told, had taken four hours.

When Logan felt strong enough, he sat up. Before he could say anything, Hansen told him that Friedlander was awaiting him for lunch.

LOGAN JOINED the Economic Aid director in the diningroom. Friedlander rose from the table and greeted him with a smile. "You seem to have come through the ordeal all right."

"I don't know," Logan said; "would you mind telling me now what all this is about?"

They sat down. Friedlander talked as they ate: "You were told that you were wanted for Government service, and that is quite correct. But it will surprise you to know that the Government I speak of isn't the Government you have in mind. Among ourselves we always call the Government *you* are thinking of 'the Administration,' to differentiate it."

"What in heaven's name—"

"You see, Professor Logan, such a genius in political science as you called for in your book exists, and

has existed, for several years. Remember? *'Weak and ineffectual as democratic government has always been, it must remain the mature selection of political thinkers until some new genius in the science of government invents some new form, uniting the theoretical attractions of Plato's Republic with practicability.'* Well, although of course you didn't know it at the time you wrote that passage, that new form exists and is now under operation."

"I simply don't understand."

"I don't expect you to, yet. I'll try to explain it as rapidly as I can. The Government is not a democracy, nor yet a dictatorship. Nor is it a compromise; it is a tyranny so complete, a despotism so comprehensive, as to give the illusion of absolute and unlimited freedom."

"I can't even visualize anything like that."

"Perhaps not, now. But I'll give you a brief outline, and then, after you have started in your service, you will perhaps get a clearer picture. Let me start getting at it this way. For whom did you vote in the last election?"

"Morrison."

"Of course; so did nearly every citizen. He won by the most crushing landslide that any presidential candidate has ever had. It was imperative that he do so, because the policies he represents are the policies that must be carried out to

preserve the peace of the world at this time. It is equally imperative that he be re-elected this fall."

"I'm not sure I see—"

"I'm sorry; I was getting ahead of my story. So you voted for Morrison. Have you ever seen Morrison, talked with him?"

"Why, no."

"How many people ever have?"

"I don't know. He's spoken to large gatherings throughout the country, and he's undoubtedly held conferences with all sorts of people."

"Yes, but you voted for him without having talked to him? And so did millions of other citizens?"

"Certainly."

"Of course. Because Benjamin Morrison does not exist."

"What?" Logan jumped to his feet. "But I've seen pictures; I've read speeches; I've—"

"You have seen pictures of a man whom we have chosen to call Benjamin Morrison, because the name has certain desirably euphonic characteristics. That was why his most recent opponent was named Silas Karp, by the way. Certain policies needed to be carried out, so we gave the people a choice between them and their opposites, as personified in two men; and we deliberately rigged the entire election so that every advantage would be on Morrison's side. Morrison was a man we had been grooming for our purposes for several years, as we had ad-

vanced him slowly to major and responsible positions where he would be well known throughout the nation. Karp, on the other hand, was a man we had been deliberately suppressing so that he would be an unknown with no attractions. He, by the way, is also one of us; he does not believe a word of the assertions he made during the last campaign."

"You don't mean that the people don't actually govern this country."

"But I do. That is just what I do mean. The people respond to the pressures we put on them to run the country the way we want them to."

LOGAN STARED for a moment. "Well, I'll be damned. That *is* genius. Who's in charge?"

"The Chief; if you pass your test, you'll meet him."

"I certainly would like to."

"He wants to meet you, too," Friedlander said. "He's a great admirer of yours—especially of the book on Mill."

"Then it was he, and not the President—"

"Oh, President Morrison admired it, too. So did I; it fits in so well with our actual practice, that we all admired a man who could come, in theory, so close to what the Chief has been doing. The Chief said that if you only had his organizational abilities, you

might have been able to form the Government yourself."

"This is really remarkable. But what sort of a group is the Government? What kind of people really *do* run this country?"

"We are an organization of the intellectually elite. Generally, the examination includes intelligence-tests as well as the sort of probing you underwent; and all of us are college graduates at least—most of us have the Ph. D. degree. The Chief felt that he should waive the intelligence-test in deference to you."

"Well! I'm flattered, of course. But this is all so new and strange to me that I can't get over it. The audacity of it! The sheer—oh, this is marvelous. What will I be doing in this Government of yours?"

Friedlander paused to eat some salad before replying. "If you pass your examination—we should know before you go to bed tonight—you will be made Special Assistant to the Chief. Your first duties will be to help arrange for President Morrison's re-election."

"What if I don't pass the examination?"

"We will have to kill you."

The very calmness and affability with which Friedlander spoke the words jolted Logan more than if there had been menace in the man's voice. Finally the professor made an effort to pass it off: "I hope not. I never *would* finish grading those examinations."



## II

THE NEWS of the examination results came at about eight o'clock that evening, and with it the Chief. Logan was lying on a couch, reading a detective novel that Friedlander had lent him, when the Economic Aid director entered smiling, his hand extended toward the professor.

"Congratulations!" Friedlander said. "You've passed the examination; I knew you would."

Logan sat up and let his hand be shaken vigorously.

"And you have a visitor," Friedlander continued.

Logan's heart gave a bound. "Good Heavens! Is it the Chief?"

Friedlander nodded, smiling affectionately at the professor.

Logan stood up. "Well! This *is* exciting. Where is he?"

"Right in here," said a voice in the next room. It was an old man's voice, made graceful by the accents of culture.

Logan bounded into the next room to see the Chief, who was standing there grinning at him. He was a short man, about the same size as Logan, with a square face and a frame that was still wiry and powerfully shouldered. He gripped Logan's hand in a firm, warm clasp and said, "I'm glad to meet you, Professor Logan." Logan guessed he must be about seventy.

"Shall we sit down and talk this over?"

They took chairs. Logan looked around and noticed that Friedlander had silently left them alone.

"I'm sorry," the Chief was saying, "that we had to subject you to the testing; but it is absolutely essential that we made certain that you really do believe in a rulership by the intellectually elite. We cannot afford any spies or turncoats; I think you can understand that."

Logan nodded.

"Like most of our members," the Chief continued, "you showed signs of independence of thought, and very little real patriotic loyalty. That was only to be expected; the kind of blind obedience that a man like Hitler demanded from his subordinates is not possible in an intelligent man—and very likely Hitler failed because the men with whom he surrounded himself were not intelligent and therefore were not fitting media through whom he could extend himself. So it is necessary that I surround myself with fitting media; and, since that is the case, I cannot expect unquestioning loyalty.

"Since that *is* the case, my organization of geniuses—we all score higher than 150 regularly on the standard I. Q. tests—is perhaps the least cohesive oligarchy in history. And I must rely on other things to keep it together. Would you like me to tell you the



pressures that we feel, for instance, would keep Professor Henry Logan in our organization?"

"Yes, I would."

"Well, then, in the first place, you have loyalty to your theory of government. You know, yourself, that you're more capable of governing the members of certain intellectual strata of society than they are of governing themselves. I imagine the incapability of most people is brought in upon you daily as you read the papers written by unthinking college students—who, after all, don't come from the lowest strata intellectually. You will learn, as you progress farther into our organization, that it is possible for highly-intelligent people to disagree on what is best for the nation. But you will also discover that it is more important that the structure of the Government be retained than that this or that individual minor policy be adopted."

"I think I understand that."

"I hope so," the Chief grinned; "it's important that you do."

"Well, that was the first place. Is there a second?"

"Yes. After all, it would seem surprising to the average citizen, if he learned of the Government, that we would bother to do this at all. All we have done is taken over the responsibility of government. Why? Largely, I think, out of altruism. You, for instance, Professor Logan—you want to govern

people better than they already are governed. Isn't that true? That altruism is a part of everyone who believes in a government by the intellectually elite. It makes no difference to you, in any personal, selfish way, how some garage-mechanic governs himself; you get nothing out of it. But, knowing better than he does, seeing more clearly than he can, you want to do these things for him. Isn't that right?"

**H**E PAUSED, and Logan, realizing that the question was not purely rhetorical, assented.

"Very well, then. The Government offers you the opportunity to perform this altruistic act. But the altruism is not enough. The satisfactions in government are not very great. There is a certain kind of satisfaction in self-immolation to help other people, of course; but one can grow tired of martyrdom. There is an appeal in power, especially such unlimited power as the Government exercises, but that soon palls when one weighs against it the heavy burdens—the mental strain that makes the job actually and physically what the man in the street calls it figuratively, 'a headache.' Some other system of rewards must be thought out to repay these geniuses for devoting their lives to taking on their own shoulders the responsibilities of government. And I have worked out the simplest and, in practice,



the most satisfactory method. Would you like to know what it is?"

"Of course."

"Professor Logan, in asking you to join the Government in its service to the people of this nation, I shall be giving you a position of consequence second only to my own. But I can give you only the same reward that the other members of the Government have received. Which is merely this: you may have whatever you want."

"Whatever I want?"

"Certainly. You will be in our service until your death. During that time, you may have whatever you want. Money is not important to us, because we get what we want in other ways, but if you want money you can have that. With some men it's women—not, I imagine, with you. For those men, we keep them supplied with all the most beautiful women they want. You are a scholar. If you want unlimited access to the National Library, you may have that; if you want any books for your own private use, you may have them. So long as the existence of the Government is not revealed—and that is a matter of method rather than of an actual limitation to the promise—you may have whatever you want. That is the reward we offer our members. And that is the second reason why nobody ever leaves Government serv-

ice; there is never anything that he can gain by it."

"It is certainly overwhelming."

"Of course. And now, I welcome you to the Government." The Chief rose, shook Logan's hand, and left the room.

### III

THE FIRST official meeting of the Government that Logan attended was a pre-convention conference in a smoke-filled room—but a very different kind of thing than he and the other citizens of the country were accustomed to regard as typical.

The scene was the Chief's private headquarters, deep in the Center of the Administration Building, protected from even a direct hydrogen-bombing by an ingenious construction of concrete-walled passageways, layer upon layer of them, between the Chief's hidden office and the splendid veneer of the Administration Building itself.

Logan did not know all the men present. One of them, of course, was the Chief himself. Another was the man whom he had known as President Morrison. Friedlander was there, too.

The Chief was saying, "We'll have to choose a bachelor to oppose Morrison. Morrison's family is a heavy asset, and we'll give them all the television play they need."

Friedlander said, "How about

having a divorced man run? That would make a good contrast."

The Chief nodded vigorously. Logan was surprised to see how freely he accepted suggestions from his subordinates.

One of the other men remarked, "Pity we can't use Karp again; he was almost perfect for us."

"How about names?" Friedlander asked. "You can do a lot with names if you use them well."

The Chief said, "You might be interested in a Western governor named Hilary Velute. His name would make him unpopular with most of the people."

"Is he married?" Friedlander asked.

"No; I don't think his marital status has ever been an issue. We can supply him with a divorced wife, I think, and people will nod and say they'd forgotten."

Morrison said, "That's pretty risky."

The Chief said, "You're probably right; we'd have to leave him a bachelor. But maybe we could give him an ex-mistress."

Friedlander said, "That's always good stuff."

Morrison said, "He's on record with some pretty pro-Morrison statements. I think we're agreed after last time that the best policy is to have Morrison's opponents believe as much opposite to him as possible." Hearing the man he thought of as Morrison refer to himself in the third person made

Logan suddenly very conscious of the enormity of the hoax the Chief had put over.

Friedlander said, "Issues aren't that important in a campaign." The Chief nodded but did not say anything.

A man Logan did not know said, "I'd like to get somebody from a border area. Velute may turn out to be the fairhaired boy of the West for some purely local reason and pull down enough of a regional vote to make him dangerous. Why can't we use Green? He couldn't win if he paid people ten dollars a vote."

The Chief said, "Green is out." And there was a quality in his voice that made Logan know he would never have questioned that statement.

MORRISON said, "I don't think Velute could carry the West. I don't know of any reason why he'd be a local hero. But if you're worried about that, let's cast doubt on his patriotism. He must have belonged to an organization we can label traitorous, or maybe he knew someone." He turned to the Chief. "Remember those pictures you took of Morrison and Warner? We did it all very secretly, and there never was any real connection between them, but they're the most incriminating-looking photos I've ever seen. Do you have anything like that on Velute?"

The Chief grinned. "Oh, I have

some material we can use. But maybe we'd better get hold of Velute and have him pose for some pictures. We'll work on the morals angle with his ex-mistress, and also on the subversive angle. We'll play on his relationships with Murray."

"Has he had any?" Friedlander asked.

"Not yet," the Chief said.

"Well, we can fix that up easily enough," Friedlander said. "But how about Morrison? We've torn Velute down pretty well, but we ought to build up Morrison."

One of the men spoke up. "I've got a peach of an idea; been saving it for something really big. Maybe this isn't big enough yet and I ought to save it, but it's still a good idea."

"Let's have it," the Chief said.

The man went on: "Get this picture. The campaign is going along nicely. Morrison seems to be comfortably ahead in all the polls, but not too much, so that it looks as if it may be a good hard fight. Morrison has an important speech scheduled in one of the big cities; everybody's looking forward to it, because it seems as if the balance of the campaign hangs on it."

The man paused. Everyone was watching him tensely. His face was glowing, and he was gesturing expressively, a lighted cigarette between two of his fingers.

"Then," he continued, "just then, there is a nationalist rebellion

in one of the protectorates. It's a national crisis—an emergency. You know, those things can have all kinds of implications and overtones in the international situation."

Friedlander put in, "It may even have been stirred up by foreign agents."

The man nodded. "That would be good. So Morrison cancels his speech. Everybody feels sorry for him because he has to stop campaigning, and in the suspense of the moment everybody is watching him. He returns to the Administration Building; he studies the situation. It looks grim. He's convinced that only his personal presence will put down the rebellion, so he flies down there. Maybe he's shot at by one of the rebels."

Morrison laughed. "Don't get carried away."

The man continued, "But his presence *does* do it. He takes command of the situation, saves lives, and does all kinds of heroic things. He shows that his interest is really in the people, not the kind of fake interest the nationalist leaders have been putting on to grab power. And then he comes back, right at the end of the campaign, to make one last speech. The polls go crazy!"

The Chief clapped the man on the back. "By George, Ted, that's a wonderful idea. I don't see how we can go wrong!"

And, as Logan saw in the next

six months, that was the way it happened.

#### INTERLUDE

*Logan had come a long way, and now he was getting tired and short of breath. He was, he was confident, getting close to his goal. He had been going constantly downward for over three hours, and, although he was not fully certain that he had always been going in the right direction, he was not entirely discouraged either.*

*What he wanted to do more than anything else at the moment was sit down and have a cigarette and a can of beer. But he had no beer, and he was afraid to sit down and have a cigarette.*

*It was, he knew, getting to be late. Outside, it must already have been dark for a long while. But here, as everywhere in these corridors, some hidden lighting-arrangement made every concrete surface a flat, dead gray.*

*Logan had had no dinner, and there was an empty feeling in his stomach; he wondered whether he would ever eat again.*

*His eyes were smarting, now. He had scarcely allowed himself to blink, so alert had he kept himself to the slightest hint of a passage-way—or of a trap. And the unrelieved grayness was bothering him.*

*It was strain all the way—strain of every sense, of every mental*

*faculty, of every muscle. He felt taut, now, but he knew that he must go on. How much farther? He didn't know. At any step he might reach his goal; or, on the other hand, at any step he might be destroyed. One moment there would be the flicker of life that he was, a pencil-point in the gigantic labyrinth of the Chief's bastion, and the next moment there would be only the six gray concrete surfaces.*

*He stopped and looked closely at a crack in the wall; that might be a doorway. He flattened himself against the wall, to one side of the crack, and cautiously touched the area on the other side in the various patterns that he knew the Chief had installed in these doorways to respond to touch. He was right on this one; it swung open for him.*

*He waited for a few moments before venturing away from the wall against which he was pressing. Cautiously he brought out his pistol and got down on the floor. He inched himself forward on his stomach and peered, gun ready, around the corner.*

*It was another corridor just like the one he was in. Its floor was a little lower than the present one, and the dimensions were different—it was a little shorter, but a little wider and a little higher. He looked at the floor carefully. There did not seem to be any traps.*

HE SCRAMBLED to his feet and stepped into the other corridor. He looked up and down. There was nothing to tell him which way to go. Generally he went downward, as he was pretty sure that the Chief had not had any of these ballways built under his quarters. But this floor seemed even. He laid his pocket-level on it and—

Was that a doorknob?

Carefully, but impatiently, he walked about twenty feet down the corridor.

Yes, it was a doorknob. There was a wooden door, about three feet high and three feet wide, set in the wall of the corridor. He could crawl through it, but that was about all.

He lay down flat to one side of the door, on the handle side. Gin-

gerly he reached up and took hold of the knob. Nothing happened. He turned it; still nothing happened. He began to open the door.

Suddenly there was a spurt of machine-gun fire, cutting through the wooden panel in a shower of splinters and ricocheting bullets. Although they came within inches, the bullets missed him.

He drew his hand back rapidly, and gravity pulled the door closed. The gun stopped.

He inspected the damage, from a safe distance. Seven bullets had torn through the door and bounced off the opposite wall. Logan suspected, from the way the gun had started up when the door opened and shut off when it closed, that the action of the gun was automatic. After all, the Chief could hardly be expected to have ma-





chine-gunners stationed all over the building in spots like this, on the chance that someone might penetrate to them.

Or was it chance? Maybe the Chief was aware of his presence and had sent a gunner to this door. He looked at the holes in the wood more carefully. They were in a straight line, beginning at the side nearest the handle. Cautiously Logan opened the door again from the side, shutting it as soon as the next spurt started.

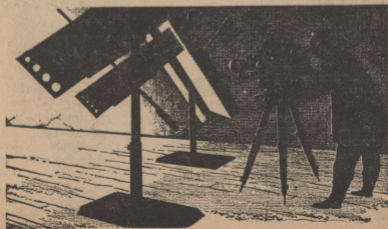
There were now eleven holes in the door. The four new holes were in the same plane as the old ones, starting where the others had left off. Logan was pretty sure now that the gun was fixed, and its action was automatic.

He opened the door again enough to start the gun going and

wedged it open with his pocket-level. Then he cautiously went down to the other end of the hallway, as far as he could get from the rebounding bullets. The chatter of the gun sounded thunderous in his ears after the silence in which he had come thus far. The bullets sprayed through the door back and forth, back and forth, for what seemed an interminable period.

Finally the gun stopped. It had, Logan surmised, run out of bullets. But he would still have to be cautious in going through that doorway. So tremendous a noise might have aroused the defenses of the Chief.

He went back over to the little portal. The gun had nearly ripped it in half. He got down on his hands and knees and pushed the door open wide.



*Nothing happened.*

*Gun in hand, he peered around the corner.*

*It was only a little closet. There was the machine-gun and the exhausted clip that had fed it bullets; there wasn't space in the room for anything else.*

*Logan sighed.*

*He began to make his way down to the other end of the corridor, looking for another passageway. There might be none; that had happened before.*

*But suddenly he froze. A section of the wall swung back. And, as he watched in utter fascination, the black barrel of a rifle poked into the corridor.*

#### IV

THERE CAME the day when the Chief called Logan into his private quarters for a conference. Clad in slacks and a gray turtle-neck sweater and sipping from a tall, cool glass, he was lounging in a comfortable armchair. "Sit down, Logan," he said brusquely.

Logan sat down, wondering what had gone wrong. This wasn't the tone of voice that the Chief generally used with him. He lit a cigarette to occupy his mind, while waiting for the Chief to speak again.

"You've had a pretty thorough

look at the Government, Logan; what do you think of it?"

"I still can't get over it."

"Of course you can't."

Logan was annoyed but tried not to show it. He still respected the Chief, despite the intimate association he had had with him over the past six months. And he had considerable respect for the Chief's Government.

After all, he thought, it isn't a bad Government. The Chief is very good about taking suggestions so that his subordinates have nothing to fear from offering ideas or even, occasionally, criticism. He does shut you up pretty well, though, when it's an area that he's decided about beyond any shadow of disagreement. But he doesn't hold it against you if you mention one of these areas.

Logan shifted a little in his chair.

"Well?" the Chief said.

Logan frowned. "Well what?"

"You still haven't answered my question; I was serious. What do you think of the Government?"

"I like it."

"Good." The Chief smiled, bounded out of his chair, and gripped Logan's shoulder affectionately. "I was hoping you'd say that."

Logan was surprised at how suddenly the Chief's coldness had melted. This was the old friendly



Chief who had so charmed him at their first meeting.

The Chief went over to the fireplace and stood by it a moment, playing with an hourglass on the mantel. "I'm very glad you said that," he said again, turning his face away so that Logan could not see it.

Logan fidgeted nervously. This was strange action on the Chief's part. He seemed to be breaking down from emotion. Could Logan's good opinion of him mean that much?

The Chief turned his face back again. Tears glistened in his eyes, and he was obviously struggling to keep his lower lip still. Logan squirmed in the chair, wishing he had been spared this.

Finally the Chief said, "Excuse me," and dashed into the next room, Logan supposed in order to cry.

*Good Lord, Logan thought. He's worse than a freshman girl.* He got up and walked around, feeling distinctly uncomfortable.

**F**INALLY the Chief reappeared. "I'm sorry for my outburst," he said, "but it meant so much to me. So few people are even aware of what the Government is—only a thousand or so throughout the entire country—and I think so highly of your opinion—" the Chief broke off and waved his hand. "However," he continued, "that's neither here nor there."

He sat down again in his armchair and gestured Logan back into his seat.

The Chief cleared his throat. "Professor Logan, I'm not going to live forever. I have the best medical care, of course; but I'm getting old, and I'm carrying the heaviest responsibility a human being has ever borne."

Logan was getting impatient again. This was a harrowing experience. He was interested in forms of government, not in seeing the soul of an individual laid bare—even if the individual was as remarkable as the Chief.

"In your opinion, Professor Logan, what will be the future of the Government if I should die?"

Logan was silent a moment, deciding how he could be both frank and tactful. "That is a weakness of absolute governments. They depend on the ability and personality of one man. When the one man is gone, his place cannot be supplied. In the first place, very often the dictator has removed anyone with the proper qualifications because of possible competition. In the second place, not all men of ability have the personality to carry on a powerful government—and, of course, vice versa."

"I know all that, I know all that." The Chief was impatient. "But answer the question: What will happen?"

