

SCIENCE FICTION

OCTOBER 15¢

SWORDSMEN OF SATURN

amazing new novel

by NEIL R. JONES

VISION OF POSSIBILITY
the story of the cover

by Eando Binder



EARTH ASUNDER!

an astounding novelet

by EPHRIAM WINIKI

HOW DO YOU IN YOUR BATHING SUIT?

**SKINNY?
THOUSANDS GAIN
10 TO 25 POUNDS
THIS QUICK EASY WAY**



**And how thin, tired-out, nervous,
down people have gained normal
health and strength—quick!**

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Here's wonderful news! Thousands of y, rundown men and women have gained 25 pounds, new pep, new popularity—with scientific vitamin-rich formula, Ironized

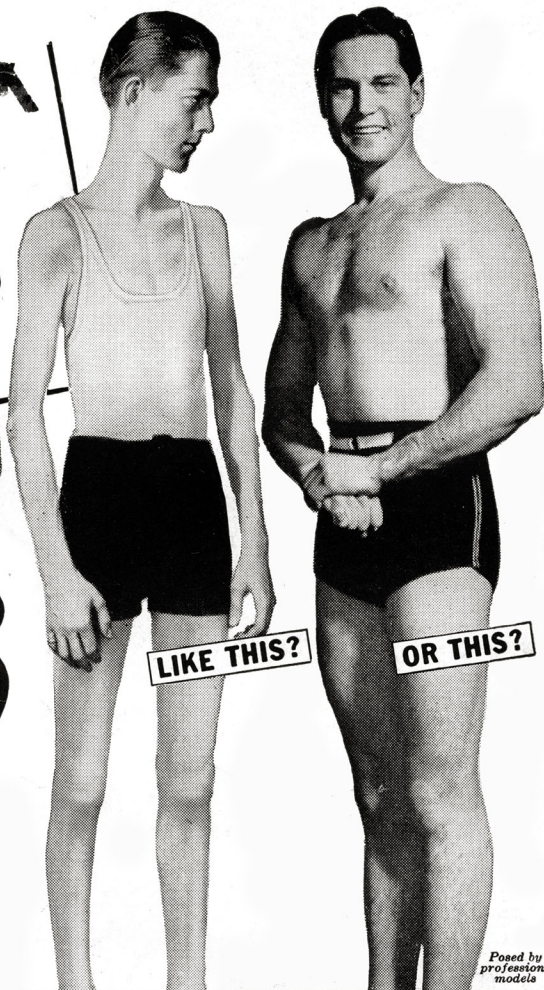
Why it builds up so quick

Scientists have discovered that countless people thin and rundown—tired, cranky, washed-out only because they don't get enough Vitamin B iron from their daily food. Without enough these vital substances you may lack appetite and not get the most body-building good out of at you eat.

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Posed by professional models

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Irvin Echard

gained 14 lbs. Now I go out regularly, have good times."

Irvin Echard, Barberton, O.

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R. Loeffler

of pep. Everybody admires my physique, too." Ralph Loeffler

Arlington, Wash.

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Ralph Loeffler

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WISH I COULD AFFORD TO DRESS BETTER

WISH I COULD AFFORD A NEW CAR

WISH I COULD MAKE MORE MONEY

WISH I COULD GET OUT OF DEBT

WISH I COULD AFFORD TO STEP OUT A BIT

WISH I COULD AFFORD TO SUPPORT A WIFE

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President
National Radio
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Dept. 9KA2,
Washington,
D. C.



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☐ National Radio Institute, Dept. 9KA2,
Washington, D. C.

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Name Age

Address

City State



Vol. I, No. 4

A BLUE RIBBON
MAGAZINE

October, 1939

COMPLETE BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL

SWORDSMEN OF SATURN Neil R. Jones 8

Bret Carson braves the dangers of the void to join a pioneering space-ship to the barbarous world of Dian — there to become the pawn of two warring factions of semi-savages! How can he protect our race against the threat of the blood-thirsty invaders led by one of his own fellow Earthmen turned traitor?

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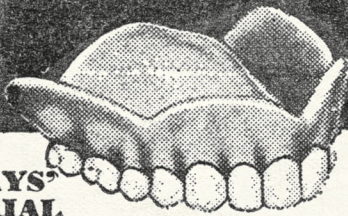
Where Editor and Readers Exchange Thoughts.

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TRIAL

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AFTER



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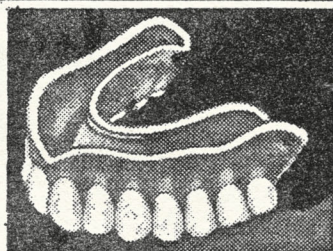
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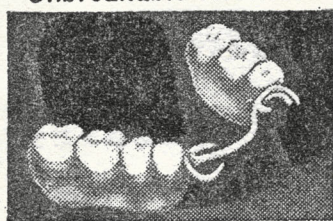
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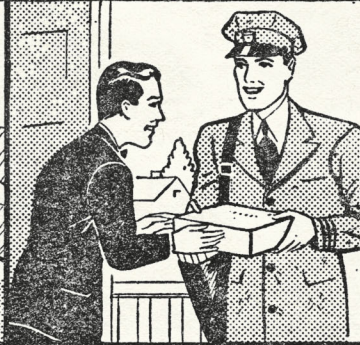
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CONTENTS INCLUDE

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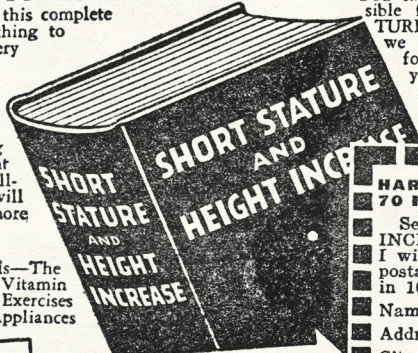
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18. Psychological Aids

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SWORDSMEN OF SATURN

by NEIL R. JONES

Roy Cooms sold his honor to plan a conquest of his fellow Earthmen by the savage hordes of the world Dian—it was the duty of Bret Carson to avenge the traitor and battle the ranks of alien warriors for the salvation of his race!

CHAPTER I

THE LATE ARRIVAL

“**A**S REPRESENTATIVE of the company, I’m here to tell you, Baynes, that your insurance does not cover the risk you are taking.”

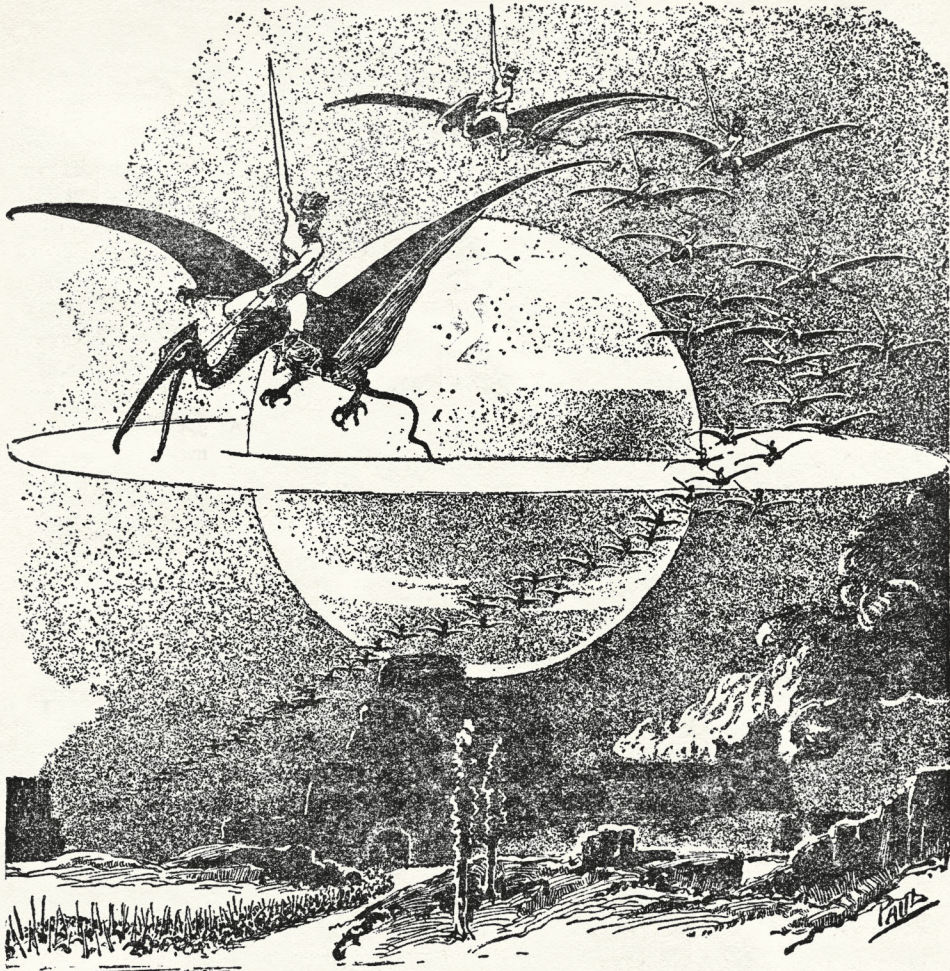
Lester Baynes, middle-aged and florid of countenance, banged his fist

down upon the office desk. “And why not?” he demanded.