"I can't be positive. But I imagine the Government will simply

cease to be. The people will go on electing their representatives, only without your control; and, unless one of the members of the Government sells his experiences to a newspaper for money, very likely no one will ever have been aware of your existence."

The Chief was silent a long while. Logan's cigarette burned down and he lit a new one from it.

Finally the Chief spoke. "I knew that, too." He sounded incredibly old and broken. Logan was angry with the Chief for having brought on the whole unpleasant situation, but he tried not to show it. He could not sit still any longer, so he got up and began to pace the room.

"Morrison has the personality but not the ability," the Chief said suddenly, breaking the silence.

Logan nodded but did not speak.

"You—" The Chief sat up straight and looked Logan in the eye. The professor arrested his pacing; he shivered, though it was not cold. "You have the ability but not the personality."

*Damn the man,* Logan thought. He was so furious that he could not do anything for fear of showing his emotion. This was embarrassing beyond measure.

"Tell me the truth, Logan!" The Chief was in an agony of pleading now. "Tell me the truth! Would

a committee—" He couldn't go on.

"No!" Logan howled at the top of his lungs and ran from the room. "No!" he screamed again in the concrete corridor outside the Chief's quarters, although there was no one there to hear.

## V

LOGAN WAS on the verge of declining the next meeting to which the Chief summoned him, but thought better of it when Friedlander came to his apartment to drive him to the Administration Building.

"Good of you to think of me," Logan said, climbing into the car.

"Don't mention it," the Economic Aid director said. They drove in silence for a while before Friedlander remarked, "You know, you've changed since you first came to the Capital."

"Have I?"

"You seemed rather sour and sharp to me when I first met you; but you've become much more relaxed and friendly."

"You met me under singularly inauspicious circumstances."

Friedlander laughed. "Yes, but it was more than that, I think; I don't imagine you liked teaching very much."

"No, I didn't," Logan confessed. "I hated it. This is much more to



my taste; I feel as if I'm really a part of great things."

"That's the way I feel about it, too. You know, I was a teacher, too, before the Chief picked me up."

"I didn't know that," Logan said.

"I taught economics. It seemed to me that I couldn't stand another day of it; I got so that I hated everybody. But everybody in the Government is so—so congenial to my own personality that I've been very happy since I joined it."

"The Chief is a remarkable leader," Logan said. "He really doesn't seem to tyrannize anybody, and the people are happy, because they think they're governing themselves. I don't feel so much like a bride on the honeymoon now, however."

"Why?"

Logan told the story of his interview with the Chief.

At the conclusion, Friedlander whistled. "I've heard about some peculiar actions, but never anything that peculiar."

"I hadn't expected the Chief to show emotions like that; he seemed so capable and self-contained the first time I talked with him."

"He's like that usually," Friedlander agreed, "but I have heard some strange stories from people who are close to him. He has a large record-library, you know. Morrison walked in on him one

evening about half an hour early for an appointment, wanted to ask him about something before the rest of us got there, and found him lying on the floor, crying like a baby, while the record player was going through one Tchaikowsky record after another. Morrison didn't know what to do, but the Chief didn't seem to mind."

"Remarkable."

"Yes, isn't it? He's thrown some pretty remarkable rages, too. You'll find out about those soon enough, I imagine."

"You don't suppose he'll be angry with me about what happened, do you?"

Friedlander shrugged. "You can't tell. There are whole areas of the Chief's personality that I'm thoroughly at sea about. The thing that really bothers me is the new business about Personal Guardians for himself."

"Is that new?"

"Yes, about four months before you came. Frankly, that alarmed me. I thought he might be a little off-balance—persecution, you know. I haven't really seen any of that in him, but I naturally thought of it at the time. Because if he gets that way, then that's the end of it all."

"Yes, I can see that."

THEY WERE drawing near the Administration Building now. It was an immense edifice, as big



as a small city and towering high into the air. Friedlander turned down the employee's parking-ramp into the basement garages. He and Logan rode the elevator up to the fifth floor, which housed the Office for Foreign Affairs, where both men had their offices.

They followed the corridor down to Friedlander's office and went in. Closing and locking the door behind them, they touched the bookcase in a pattern of places. It swung outward and admitted them to a concrete corridor. They were accustomed to getting to the Chief's quarters by this route, so their penetration into the depths of the building went quickly. They knew just where to jump over traps, and where to find the doors that would let them into the next passageway.

Logan had, by now, entered into the secret recesses which the Chief had in the heart of the Administration Building by some half-a-dozen ways. He knew that there were others. The Chief had once gone over with him a chart of the paths through the labyrinth, so that Logan was probably as familiar with the arrangements as anyone. In fact, Logan had found out later that only a very few members of the Government ever received that particular kind of instruction. He had been mildly puzzled until the Chief had sprung the business about the succession on him, and then the reason for it became clear.

The audacity of having used the heart of the great Administration Building was something that Logan admired. It was a safe hiding-place, for the building was so huge and complex that even the oldest employees knew their way around only one, or at the most two, floors. The complicated arrangement of the building discouraged the effort of the will necessary to master its intricacies, so that most Administration workers gave it up with a cheerful curse.

The building was about thirty years old. That gave Logan some idea of the age of the Government, as the erection of the Administration Building was likely one of the Chief's first projects after he came to power—but the peculiar adaptability of the building to the Chief's purposes showed that it could not have been planned before the beginning of the Chief's rule. Well, say that the Chief had governed the country for about thirty years—since he was, roughly, forty. That was a young age for a man to have acceded to so much power.

Logan wondered what the story behind it was, but he wondered in silence. It was a common rumor that various spots in the corridors were sensitized to carry sounds to the Chief's quarters. Neither Logan nor anyone else knew whether the rumors were true; but most people either were silent while going through the corridors, or spoke

only on unexceptionable topics. He and Friedlander had adopted the policy of keeping quiet.

Then they entered the conference room and sat down. The others were there before them, and the Chief was at the head of the table.

**T**HE CHIEF called the meeting to order. His face, Logan saw, was flushed and puffy from lack of sleep. He looked more tired and harrassed than Logan remembered ever having seen him. "Gentlemen," he began drily, "there is a crisis."

Logan squirmed a little on his seat. The Chief's voice held a note of portent, a note of grave decisions, that Logan didn't like. He glanced around the circle. Morrison was studying the wood on the table in front of him. Friedlander was resting his crossed arms on the table. Another man whom he did not know was industriously filing his nails. All avoided looking at the Chief.

The Chief talked on. The details of what he said were hard to grasp, dealing as they did with intricacies of secret diplomacy with which Logan was unfamiliar. But the broad outlines were frightening.

The defection of an ally had weakened the nation's position internationally to an alarming extent. Oriental scientists had perfected a remarkable new weapon,

details of which were still unknown; roughly, its effect was to interfere with the electrical system—the ignitions of aircraft and ground-vehicles, for example—of anything upon which it was trained. The Orient threatened a new major war—a war that the nation would enter with every conceivable disadvantage—within a week unless the nation's foreign policy underwent certain radical changes, changes to which Morrison and his Administration were irrevocably opposed. Concessions were demanded; yet Morrison had made commitments from which he could not retreat.

At the end of the Chief's talk, Logan was leaning forward, his eyes on the old man. Everybody else was raptly attentive, except Morrison, who seemed not to have moved.

Friedlander asked, "What if we make the concessions, just to gain time?" His usually pleasant face was serious now.

"We'll have to," Morrison murmured.

The Chief replied to Friedlander as if the President had not spoken. "In the first place, we'll lose face throughout the world. And that's important; other countries have confidence in us and have taken certain positions in the past because of their faith in us. We can't just say, 'Okay, we're licked.'"

"Well, we *are* licked," a man



said. Logan did not remember having seen him before.

The Chief flashed the last speaker a withering glance. He did not say anything more all during the conference.

A man whom Logan knew only as Ted said, "What are these commitments again?"

The Chief listed them over.

Ted said, "Do any of them depend on legislative action?"

The Chief shook his head.

"Too bad," Ted commented. "I thought maybe we could get a floor-fight started; a month or so of debating might give us enough time that we could think this out."

"That worked well enough during Young's Administration, when the Orientals claimed they'd shot down the *Thunderer* by mistake. But then all we had to do was stave off the pugnacity of our own angry population; now we have to placate a very dangerous foreign power."

**T**HERE WAS silence. Logan found himself thinking about the Chief instead of the Oriental problem. The Chief implied that he had been in control of Young's Administration; and Young had taken office—Logan computed hurriedly—thirty-eight years ago. That was remarkable. The Chief must have come to power in his early thirties. Or maybe he was older than he looked.

Logan regarded him carefully. He seemed to be in the low seventies—the same estimate Logan made when he first met him. And well preserved at that, Logan thought, remembering some of his university colleagues, who were senile at seventy, and comparing them.

But then the Chief had access to unlimited medical facilities. Nothing that could be done to keep him healthy had been overlooked. Even so, medical science could go only so far, and—

But Friedlander was speaking, and Logan brought his attention back to the present.

"The public," he said, "is unaware of the Oriental ultimatum. Suppose that Morrison suddenly announces that he feels that certain problems have arisen that can be solved by a personal conference with the Oriental leader. So they meet on neutral ground and confer. Morrison can make the concessions they want; that will gain us time until we can repudiate them later, when we're in a stronger position. We'll tell them frankly that we'll do anything they want, if they'll only make one or two minor concessions themselves to save our face; then we can emphasize the concessions we've won, and minimize theirs."

The Chief brightened at that. "That would help give us time, at least. And I'm convinced that they'd rather get what they want

without war than with. After all, a war is expensive even if you win it."

The man Logan knew as Ted said, "They'll never give us any concessions now that they have the whip hand; and they'd never trust us any more than we'd trust them. They'd know that we'd repudiate the agreements as soon as we could."

The brightness faded from the Chief's face. "Yes, you're probably right."

Logan glanced over at Friedlander. The Economic Aid Director was sitting with his chin on his chest, staring at the floor. Logan felt his dejection very plainly.

"Does anyone else have any ideas?" the Chief asked. Everyone was silent. "Then," he said, rising, "I suppose that the meeting had better be adjourned. We have until next Thursday to make up our minds. If anyone gets an idea between now and then, please get in touch with me."

Everyone nodded. You got in touch with the Chief through Morrison, who was in almost daily communication with him. And everyone stood, looking serious and determined. Logan, too, was alarmed; the prospect of a war with a formidable adversary, when the odds are against you, is not cheering.

They left the Chief's quarters and went back out into the externals of the Administration

Building, and Friedlander offered to drive Logan home.

WHEN THEY were comfortably seated in Friedlander's car, Logan asked, "Just what is the Chief's history?"

"History?"

"Yes. How long has he been in power, and how did he come there?"

"I don't know; I've worked for him only about fifteen years myself. But I understand from the older men that he's lasted forty years or so."

"That's remarkable. How old is he now?"

"He's over eighty."

"He looks and seems ten years younger."

"Someone told me that he has a kind of glandular imbalance that makes him age more slowly. It's probably the same kind of arrangement that people have who live to be a hundred or so."

Logan nodded. "And I expect he's had the very best medical treatment."

"Oh, he certainly has."

"How did he come to power?"

"The Chief has a theory that a popular presidential candidate can swing his party into office after him. That's happened, you know. It's happened the other way, too—the Republicans couldn't elect Fremont, who was tremendously popular, but they could elect Lincoln, who was virtually unknown

outside of Illinois, because Republicans had captured so many congressional seats.

"But that's beside the point. The Chief worked it from the other way. He and Young worked hard for Young's election, through the usual methods. What people didn't realize was that Young, who was a tremendously popular candidate, was running really for the Government, not for the party that nominated him. When Young got in, everything was easy. The Chief was in a position to manipulate events the way he wanted them, and Young had the support of his party and could use them in the customary way. The Chief's power wasn't great then, of course, and he had some setbacks; but he was able to keep control and gradually build up his authority. In fact, Urquhart was president and followed orders religiously—yet he died never knowing that the Government existed. He was just the sort of man the Chief could use by putting pressures on him, and without making him a member of the Government at all."

"That's fabulous."

"It is. And that's the way the Chief gets power. He pressures people to do what he wants. With that kind of organization, he doesn't need large numbers of men to follow him actively. He can be highly selective in getting just the kind of man he wants—which is, as I believe I told you the first

time I met you, an intelligent man who realizes his own superiority to the clods around him."

"It's still amazing."

"Oh, I agree," Friedlander laughed. "There are times when I've felt, as you said, that the honeymoon is over. But the advantages, both to myself and to the nation, are so great that I'm glad enough of the chance to stick it out."

"Oh," Logan said, "I don't have any thoughts of resigning."

"It's just as well," Friedlander said.

**A**FTER Friedlander dropped him off, Logan went up to his apartment. As the Chief had promised him, the reward of membership in the Government was an adequate supply of everything he wanted. This, in Logan's case, had meant books. He switched on the lights when he entered, for it was growing dark, and took off his coat, throwing it on the davenport.

He took up a novel that he had been reading, intending to pick up where he had left off, but his mind refused to concentrate. Instead, he kept thinking of what he had seen and learned about the Chief.

When Logan had first found out about the Government, he had been eagerly enthusiastic. Now he was not so sure. He had no deter-



mined antipathy, but, as he had said to Friedlander, the honeymoon was over. He accepted his strange, new existence without much strong emotion at all. A year before, he had had no idea that there was such a thing as the Government. Now, today, he was a member of its inner council, a party to secrets of the most surprising and unexpected nature, a man whose influence (had he chosen to exercise it) would be great over millions of his fellow countrymen but of whom not more than a few hundred had ever heard. He had become, in the past year, a strange and romantic figure, despite his stature and myopia. And yet he felt not so much excitement as numbness.

The book could not hold his attention, so he put it down. He went to a window and looked for a while at the busy city, thronged with homebound Administration employees. Here and there might be one of them who had some realization of the actual structure of the Government. It was a hoax, a shell-game of unprecedented dimensions. The Cardiff Giant was a pigmy to the Chief.

What of that? It was a good Government. The Chief and his associates ran it as well as they could. All the members of the Government were highly-intelligent and well-educated. Undoubtedly they knew what was best for the people better than the people them-

selves did. That was what Logan had spent the first fifty years of his life preaching.

But, damn it! He clenched his fist and turned away from the window. It just didn't appeal to him somehow any more. He was—yes, he was tired of it. It had become a job, a drudgery. And the Chief could be as weak, could be as much a fool, as anybody else.

The street-lights were going on in the Capital. From his window it was a striking sight, but his back was to it, and he was thinking. He'd been handled with a velvet glove in the past year. But he recalled his first introduction to the Government. He had been threatened with death, and he had had no doubt that the threats would be made good. There was an iron fist in that velvet glove. He had cast in his lot with the Government, and there was no way out except by death.

Disturbed, he turned on his radio to a symphony orchestra and sat, trying to let the music calm him.

Suddenly the program was broken into: "We interrupt this concert to bring you an important news bulletin. President Benjamin Morrison was shot by an assassin at 5 p. m. today while he was leaving the Administration Building after an important conference concerning Oriental affairs. The murderer was slain by a presidential guard while attempting to escape.

The President died within minutes after he had received the fatal wound. Vice President Clinton Allbright has called an emergency cabinet meeting to discuss the steps which should be taken to keep the government running smoothly."

The music continued. But Logan was not paying it much attention.

## VI

**T**HE NEXT morning Logan did not even make the pretence of going to his office in the Administration Building and overseeing the duties that pertained to his sinecure. He bought a newspaper and read all the accounts of Morrison's death thoroughly.

The hand of the Chief was behind it, he decided, when he had finished the newspaper stories. Even before that conference the day previous, the Chief had decided that Morrison had to die. The reason was not far to seek.

Allbright, the new Vice President, was known to agree with Morrison on domestic issues, but to hold a more conservative view of foreign affairs. With Morrison out of the way, the Orientals would feel that Allbright might accede to their demands; but, realizing that the transfer of administrative power would mean a delay, they would withdraw their ultimatum temporarily. That might give the Chief the time he needed to pre-



pare for a war; if it did not, it would at least provide the Administration with a legitimate motive for changing its policy with regard to the Orient. The people would not be surprised if Allbright, acting apparently on his own initiative, made certain concessions to the Orient. The worst that could happen would be that he would become unpopular enough to be impossible of re-election.

Logan realized suddenly that the Chief must have selected Allbright for Vice President with just such an idea in mind. He recalled that the Chief had advanced him as the South's favorite-son candidate, and no discussion of his views had been made. But the Chief, looking ahead, must have seen that it might be necessary to reverse foreign policy—and have chosen just the man who could do it.

The shocking expendability which Morrison had proved to have alarmed Logan. The Chief had held Morrison in the highest esteem, had considered him as his successor equally with Logan himself.

Logan himself. What about Logan and his relations to the government? Was he to be chopped off as Morrison had been, with little or no compunction, sometime?

Profoundly disturbed, Logan lit a cigarette and looked over the

newspaper stories again. There was a picture of Allbright. So far as Logan knew, he was not a member of the Government. This was, as the Chief had said, a time of crisis; and Logan was not sure whether, in a time of crisis, it was wise to depend on indirect pressures to achieve results. What would be Allbright's reaction to his discovery that Morrison had been engaged in secret communications and agreements with other powers? There might be a public reaction against anything that Morrison stood for—even to the extent that it would be difficult for the Government to control the nation.

And his mind kept coming back to himself and his own chances for survival. He was not in an important position; his removal would not advance the policies of the Government by very much. But if it could do so in any way, he realized now that the Chief would not even hesitate in giving the order. He might be struck by an automobile, or perhaps shot as Morrison was. He might be given some form of food poisoning.

There was another picture in the newspaper, that of the young guardian who had shot down the attacker. His name was Fred Hansen, and the face seemed familiar to Logan. Wasn't there a—

Of course. Fred Hansen was the young man who had put him through the examination when he



first joined the Government. He had not seen him for the almost a year that he had been a member, and he had not known that Hansen belonged to the Presidential guard.

On the impulse, Logan rose, determined to visit the younger man and talk with him about what was in his mind.

AS HE REACHED for his coat, he stopped. Hansen's loyalty to the Chief was under no question, or he would not have been in charge of the examination; he might reveal his doubts to the younger man and hasten his own death.

Maybe Friedlander—

He felt that he had to talk with someone, and Friedlander had been so genial toward him that he thought maybe the Economic Aid director would help him. He picked up the phone and dialed his office. After identifying himself to Friedlander's secretary, Logan heard his friend's voice.

"Hello, Arthur," Logan said.

"Oh, yes," Friedlander said. "Why aren't you down here, Henry?"

"I just didn't feel like coming today," Logan replied. "Morrison's death shocked me deeply."

"Oh, yes," Friedlander said. "But one must carry on. After all, we have a fine new leader now, and I'm sure President Allbright

will be a particularly brilliant guide in foreign affairs."

Was Friedlander serious? Logan looked at the telephone in amazement.

"Are you there, Henry?"

"Why, yes," Logan said falteringly.

"I'm sure, after you think it over," Friedlander said, "you'll agree that it was all for the best."

"Well—"

"Was there anything else you wanted, Henry? I'm very busy."

"No, thanks, Arthur." Logan hung up the phone as if in a dream. Friedlander sounded like another man; he could scarcely believe his ears.

No, he could not talk with Friedlander. He could see that now.

Suddenly he threw the newspaper to the floor, shrugged on his coat, and left the apartment. He was determined to see Fred Hansen.

Hansen greeted him with a heart-warming smile. "Come on in, Professor! What can I do for you?"

Logan took a deep breath and began, "I'd like to learn more about President Morrison's death."

"I'd rather not talk about it."

Logan did not know what to say to that. He stood in the doorway, hat in hand, silently.

Hansen seemed as nervous as

he. Finally he said, "Come in anyway."

He took Logan's hat and coat and led the older man over to a chair, where he sat. Hansen remained standing and offered the professor a cigarette.

Logan asked, just to make sure, "You're a member of the Government?"

"Yes," Hansen replied.

*Good Lord*, Logan thought. He didn't know how far to trust Hansen, and Hansen didn't know how far to trust him. Nobody would make any headway in this conversation unless he decided to be frank, and be damned to the consequences.

"Hansen," the professor said. "I'm not satisfied with things." And he began talking. He talked about the Chief's emotional outburst of a few days before, about his suspicions as to the reasons behind Morrison's assassination. He put his cards on the table frankly.

**H**ANSEN listened with intense interest. When Logan had finished, he asked, "Are you telling me the truth, Professor?"

"Of course," Logan snapped, annoyed by the question.

"Good," Hansen said. "Then I'll level with you. You've got half of the key that puts the Chief behind Morrison's death—the motivation. But I've got the other half."

"You don't mean the Chief ordered you to shoot—"

"Nothing so crude as that. But we did have orders to shoot anyone who made any attempt on Morrison's life."

"Who gave them?"

Hansen licked his lips. "Morrison himself."

Logan almost rose out of his chair. "You mean—"

"A perfect circle. The assassin can't put the finger on the Chief because he's dead at Morrison's orders. The President can't do it either, because he's dead too. The two men in the whole plot who were in on the Chief's secret instructions killed themselves off. With me in the middle, because I did the dirty work."

The young man paced the floor angrily, Logan watching him absorbed. Hansen continued, "Have you ever been just a pawn, Professor? Have you ever known that people were using you for their own purposes and didn't care a damn about you? That's the way I feel now, and it isn't pleasant, believe me."

"I know," Logan replied. "Morrison's murder was so casual that it made me realize I'm not safe myself. Morrison himself was only a pawn."

Hansen sat down and began to talk again. "I'm one of the youngest men in the Government. I was a political science major in college,

and all my profs said I was the most brilliant student they'd ever had. I had straight A's in everything, and I was a football-player, too. Anyhow, I got elected student-body president. And I ran things pretty well to suit myself. I knew what was best for everybody. I guess the Chief heard about me somehow, because he picked me up as soon as I graduated and I joined the Government. That was five years ago. When I first got into it, I loved every minute of it. And there was the hope that some day I might lead it myself. The Chief told me that I had the right combination of qualities to run something like this, and that if I were only older he'd make me his successor."

Logan squirmed uncomfortably in his chair.

**T**HE YOUNGER man continued, "But I'm mad, now. It isn't just the Morrison thing, though right now I'm so sore about that, that I'm talking to you—which is very foolish. I've been cooling off for a couple of years now. I wasn't quite so sure that I could run things better than anybody else; I wasn't quite so sure that I knew what was best for everybody. I got a little more tolerant of people who weren't quite as bright as I was. I guess what happened was that I grew up."

Logan wondered with a shock if that was what had happened to

him—suddenly, at the age of fifty, he had grown up. Good Lord! He shook his head dolefully and was about to speak, but Hansen was talking again.

"Here's where I really stick my neck out," he said. "I've got something to tell you. And I hope nothing goes wrong, because if it does, a lot of damage will be done." He leaned forward and his voice became confidential. "I'm fed up, and I'm not the only one; there are about a hundred of us. We've been holding secret meetings for about a year now. We're very careful, of course, and generally we hold a series of meetings of ten or twenty people each rather than one big meeting with us all together. Most of us are young men. I suppose we'd have revolted before now, only we don't know how to do it. I'm the only one who's ever been in the Center, where the Chief's quarters are, and that was only once, a long time ago. Most of the rest didn't even know it existed until we told them. And, too, we've been thinking that the Chief can't last forever, and maybe things will go to pieces when he dies."

"The Chief may live to be a hundred," Logan said. "It's something about his glands. And he's making plans to keep things going after his death. I agree with you; I think things will go to pieces when he dies. But not for a long



time, and then only after a terrible upset, if he has time to groom a successor."

"It would be better to break it off clean," Hansen said.

The two men looked into each others' eyes, and both knew that the other had the same thought. The Chief must die and die now. Twenty years later would be too late. The Government had outlived its usefulness—had, in fact, become dangerous—and it had to be ended now. There was only one way to end it.

Hansen said, "Would you like to meet with some of my fellow malcontents?"

"Yes, I would."

The young man stood up. "Come along, then. And God help you if you're a spy."

## VII

**H**ENRY LOGAN felt strange, now that he was actually going on his mission. The secret meetings, the hours of target-practice, all the other activities of the past six months that had been so real and hopeful—they seemed dreamlike, now that he was walking up the steps of the Administration Building, his revolver under his armpit, and knives strapped to his arm and leg.

He was recognizing how pitiful-

ly optimistic and childish their plan had seemed. He was to go to Friedlander's office, because it was the passageway from there that was most familiar to him. He was to disarm Friedlander by engaging in conversation about some appointment with the Chief. Then he was to go down the corridors, past the Personal Guardians, and insinuate himself into the Chief's presence. There, at the best opportunity, he would kill him. What would happen then? He wasn't to be concerned about that.

The plan might work; it just might—but Logan was feeling no optimism. The weight of the .38 under his armpit, the tension of the straps on his arm and leg made him self-conscious. He was sure that the people who glanced at him in passing could see some, at least, of the arsenal he carried on him. The gun, particularly, made a noticeable bulge at his shoulder; he was certain that he would be stopped by the Administration Building police for carrying concealed weapons.

But nothing happened as he walked up to Friedlander's office and opened the door. Friedlander's secretary smiled in recognition and said, "Go right in, Professor Logan."

Logan entered the office and said, "Hello, Arthur."

Friedlander looked up at him,

smiling affably. "Hello, Henry; sit down."

"How are things going in the Economic Aid department?"

"Oh, well enough. You haven't been around much for the past few months; I hardly ever see you."

"I've been working on a book." It was the excuse that he and Fred Hansen had agreed on.

"Oh? What about?"

"The history of the decline of monarchy."

"Sounds interesting. You didn't just drop in for a chat, though, did you?"

"No, I didn't." Logan crossed his legs. This was the hard part. "The Chief wanted me to come down and see him."

"Oh, he did?"

Logan didn't like Friedlander's tone. He tried to think of what he might have said to betray himself, but he couldn't. After a pause—too long a pause, he was afraid—he replied, "Why, yes."

"That's interesting, Henry. For two months we've all had orders not to admit you unescorted into the Center. The Chief has had his doubts about you. I thought he was wrong. But *what's that under your coat?*"

**FRIEDLANDER** was standing, now, leaning forward on the desk. The affability of his countenance was gone, and in its place

there was an intense hatred that shocked Logan perhaps more than Friedlander's words.

"You fool!" Friedlander was saying. "It's our bread and butter; do you want to grade freshman papers the rest of your life?"

He came around the desk and charged toward Logan, who now half-rose and pulled out his gun.

It went off.

The sound was a thunderclap in the little office. Silence followed it. Logan stood, stupefied, the smoking gun in his hand, watching Friedlander, shot through the head, fall sprawling on the carpet.

And then he turned and ran, out through the office, past the startled secretary, and into the hallway. Her scream followed him. He bolted past throngs of people. Soon he heard, behind him, the noises of pursuit. He could hear the heavy treads of booted Administration Building police beating toward him.

He looked around him for a place to hide. Suddenly he realized he still had the gun in his hand and put it back in the holster; he felt lighter and freer.

There was no place to go, and so he ran on. He came to a flight of stairs and scrambled up them, panting heavily. At the top he dashed down the left-hand corridor, hoping that the police would choose the right. He saw a men's room and paused, his hand on the



doorknob. Should he hide here? No, they would search it and there would be no escape. He ran on. There was what seemed to be a cross-corridor up ahead, and he made for it, dodging into it as he heard the boots thumping up the stairs behind him. He was perspiring now.

If he'd only kept his head, he could have ducked right into the pathway to the Center from Friedlander's office. But he'd panicked and run. So now—

There was another cross-corridor; he could hear the sounds of pursuit getting louder behind him, and he dodged down this side path. He was getting a pain in his side; he was not used to exercise. He looked wildly around him, hoping that he would recognize one of the myriad entrances to the Center. He was lost, in an area of the building unfamiliar to him, and he had made so many turnings he was not sure of his directions. But if he could find a section of the marble wall that showed the faintest depth in the cracks that set it off, he might be able to—

And there it was, like the answer to a prayer.

He touched it in the proper pattern, and it swung open. Quickly he ducked in, shut the panel, and bolted it from the inside.

#### EPILOGUE

*Logan's eyes burned as he stared*

*at that rifle-barrel, gleaming darkly at the other end of the corridor, thrust out from behind the protection of the thick concrete walls.*

*A voice said, "Throw your gun down here; put it on the floor and slide it."*

*Logan stooped down and put the gun on the floor. He pushed it a few inches as he tried to think, then gave it a shove and watched it skitter down the corridor and come to a thumping stop at the other end.*

*"All right. Come on down here. And keep your hands up."*

*Logan raised his hands as he had seen people do in the movies and went down to the aperture in the corridor wall. There were five of the Chief's Personal Guardians there with guns trained on him. One of them laid his gun down and searched Logan thoroughly. He took off Logan's empty shoulder-bolster and quickly found and removed the knives strapped to the professor's arm and leg.*

*Well, this was it. All the high hopes of Fred Hansen and his friends trickled out in this. Logan's shoulders sagged. He was tired.*

*"You can put your hands down," the man who had searched him said, "but don't make any sudden moves."*

*Logan put his hands down. His dejection was thorough.*

*"Come on," he was ordered.*

*The men fell into place around*

him and conducted him through the next passageway to the quarters of the Chief's Personal Guards.

"May I have a cigarette?" he asked.

"No," he was told.

They bound his arms, sat him down in a plain wooden chair, and fixed up a light so that it shone in his face. They kept him covered from behind the light, and one of them began to question him.

"Whose idea was this?"

"Mine."

"You're lying. Whose idea was it?"

"Mine."

The man struck him. "Come on. You weren't in this alone."

"Yes, I was."

The man hit him so hard that Logan fell down and had to be picked up and put back in the chair.

"Was this your own idea?"

Logan nodded, weakly.

"All right, then; it was your own idea. That means you were the ringleader. That means you are fully-responsible for what you did. That means you have to take all the punishment yourself. If you were somebody's tool, if somebody was just using you, was filling you full of lies, that would be a different story. We'd feel sorry for you;

we'd punish him and go easy on you. See what I mean?"

Logan nodded again.

"All right, then. Come on. Whose idea was this?"

"Mine."

The man hit him. "You're lying," he said.

Logan didn't reply.

The man stood, looking down at him. "Who was in it with you?"

"Nobody."

The man hit him again. "That's a lie."

Logan sucked on his lower lip. It was cut.

The man lit a cigarette and blew smoke in Logan's face. "Who was in it with you?"

"Nobody."

"Why cover up for them? They'd tell on you if they got a chance."

Logan didn't say anything.

The man said, "Come on."

Logan was silent.

**T**HE MAN hit him. Logan toppled over and his glasses fell off. One of the lenses broke in the fall.

They picked him up and set him back on the chair. Logan felt like crying.

"Who was in it with you?"

"Nobody." Logan's lips formed the words, but he didn't say it loud enough for anyone to hear it.

The man drove his fist hard into Logan's stomach. The chair

collapsed with a clatter and the professor fell, sprawling and gasping for breath. The tears came to his eyes. He was afraid that he would be sick, but he wasn't.

The man kicked him in the face, just hard enough to bruise his cheek. "Come on," he said. "Who was in it with you?"

Logan shook his head.

The man crouched down and blew smoke into Logan's face. "Come on."

Logan shook his head.

The man half-straighened. "Want a cigarette?"

Logan nodded.

"I'll give you one if you'll tell me who was in it with you."

"No." Logan breathed the word faintly.

The man stood up and nudged the side of Logan's nose with his boot. "I could smear that all over your face as easy as this," snapping his fingers.

Logan said nothing.

Suddenly there was a new voice. "Any luck, gentlemen?" It was the Chief. Logan tried to sit up, but the man kicked him back down.

The Chief came over where Logan could see him; in the strong light and deep shadows of the room the Chief's face looked like a frog's.

"Such a distinguished guest," the Chief said sadly. "We mustn't be inhospitable. After all, he wanted to see me so much that he killed

a man to get to me. We should be honored." He turned to the man who had been questioning Logan. "I'd like to talk with him myself; you can have him later."

"Do you think it's safe?"

"Oh, of course. But you can come along if you like. Two of you carry him into my quarters." Logan was picked up like a sack of potatoes. "Come along, Professor," the Chief said gaily.

"Now then, Professor," he said, standing over him without gloating, after the Guardians had deposited him in a chair and left. "How did you come to get mixed up in all this?" Logan did not feel like replying, but fortunately the Chief went on without waiting for an answer. "I can't understand it. Unless you wanted to assassinate me so that you could become Chief in my place. But after that scene you put on down here one day I can hardly think that."

Logan shook his head.

THE CHIEF smiled. "What's the matter, then? Haven't we treated you well enough?"

"Why—"

"We brought you out of the dead little college existence you were in and made you one of the most powerful men in the nation. We gave you everything you wanted. You had all the books you wanted for yourself; you had access to the National Library at all times, and even special privileges



there. That was all you ever asked for, but if you'd wanted more you could have had it. What more could you have wanted? Freedom to disagree? You had even that; I have been most careful about that."

Logan was stung into answering. "I guess what I wanted was freedom from fear."

"Fear?" The Chief's eyes were shocked.

"Yes. I was afraid that you might have me removed the same way you removed Morrison."

"Why, I had nothing to do—"

Logan interrupted him and told him why he thought the Chief was in back of Morrison's assassination.

When he had finished, the Chief looked a little shaken. Logan was surprised that what he had said would disturb the older man.

The Chief stood silent for a moment, thinking. Then he said, "So you did have accomplices." He did not say it very heartily, however.

Logan asked, "Why do you say that?"

"You couldn't have found out these details about what the presidential guardians were instructed, unless you had a friend in the guardians. And that means, I think, Fred Hansen."

Logan sat quietly, trying not to let emotion show on his face.

The Chief was watching him narrowly. "Hansen is another

strange case. If he had been older, I would have taken him to be my successor; I gave him every benefit he could desire. And yet he turned against me, just as you did. Have you no patriotism?"

Logan blinked. The question had thrown him off-balance. "Patriotism? I don't see how—"

"Oh, you fool!" The Chief's face flushed. "You knew that the affairs of the nation were in a perilous state; you knew that at any moment we might be plunged into a disastrous war with the Orient. You knew that it was my hand that was guiding us through this dreadful situation. And you would kill me and blunge the country into chaos."

Logan blinked again. The sudden revelation of the egotism of the man was amazing. He said, "I don't think it would have plunged the country into chaos."

"You don't think that poor fish Allbright could keep us out of war all by himself, do you?"

"I don't know; but he ought to have the chance."

It was the Chief's turn to blink. "Why?"

"BECAUSE he ought to have a free hand; you can't tell whether he can do something or not until he tries."

"That's a very risky philosophy. And I'm surprised at hearing it from you, Professor. What if we find out too late that he can't?"

"Then we find out. The point is, if Allbright's so poor as all that, who's responsible for making him President in the first place? You are. You got us into the whole mess; now you think you're the only one to get us out of it. But that's the way you've run the country for forty years—getting us into a hole and then making us be grateful to you for getting us back out of it and then into a deeper one."

Logan's voice was rising. "Maybe the people can't run their own government, but I'm not so sure now. Maybe if they'd been let alone they'd have made a better man than Allbright president."

"Maybe, maybe, maybe!" the Chief shouted back. "They're clay for me to mold! Look how I've had them eating out of my hand for forty years! If they had so much sense as that, would they have stood for it? Look how I can make them do what I want! They vote for a family man! That's how they pick their leaders!"

Logan struggled with his bound hands and swayed to his feet. "That's not fair! That's not true!"

"Yes, it is! It is!" The Chief's face was getting redder and redder as he could scarcely control his rage.

Logan screamed back at him, "Tyrant! Tyrant! How do you know so much? Why are you indispensable? Why are you any better?"

In an uncontrollable fury, the Chief leaped at Logan and grappled with him, trying to strangle him. He buried his hands in Logan's neck. Logan fell back into the chair, straining to free his bound hands. Both men were kicking out freely with their feet, trying to hurt the other.

After a violent kick, Logan slid off the chair and fell heavily to the floor. The Chief relaxed his grip for a moment, and Logan rolled away from him. "Coward!" the professor yelled. "Let me get my hands loose!" He tried to scramble to his feet, but the Chief, panting heavily, was up before him and kicked him back down again. The Chief began to kick him in the stomach, so Logan rolled over, trying to get away. Then the Chief kicked him in the back, in the ribs, anyplace he could.

Straining at the ropes was all that Logan could do. He was straining with all his might and then relaxing his hands, trying to make the rope loose enough that he could slip his hands through it. Finally he managed to slip one hand loose, and the rope fell loose on the other one.

He charged for the Chief, knocking him off-balance and to the floor. The Chief fell with a heavy thud. Logan jumped to his feet, breathing heavily. He was so tired that he could hardly stand. He caught a couple of deep

breaths, so exhausted that he needed them more than he needed to follow up his advantage. His wrists were burning and the skin was rubbed raw.

Just then one of the Guardians rushed in, covering Logan with his gun.

**T**IREDLY, resignedly, Logan raised his hands to shoulder-height. He looked at the Guardian negligently, expecting to be shot and not much caring. But then he noticed that the Guardian was not looking at him so much as at the Chief. Logan followed his gaze. The Chief was still lying on the floor, quietly, making no effort to get up. Logan's heart seemed to stop. Was he— No, he was breathing heavily and peacefully, as if he were asleep. He was just knocked out.

There were heavy bootsteps, and another Guardian poked his head into the room. "Good Lord!" he said. "You keep him covered; I'll get Dr. Franz."

A few hours before, the discovery that there was a physician to the Chief, perhaps permanently-resident in the Center, would have excited Logan. Now it didn't make any difference. He was tired and it was all over with him, and he wished somebody would shoot him and put an end to it. He had failed. He was not even particularly interested in the cause of his

failure; he just wanted desperately to sit down, but he was afraid to ask the Guardian, who kept the gun pointed at him.

The Guardian who had kicked Logan came in and stood in a corner of the room, strangely subdued. He, too, kept his eyes fixed on the body of the Chief, which lay motionless except for the deep and regular breathing. He shot a glance at Logan but said nothing.

The second Guardian returned with a short, heavily moustached man, clad in dirty old brown trousers and a well-worn T-shirt. "All right," he snapped at Logan, "what happened?"

Logan tried to tell as little as he could, but the doctor kept snapping questions at him and forcing him to go into as many details of the fight as he could remember. Finally, feeling that he had stood about enough, Logan asked, "May I sit down?"

"All right," the doctor nodded.

The professor sat gratefully.

"After you got the rope off your wrists, what happened?"

"I knocked him down."

"How?"

"I jumped at his legs. He wasn't expecting me, so I knocked his legs out from under him, and he went down."

"Then what?"

"That's all."

"What do you mean?"



"I suppose I'd have tried to figure out some way of killing him. But just then he"—pointing at the Guardian with the gun—"came in and stopped me."

"You didn't do anything to him after he fell?"

"No." Logan shook his head.

"Didn't kick him or hit him or anything?"

"No."

The doctor knelt and looked closely at the Chief, running his fingers over his head and raising one of his eyelids to look at his eye. "Here," he said, looking at the two Guardians who were standing by, watching. "Help me get him in on the bed." The third Guardian kept the rifle pointed unwaveringly at Logan as the doctor and the other two Guardians picked up the Chief's body, gently and tenderly, and carried him gingerly into the next room. The door was closed behind them. Logan was left outside, staring at the gun pointed at him.

"May I have a cigarette?" he asked. "They're in my shirt pocket. I don't have any weapons."

**T**HE GUARDIAN threw him a cigarette and a package of matches. Logan got the cigarette going and gave the matches back to the Guardian. The minutes dragged on. Logan found an ash-tray and sat, puffing smoke and flicking ashes into it. Finally he

finished the cigarette down to the last inch and stubbed it out. By now he was thirsty, but he thought a drink would be refused him so he did not bother to ask. From the next room came mutterings and scufflings. Logan sat and waited, trying to make himself as comfortable as he could.

Then Dr. Franz came out of the room and stood looking at Logan. He ran his fingers through his untidy hair. "Well," he said, "damn you, you've done it; you're getting what you wanted."

"Is he dead?" Logan asked, blinking stupidly.

"No, but I'll bet he will be this time tomorrow. He's an old man; he couldn't take that kind of roughhouse. And now everything'll go to hell," he added morosely, scuffing his foot absently against a chair leg.

"This wasn't a bad deal," the doctor said. "Now I'll have to go back to treating Junior's mumps and Mama's imagination. That's the trouble with guys like you," he snapped, suddenly fixing Logan in an angry glare. "You don't think about other people. You've got your own little private grievance, and you don't realize that you mess up the lives of a lot of other people. Me, for instance, and everybody else in the Government. What'll they do?"

"Some of 'em have government jobs, and they'll keep 'em until the new Administration runs 'em

out of office. And then they'll go back to the sticks and rot there, doing anything they can do to scrape a living together. And thinking about what might have been. But a lot of 'em didn't have any government jobs. They just kind of disappeared. Now, suddenly, they're going to have to reappear. What explanation'll they give? And what'll they do? A lot of 'em gave up the chance for further training to join the Government."

He waved a hand at the Guardian with the gun. "What'll this guy do? You name it. Bank-teller, grocery-clerk, anything. One of the fine minds in the country, snapped up by the Government before he had a chance to finish his education. And now what? Right back into the crowd, worse off than before. Two years in his past he can't explain. No money; no train-

ing for anything. That's the trouble with you loonies, you never think of anybody else." He turned away, moodily.

Logan sat, staring. He could not believe that he had been so grossly and completely misunderstood. He was on the point of trying to defend himself, but gave it up. A man so massively, so monumentally prejudiced— It was more than a human being could do to convert him. At best he should crush him with a sharp retort, of the kind he had had on his lips constantly as a teacher. But he couldn't think of anything. He started to fish for his cigarettes in his shirt pocket, then suddenly realized that the Guardian—

And the last sound Henry Logan heard in this world was the report of the Guardian's rifle.



With our next issue, which will be dated August, **FUTURE SCIENCE FICTION** returns to bimonthly publication. And the August issue will be one you will not want to pass by; it features a novelet by a gentleman whose first appearance, seven years ago, had the science-fiction world asking excitedly, "Who is T. L. Sherrd?" That story, as you may recall, was the much-anthologized, "E For Effort". He'll be with us, offering a story which may be close to actual possibility. Don't miss "Cure, Guaranteed," in our August issue!

**Ed Morris didn't know what sales-technique was until the fasrad invaded his life.**

# SALES PITCH

**BY PHILIP K. DICK**

**C**OMMUTE ships roared on all sides, as Ed Morris made his way wearily home to Earth at the end of a long hard day at the office. The Ganymede-Terra lanes were choked with exhausted, grim-faced businessmen; Jupiter was in opposition to Earth and the trip was a good two hours. Every few million miles the great flow slowed to a grinding, agonized halt; signal-lights flashed as streams from Mars and Saturn fed into the main traffic-arteries.

"Lord," Morris muttered. "How tired can you *get*?" He locked the autopilot and momentarily turned from the control-board to light a much-needed cigarette. His hands shook. His head swam. It was past six: Sally would be fuming; dinner would be spoiled. The same old thing. Nerve-wracking driving, honking horns and irate drivers zooming past his little ship, furious gesturing, shouting, cursing...

illustrated by LUTON





And the ads. That was what really did it. He could have stood everything else—but the ads, the whole long way from Ganymede to Earth. And on Earth, the swarms of salesrobots; it was too much. And they were everywhere.

He slowed to avoid a fifty-ship smashup. Repair-ships were scurrying around trying to get the debris out of the lane. His audio-speaker wailed as police rockets hurried up. Expertly, Morris raised his ship, cut between two slow-moving commercial transports, zipped momentarily into the unused left lane, and then sped on, the wreck left behind. Horns honked furiously at him; he ignored them.

"Trans-Solar Products greets you!" an immense voice boomed in his ear. Morris groaned and hunched down in his seat. He was getting near Terra; the barrage was increasing. "Is your tension-index pushed over the safety-margin by the ordinary frustrations of the day? Then you need an Id-Persona Unit. So small it can be worn behind the ear, close to the frontal lobe—"

Thank God, he was past it. The ad dimmed and receded behind, as his fast-moving ship hurtled forward. But another was right ahead.

"Drivers! Thousands of unnecessary deaths each year from interplanet driving. Hypno-Motor Control from an expert source-point insures your safety. Surrender your

body and save your life!" The voice roared louder. "Industrial experts say—"

Both audio ads, the easiest to ignore. But now a visual ad was forming; he winced, closed his eyes, but it did no good.

"Men!" an unctuous voiced thundered on all sides of him. "Banish internally-caused obnoxious odors forever. Removal by modern painless methods of the gastro-intestinal tract and substitution of the all-plastic GE absorption system will relieve you of the most acute cause of social rejection." The visual image locked: a vast nude girl, blonde hair disarranged, blue eyes half shut, lips parted, head tilted back in sleep-drugged ecstasy. The features ballooned as the lips approached his own. Abruptly the orgiastic expression on the girl's face vanished. Disgust and revulsion swept across, and then the image faded out.

"Does this happen to you?" the voice boomed. "During erotic sex-play do you offend your love-partner by the presence of gastric processes which—"

THE VOICE died, and he was past. His mind his own again, Morris kicked savagely at the throttle and sent the little ship leaping. The pressure, applied directly to the audio-visual regions of his brain, had faded below spark-point. He groaned and shook his

head to clear it. All around him the vague half-defined echoes of ads glittered and gibbered, like ghosts of distant video-stations. Ads waited on all sides; he steered a careful course, dexterity born of animal desperation, but not all could be avoided. Despair seized him. The outline of a new visual-audio ad was already coming into being.

"You, mister wage-earner!" it shouted into the eyes and ears, noses and throats, of a thousand weary commuters. "Tired of the same old job? Wonder Circuits Inc. has perfected a marvelous long-range thoughtwave scanner. Know what others are thinking and saying. Get the edge on fellow employees. Learn facts, figures about your employer's personal existence. Banish uncertainty!"

Morris' despair swept up wildly. He threw the throttle on full-blast; the little ship bucked and rolled as it climbed from the traffic-lane into the dead zone beyond. A shrieking roar, as his fender whipped through the protective wall—and then the ad faded behind him.

He slowed down, trembling with misery and fatigue. Earth lay ahead. He'd be home, soon. Maybe he could get a good night's sleep. He shakily dropped the nose of the ship and prepared to hook onto the tractor beam of the Chicago commute field.

"The best metabolism adjuster

on the market," the salesrobot shrilled. "Guaranteed to maintain a perfect endocrine-balance, or your money refunded in full."

Morris pushed wearily past the salesrobot, up the sidewalk toward the residential-block that contained his living-unit. The robot followed a few steps, then forgot him and hurried after another grim-faced commuter.

"All the news while it's news," a metallic voice dinned at him. "Have a retinal vidscreen installed in your least-used eye. Keep in touch with the world; don't wait for out-of-date hourly summaries."

"Get out of the way," Morrison muttered. The robot stepped aside for him and he crossed the street with a pack of hunched-over men and women.

**R**OBOT-SALESMEN were everywhere, gesturing, pleading, shrilling. One started after him and he quickened his pace. It scurried along, chanting its pitch and trying to attract his attention, all the way up the hill to his living unit. It didn't give up until he stooped over, snatched up a rock, and hurled it futilely. He scrambled in the house and slammed the doorlock after him. The robot hesitated, then turned and raced after a woman with an armload of packages toiling up the hill. She tried vainly to elude it, without success.

"Darling!" Sally cried. She hurried from the kitchen, drying her hands on her plastic shorts, bright-eyed and excited. "Oh, you poor thing! You look so tired!"

Morris peeled off his hat and coat and kissed his wife briefly on her bare shoulder. "What's for dinner?"

Sally gave his hat and coat to the closet. "We're having Uranian wild pheasant; your favorite dish."

Morris' mouth watered, and a tiny surge of energy crawled back into his exhausted body. "No kidding? What the hell's the occasion?"

His wife's brown eyes moistened with compassion. "Darling, it's your birthday; you're thirty-seven years old today. Had you forgotten?"

"Yeah," Morris grinned a little. "I sure had." He wandered into the kitchen. The table was set; coffee was steaming in the cups and there was butter and white bread, mashed potatoes and green peas. "My golly. A real occasion."

Sally punched the stove controls and the container of smoking pheasant was slid onto the table and neatly sliced open. "Go wash your hands and we're ready to eat. Hurry—before it gets cold."

Morris presented his hands to the wash slot and then sat down gratefully at the table. Sally served the tender, fragrant pheasant, and the two of them began eating.

"Sally," Morris said, when his plate was empty and he was leaning back and sipping slowly at his coffee. "I can't go on like this. Something's got to be done."

"You mean the drive? I wish you could get a position on Mars like Bob Young. Maybe if you talked to the Employment Commission and explained to them how all the strain—"

"It's not just the drive. *They're right out front.* Everywhere. Waiting for me. All day and all night."

"Who are, dear?"

"Robots selling things. As soon as I set down the ship. Robots and visual-audio ads. They dig right into a man's brain. They follow people around until they die."

"I know." Sally patted his hand sympathetically. "When I go shopping they follow me in clusters. All talking at once. It's really a panic—you can't understand half they're saying."

"We've got to break out."

"Break out?" Sally faltered. "What do you mean?"

"We've got to get away from them. They're destroying us."

MORRIS fumbled in his pocket and carefully got out a tiny fragment of metalfoil. He unrolled it with painstaking care and smoothed it out on the table. "Look at this. It was circulated in the office, among the men; it got to me and I kept it."



"What does it mean?" Sally's brow wrinkled as she made out the words. "Dear, I don't think you got all of it. There must be more than this."

"A new world," Morris said softly. "Where they haven't got to, yet. It's a long way off, out beyond the solar system. Out in the stars."

"Proxima?"

"Twenty planets. Half of them habitable. Only a few thousand people out there. Families, workmen, scientists, some industrial survey teams. Land free for the asking."

"But it's so—" Sally made a face. "Dear, isn't it sort of underdeveloped? They say it's like living back in the twentieth century. Flush toilets, bathtubs, radios instead of vidsenders, gasoline driven cars—"

"That's right." Morris rolled up the bit of crumpled metal, his face grim and dead-serious. "It's a hundred years behind times. None of this." He indicated the stove and the furnishings in the livingroom. "We'll have to do without. We'll have to get used to a simpler life. The way our ancestors lived." He tried to smile, but his face wouldn't cooperate. "You think you'd like it? No ads, no salesrobots, traffic moving at sixty miles an hour instead of sixty million. We could raise passage on one of the big trans-system liners. I could sell my commute rocket. . ."

There was a hesitant, doubtful silence.

"Ed," Sally began. "I think we should think it over more. What about your job? What would you do out there?"

"I'd find something."

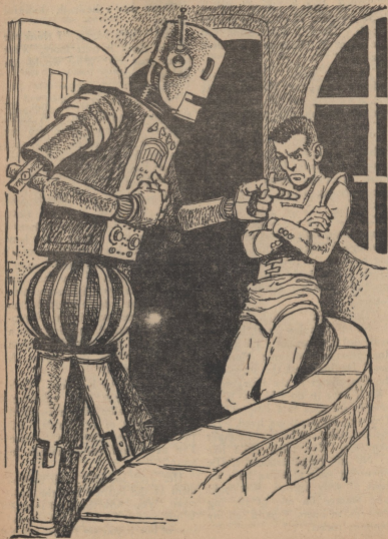
"But *what?* Haven't you got that part figured out?" A shrill tinge of annoyance crept into her voice. "It seems to me we should consider that part just a little before we throw away everything and just—take off."

"If we don't go," Morris said slowly, trying to keep his voice steady, "they'll get us. There isn't much time left. I don't know how much longer I can hold them off."

"Really, Ed! You make it sound so melodramatic. If you feel that bad why don't you take some time off and have a complete inhibition check? I was watching a vidprogram and I saw them going over a man whose psychosomatic system was much worse than yours. A much older man."

She leaped to her feet. "Let's go out tonight and celebrate. Okay?" Her slim fingers fumbled at the zipper of her shorts. "I'll put on my new plastirobe, the one I've never had nerve enough to wear."

Her eyes sparkled with excitement as she hurried into the bedroom. "You know the one I mean? When you're up close it's translucent but as you get farther off it





becomes more and more sheer until—”

“I know the one,” Morris said wearily. “I’ve seen them advertised on the way home from work.” He got slowly to his feet and wandered into the livingroom. At the door of the bedroom he halted. “Sally—”

“Yes?”

Morris opened his mouth to speak. He was going to ask her again, talk to her about the metal-foil fragment he had carefully wadded up and carried home. He was going to talk to her about the frontier. About Proxima Centauri. Going away and never coming back. But he never had a chance.

The doorchimes sounded.

“Somebody’s at the door!” Sally cried excitedly. “Hurry up and see who it is!”

**I**N THE EVENING darkness the robot was a silent, unmoving figure. A cold wind blew around it and into the house. Morris shivered and moved back from the door. “What do you want?” he demanded. A strange fear licked at him. “What is it?”

The robot was larger than any he had seen. Tall and broad, with heavy metallic grippers and elongated eye-lenses. Its upper trunk was a square tank instead of the usual cone. It rested on four treads, not the customary two. It towered over Morris, almost seven feet high. Massive and solid.

“Good evening,” it said calmly. Its voice was whipped around by the night wind; it mixed with the dismal noises of evening, the echoes of traffic and the clang of distant street signals. A few vague shapes hurried through the gloom. The world was black and hostile.

“Evening,” Morris responded automatically. He found himself trembling. “What are you selling?”

“I would like to show you a fasrad,” the robot said.

Morris’ mind was numb; it refused to respond. What was a *fasrad*? There was something dreamlike and nightmarish going on. He struggled to get his mind and body together. “A what?” he croaked.

“A fasrad.” The robot made no effort to explain. It regarded him without emotion, as if it was not its responsibility to explain anything. “It will take only a moment.”

“I—” Morris began. He moved back, out of the wind. And the robot, without change of expression, glided past him and into the house.

“Thank you,” it said. It halted in the middle of the livingroom. “Would you call your wife, please? I would like to show her the fasrad, also.”

“Sally,” Morris muttered helplessly. “Come here.”

Sally swept breathlessly into the livingroom, her breasts quivering



with excitement. "What is it? Oh!" She saw the robot and halted uncertainly. "Ed, did you order something? Are we buying something?"

"Good evening," the robot said to her. "I am going to show you the fasrad. Please be seated. On the couch, if you will. Both together."

Sally sat down expectantly, her cheeks flushed, eyes bright with wonder and bewilderment. Numbly, Ed seated himself beside her. "Look," he muttered thickly. "What is the hell is a fasrad? *What's going on?* I don't want to buy anything!"

"What is your name?" the robot asked him.

"Morris." He almost choked. "Ed Morris."

The robot turned to Sally. "Mrs. Morris." It bowed slightly. "I'm glad to meet you, Mr. and Mrs. Morris. You are the first persons in your neighborhood to see the fasrad. This is the initial demonstration in this area." Its cold eyes swept the room. "Mr. Morris, you are employed, I assume. Where are you employed?"

"He works on Ganymede," Sally said dutifully, like a little girl in school. "For the Terran Metals Development Co."

The robot digested this information. "A fasrad will be of value to you." It eyed Sally. "What do you do?"

"I'm a tape-transcriber at Histo-Research."

"A fasrad will be of no value in your professional work, but it will be helpful here in the home." It picked up a table in its powerful steel grippers. "For example, sometimes an attractive piece of furniture is damaged by a clumsy guest." The robot smashed the table to bits; fragments of wood and plastic rained down. "A fasrad is needed."

MORRIS leaped helplessly to his feet. He was powerless to halt events; a numbing weight hung over him, as the robot tossed the fragments of table away and selected a heavy floor lamp.

"Oh, dear," Sally gasped. "That's my best lamp."

"When a fasrad is possessed, there is nothing to fear." The robot seized the lamp and twisted it grotesquely. It ripped the shade, smashed the bulbs, then threw away the remnants. "A situation of this kind can occur from some violent explosion, such as an H-bomb."

"For God's sake," Morris muttered. "We—"

"An H-bomb attack may never occur," the robot continued, "but in such an event a fasrad is indispensable." It knelt down and pulled an intricate tube from its waist. Aiming the tube at the

floor it atomized a hole five feet in diameter. It stepped back from the yawning pocket. "I have not extended this tunnel, but you can see a fasrad would save your life in case of attack."

The word *attack* seemed to set off a new train of reactions in its metal brain.

"Sometimes a thug or hood will attack a person at night," it continued. Without warning it whirled and drove its fist through the wall. A section of the wall collapsed in a heap of powder and debris. "That takes care of the thug." The robot straightened out and peered around the room. "Often you are too tired in the evening to manipulate the buttons on the stove." It strode into the kitchen and began punching the stove controls; immense quantities of food spilled in all directions.

"Stop!" Sally cried. "Get away from my stove!"

"You may be too weary to run water for your bath." The robot tripped the controls of the tub and water poured down. "Or you may wish to go right to bed." It yanked the bed from its concealment and threw it flat. Sally retreated in fright as the robot advanced toward her. "Sometimes after a hard day at work you are too tired to remove your clothing. In that event—"

"Get out of here!" Morris

shouted at it. "Sally, run and get the cops. The thing's gone crazy. *Hurry.*"

"The fasrad is a necessity in all modern homes," the robot continued. "For example, an appliance may break down. The fasrad repairs it instantly." It seized the automatic humidity control and tore the wiring and replaced it on the wall. "Sometimes you would prefer not to go to work. The fasrad is permitted by law to occupy your position for a consecutive period not to exceed ten days. If, after that period—"

"Good God," Morris said, as understanding finally came. "You're the fasrad."

"That's right," the robot agreed. "Fully Automatic Self-Regulating Android (Domestic). There is also the fasrac (Construction), the fasram (Managerial), the fasras (Soldier), and the fasrab (Bureaucrat). I am designed for home use."

"You—" Sally gasped. "You're for sale. You're selling yourself."

"I am demonstrating myself," the fasrad, *we* robot, answered. Its impassive metal eyes were fixed intently on Morrison as it continued, "I am sure, Mr. Morris, you would like to own me. I am reasonably priced and fully guaranteed. A full book of instructions is included. I cannot

conceive of taking *no* for an answer."

AT HALF past twelve, Ed Morris still sat at the foot of the bed, one shoe on, the other in his hand. He gazed vacantly ahead. He said nothing.

"For heaven's sake," Sally complained. "Finish untying that knot and get into bed; you have to be up at five-thirty."

Morris fooled aimlessly with the shoelace. After awhile he dropped the shoe and tugged at the other one. The house was cold and silent. Outside, the dismal night-wind whipped and lashed at the cedars that grew along the side of the building. Sally lay curled up beneath the radiant-lens, enjoying a cigarette between her lips, enjoying the warmth and half-dozing.

In the livingroom stood the fasrad. It hadn't left. It was still there, was waiting for Morris to buy it.

"Come on!" Sally said sharply. "What's wrong with you? It fixed all the things it broke; it was just demonstrating itself." She sighed drowsily. "It certainly gave me a scare. I thought something had gone wrong with it. They certainly had an inspiration, sending it around to sell itself to people."

Morris said nothing.

Sally rolled over on her stom-

ach and languidly stubbed out her cigarette. "That's not so much, is it? Ten thousand gold units, and if we get our friends to buy one we get a five per cent commission. All we have to do is show it. It isn't as if we had to *sell* it. It sells itself." She giggled. "They always wanted a product that sold itself, didn't they?"

Morris untied the knot in his shoelace. He slid his shoe back on and tied it tight.

"What are you doing?" Sally demanded angrily. "You come to bed!" She sat up furiously, as Morris left the room and moved slowly down the hall. "Where are you going?"

In the livingroom, Morris switched on the light and sat down facing the fasrad. "Can you hear me?" he said.

"Certainly," the fasrad answered. "I'm never inoperative. Sometimes an emergency occurs at night: a child is sick or an accident takes place. You have no children as yet, but in the event—"

"Shut up," Morris said, "I don't want to hear you."

"You asked me a question. Self-regulating androids are plugged in to a central information exchange. Sometimes a person wishes immediate information; the fasrad is always ready to answer any theoretical or factual inquiry. Anything not metaphysical."



Morris picked up the book of instructions and thumbed it. The fasrad did thousands of things; it never wore out; it was never at a loss; it couldn't make a mistake. He threw the book away. "I'm not going to buy you," he said to it. "Never. Not in a million years."

"Oh, yes you are," the fasrad corrected. "This is an opportunity you can't afford to miss." There was calm, metallic confidence in its voice. "You can't turn me down, Mr. Morrison. A fasrad is an indispensable necessity in the modern home."

"Get out of here," Morris said evenly. "Get out of my house and don't come back."

"I'm not your fasrad to order around. Until you've purchased me at the regular list price, I'm responsible only to Self-Regulating Android Inc. Their instructions were to the contrary; I'm to remain with you until you buy me."

"Suppose I never buy you?" Morris demanded, but in his heart ice formed even as he asked. Already he felt the cold terror of the answer that was coming; there could be no other.

"I'll continue to remain with you," the fasrad said; "eventually you'll buy me." It plucked some withered roses from a vase on the mantel and dropped them into its disposal slot. "You will see more and more situations in which

a fasrad is indispensable. Eventually you'll wonder how you ever existed without one."

"Is there anything you can't do?"

"Oh, yes; there's a great deal I can't do. But I can do anything *you* can do—and considerably better."

**M**MORRIS LET out his breath slowly. "I'd be insane to buy you."

"You've got to buy me," the impassive voice answered. The fasrad extended a hollow pipe and began cleaning the carpet. "I am useful in all situations. Notice how fluffy and free of dust this rug is." It withdrew the pipe and extended another. Morris coughed and staggered quickly away; clouds of white particles billowed out and filled every part of the room.

"I am spraying for moths," the fasrad explained.

The white cloud turned to an ugly blueblack. The room faded into ominous darkness; the fasrad was a dim shape moving methodically about in the center. Presently the cloud lifted and the furniture emerged.

"I sprayed for harmful bacteria," the fasrad said.

It painted the walls of the room and constructed new furniture to go with them. It reinforced the ceiling in the bathroom. It increased the number of heat-



vents from the furnace. It put in new electrical wiring. It tore out all the fixtures in the kitchen and assembled more modern ones. It examined Morris' financial accounts and computed his income tax for the following year. It sharpened all the pencils; it caught hold of his wrist and quickly diagnosed his high blood-pressure as psychosomatic.

"You'll feel better after you've turned responsibility over to me," it explained. It threw out some old soup Sally had been saving. "Danger of boltulism" it told him. "Your wife is sexually attractive, but not capable of a high order of intellectualization."

Morris went to the closet and got his coat.

"Where are you going?" the fasrad asked.

"To the office."

"At this time of night?"

Morris glanced briefly into the bedroom. Sally was sound asleep under the soothing radiant-lens. Her slim body was rosy pink and healthy, her face free of worry. He closed the front door and hurried down the steps into the darkness. Cold night wind slashed at him as he approached the parking lot. His little commute ship was parked with hundreds of others; a quarter sent the attendant robot obediently after it.

In ten minutes he was on his way to Ganymede.

THE FASRAD boarded his ship when he stopped at Mars to refuel.

"Apparently you don't understand," the fasrad said. "My instructions are to demonstrate myself until you're satisfied. As yet, you're not wholly convinced; further demonstration is necessary." It passed an intricate web over the controls of the ship until all the dials and meters were in adjustment. "You should have more frequent servicing."

It retired to the rear to examine the drive jets. Morris numbly signalled the attendant, and the ship was released from the fuel pumps. He gained speed and the small sandy planet fell behind. Ahead, Jupiter loomed.

"Your jets aren't in good repair," the fasrad said, emerging from the rear. "I don't like that knock to the main brake drive. As soon as you land I'll make extensive repair."

"The Company doesn't mind your doing favors for me?" Morris asked, with bitter sarcasm.

"The Company considers me your fasrad. An invoice will be mailed to you at the end of the month." The robot whipped out a pen and a pad of forms. "I'll explain the four easy-payment plans. Ten thousand gold units cash means a three per cent discount. In addition, a number of household items may be traded in—

items you won't have further need for. If you wish to divide the purchase in four parts, the first is due at once, and the last in ninety days."

"I always pay cash," Morris muttered. He was carefully resetting the route positions on the control board.

"There's no carrying charge for the ninety day plan. For the six month plan there's a six percent per annum, charge which will amount to approximately—" It broke off. "We've changed course."

"That's right."

"We've left the official traffic lane." The fasrad stuck its pen and pad away and hurried to the control board. "What are you doing? There's a two unit fine for this."

Morris ignored it. He hung on grimly to the controls and kept his eyes on the viewscreen. The ship was gaining speed rapidly. Warning buoys sounded angrily as he shot past them and into the bleak darkness of space beyond. In a few seconds they had left all traffic behind. They were alone, shooting rapidly away from Jupiter, out into deep space.

The fasrad computed the trajectory. "We're moving out of the solar system. Toward Centaurus."

"You guessed it."

"Hadn't you better call your wife?"

Morris grunted and notched the drive bar farther up. The ship bucked and pitched, then managed to right itself. The jets began to whine ominously. Indicators showed the main turbines were beginning to heat. He ignored them and threw on the emergency fuel supply.

"I'll call Mrs. Morris," the fasrad offered. "We'll be beyond range in a short while."

"Don't bother."

"She'll worry. The fasrad hurried to the back and examined the jets again. It popped back into the cabin buzzing with alarm. "Mr. Morris, this ship is not equipped for inter-system-travel. It's a Class D four-shaft domestic model for home consumption only. It was never made to stand this velocity."

"To get to Proxima," Morris answered, "we need this velocity."

**T**HE FASRAD connected its power cables to the control board. "I can take some of the strain off the wiring system. But unless you rev her back to normal I can't be responsible for the deterioration of the jets."

"The hell with the jets."

The fasrad was silent. It was listening intently to the growing whine under them. The whole ship shuddered violently. Bits of



paint drifted down. The floor was hot from the grinding shafts. Morris' foot stayed on the throttle. The ship gained more velocity as Sol fell behind. They were out of the charted area. Sol receded rapidly.

"It's too late to vid your wife," the fasrad said. "There are three emergency-rockets in the stern; if you want, I'll fire them off in the hope of attracting a passing military transport."

"Why?"

"They can take us in town and return us to the Sol system. There's a six hundred gold unit fine, but under the circumstances it seems to me the best policy."

Morris turned his back to the fasrad and jammed down the throttle with all his weight. The whine had grown to a violent roar. Instruments smashed and cracked. Fuses blew up and down the board. The lights dimmed, faded, then reluctantly came back.

"Mr. Morris," the fasrad said, "you must prepare for death. The statistical probabilities of turbine explosion are seventy-thirty. I'll do what I can, but the danger-point has already passed."

Morris returned to the view-screen. For a time he gazed hungrily up at the growing dot that was the twin star Centaurus. "They look all right, don't they? Prox is the important one. Twenty planets." He examined the wildly flut-

tering instruments. "How are the jets holding up? I can't tell from these; most of them are burned out."

The fasrad hesitated. It started to speak, then changed its mind. "I'll go back and examine them," it said. It moved to the rear of the ship and disappeared down the short ramp into the thundering, vibrating engine chamber.

Morris leaned over and put out his cigarette. He waited a moment longer, then reached out and yanked the drives full up, the last possible notch on the board.

The explosion tore the ship in half. Sections of hull hurtled around him. He was lifted weightless and slammed into the control board. Metal and plastic rained down on him. Flashing incandescent points winked, faded, and finally died into silence, and there was nothing but cold ash.

**T**HE DULL *swish-swish* of emergency air-pumps brought consciousness back. He was pinned under the wreckage of the control board; one arm was broken and bent under him. He tried to move his legs but there was no sensation below his waist.

The splintered debris that had been his ship was still hurtling toward Centaurus. Hull-sealing equipment was feebly trying to patch the gaping holes. Automatic temperature and grav feeds were

thumping spasmodically from self-contained batteries. In the view-screen the vast flaming bulk of the twin suns grew quietly, inexorably.

He was glad. In the silence of the ruined ship he lay buried beneath the debris, gratefully watching the growing bulk. It was a beautiful sight. He had wanted to see it for a long time. There it was, coming closer each moment. In a day or two the ship would plunge into the fiery mass and be consumed. But he could enjoy this interval; there was nothing to disturb his happiness.

He thought about Sally, sound asleep under the radiant-lens. Would Sally have liked Proxima? Probably not. Probably she would have wanted to go back home as soon as possible. This was something he had to enjoy alone. This was for him only. A vast peace descended over him. He could lie here without stirring, and the flaming magnificence would come nearer and nearer. . .

A sound. From the heaps of fused wreckage something was rising. A twisted, dented shape dimly visible in the flickering glare of the view-screen. Morris managed to turn his head.

The fasrad staggered to a standing position. Most of its trunk was gone, smashed and broken away. It tottered, then pitched forward

on its face with a grinding crash. Slowly it inched its way toward him, then settled to a dismal halt a few feet off. Gears whirred creakily. Relays popped open and shut. Vague, aimless life animated its devastated hulk.

"Good evening," its shrill, metallic voice grated.

Morris screamed. He tried to move his body but the ruined beams held him tight. He shrieked and shouted and tried to crawl away from it. He spat and wailed and wept.

"I would like to show you a fasrad," the metallic voice continued. "Would you call your wife, please? I would like to show her a fasrad, too."

"Get away!" Morris screamed. "Get away from me!"

"Good evening," the fasrad continued, like a broken tape. "Good evening. Please be seated. I am happy to meet you. What is your name? Thank you. You are the first persons in your neighborhood to see the fasrad. Where are you employed?"

Its dead eyelenses gaped at him empty and vacant.

"Please be seated," it said again. "This will take only a second. Only a second. This demonstration will take only a—"



# READIN' and WRITHIN'

BOOK REVIEWS

by Damon Knight



**T**HE HEAD OF Cerberus, by Francis Stevens. Polaris, 1952; 190 pp., \$3.00.

Now that American science-fiction, past its majority, is heading for the peaceful middle-age of an established form, some of its earliest adherents feel as if they had suddenly grown long gray beards; there is nothing more pathetic, I suppose, than the look on the face of an old-guard fan who's waiting to say something about Stanton A. Coblentz, while all around him people are talking about Heinlein.

With understandable bitterness, some have been driven to the extreme position that no science-fiction published later than 1935 is worth reading—while among their younger colleagues it isn't hard to find those who will put the date still later, and argue that everything published before it was trash.

But whether you belong to either group or to neither, there's almost certain to be something in "The Heads of Cerberus" for you. Those who yearn for the Good



Old Days are bound to like it—it was first published, in *The Thrill Book*, in 1919. Those who insist on the closing reasoning and the satirical wit of modern science fiction will find surprising amounts of both here; and if, like myself, you have a foot in both camps, you're sure to be delighted by this connoisseur's blend of the quaint and the ageless.

Terry Trenmore, not the ingenu but the hero of this story anyhow, is the sort of big, flamboyant, sentimental, stage Irishman that used to turn up all the time in the popular arts until, I guess, about the time Victor McLaglen retired and Brian Ahearne went back to drawingroom romance. You couldn't write about such a man today, he doesn't exist; but here he is, for those that love him, musclebound and poetic as ever he was.

For contrast, look at the world into which Trenmore and his friends stumble: Philadelphia in the year 2118, ruled as a pocket-oligarchy by "Penn Service" and its glittering court of Superlatives—the Loveliest, the Cleverest, and so on—chosen and kept in power by blatantly-rigged tests, while the rest of the populace has no names at all, only numbers which they must wear on Landon-sized buttons on their chests. It isn't the best social-satire in the world; but it's modern enough, if you like, to have come out of the pages of this magazine.

P. Schuyler Miller calls this "perhaps the first work of fantasy to envisage the parallel-time-track concept." You can read it that way, to be sure, but it's perversity; the author tells you in plain terms that the story's about

something quite different and at least as interesting: Philadelphia 2118 is a world of might-be, a philosophical spark struck off from the brain of the first traveler to find the way out of our prosaic universe of what-is. "Many times have I sought him there. Many times has his name come up in some such fantastic connection as it came to you. I have seen, as it were, the shadow of his thought sketched in the tangible phantasmagoria which surrounded me. But either he evades me purposely, or he is dead, and only his mind endures as an invisible force....!"

That passage has a dusty taste, and much of the writing is the same or worse, but not all by any means. Let me quote the beginning of chapter 5:

*When the marvelous oversteps the bounds of known possibility there are three ways of meeting it. Trenmore and his sister, after a grave discussion of certain contingencies connected with the Catholic religion and a dismissal of them on grounds too utterly Celtic and dogmatic for Drayton to follow, took the first way. From that time on they faced every wonder as a fact by itself, to be accepted as such and let go at that.*

*Drayton...compromised on the second way, and accepted with a mental reservation, as "I see you now, but I am not at all sure that you are there or that I really believe in you!"*

*Fortunately there was not one of the three so lacking in mental elasticity as to discov-*

*er the third way, which is madness.*

Now that, I submit, is not dated writing and never is likely to be; it's lucid, didactic, analytical and above all, zestful: an adjective which describes nearly the whole of the book. "Francis Stevens," we are given to understand, wrote only out of need and stopped at once when the need ended; but she wrote in the only way good writing is ever done: with joy. There is no plot-necessity for the interlude in the half-world of Ulithia; it's pure fantasy for the love of it; and there are lines in that chapter that are feathertouches along the cheek.

This limited-edition book is beautifully printed, bound and boxed. It's decorated by a colophon designed by Hannes Bok, and—God and Eshback only know why—disfigured by Ric Binkley's painfully-amateurish pen drawings. Buy it anyway; it's available \*(assuming there are a few copies left), directly from the publisher, Polaris Press, Reading, Pa.

**MORE THAN HUMAN**, by Theodore Sturgeon. Ballantine with Farrar, Straus & Young; 233 pp., \$2.00 in boards, 35 cts. paperbound. **E PLURIBUS UNICORN**, by Theodore Sturgeon. Abelard, 271 pp., \$2.75.

Everybody who reads science-fantasy for something he rarely gets out of it or out of anything, should have these books.

Ted Sturgeon is a phenomenon escaped from Philadelphia, a yellow-eyed thing with a goatee, a mortician's voice, and Pan's original smile. He clashed with high-school. He ran away to sea; took

up nudism; ran a bulldozer; got married and unmarried; wrote music, advertising copy and fantasy; smoked cigarettes in a long holder; tinkered with gadgets. His biographical note in "More Than Human," as wild as anything he's written, ends with this sentence:

*He lives with his wife and son, twelve-string guitar, and hot-rod panel truck in Rockland County, where he is at present working on an opera.*

*Now there you are; that's Sturgeon. Damn the man!*

*The idiot lived in a black and gray world, punctuated by the white lightning of hunger and the flickering of fear. His clothes were old and many-windowed. Here peeped a shinbone, sharp as a cold chisel, and there in the torn coat were ribs like the fingers of a fist.*

That's from the first paragraph of "More Than Human," and it will do for a sample of the best Sturgeon yet. Or this from page 43, when a little girl named Janie has just walked out on her mother.

*Wima knew before she started that there wasn't any use looking, but something made her run to the hall closet and look in the top shelf. There wasn't anything up there but Christmas tree ornaments and they hadn't been touched in three years.*

...My God, it's all like that, violins and stained glass and velvet and little needles in your throat. Even after the first reading, you can dip into this book anywhere and have to haul yourself out by the scruff. The Galaxya novella "Baby Is Three" is

the middle section of it, and that's all it is; if you thought it was complete in itself when you read it, you'll never think so again after you've finished "More Than Human." It's a single story that goes from here to there like a catenary arc, and hits one chord like the Last Trump when it gets there, and stops.

Three of the 13 stories in "E Pluribus Unicorn" are that good—"Bianca's Hands," which gathered furious rejection for ten years and then took the \$1,000 first prize in the English *Argosy* short story contest; "A Saucer of Loneliness," from *Galaxy*, and a long shocker called "Die, Maestro, Die" from one of Popular's detective magazines. Of the rest, there are seven that are either not quite that good, or that are good only because Sturgeon wrote them, and there are three that are not good at all: from Sturgeon's viewpoint, though he would probably assess them differently, ten partial or total failures.

But many of Sturgeon's failures are as triumphant as his successes; they made the successes. Sturgeon is the most accomplished technician this field has produced, bar nobody, not even Bradbury; and part of the reason is that he's willing to experiment with anything. He tried writing about each character in a story in a different meter once—iambes for one, trochees for another—a trick, not viable, but it taught him something about rhythm in prose. He has cold-bloodedly studied the things that make people angry, afraid, pitying, embarrassed, worshipful, and mortared them into his stories.

And for a good many years he

has been earnestly taking love apart to see what makes it tick. Not what the word means on the cover of a pulp magazine, but love—all the different kinds there are or could be—working from the outside in. "It is fashionable to overlook the fact that the old-shoe lover *loves* loving old shoes,"\* Some of the resulting stories have been as flat and unconvincing as others are burstingly alive; but Sturgeon is learning, has learned as much about the strongest theme in life or literature as anybody this side of Joyce Cary. He writes about people first and other marvels second. More and more, the plots of his short stories are only contrivances to let his characters expound themselves. "It Wasn't Syzygy," "The Sex Opposite" and "A Way of Thinking" are such stories: the people stand out from their background like Rubens figures that have strayed onto a Mondrian canvas: graphic evidence that Sturgeon, like Bradbury, was gone very nearly as far as a man can, of this field, without breaking them.

**SPACE LAWYER**, by Nat Schachner. Gnome, 222 pp., \$2.75

\* Sturgeon's "Why So Much Syzygy?" in the Summer '53 issue of *Skyhook*, obtainable from the publisher, Redd Boggs, 2215 Benjamin St. N. E., Minneapolis 18, Minn. Not coincidentally, this amateur magazine regularly carried the only intelligent criticism of magazine science fiction I've seen anywhere, in William Atheling, Jr.'s "The Issue At Hand."

[continued on page 105]



# THE INTIMATE INVASION

*She was young; she was lovely; she was in love—and he: well, what was he?*

By **SAM MERWIN, JR.**

**L**IKE ANY brother worth his salt, Tom Lynch had come to recognize through experience, if not exactly to respect, certain symptoms which meant his sister was in love again. For with Marie, as with most females under twenty-five, the process followed a definite behavior-pattern. Marie was twenty-three.

So when, after asking three times for her to pass him the sugar for his strawberries, he was handed the salt and pepper shakers, Tom knew it was on once more. He knew better than to ask for the sugar a fourth time. Instead, he

stretched halfway across the dining-room table that, like the house itself and everything in it, was much too large for just the two of them, and sugared his own berries.

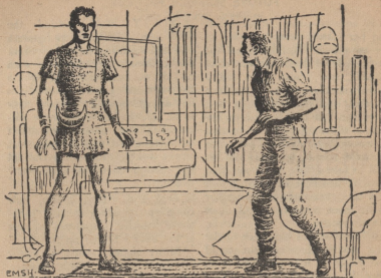
Marie, usually a stickler for manners, failed to notice his rudeness. Which was enough to turn speculation into certainty; this time, the kid-sister had it bad.

"Using the car tonight?" Tom asked her a moment later.

"What, Tom?" Her hazel eyes came briefly into focus.

When he repeated the question, she shook her auburn head absently, peppered her own berries,

illustrated by **EMSH**



dreamily swallowed a spoonful. To her numbed senses, it appeared to be as bland as junket. She said, "No, I'm staying home; you do whatever you want to."

Tom, who had intended to spend the evening puttering in his basement workshop-studio over his hexagonal canister design, decided the house was no place for him that evening. He said, "Okay, I think I'll run out for awhile. Anything I can get you?"

A barely-perceptible shake of Marie's pretty head was all the response he got. Shaking his head over the hopelessness of females

in general, and his sister in particular, he put down his napkin and got out of the house.

It was, he had to admit as he tooled the sedan out of the driveway, a night for romance. Soft June elm-laden darkness, asparkle with fireflies doing their seasonal stuff—even the familiar homely-comfortable late Victorian and Edwardian facades of Allensburgh were awash with glamour as revealed by occasional street and porch and driveway lights.

But Tom was in no mood for romance. He was worried—worried about himself and his appar-



ently arrested-career; about Marie and her future, to say nothing of her emotional vagaries; about the king-sized old house. It was comfortable, and it was home, but it was damnably expensive to keep in repair—to say nothing of heat in winter. No one wanted to buy such a white elephant, or to rent it at a worthwhile fee. And unless he could rent it, he could not afford to take Marie and himself to New York, where he could get on with his career and where his sister might meet some new and more suitable males.

Which brought him back to the little matter of whom she could have fallen in love with this time. Since the senior Lynches had died four years earlier in an auto-crash, Tom had nursed Marie through more-or-less violent crushes with a quarter-witted halfback from the State University, an editor of the *Allensburgh Weekly Register* who had chronically dirty fingernails and had long since decamped with the subscription-receipts, a visiting fifth-rate concert pianist and Alan Ladd.

There simply weren't any current possibilities around town—unless he counted Morty Keener. And Morty had been mooning around Marie for all of five years, to no avail. It was hardly likely that she...

All the same, Tom decided to look up Morty.

MORTY WAS behind the counter of the soda fountain at Keener's Drug Store, on Front Street. Morty regarded him with owlish wariness enhanced by his horn-rimmed glasses, mixed him an orange squash without comment. He looked even more disconsolate than usual. Tom didn't believe the fact that the store was empty was the cause—it would fill up enough once the early show ended.

Tom said, "Hey, Morty, how come you're using the old milkshake mixers? Customers squawk at the ones I rigged up for you?"

Morty sighed, rested an elbow on the imitation marble counter, put his chin in a cupped hand. He said, "They squawked. Not that they minded getting free drinks—they just didn't like getting them all over their clothes. Seems that dingus of yours made this into a real soda fountain—sprayed the stuff all over everything."

"Very funny," said Tom. "Very funny!" He scowled. "They shouldn't have done that. Morty, I'll lay odds you forgot to cut the current down to half. My design doubles the power."

"I should crawl under the counter to cut the switch every time a chick wants a super-duper," said Morty scathingly. "Listen, Tom, you've got great ideas—but they're just a little too big for this town."

"You're telling *me*," said Tom,



feeling as disconsolate as Morty looked. Then, to change the subject, "What's with you and Marie lately?"

Morty switched arms, rested his chin in his other palm. "Don't ask me," he said gloomily. "The other night—you remember, the time I took her to the movies while you were doing something to the house—I thought maybe she was beginning to soften up a little. She didn't even beef when I kissed her good night. But since then—" he picked up a cloth, made a vicious swipe at the pseudo-marble—"nothing."

"Damn! I'm sorry, Morty," said Tom. While the druggist was not his beau ideal of a brother-in-law, still, he was a nice guy as well as a solid citizen, and Marie could do a lot worse. He wondered who the devil it could be—but knew better than to broach his sister's condition to Morty. He went to the movies alone instead.

When Tom got home and walked upstairs after locking the house for the night, he was just in time to see his sister emerge from the bathroom. She was wearing the peach-satin negligee he had let her buy herself for her birthday in March and her whole being was aglow with a rapture that carried her past him without seeing him as she fluoresced slowly to her room at the end of the hall.

He said, "Good night, Marie."

There was no answer.

He thought, *What the hell?*—and went into the bathroom himself.

His first reaction was that he had somehow blundered into the wrong house. Not that the Lynch bathroom wasn't remarkable in itself. In part, at any rate, it was the oldest piece of inside-plumbing still extant in Allensburgh. Tom and Marie's grandparents had had it put in decades earlier, in what had originally been a sewing-room overhanging the porte cochere. With the porte cochere long gone, it now merely overhung.

**T**HE ROOM was long and narrow, with a sort of terrace running the length of it, into which both tub and washbasin were sunken. Its remainder, backed by a mirror, offered a fair imitation of a dressing-table. Thus, it was a remarkable bathroom by any standards in its own right.

However, something new seemed to have been added. Seen a trifle off-focus, as if through a glass lightly, were softly-gleaming walls and artifacts of some alabastine substance that made Tom feel as if he had stepped into the heart of a crystal. Artifacts whose purpose eluded him, even as the beautiful functionalism of their design enthralled him, lay on every hand.

Involuntarily, he extended a



hand to touch the subtly-curving lip of what seemed to be some sort of tub. His hand passed through it—not as if nothing were there, but as if the atmosphere had been thickened to that of a light tapioca pudding. It was real—but it wasn't real. Tom wondered what Morty had put into his orange squash.

Taking a deep breath, he walked through the tublike object toward the bowl, feeling its slight density against his thighs, and turned on the water in the basin. It seemed to work normally. He batted his forehead hard with the heel of a hand, but the odd illusion refused to fade. He decided he must be going crazy.

Then the tall young man came in. He was dark, sensitive-looking, and moved with an odd articulation as if his joints were subtly different from those of other folk. He wore an unusual singlet of shimmering pale blue, which looked as if it might have been spun of satin chainmail. About his waist was a broad belt or girdle, that appeared to be moulded to his body, with a soft, brown, crescent-shaped pouch.

He reached for some small object on one of the translucent walls, saw Tom and stayed his hand. He said, "You must be Tom—Marie's...brother. She has told me of you." His accents were inex-

plicably odd, and his voice, which was muffled, seemed to come from the drain in the real washbasin.

Tom said, "What is this—and who in hell are you?"

"Eggers," said the stranger. "Call me Eggers. Don't be alarmed—I couldn't hurt you if I wished, which I don't. Nor can you hurt me. Sorry, but it's time to break contact."

With which he touched the object on the wall and vanished—along with the alien bathroom.

Dazed, Tom stood bewildered for a long moment. Then he walked slowly down the two flight of stairs to his basement workshop-studio, dug out a half-empty bottle and a glass, and poured himself a far stiffer slug of whiskey than usual. He downed it, and another, and then one more.

He eyed the row of Lynch-designed objects on what he called, ruefully, the discard-bench. The beautifully simple handipack jigsaw, which could do everything but turn corners—the easilift eggcrate, which lifted easily enough but scalped the eggs while doing so—the waterproof navel watch for Bikini bathingsuit-wearers, which kept out the water as planned but removed most of the navel after swimming.

And, of course, his latest, the hexagonal canister, guaranteed to save vast amounts of packing-space

over the usual cylindrical shape, thanks to its honeycomb design. Which would be an almost certain winner if he could figure out a proper airtight top, or one that would permit regulation can-openers to work on it easily.

Truly, the way of the designer was hard, at least in Allensburgh, without proper testing-facilities. Tom felt a twinge of self-pity course through him. Then, almost fiercely, he forced himself to think again of the incredible incident in the bathroom.

Considering himself hypothetically sane, for the moment, he wondered how the impossible had happened. Certainly, granted that what he saw *had* happened, it must be of recent vintage. Tom had spent too much of his twenty-six years in the odd hybrid-chamber not to have been aware of anything of long duration—anything as unexpected as a superimposed alien bathroom, to say nothing of Egg-ers.

Why, only last Thursday evening, he had rigged a new set of fluorescent lights in there, following Marie's long-term plaint of being unable to see anything in the mirror—or at least to see clearly enough for make-up purposes while preparing for an evening out. Tom had rather prided himself on the ingenuity of his arrangement, of his use of the long-

dead gas-lamp system for the new wiring.

A neat, practical, economical job of home carpentry. He had used the same principle of power amplitude that had caused minor disaster at Morty Keener's soda fountain downtown. He had...

A NUMBER of separate wheels of thought meshed and began to revolve in gear beneath his scalp. He got up, put the bottle firmly back in its place behind the oilcan on the shelf, climbed the stairs again to the second floor of the old house, walked to the end of the hall and poked his head through his sister's door.

She said, "Go away, Tom. I'm asleep."

He said, with true brotherly tact and consideration, "The hell you are—you're lying there in the darkness, thinking sickening thoughts about that two-dimensional creep in the bathroom. What's his name—Egghead?"

She said, "Oh!" in the reproachful voice of a doe pierced by a hunter's bullet. She sat up and added, "I might have known a beautiful thing would be merely an object for stupid derision to a Yahoo like you." Then, more practically, "How'd you find out?"

"He forgot to switch himself off just now," said Tom bitterly. "He walked in on me just after you came to bed."



There was silence, the sort Tom could only think of as pregnant—a word which made him glad their visitor was not three-dimensional. Which in turn made him wonder, for the first time, just what Eggers was anyway, where he came from. He asked Marie.

She said, in her small little-girl-in-love voice, "It's like magic—he's from a world much like ours in both time and space, yet separated by the infinity of the atom. That's what he says it is, anyway." This last in a tone of self-defence.

"I get it," said Tom. "A parallel time-track." Curiously enough, he thought, it made sense after a fashion. Granting, of course, that the whole business wasn't some sort of 3-D illusion gone amok. He added, "But why the hell should he turn up in our bathroom?"

"Because," Marie said patiently, "something happened recently that enabled him to get through. Oh, you know I never could pass second-year algebra. It's way beyond me."

"Yeah." Tom scratched his nose. "I know. Now, how long have you known this creature from another world?"

"Oh..." Marie, now sitting up in bed, made a theatrically-vague sweep of her bare arms. "What does time matter? Have I known him a night or a thousand? All I know is I've known him forever."

"I see what you mean," said



EMSH-

Tom. "Let's say you've known him since last Thursday night; that about it?"

"Oh—I guess so. Yes, it was

last Thursday, when I got home from my date with that horrible Morty Keener." Marie hugged herself, abruptly lay down once more, added, "Now go away, won't you?"

"Okay," said Tom. "Just one more question—when does he manage to *get through*?"

"*Hah!*" came the derisive retort. "I should tell *you!*"

"I want to talk to your new friend," Tom told her.

"You just want to get rid of him the way you have all my other men-friends except for that horrible Morty Keener!" she said dramatically, sitting up once more. "I think you're a Freudian case."

**TOM KNEW** when he was licked, where Marie was concerned. He retired with none of the honors of war. Why, he wondered, hadn't he had the wit to reply, "I was only trying to save them from a fate worse than death—marriage to you!" He pulled off his other sock and, on impulse, padded back to the bathroom.

*Talk about your intimate invasions!* he thought.

But the real question was—how did this bridge between parallel time-tracks, if that's what it was, work? Something very evidently had been activated by his fluorescent-wiring of the previous Thursday. Just what, was the point. It was going to be next to impossible

to figure, since there must have been work done by the other side.

He checked his homemade wiring all the way to the fuse-box in the basement, next to the furnace—nothing. Tom took another slug from the rapidly-waning bottle, then began tracing it backwards, determined not to let recent events get the best of him.

This time, at ground-floor level, he found an oddity. Since both the town and the house still used gas for its kitchen stove, the supply had not been cut off. However, the long-obsolete gas-lighting system had been sealed away from the main outlets.

In running his new wiring system from basement to upstairs bathroom, Tom had inadvertently punctured the seal. Sniffing, he could smell the faint acidity of the aeriform stuff. He sniffed again and frowned and again scratched his nose.

By all rights, the house should be reeking with the gas. But, save for that one spot, it was absolutely free of any taint. Tom went into the kitchen and tested the stove. Pilot-light, range and oven, all worked perfectly. He went back to the basement and had another drink; then he went upstairs and fell into bed.

When Tom awakened the next morning, his mouth was full of angora wool and a malicious grem-



lin was snapping rubber bands in back of his eyeballs. He had overslept, and Marie had left a note on the upstairs hall-table, informing him that she was spending the day working in the library.

The bathroom looked almost distressingly prosaic.

He breakfasted after a fashion on a three-day-old piece of Danish pastry from Morty Keener's drug-store, and a cup of tepid coffee. There was just one good thing about the real or fancied happenings of the night before, he decided. If he was crazy, it ran in the family—for Marie was certainly a matching nut.

Tom's first impulse was to make as if nothing had happened. It hardly could have. But, recalling his sister and her ways when in love, he made a trip back upstairs and did a little fixing of the lock on the bathroom door. If what he thought couldn't have happened happened again, he had no intention of being shut out.

When he returned to the ground floor, the mail was in. A long, official-looking envelope informed him that the United States Patent Office had chosen to grant him a patent on the hexagonal canister, thus affording him protection against any other inventor who might subsequently come up with a similar idea.

*Great!* he thought. Protection

against any inventor as cracked as himself, who might come up with a similar idea that wouldn't work. Sure, they could fix it with a self-sealing strip, like those found on canned hams and the costlier—if not coffer—coffees. But that would up the cost right out of the mass-level consumer, who would find the space-saving of a hexagonal can profitable.

And you couldn't screw off or on a hexagonal top.

**BY** THREE o'clock he gave up on it as a bad job and drove out to the golf course for some exercise. He shot a juicy 99—his usual score was in the high 80's—and managed to lose four new balls. All in all, it was a miserable day, even though the sun was shining, the humidity was low and the breeze gently delightful.

Marie was still in her fog. She cooked the mushrooms with the stewed tomatoes, the okra with the chops. There was cornstarch in the coffee, and the pudding was unbearably formless and sweet. Tom's squawks might as well have remained unuttered—they bounced off his sister's romantic shell like cannonballs off the armored turret of the *U. S. S. Monitor* in 1862.

He finally sought surcease at Morty Keener's, in a double hamburger and a malted. Morty said,

"What's Marie doing tonight, Tom?"

Tom said, "As far as I know, she's taking a bath."

Morty said, "Oh!"—vaguely—and moved on to another customer.

Although there had been a change of bill at the Tivoli, Tom didn't go to see it. Instead, he returned home, entering far more quietly than was his wont.

As he sneaked upstairs, he saw that the bathroom door was shut. He could hear Marie's voice through the door. He hesitated. Even sisters had some rights when it came to using the bathroom.

Then he heard Eggers' voice faintly, unintelligibly, from within. He grasped the knob, turned it and entered.

The alien room was back in all its translucent glory, and Marie and the stranger in the gleaming blue singlet were as close together as the variance in their dimensions permitted. In fact, to Tom's somewhat jaundiced gaze, they seemed to overlap a trifle fuzzily.

She said, "Tom, I was just going to try to find you. Eggie wants to talk to you." She moved away from her semi-material lover with obvious regret.

Eggers said, in the faint voice that seemed to be piped through the washbowl drain, "Yes; I want you to do something for me."

Tom sat down on the edge of the tub and lit a cigarette. No sense in letting his inner excitement show. He said, "I want you to do something for me, Eggy. I'd like to know how you arranged this—contact. And why the bathroom? Why *our* bathroom?"

Eggy's shoulders rippled faintly in what might have been a shrug. Marie's hazel eyes sought her brother's. Her face wore an isn't-he-wonderful expression. Eggy said, "We've been trying to get through to your plane for what you call years. We've been watching you, studying you, whenever we managed to make observation contact."

He paused but Tom was watchfully, Marie rapturously, silent. Eggers added, "It appears to have been merely a matter of luck that we made conversation semi-materialization with your bathroom. And it *is* lucky—since the bathroom, as you call it, appears to be the most truly functional room in your dwellings."

"You can say that again," Tom told him. "But why *ours*?"

"Because of the *schmorko-conflitz* bridge you created," said Eggers.

"Come again?" Tom asked, bewildered.

"Oh—sorry." The alien smiled politely. "You would call it a gas-fluorescent blend, I suppose," he



added. "It is the only chemical or material means of spanning our planes. We've had our *replioskae*—our contact-chambers—set up and ready for generations, waiting for someone on your side to create a bridge. You have done so."

"Oh, Tom!" breathed Marie ecstatically. "How wonderful!"

"Yeah," said Tom, rapidly re-adjusting his mental sunsights and taking a quick azimuth on himself, "but why this bathroom-to-bathroom deal? Or is the room you're in a bathroom?"

"Of course," Eggers smiled again. "We long ago decided to meet your end of the bridge, whenever it was created, with a matching end of ours—to make the transition point less radical, of course."

"I see," said Tom, scratching his nose and agreeing silently that Marie's half-lover made sense of a sort, "but why the evening-only appearances?"

"Because you don't turn on your lights in the daytime," was the devastating reply. Then, again, "I want you to do something for me. I want you to make an actual physical transfer possible. I have promised your sister..."

"You want in here?" Tom asked dubiously. He hesitated, turned to Marie, added, "Scram, kid—I'll call you when we've got things settled."

"If you think I'm going to sit outside while you and Eggy..." she began, outraged.

"It might be wiser," said the alien, unexpectedly.

"Yes, dear," Marie said meekly. She left.

**T**OM FOLDED his arms and leaned back against the edge of the ancient tub. "Now, just why do you wish to cross into our plane?"

"Because," said the alien, "I love your sister. There are insurmountable differences between us of which she knows nothing. I wish only to embrace her briefly, to *schmoggle* her—"

"To *what*?" Tom almost shouted.

Eggers made a deprecatory gesture. "You would term it a kiss," he said. "I assure you I cannot remain long in your atmosphere—nor can I exist at all in your plane outside of a bowl of force which will be limited to this room. Incidentally, I am glad you selected the bathroom for your end of the bridge. It's the only truly romantic room. And your sister's beauty..." He sighed, reminding Tom of Marie.

"You *are* different," said Tom. "What do women in your world do when they want to meet a man—drop the cleanex instead of a hand-

kerchief? Or snap their bobby-pins?"

"I don't understand." The alien frowned politely.

"Forget it," said Tom. "But if you make physical transfer to this plane, what's to prevent you from kidnapping Marie and taking her back with you for a real *schnoggle* session?"

"My dear fellow!" Eggers looked hurt. "Our love is one of those romances that is fated to exist only in our memories and heart. But I would like to leave her some small token. . ."

Tom thought it over, decided to play along for a while. He said, "Okay, what do you want me to do?"

Eggers went to the translucent wall, laid a finger on the odd device he had switched off the previous night. He said, "I'm going to show you a plan of this transmitter. I want you to *phrenglich*—photograph—it, if you will. Then I want you to make one, following the circuits accurately. When you turn it on, I shall be able to come through. It will be the most *plarbuist* event of our twin universes."

"I can see that," said Tom. "But how about my being able to get through to your world?"

"You'd need protective covering, I fear," said Eggers. "Our atmosphere is hardly salubrious for your species."

"But how about you in ours?" Tom asked.

The alien made another deprecatory gesture. "We have taken necessary precautions," he said.

Although he disliked a number of Eggers' implications, Tom went and got his camera. He also brought one of his hexagonal cans, showed it to the alien and explained its function—also its difficulties. Eggers said, "I believe I can solve it for you. I'll have to consult some of our *milschwasses* though."

"What are they?" Tom asked suspiciously.

"Oh—you'd call them experts," said Eggers. "Now—I hope you make a faithful record."

Tom photographed the strange device, which, opened, looked like a cutaway diagram of an electric-shaver. Then he left and told Marie to return to her *schnogging* lover from another plane.

He spent most of the night and all the next day in his workshop-studio, laboring over the circuits of the alien gadget. It was ingenious, economical, operating on aluminum print in a strangely convoluted order. The only hitch lay in the power of the original, which apparently tapped any nearby electric current without plug or battery. He thought of using dry cells, then decided to put the entire sys-



tem into an empty electric shaver shell and plug it in the wall.

**I**N THE BASEMENT, nothing happened—nothing alien, that is—when he turned it on. However, the device gave off a not-unpleasant warmth and whirred softly as it did whatever it did. Hoping he had made no mistake and, if he hadn't, that he wasn't exposing either the world or his sister to alien invasion, he took it upstairs and plugged it into the wall-socket alongside the cabinet over the basin. By that time Marie had dinner ready.

In his own abstracted condition, Tom failed to realise until much later that she had basted the broiler with mayonnaise and used whipped butter instead of mayonnaise on the salad. Afterward, hand-in-hand and intensely silent, they entered the bathroom together.

As he reached for the light-switch, Tom said, "Remember, kiddo, I want the answer to my question before I bring him through."

"Just don't take too long," she replied, looking at him but not seeing him at all.

Tom pressed the switch, waited breathlessly while the fluorescent lights flickered, then came on full power. At once, the alien room, popped into view. Eggers was standing there, waiting for them,

looking at Tom rather than Marie. He said, "Now—try it."

"As soon as you answer my question," said Tom.

"Your question? Oh, the canister," said the alien. He sighed, added, "I have your answer, of course. A brief vertical toggle will do the trick. But your device is not space-saving, I fear."

"Why not? It's modeled after the most economical packing-job we have—the honeycomb," Tom insisted.

"Ah, yes—your insect device," said the other, nodding. Then, "But the bees use the hexagon to contain round holes. The square is the only truly economical pack. I believe your dairymen have proved it with milk-cartons."

Tom gave a yelp of anguish and smote his brow. Eggers said, "I am sorry, but I've fulfilled my promise. Now fulfill yours."

Numbed, Tom pushed the starter on the converted electric shaver. Marie, her eyes glued on her alien lover, saw nothing of what he did.

There was a curious flickering effect, but the other room took on a new reality and, suddenly, Eggers was with them. Or was he? As he stepped to Marie and took her into his arms he seemed to flicker off and on like an old-fashioned movie storm-effect. He said, in oddly staccato tones, "My dear, I want you to have this, to guard it with your life," and placed the

crescent-shaped pouch from his belt in her hands.

Then Marie said, "Ugh!" Wrinkling her nose, she pushed clear of her love, gasping and choking, and stumbled for the door.

Eggers, still flickering on and off, gaped after her. Then he too let out a cry—"Varshminkle!"—and scrambled back toward the far wall, his face contorted with anguish. A sizzling sound began to gain in volume, the alien scene and its occupant flickered more violently.

And then the other-plane bathroom flashed out of sight with a violent clicking snap!

For a long moment, Tom feared he had blown a fuse, while the fluorescents waned and waxed. Then they settled into normal brightness, revealing, in a puddle of foul-smelling swamp water where Eggers had stood, the crescent-shaped pouch Marie had dropped.

From the door, the girl gasped, "How horrible, Tom! He got me soaking wet! Thanks for getting rid of him. He—smelled!"

"I wonder how we smelled to him," said Tom, more to himself than to Marie. He was puzzled by the odd way things had gone. His only deviation from instructions had been to use a wall-plug connection for the non-existent source of power in Eggers' gadget. He

picked up the shaver-shell and looked at it idly. His eyes picked up the *Works on AC or DC* legend. And then he had it.

**A**LLENSBURGH was an AC community. And, evidently, Eggers lived in a DC world. Furthermore, if it was as damp as indicated, the atmosphere itself might be an efficient conductor, which would explain the lack of a battery or plug in the gadget.

He laid it down on the basin, said, "Marie, better be careful with this thing."

She ran her fingers through hopelessly sodden hair, said, "Oh, I'm a mess. And that horrible thing!" She looked at the odd pouch on the floor. "It felt—alive."

"I'll get it out of here," said Tom. "You fix yourself up."

"I'll have to have a new permanent," she lamented. When Marie was through with a crush, Tom knew from experience, the finish was both quick and complete.

He picked up the pouch, which *did* seem to quiver with life of some sort, hefted it, took his departure. On the way down to the basement, he made a detour and turned off the gas. He'd seal up the puncture in the morning. No more alien worlds, if only for Marie's sake, he decided. Square canisters...



He had to use an electric-drill to open the pulsating sac, whose outer envelope was both resilient and tough, almost like some sort of rubberized steel. Inside, it was full of tiny, gelatinous blobs. Even as he looked at them under the light, he could see their substance shrivel away, exposing the wee, wriggling tadpole-like creatures within them. After awhile, their wriggling ceased.

Tom pulled over one of the photographs he had taken the night before and studied it. Viewed with new detachment, he could see some definite indications in the portions of Eggers his camera had caught. The width of mouth, the flat set and largeness of the eyes, the shortness of his arms, the great length of his legs. And he recalled the odd articulation of the alien's joints.

If Eggers was the dominant species of his world, it was a world of amphibians. It wasn't hard to guess why he had made the contact, why his world and species wanted it. The mess in the pouch was the answer. If Marie had reacted as expected, she would have guarded his gift preciously. And, if it operated with the efficiency of the rest of the aliens' devices, it would doubtless have inaugurated the birth of a new dominant species in this world.

Conquest might not have been their aim—indeed, superficially, it

seemed unlikely to Tom. But there would have been bound to be unpleasant repercussions with frogmen operating on both sides of the dimensional-curtain. No wonder, he thought, they found their bathroom the most functional chambers in their homes. Amphibians would.

He studied the now-empty pouch, cleaned it, thought, idly, it could be converted to a useful tobacco pouch. Then he wondered how he could give the alarm, in case any further contacts were made. He wondered who would believe him if he tried to relate what had happened. And then, with a sigh, he decided to keep quiet about it. It seemed unlikely any other gadgeteer would manage to come up with the same accidental combination that had led to the contact.

Depressed and let down, Tom went slowly back upstairs—and was greeted, on the landing, by a suddenly-radiant Marie. She held the converted shaver in her hand and, for a moment, Tom feared she had remade contact and been hypnotized by Eggers.

However, she said, "Tom, you darling! How like you to keep it a secret! I could almost strangle you..."

"Huh? What a secret?" he asked brightly, coming to a full stop.

"*This!*" she said, waving the shaver-shell with its trailing insu-



lated cord. "Oh, Tom, it's the most wonderful thing you ever thought of. It dries and waves and sets, all at once. Look!" She turned her head to display perfectly-arrayed auburn locks where, minutes before, she had looked like a lady caught in a cloudburst without a chapeau.

Tom sat down abruptly on the

top of the steps. He recalled the pleasant warmth of the gadget, its faintly whirring inner activity. He looked up at his sister and smiled and said, "Oh, Old Tom knows what he's doing."

He wondered if he could package the pocket beautician—which would have to be its name—in a hexagonal container.

### READIN' and WRITHIN'

People with a taste for the sharp-operator hero who flourished in American popular fiction during the thirties, and people with an insatiable appetite for bad science-fiction will like this old series from *Astounding*. I confess to a sneaking fondness for it myself; the story moves fast and simply, as mechanically-exciting as a pinball machine; it's wonderfully relaxing—because the author has done all the work, what there was of it—and nothing is required of the reader, not a moment's thought, not even an emotional response.

The formula is simply an amalgam of Mr. Tutt and Colin Glen-cannon, lifted bodily out of context and dumped into space. I wrote "into a spaceship" before I caught myself; actually the internal evidence is clear that the things the author calls spaceships are oceangoing vessels—probably windjammers, at that.

*No sooner had the ship blasted off than they set him to work. And what work! Scrubbing and scouring and restacking bales and cases every time the freighter took a steep curve... (P. 24.)*

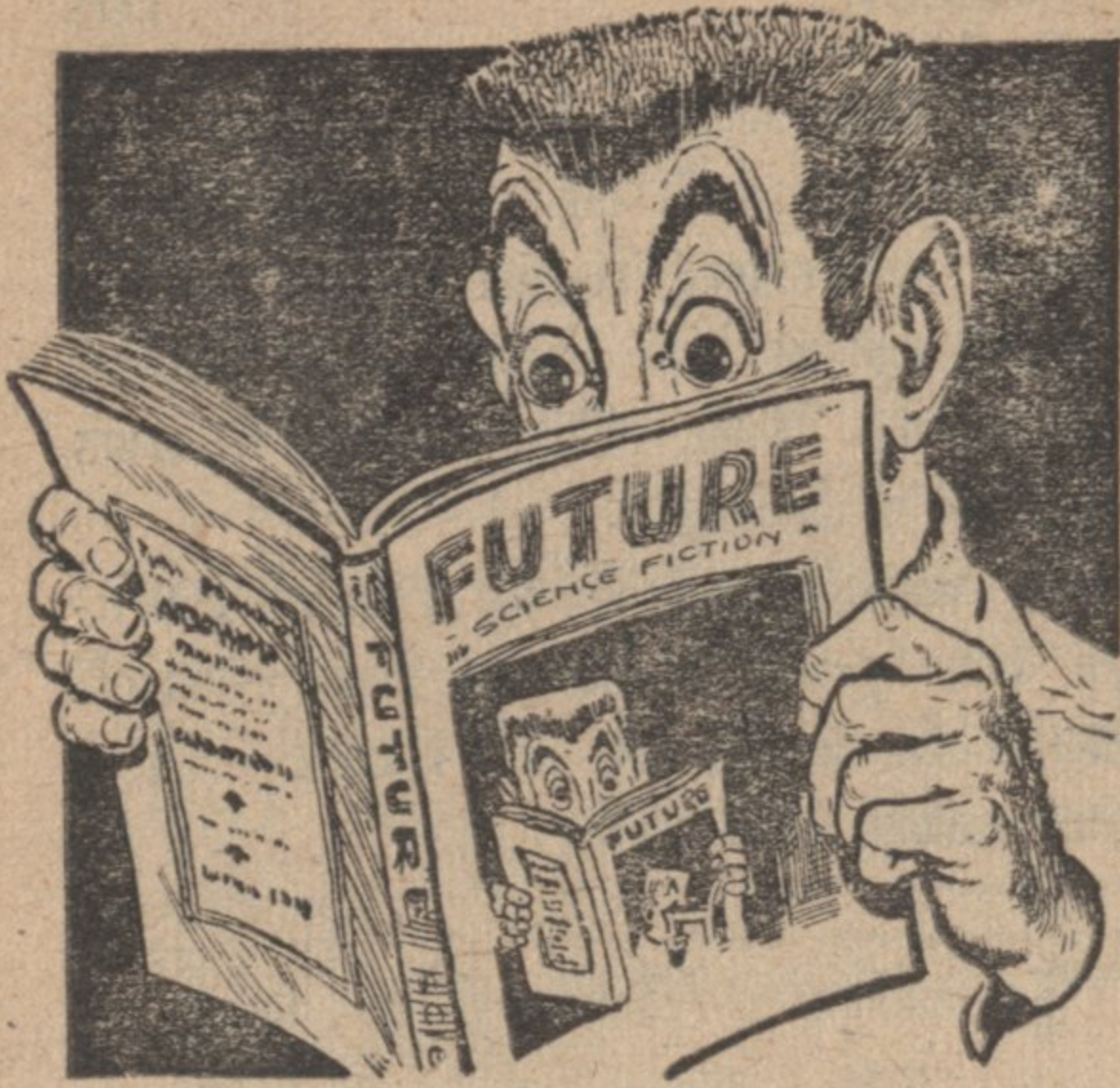
[continued from page 89]

*...The liner swerved toward her, and the buzzer sputtered, as the ship called for her to make radio contact. ...The liner hesitated (with flapping sails?), then proceeded on its course... (P. 137.)*

*...She made some rapid calculations. If she kept her rockets on to hold to a steady three-hundred-mile-a-second gait (against a contrary wind, probably)... (P. 139.)*

And so forth. here's a dramatic moment in chapter 10 when the hero, after accelerating steadily for 35 million miles out from Earth, turns on a dime and shoots back to rescue the heroine, becalmed in the Horse Latitudes and about to fall into the sun; later on we encounter a description of radioactivity, all too obviously written when the words of A. Merritt had to serve in place of the unborn Smythe Report; but it doesn't matter—there's never a doubt that hero and heroine will steer safely at last through reef and shoal, in fair weather and foul, to the snuggest of all paste-board harbors.





# INSIDE SCIENCE FICTION

Reports and Reminiscences  
By **ROBERT A. MADLE**

## SCIENCE FICTION SPOTLIGHT

**N**EW AND VIEWS: Sixty-five science-fiction friends helped Forrest J. Ackerman celebrate his 27th birthday several months ago. After attending the Los Angeles opening of "The War of the Worlds," the entire group assembled at the Ackermans where an AM fantasy-session ensued. Among those indulging in the festivities were A. E. van Vogt, Chad Oliver, E. E. Evans, Morris S. Dollens, and producer George Pal. Ackerman was presented with a bronze miniature,

mounted on plastic tripods, of the Martian war-machine as portrayed in "The War of the Worlds." Included was an inscription: "*Happy Birthday—Mr. Science Fiction. Your Pal, George.*"

Plans for the Twelfth World Science Fiction Convention are well under way, and it has been announced officially that it will be a four-day affair. Right now the Convention Committee requires all the fan-support it can possibly muster. So send \$1 to Box 335, Station A, Richmond 2, California. This \$1 will make you a member of the Convention, and



you will receive periodic reports of the activities which will culminate in 1954's World S-F Convention, to be held in San Francisco over the Labor Day weekend.

Another science-fiction gathering (of primary interest to eastern and mid-western enthusiasts) will be held May 22 and 23. This will be the 5th Indian Lake Conference, Hotel Ingalls, Bellefontaine, Ohio. Dr. C. L. Barrett, Don Ford, and Stan Skirvin have proved themselves to be conference-hosts supreme (as anyone who has attended any of the previous Indian Lake clambakes will testify) and it is urged that all interested in attending should write directly to the hotel for reservations as soon as possible.

Old fanmag editors never die: they just fade away only to return to the field years later. In a previous column we mentioned that Allen Glasser, 71 Tehama Street, Brooklyn 18, New York wants to hear from anyone who has copies for disposal of his 1932 publication, *The Time Traveller*. Now we have heard from Larry B. Farsaci, who edited that excellent fanzine of the late '30's, *Golden Atom*. Larry would like to hear from any of his oldtime subscribers and, in particular, those who have extra copies of *Golden Atom*. The address is 187 North Union Street, Rochester 5, New York.

Remember David Lasser who was Managing Editor of *Wonder Stories* from 1929 to 1933? He is now research-director for the CIO's United Electrical workers.... The University of Akron is now offering a course in the writing of science-fiction. Dr. Laurence J. Lafleur states that the purpose is to show students

how to separate the "possible from the myth".... A recent dispatch from Washington informs that the Bulgarian Communists are complaining about the lack of science-fiction in Bulgarian children's literature.... Dr. I. M. Levitt, Director of Philadelphia's Fels Planetarium, has developed the world's first space-clock. This device registers the relative time on Earth and Mars, and will be indispensable to pioneer space-travellers.... The latest issue of *Scientology*, published by the Hubbard Association of Scientologists, Philadelphia, mentions that L. Ron Hubbard is now residing in the Quaker City. We have also been informed that Elron plans an early return to s-f writing.

New York authoress Katherine MacLean was welcomed by Kris Neville, Floyd Wallace, Chad Oliver, James Schmitz, the Evans', and the Ackermans when she attended the 849th meeting of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Social in December. Also on hand was Wm. S. Hofford, one of the original members of the LASFS, who returned after an absence of more than fifteen years.... The South will rise again! The newest science-fiction club (initial meeting was held January 15th) is the Carolina Science Fiction Society. All readers in North and South Carolina are cordially invited to write to the Secretary, Martin Klein, 2020 Kirkwood Circle, Charlotte, North Carolina, for details.

*The Scientifilms*: An authoritative source informs that Fritz Land will soon refilm the legendary masterpiece, "The Girl in the Moon".... *Films in Review*, organ



of the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures, has invited Forrest J. Ackerman to be its scientific critic.... A forum on "Science Fiction Films and Reality" was recently held at Paramount Studios. George Pal, Ivan Tors ("Magnetic Monster" and "Riders to the Stars"), Chesley Bonestell, and R. S. Richardson participated before an audience of 150 foreign correspondents.... "Mr. Science Fiction" will soon be interviewed over a Hollywood TV channel in a series which will also include such personalities as Ida Lupino and Mickey Spillane.... A prominent producer is seriously contemplating the works of A. E. van Vogt as possible material for his forthcoming scientific film. Also under consideration by this same individual is that ancient classic from the Spring, 1928 *Amazing Quarterly*, "The Nth Man," by Homer Eon Flint.

*From the World of Books:* The Chamberlain Press (which was announced by this department in the January *Dynamic Science Fiction*) has scheduled its initial volume for late March release. It will be a Richard Matheson anthology, "Born of Man and Woman." Alan E. Nourse, popular young author, is a high-ranking officer of the new firm.... August Derleth's next anthology will be called, "In Time to Come," and will contain originals by Isaac Asimov, Arthur J. Cox, Evelyn Smith and Clark Ashton Smith.... Among the latest softcover volumes are two outstanding anthologies, edited by Frederik Pohl: "Shadow o Tomorrow" (Permabooks, 35¢) and "Star Science Fiction Stories No. 2" (Ballantine, 35¢).

Other Ballantine releases are the first American publication of John Wyndham's "Out of the Deeps;" a collection of Arthur C. Clarke shorts, "Expedition to Earth;" and a novelization of Curt Siodmak's scientific film, "Riders to the Stars." Avon Publications have issued a 25¢ edition of van Vogt's "Away and Beyond" and Ace Double Novels latest release is "Conan and the Conqueror" by Robert E. Howard and an expansion of "Sea Kings of Mars", by Leigh Brackett, retitled "The Sword of Rhiannon"—both for the price of one, 35¢.

#### THE FAN PRESS

**I**N THE EDITION of "Inside Science Fiction" which appeared in the March *Future* we indicated that we considered Joel Nydahl, publisher of *Vega*, one of fandom's most dynamic personalities. After reading the anniversary issue of *Vega*, we are compelled to reiterate that statement most emphatically! This issue contains *one hundred* faultlessly mimeographed pages, and obviously represents an incredible amount of "work, sweat and tears" on the part of its youthful editor and publisher. And the contents, from the well-executed three-color cover to the poem, "The Model of A Science Fiction Fan," on page 100, is topflight stuff. Marlan Ellison, Lynn Hickman, Bob Tucker, and Dean Grennell appear with regular departments of interest to readers and collectors, and there are innumerable articles by Walter Willis, Marion Zimmer Bradley, Bob Silverberg, Redd Boggs, ad infinitum. Included also is



"The Philcon Diary," twenty-two pages of what went on at the Bellevue-Stratford by Norman A. Browne, Bob Tucker, and Robert Bloch. If you want this special issue, send 50¢ to 119 S. Front Street, Marquette, Michigan. Future issues will cost 15¢ or 75¢ a year.

Another fine publication is *Spaceship* (10¢ from Bob Silverberg, 760 Montgomery Street, Brooklyn 13, New York). In the latest number Larry Stark almost viciously criticizes scientifilms in general, and "The War of the Worlds" in particular. Editor Silverberg compares Huxley's "Brave New World" with Orwell's "1984" and Redd Boggs appears with his commentary, "File 13." There are other better-than-average items by Harry Warner, Jr., Fred Chappell, and others. We can unhesitatingly recommend *Spaceship*—even to those who have never experienced a fanzine.

A unique publication is *Star-Lanes* (20¢ will get you a sample from Orma McCormick, 1558 W. Hazelhurst Street, Ferndale 20, Michigan). This mimeod magazine is comprised entirely of poetry: even the comments of its readers are in verse. Dean Grennell, Lillith Lorraine, Garth Bentley, and Lin Carter are among those represented this time. Starting with next issue, *Star Lanes* will be professionally printed. Suffice to say, if you like poetry—you'll like *Star Lanes*.

We wonder if anyone ever said, "What fandom needs is a good five-cent fanzine"? At any rate, fandom has just that in *Mote* (obtainable from Robert Peatrowsky, Box 634, Norfolk, Nebraska). Rich Lupoff is repre-

sented twice this time: in his department he compares Bradbury and Heinlein, and fervently pleads for the return of *Captain Future*. His other contribution is, "Ray Palmer—Genius or Madman?" There are various other departments and articles and, like the above described publications, *Mote*, is worth peering into.

Send all fan publications for review to: Robert A. Madle, 1825 Academy Street, Charlotte, North Carolina.

### TWENTY YEARS AGO IN SCIENCE FICTION

**I**N PREVIOUS issues we have indicated how science-fiction plunged to abyssmal depths in the economically-calamitous year of 1933. We have further shown magazine science-fiction emerging from the darkness of 1933—led by two new editors—two men who injected radical concepts into their policies. F. Orlin Tremaine's "thought-variant" policy and Charles D. Hornig's "New Plot" requisite were creating a renaissance in the field. Again science-fiction was paralleling the nation's economic situation: FDR was employing new and radical ideas in an effort to invigorate the nation's economy, and Tremaine and Hornig were applying similar measures in their editing of *Astounding Stories* and *Wonder Stories*.

*Astounding Stories* for April, 1934 (160 pulp size pages) featured one of Howard V. Brown's better cover-paintings, which portrayed a scene from the initial installment of Jack Williamson's classic, "The Legion of Space." We suppose almost everyone has read



of the fabulous activities of John Star, Giles Habibula, Jay Kalam, and Hal Samdu and their strange adventures on a faraway world as they battled evil forces to save the lovely Aladoree Anthar who held in her mind the secret weapon of Earth, AKKA. Fantasy Press has published a hardcover edition of "The Legion of Space" and *Galaxy Novel* No. 2 was a 25¢ edition.

The "thought-variant" this time was Nat Schachner's novella, "He From Procyon," which described the experiment of a god-like being from a far star, and how the world was affected by the four people to whom he gave a strange power. Other stories were by Harry Bates, Stanton A. Coblentz, and Donald Wandrei. Installment No. 1 of "Lo!" by Charles Fort astounded many readers. Illustrations were by Brown, Marchioni, Durant, and, making his appearance for the first time, Elliot Dold. (Dold, one of the greatest of all stf illustrators, had previously illustrated the short-lived *Miracle Stories* of 1931.)

"The Blinding Shadows," by Donald Wandrei, was the thought-variant in the May, 1934 *Astounding*, and Brown's cover portraying a scene from it was one of his worst. Wandrei told of an experiment getting out of control, and how New York was occupied by alien three-dimensional shadows. Just to be different, Wandrei had Man being defeated in his efforts to disperse the creatures from NYC. Fortunately, the rest of the world was untouched. John Russell Fearn had a real super thought-variant, "The Brain of Light," and there were stories by

Charles Willard Diffin, Nat Schachner, and Howard W. Graham. PH.D. (Howard Wandrei). Williamson and Fort continued their serials, and Orban, Thomson, Brown, and Dold illustrated. Donald Wandrei, Olon F. Wiggins, and William S. Sykora were among the letter writers. Most readers were enthusiastic in their praise of the new *Astounding*.

*Wonder Stories* for April, 1934 (128 pulp size pages) presented an admirable Lunar landscape, Frank R. Paul cover illustrating a scene from "The Moon Devils," by John Beynon Harris (John Wyndham today). Earthmen accidentally revived Lunarians from suspended animation, only to have the Lunarians destroy them. A. C. Stimson made his first (and only) appearance in science fiction with a so-so adventure novelette, "The Land of the Mighty Insects"—giant monster insects residing beyond the South Pole: nothing original or world-shaking here. Milton Kaletsky, John Edwards, and R. F. Starzl penned tales of average interest, while Jack Williamson continued his popular Merritt-like serial, "Xandulu."

The stories in this issue were not of exceptional merit, but Hugo Gernsback's editorial was probably the most important he ever wrote. The information of the Science Fiction League was announced, and Gernsback said:

...there are now actually thousands upon thousands of active fans, who take the movement as seriously as others do music, or any other artistic endeavor. Many fans collect science-fiction stories. ...Research is being conducted by others. ...With such a



vast movement, the writer, who has been watching it since he launched the first science fiction magazine in April, 1926, now feels the time is auspicious to coordinate all who are interested. . . . into one comprehensive international group.

In the May, 1934 *Wonder Stories* Gernsback outlined detailed plans for the League. The information of local chapters was particularly stressed, and Gernsback thrillingly stated:

The founders of the Science Fiction League sincerely believe they have a great mission to fulfill. They believe in the seriousness of Science Fiction. *They believe that there is nothing greater than human imagination, and the diverting of such imagination into constructive channels.* They believe that Science Fiction is something more than literature. They sincerely believe that it can become a world-force of unparalleled magnitude in time to come.

Paul's usual outstanding cover illustrated "Earthspot," by Morrison Colladay, a story which utilized the interesting concept of an earthspot at the magnetic pole, and how it caused a second deluge. Eando Binder (whose tales were appearing with extreme rapidity during this period) wrote of "The Green Cloud of Space"—a plague threatened to wipe out mankind, but Man won out in this not-too-inspiring short. Jack Williamson has Miles Kendon defeat the Red God and return to his love in "Xandulu," while Friedrich Freska, Epaminondas T. Snooks, D.T.G.

(C. P. Mason), and Chester G. Osborne (a one-shot author) rounded out the issue. Paul and Winter illustrated.

*Amazing Stories* for April, 1934 (144 pulp size pages) had a passable Leo Morey cover depicting a scene from Francis Flagg's time-traveling novelette, "The Mentanicals"—a tale of the far future when machines rule the world. This was mediocre, as was Harl Vincent's extra-dimensional story, "Cat's Eye"—a strange gem bridged the gap between the third and an alien dimension. H. Haverstock Hill's "Terror Out of Space" inspired very few this installment, while "Skylark" Smith brought "Triplanetary" to a satisfactory denouement. Edgar Allen Poe's "The Gold-Bug" was reprinted, and Morey illustrated throughout.

The May, 1934 *Amazing Stories* continued along its changeless path, under the static editorial policies of T. O'Connor Sloane, Ph. D. Morey's cover symbolized science fiction with a painting of Jules Verne's monument in Nantes, France. This issue possibly established an unbroken record for it contained *three* serials!\* "Terror Out of Space" finally ended; Jules Verne's "Measuring A Meridian" began, as did "The Lost City," by Milton R. Peril. Peril's adventuresome novel told of the discovery of Atlantis beneath Egyptian ruins. (What a concept!) J. Lewis Burtt wrote of "The White Dwarf"—and in this ho-hum tale, "The White Dwarf" was old Sol. But Man devised a method to counteract the cosmic calamity. Fletcher Pratt and Dr. D. E. Winstead (another solo-appearance) added nothing extraor-

[continued on page 121]





# RESCUE

By **GORDON R. DICKSON**

**I**T WAS AT noon of the third day that the four hunters of Amuk came upon the fallen star. It had not buried itself as deeply in the earth as most of its kind, but it was very shiny and hard; after trying unsuccessfully for a while to break off a piece, the hunters gave up and left it alone.

There was, however, a trail leading away from it, as of a beast that went on two legs, like the men, like the hunters themselves; out of curiosity, as much as out of their need for meat, they followed it. It led them into the jungle for some little ways, wandering here and there as if the beast was wounded, but there was no sign of

blood to be seen; indeed, when the hunters finally caught up with the thing it turned out to be perfectly whole.

They came upon it at last in a clearing, where instead of running away from them it ran toward them. And so they waited for it—for indeed they were four, and all hunters—and it came up within a spear's length and faced them and they talked with it.

It was, indeed, very like a man; it called itself a man, and claimed to have been seeking the men over great distances. But no one would have taken it for a man. For one thing it was too tall for a man, and too light, and had no beard. Also it wore the clothing of no





**The star-man looked at Pibo and his people pityingly, but Pibo's reputation for wisdom hadn't been built on air.**

illustrated by **ORBAN**

tribe. However, it spoke a variant of the Old Language, which the tribe itself had jealously preserved; and so the hunters decided to take it back to the king for instructions on what to do with it.

The king of the Men of Amuk at that time was Pibo; he was very old and had a reputation for being wise. He did not come at once to a decision, but ordered the hunters to step back and told the thing that talked like a man, and walked like a man, to seat itself and talk with him.

The beast opened the neck-part of its strange clothing and sat upon the ground; Pibo seated himself upon the black rock of judgment and questioned it, drawing

his robes around him as he talked. "Where do you come from?" he asked, in the old language.

"From Earth," said the beast. "Scout Lieutenant Holroyd Aldo at your service."

These words, of course, made no sense, but Pibo had not come by his reputation for wisdom by admitting ignorance. He nodded and went on.

"What are you doing in the neighborhood of the Tribe of Amuk?" he asked.

The beast settled himself more comfortably on the ground. "I was looking for you," he answered.

**T**Hese words were understandable, but pretty obviously



a lie. However, Pibo's wrinkled brown features gave no sign of what he thought of such a transparent falsehood; he merely nodded to the beast to go on.

"It's going to come as a bit of a shock to you, probably," said the beast, "but we've been hunting you, along with the other lost worlds, for the last eighty years. You're just lucky I found you; I'd already made my sweep of this system and was just about to give up when my drive by-pass conked and I had to flop in for an emergency-landing. The reason I missed you on my first sweep must have been because your cities are all gone. I didn't see a sign of any buildings. What are you people living in?"

"We live in trees, of course," said Pibo. He swayed a little on the black judgement-rock, considering which of many questions to ask. He finally seized on the one understandable statement out of the beast's last speech.

"You have been looking for the Tribe of Amuk eighty years," he said. "You mentioned others; who are they?"

"The people of Earth and of the twenty systems," replied the beast. "The people of forty-eight worlds; but they're all from Earth of course, just like you are."

"But *you* have been looking for eighty years," said Pibo, cunningly.

The beast laughed. "Not I, myself," it said. "I've only been searching personally for five of your years. After all, I'm only thirty-five years old."

Pibo stifled a smile of triumph. He began to feel more sure of himself, and sat on the black stone in more relaxed fashion. He began to feel almost indulgent toward the beast for letting itself be tricked into such a clumsy lie. No man lived to be thirty-five. Pibo himself was an ancient twenty-seven, three times the average age of the hunters; and no tree or bush or animal lived half the age of a man. He looked at the beast fondly. Now that he had proved his superiority by catching it in a lie, he could afford to let it string tales at will. He encouraged it with a lazy nod. "Tell me more," he commanded.

"Anything you want to know," said the beast, cheerfully, "but I ought to be asking a few questions myself. How many are there of you people?"

"Five hundred thousand," lied Pibo.

"That many?" said the beast, with a look of astonishment. "It'll be some job to reorient your bunch. Well, if you've got that many, you ought to be able to spare me about twenty men to dig my ship out. I've got to get her upright before I can extend my antenna and call my mother ship."



Pibo nodded; but said nothing. The beast looked relieved. "I suppose you wonder how this all came about?" he asked. "How much do you people remember of the past?"

"We know all our history," said Pibo. "Nothing that ever happened to Men has been forgotten by the Tribe of Amuk."

"That so?" inquired the beast. "Tell me, just how does your history run?"

"From the beginning to the present," replied Pibo. "It is all remembered. From the time the earth split open and gave forth the first man, to the end of the world when the sun will trip his feet on the mountains as he passes and fall into the jungle, setting the world on fire."

"My God!" said the beast. Then checked it itself and said no more. Pibo looked at it curiously, wondering if perhaps he had not made a mistake to say what he just had. Then he remembered the stupid lie of the beast about the years it had lived, and felt reassured. Still, it was a very strange beast, and it behooved him to find out about it. Also, Pibo was very old and the old are inquisitive.

"Are you surprised?" Pibo asked the beast.

The beast looked at Pibo cautiously. "I see I've made a mistake," it said. "You people are in for extensive reorientation. It was

the fact you spoke such good lingo that fooled me."

"Eight and eighty-eight are the tongues of men," said Pibo, automatically, "but there is only one Old Language. How could there be more?" He looked at the beast. "How did you learn to speak it, beast?"

**T**HE BEAST jumped a little at the last word. He looked around and saw where the hunters had drawn close and leaned upon their spears, listening. He put his hand to the middle of his body as if searching for something; but the hand found nothing and he pulled it away again. There was a little sweat that came out on his forehead and the hunters scented Fear.

"Hold on, there," he said. "I'm a man just like the rest of you. I learned what you call the Old Language the same way you did—by growing up with other human beings."

"What are human beings?" asked Pibo. The hunters moved closer.

"People like yourself," cried the beast. "Men—and women and children."

"There are the Men, and there are beasts," replied Pibo; "these others I have never heard of." He made an imperceptible little gesture to the hunters, that they should draw back, for their near-



ness was alarming the beast. Then he went on. "Tell me about them."

"Well, I'm not supposed to," said the beast, "I'm just a scout-pilot; you ought to be told these things by the reorientation-crew." He looked Pibo in the face and

continued a little helplessly. "Well, I'll try."

Pibo nodded.

"You see—" began the beast stumbingly, "We were all Earthmen once—"

"That indeed would be so,"





said Pibo. "For did not the first man come out of the earth?"

"But—well, anyway," went on the beast. "We grew in numbers and—er—developed until we could fly in the air; then we got better so that we could fly between the stars."

"Truly," said Pibo, "truly that is some feat, for the stars are very close together, as any man by himself may see by looking."

"No," said the beast; "no, that is one thing you must change your mind about. You see, those stars that look so small when you look at them from here, are really great big places where other men live."

"Now this is impossible," said Pibo. "How can something so small be so big?"

**T**HE BEAST thought for a minute and the hunters smelled Fear again. "Look," he said. "If you stand and watch a man go away from you, doesn't he get smaller the farther away he goes?"

"That I have seen," said Pibo.

"Then these big places look so small because they have gone so far away from you—the world that they have grown very small, and everything on them."

"Now, this is indeed something new," admitted Pibo. "And to me it sounds like the truth; for since the earth is the center of all big-ness, since it is from what everything came, things do get smaller

as they get away from it. For are not the leaves near the top of the trees smaller than those below, and do not all birds grow smaller as they rise in the sky? But—" he added struck by a certain thought, "how is it that you are so large, if you come from so tiny a place?"

The perspiration shone greasily on the beast's forehead. "Why," he said, "when I got closer to the earth, I got bigger, of course."

Pibo thought this over in the time it took for an insect to crawl halfway across the clearing. Finally he spoke again. "You must understand," he said, lowering his voice to a confidential tone that the hunters could not overhear, "that I can't just accept something like that just on your say-so. I am the King of the Men of the Tribe of Amuk. If you were not from so far away, you would have heard of me. It is my job to sit here on this black stone and pronounce solemn judgements. But I'm also an individual, aside from my official position—an individual with an individual's interest in what may be of personal benefit. Now, I'd like to hear more of all these interesting things you talk about; but before we go any further, do you happen to have any small item of proof with you that would indicate that more talk would be to both our advantages?"

The man—as he called himself—sitting on the ground, nodded.



He reached through a slit in his strange clothing. "I have here—" he began.

"Just a minute," said Pibo. He motioned for the hunters to draw further away, which they did without protest. They were all healthy young men without too much in the way of brains—interested in the more concrete verities of food, women and hunting, and quite willing to let the King settle matters. "Go ahead," said Pibo.

The other drew out a small rounded object, about the length shape of a thumb-sized piece of peeled stick. It shone like calm water in the sunlight. "This is a very useful thing," said the man. "And if you'll supply me with twenty men to put my ship back on its feet, I'll give it to you and show you how to use it."

"It strikes me," said Pibo, rubbing his old chin, "that something that small could hardly be worth twenty men; I might give you one or two."

"Twenty," said the man, "There's lots of men in the world, but there's only one of these."

"Oh, well," said Pibo, "why quibble? You and I are above such things. What does it do?"

"This," said the man. He turned one end of the stick that seemed to rotate separately from the rest of it and a faint-beam sprang from it to strike the ground a few feet from Pibo's feet. Almost imme-

diately, the ground began to smolder and smoke. Little flames sprang up from the humus of dead leaves lying close. The man turned the end of the stick back, the light winked out, and he stamped on the ground to kill the flames.

"What is it?" demanded Pibo eagerly, feeling greed curl within him like a hungry snake.

"We call it a small hand-torch for cutting metal parts, but it has many uses," explained the man.

"It would be very useful for setting fire to the forest to drive game," said Pibo. "Even I could go hunting with it in my hand."

"Do I get my twenty men?" asked the other.

"You do," said Pibo. He stretched out his hand toward the object. "Give it to me."

The man withdrew his hand. "When my ship is set back upright," he said.

**P**IBO CONCEALED his disappointment. He made a deprecating gesture with one dark and skinny old hand. "However you wish it," he said; "these things are mere details. How is this thing constructed?"

"It is made with other things called tools in a place called a factory," said the man. "There are no words in the Old Language for how it is done."

Pibo almost sulked. The man



was either very stupid, or very smart to withhold information so neatly. "What were you doing when my hunters found you?" he asked.

The man considered his answer before replying. "I will try to explain," he said. "My ship comes from a bigger ship which we call the mother ship. When I was forced to make an emergency-landing here in the jungle, and saw that my ship was so placed that I could not extend my antenna to call my mother-ship to come and rescue me, there was only one thing I could do. That was to locate some high place like the top of a mountain, and there set off a mechanism that would go high in the air and then fly apart, into countless little bits. The winds would carry these little bits all over the world in the air. These little bits are what we call radio-active; and there is a mechanism on the mother-ship that can smell them from a great distance. When I do not return, the mother-ship will come looking for me. They will listen for my radio-signal; and if that does not come, they will look for the little bits—using their smelling-apparatus. If they smell them, they will stop and search the world closely until they find me."

Pibo nodded, absorbing this all with his black, button-bright eyes.

"These others on the mother-

ship," he said, "they are men, too—they are not beasts?"

The man chuckled. "They're men; I give you my word on it," he answered.

"Good," Pibo said, "we could use another tribe around here; the Men of the Tribe of Amuk often go footsore and hungry."

The man looked surprised.

"With five hundred thousand of you," he began. "I should think—"

Pibo instantly saw the error of his earlier lie. "Do not all men go hungry at times?" he countered. "When a man is far from home and hunting is bad, is he not often hungry?"

The man laughed. "That's something that's going to be changed for you and your people, oldtimer," he said. "Out where I come from nobody ever has to go hungry."

"Is that the truth?" said Pibo.

"Of course," said the man. "We have something which we call civilization, which means people-and-machines-working-together. There are great artificial places to live where the weather cannot get at you."

"Even the thickest trees," interjected Pibo, "will not shelter a man from a heavy rainstorm."

"The great caves we have built do that," replied the man, "for I suppose you'd call them caves. The great places which make food produce for all."



"Who hunts?" asked Pibo, dubiously. "Who goes tired and thirsty while ranging the jungle?"

"There is no jungle," cried the man. "There is no need to hunt."

**P**IBO LAUGHED. "This is foolish," he said. "The jungle is all about us. Look for yourself."

"But the jungle will be there no more when my mother-ship comes, and others like it," said the man. "They will clear out the trees and the undergrowth. They will heal your sick people. They will give you machines to build great structures, and other machines to fly you through the air like a bird. You will live longer and be happier. You will be safe from all dangers and fears. There will be shade for the day and light for the night."

"Bah," said Pibo. "This is impossible."

"Impossible?" said the man—and there was the light of triumph on his face. "How about that cutting-torch I showed you, and promised you for the men you will lend me? Do you have anything like that? If that is real and does what you saw it do, then everything else I say must be real and true, also."

His voice rang out over the clearing; and Pibo did not answer. Instead he sat like an old idol in black stone, perched on his seat of judgement and thinking deeply. He

sat in this fashion, pondering what the man had said; the slow minutes crawled past, and crawled past, one after the other, like worms that travel in a long line, the nose of each to the tail of the one before it. He thought of what the man had said, and he thought of the stick that set fires; he thought of the future the man had painted and he thought wryly that he was probably the only man in the tribe with wit enough to consider the implications of the situation.

At last, when the sun had moved a good forefinger's distance across the sky, he gave over his thinking; turning to the hunters, gave them an order in their own language to kill the man. And the four of them leaped upon him and pulled him down on the ground, to cut his throat. The man screamed.

"Why are you doing this?" he shrieked at Pibo. "It was the truth I told you; the truth!"

"I don't disbelieve you," replied Pibo, not moving from his judgement seat. "What you had to say was fantastic; but there is enough evidence in the form of the Old Language, and certain almost-obsolete tribal customs, to convince me that what you picture is probably the truth. After all, I have always been a wise man and age has mellowed my thinking-processes. I realize that nothing is impossible.

"However—", continued Pibo,



rather unnecessarily—for the jagged stone knives of the hunters had done their work and the man from the stars was busily engaged in gasping out the last of his life into a widening pool of his own blood on the ground—"there is the moral question to consider.

"I cannot honestly see but what a transition to such a paradise as you picture would be destructive to the ancient and honorable virtues of our independent way of

life. The social-structure of the Tribe of Amuk might well collapse. Possibly the hunters might not even need me to think for them any more. And the Gods forbid," finished Pibo, folding his robes around himself judicially, and looking at the now-dead man from the stars, "that I should do myself out of my job in the summer of my old age."



## Inside Science Fiction

[continued from page 111]

dinary to this issue. C. A. Brandt reviewed Curt Siodmak's "F.P.1 Does Not Reply" and enthused over two early s-f flickers, "Deluge" and "The Invisible Man." It was becoming increasingly obvious that *Amazing Stories* was falling far behind its two foresighted competitors, and its circulation was dipping proportionately.



\*Not quite; the September 1926 issue also had three serials, to wit: "Station X" (conclusion), by G. McLeod Winsor; "A Columbus of Space" (part two), by Garret P. Serviss; and "The Purchase of the North Pole" (part one), by Jules Verne.

The record, however, was set in the October 1926 issue, which had four serials: "A Columbus of Space" and "The Purchase of the North Pole" were concluded; "Beyond the Pole", by A. Hyatt Verrill and "The Island of Dr. Moreau", by H. G. Wells were commenced. The Verrill serial was his first appearance in the magazine, and also the first new serial published in this magazine. The issue also carried one complete story.

In the following issue, the Verrill and Wells serials were concluded, and "The First Men in the Moon", by H. G. Wells started off on its three-part course.

RWL





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A man with a weak heart might live on Mars, where the strain of gravity is less. See "The Guthrie Method" by Raymond Z. Gallun



Earth was only a memory; these people knew only the dome under which they lived, and through which the ship of the gods came for them. See "The Adaptable Ones" by Morton Klass.

And, in addition to short stories by Jerome Bixby, Charles Beaumont, and Frederik J. Gosche, we present the popular department, "Inside Science Fiction", by Robert A. Madle.



# down to earth



## Where The Readers Talk Back

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

Your exposition of "things as they are", in the March issue editorial, was well put. However, the mere fact that a situation exists is no justification for its perpetuation.

In my opinion there is too much leaning over backward; too much compromise of the principles of good communication on the part of those most concerned, on the plea that it is necessary to keep the language fluid. This is merely exchanging the dead horse of purism for the sacred cow of usage. Why assume that a language can grow only through continual corruption, so that growth comes about only through a sort of reverse percolation? Why tolerate as

the norm a situation in which those who are expected to use a language creatively are always the last to be informed of current usage? There can be no really great literature without some sort of working-arrangement between stability and expedience; for example, no matter how well you may think of Shakespeare you must admit that much of his work no longer makes sense to anyone but a student, because of the sweeping changes in usage since it was written. (As a corruptioneer from 'way back himself, it seems that the old goat has been hoist on his own petard.)

Just what is the objection to "freezing" the primary meaning of a word, and adding secondar



and tertiary extensions as necessary? A degree of useful stability does not necessarily imply stasis of an entire language. A good writer does not object to creative flexibility or imaginative extension of language, but to the slovenliness of others which often robs him of useful words for which it may be difficult to find adequate substitutes. Take for example, the word "disinterested". This once meant to be without selfish motive, but through the gleeful onslaughts of unschooled writers-by-ear, over the past fifteen years or so, has become a sort of poor relative of the word "indifferent", while the word in its original definition has all but disappeared, leaving a painful gap. Surely some degree of precision in the use of such words is possible without sterility.

Do not misunderstand; I do not advocate a juiceless, academic, dry-as-dust form of writing; slang, meaningful distortion, and all the tricks of the trade have their place, *when used properly*—but often they are not. A word *obviously* lifted out of context, and placed in a new frame of reference, contributes to the growth and freshness of language, presents no problems, and is often a very useful way of expressing a thought or mood otherwise difficult to express. When a bopster says "Cool, man", we know what he means; when a weatherman says the same thing, we know what he means—but, nowadays, when a man speaks of being "disinterested", we don't know if he means that he hasn't a dime invested in the verdict, or if he means that he just doesn't give a damn. So, writers, don't be

lazy; before you decide to use a word in distorted context, on the excuse that you haven't available just the one you want, look about a bit and perhaps you'll find it—unless someone has already done with it just what I am urging you not to do!

The remarks on Dianetics were almost too silly for counter-comment. Mr. Butler is not nearly as bored with Dianetics as I am with those who lack the initiative to test its claims, but still have the brass-encrusted guts to presume to pass judgement upon it.

—Curtis D. Janke, 1220 N. 14th Street, Sheboygan, Wisconsin.

*I wasn't considering the desirability of usages and corruptions, but rather the likelihood of their continuance, since mass media such as the cinema, radio, tv, comics, general advertising copy, etc., tend to cater to the lowest common denominator. Thus, there is little tendency to encourage "correct" usages of language at the base, and history seems to show that language and word usages have levelled off at the base of democratic or semi-democratic societies. Classic Greek comedy, too, is chock-full of slang expressions and popular usages.*

Dear Mr. Lowndes,

When I looked at that title, "Rx Jupiter Save Us", I thought, "Not another of those West mythology series!" I looked closer: Ward Moore! That's (temptation...oh, well) Moore like it! After the first page I was sure it would be a rehash of "Limbo", "Brave New World", and "1984". It really wasn't quite, nor as good—though still very enjoyable. It was a bit



too pat and sterile, but the succinct presentation of ideas set me thinking.

The Moore story demonstrates very effectively the power of SF as an "educational" force—or to steal from Moore (who stole from psychology), a "conditioning" force. In this case, the concept of normality and abnormality is brought forth; other stories along with this have expressed more clearly the types of "normality" than any text.

Many non-SF readers have a simple definition of abnormality: the *other* fellow is doing something strange, something I wouldn't do. If this "normal" man is fairly wide-awake, he may realize that he doesn't do such things because the people he learned to obey and respect didn't, or said he shouldn't. That is the first type of normality: conformity to a rather arbitrary group code. When two differing types of groups meet, it's always the other fellow who's arbitrary and odd.

But Ruth Benedict, the ethnologist, describes a culture which by our standards is weird, indeed, and best described as paranoid. Here we drag in the "mental health" approach to normality: normality leaves you psychologically fit, adjusted and happy. Of course, one learns in any given culture a slightly different idea of "happiness", so the definition of "normal" is changed to greatest freedom from ulcers, hypertension, and psychosomatic troubles.

That, of course, sounds like a slap at our modern culture. And no one can deny that it has produced more comfort and power than any before it. (I will *not* argue about Atlantis; deCamp can

do that far better than I.) Thus, the idea: what good is normality from ulcers, if the invading aliens fry you in your mud—or even steel—huts? This drags in the "absolute sanity" standard of normality: knowing the full truth about everything and reacting logically to situations. Certainly though, perfect logic and complete, precise information are rare enough, and therefore abnormal statistically. I'm ... it doesn't conform to any ... norm on earth; whether it includes or precludes ulcers I cannot guess. I leave it to your authors, who can make it part of a good story.

—Donald Susan, 706 Grant Street,  
McKeepport, Penn.

*Pure "normality's" a myth, of course, just like pure "identity"; you might say that most cows grazing out on the field are "normal", though.*

Dear Bob,

You'll have to forgive the impertinence of an elderly twentyish fan and fledgling professional, but I'm afraid I'm going to have to take exception to your statement that Campbell, Palmer, and Lowndes are the only editors that know the science-fiction field from its inception, and are the only editors who do not reveal weaknesses, because of it. I take exception to this, largely on behalf of some friends of mine: Sam Mines, Horace Gold, and Garrett Ford.

Ford, of course, had been a fan even longer than you, and certainly knows the field backwards and forwards. As a matter of fact, he can name the contents of any science-fiction magazine published—from memory. Mines has men-



tioned, "We oldtimers, who cut our teeth on Gernsback's *Wonder...*" so he is no young up-start. Obviously, a current science-fiction editor who knows a great deal about the Gernsback *Amazings* is one Hugo Gernsback. Sam Moskowitz shares a good deal of his knowledge, too. Obviously, the oldtimers' circle is not so limited as you would seem to think. Let's not forget William Crawford, here.

More important than these omissions, tho, is the idea that only the creaking relics of First Fandom (no offense, Bob; as a Fourth Fandomite, I frequently creak around Seventh Fandom) can edit worthwhile science-fiction magazines. I certainly hope that this isn't true. After all, in thirty or forty years, infirmities and/or senility is going to force you, JWC, and Rap into retirement. Will we have to put up with second-class stf magazines then?

There seems to be two good questions we should consider. 1. Is first-person experience the *only* way to gain knowledge of the history of science-fiction? 2. How important is that knowledge when gained?

Frankly, Bob, I imagine I know almost as much about early science-fiction magazines as many oldtimers—through Moskowitz' "Immortal Storm", back issues, and correspondence and conversation with the old fans. I admit this doesn't give me the wonderful experience early fans had, and I envy you fellows them; but vermisitude is not overly important in learning a lesson from history. All you have to do is wait for the thing to come around again, and experience it personally.

But I wonder just how much

good knowing which of Hugo Gernsback's stories *Science Wonder* rejected (that even stopped Forrie Ackerman for awhile) would help me if I were editing *Future*? H. L. Gold had a hard time getting it through my harder head that a magazine edited for people who remembered the 1926 *Amazing* was a magazine headed for bankruptcy. If I were editing *Future*, I might know that the idea used by, say, Poul Anderson in a story was first used by Capt. S. P. North twenty-five years ago in *Air Wonder*, but I dare say, Mr. Anderson could see approaches, scientific and literate, that the good Captain wasn't even remotely aware of. I don't think I'd reject the story of Mr. Anderson just because I and perhaps a dozen of my readers had seen the idea before.

Naturally, I don't advocate complete ignorance of the past of science-fiction. I think there is a fallacy in the thinking of a certain editor who says he doesn't give a damn about what his magazine was and did before he took over. But I seriously question that knowledge of science fiction magazines from their beginnings is even a *major* attribute in editing good science-fiction magazines, altho it's a helpful minor attribute. Science-fiction magazines have changed too much, and are destined to change even more, for any editor to be able to live in the past very much.

Well, enough of that. My side, anyway.

Incidentally, I've never liked the type of cover Schomberg had on the January *Future*, but I must admit that if I didn't buy all science-fiction magazines, I would probably have bought this *Future*



anyway. An intellectual concern, no doubt, as to whether the young lady would drop the towel the rest of the way when she saw the Bem. And that *was* a Bem!

I must say I think this issue was about the best-balanced you've had in quite some time. I don't mean humor to tragedy, simplicity to complexity—I haven't read all the stories yet. I mean just by story lengths. Long stories make a thin magazine seem bigger, you know. But I don't know why you and HLG insist on using the term, "Novella"—it's only Italian for the French "Novelette"—they both mean *exactly* the same thing... a little novel. The English term "Short Novel" is more appropriate and undoubtedly has more S-appeal ("sales" not "sex"). How about "Novelle"?

As much as I like the type of article you use, I'm afraid, impersonally, I must say that I think editorial, letters, and Madle (which I like very much—all of them) are enough features for a science-fiction magazine the size of *Future*.

—Jim Harmon, 427 East 8th Street, Mt. Carmel, Ill.

*I wasn't thinking of any of the three you mention, having in mind rather instances where a man with editorial experience, but who has never read science fiction, suddenly finds himself editing a science fiction publication. Perhaps I overstressed the point.*

Dear Bob,

I suppose Jerry Megahan was being at least 80% whimsical when he suggested that I "won't give a [favorable] review unless the author (1) is a friend or (2)

bribes [me]," but he has a point, and I'd like to answer it. I could say that if the only non-friends who get good notices from me are those who pay for them, I've got a considerable sum coming from many writers I've never met and a few more I actively dislike. The line forms to the left... But it's quite true that Jim Blish is an old friend of mine (and an even older enemy—Megahan should see some of the vitriol I poured on Blish's patient head in the *Vanguard-APA*, circa '46), and that my long acquaintance with him had something to do with the length and enthusiasm of my review of "Beanstalk."

It had this much to do with it, in the first place: I know Blish and his work well, and I write best about what I know best. Further, I'll admit the possibility—almost the certainty—that personal considerations modify my opinion of every story by a writer I know. A critic isn't a computing machine, and, I think, shouldn't try to be: he ought to be aware of his own prejudices, but he can't—not possibly, not ever—operate without them.

A computer could be built which would criticize fiction, and would very likely do as good a job as the average product of the reading-fee mill for which Blish and I once worked. But the computer would have to work with each story as if it were spontaneously generated, a discrete thing-in-itself, and this is exactly what a human critic can't do. In human terms, a piece of fiction is an extension of the person who wrote it, and the instant you chop it off, it becomes essentially meaningless.

I once thought of listing my



critical prejudices for the reader's convenience, but gave the idea up; there are too many of them, and I think—I hope—they're obvious enough from what I say.

Incidentally, for the record, I write the kind of reviews I do principally because I can't feel they're worth doing any other way, not because—except for occasional lapses—I enjoy hurting anyone's feelings. I know what a crushing thing it can be to have so much as a comma of one's work stepped on, and when I began these things I looked forward without pleasure to becoming the best-hated man in science fiction. For some reason that isn't clear to me yet, I've got a growing file of assenting letters, and to date, except for that one issue of *Dynamic* when I got too windy and

was told so, not a single beef. Nobody could be more amazed—or more gratified—than I am.

—Damon Knight, *Canadensis*,  
Penna.

*I wonder if you're not using "prejudice" above when you really mean "bias"; a bias in favor of a particular writer would lead you to read his latest work ahead of someone else's, and might soften you toward faults to the extent that you might not notice some of them. A bias against an author might lead you to postpone reading, or by-pass it completely, or exaggerate minor faults, etc. But a prejudice, one way or another, would most likely lead you to praise or condemnation without reading, or, at most, a cursory glance.*

## The Reckoning

Only the last place story failed to win some token of your affection this time, even though the lead story received twice as many first-place votes as any of the others. Some of you noticed the editorial boner on the contents page; others praised Schomberg for the cover that Luross drew, and should have received credit for. The score reads:

1. Wampum ( <i>Sam Merwin, Jr.</i> )	1.60
2. The Wayward Course ( <i>Randall Garrett</i> )	2.66
3. The Square Peg ( <i>Stephen Arr</i> )	2.90
4. The Oldfashioned Spaceman ( <i>Dave Dryfoos</i> )	3.88
5. The Payoff ( <i>Eando Binder</i> )	4.66

There was no announcement of the change, because the decision had not been made at the time the March issue was closed. We're going back to bi-monthly publication, so the next issue will be dated August.



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Letters from readers are welcome here at all times, but realizing that many readers do not have the time to write, or don't feel like writing a letter — yet would still like to vote on such matters as story ratings, artwork, various aspects of policy such as departments, etc. — we've included a coupon which can be easily clipped out without mutilating the magazine. There's another coupon on the reverse side, you see; and if you want to fill that one out too, it comes to the same address.

But no matter how we receive them, your comments are read, and any votes tabulated, so long as we can decipher what you've written. You list the stories in order of your preference, from one to five; if you liked two or more equally well, tie votes will indicate your feeling. If you thought any story was really bad, rather just in last place because you liked the others better, put an "x" beside it. This gives us intense pain, but how else can we know that you were unhappy, too?

The total score for each story is divided by the number of votes we received, thus giving the point-scores in "The Reckoning"; the lowest point-scores indicate the highest ratings. A story marked "x" is given a figure one higher than the total number of stories per issue, so that your dislike will show in the final tabulations. Naturally, we all hope that no reader will find it necessary to make such marks on the coupon!

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..... "Readin' and Writhin' "? .....

"Down to Earth"? ..... Editorial? .....



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—Continued from Back Cover

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—Continued on Inside Cover