“Our company is not liable for casualties sustained beyond the orbit of Mars or inside the orbit of Venus,” stated the insurance agent, quoting mechanically from the policy. “You are trying to reach Saturn.”

“Yes, and I’ll do it, too—insurance or no insurance!”





"We're saved!" yelled Drook. "They're skels—with riders—red swordsmen from Larooos!"

"But no one has ever reached Saturn yet."

"More glory to me," retorted Baynes spiritedly. "I'll be the first, then."

"Within the last seven years, two expeditions have tried it and failed. They never came back."

"Are you trying to scare me?" demanded Baynes fiercely, his face mantling red. "Jupiter has been reached—why not Saturn?"

"You can't land on Saturn," dissuaded the insurance man. "It is still molten, like Jupiter."

"But it possesses moons—ten of

them. We're heading for one of the largest, Dian."

"You're crazy!—a man of your age trying a thing like that! Suppose you didn't come back? What about your daughter?"

Lester Baynes grew thoughtful, losing a bit of his verbose attitude. "Well," he explained, "she's in good hands. There's plenty of my money and estates to take care of her."

The agent shook his head sadly. "I guess there's no stopping you," he said. "I hope you return safely," and then he added pessimistically, "but I'm afraid you won't."

With marvelous control, Baynes restrained himself from throwing a book at the man as he left the office. Settling back in his chair, he listened to the swelling roar of cheers outside the little office. Admiring throngs crowded around his space-ship, fellow passengers and crew.

It was the year 2364. Mars and Venus were being colonized by peoples of the earth. Expeditions had gone to the asteroids and Jupiter's moons, returning safely. Two expeditions had set out for Saturn, but neither had ever returned. Three years had passed since the last attempt, and now Lester Baynes and several others dared to face the veiled mystery which hung menacingly over Saturn.

FOUR men entered Baynes' office. They were Baynes' associates on the venture into the Saturnian territory. There was Kern Hilton, an adventurer. Hilton had led many of the colonizing expeditions to Venus and Mars, and as a young lad had been with the first space-flight to the asteroids. Tall, with brown hair and dark eyes, still in his late thirties, he represented the spirit of the space pioneers. That he had not emerged unscathed from his various adventures was apparent. Two scars creased his face. His clothing hid more of them.

Professor Zander, a scientific savant, was accompanying Baynes' group in the interests of his clique. He was slim, and his shoulders, slightly bowed, suggested long years of study bent over open books. The two remaining members of the interstellar flight to Saturn were Roy Cooms and James Fenley. Fenley was Baynes' secretary, while Cooms had just lately joined the expedition, qualifying as an assistant to Profes-

sor Zander. Cooms was a dapper young man with dark hair, an olive complexion, and black eyes which had a continual habit of shifting about.

"Everything's set," announced Hilton. "We leave in half an hour, if you're ready."

"Did you send off that radiogram to my daughter?"

"Yes," replied Fenley, "I attended to that, sir."

"Then I guess everything is ready for the start," said Baynes. "Find out about—"

There came a vigorous banging on the door, cutting short the financier's words. Cooms opened it. A young man dashed into the office, out of breath, his clothing awry; he had pushed his way through the milling throng of humanity.

"Are you Mr. Baynes?" he asked.

"Yes!" snapped Baynes, a bit ruffled by the intrusion. "What do you want?"

"Here's a letter!" The newcomer laid a grimy, wrinkled letter upon the desk before Baynes.

The latter glanced up at the clear blue eyes which stared at him wildly. The youth pushed a shock of blonde hair away from his eyes. Baynes ripped open the envelope and withdrew the missive. He read the message, and his impatience turned to surprise.

"So you're Don Carson's boy?" he asked.

"Yes. I'm Bret Carson."

"Your father tells me you wish to embark with us for Saturn. Is that true?"

"Yes!" was the rather fervent reply.

"Well—I don't know," mused Baynes. "You see, we're pretty well fixed right now. There's five of us, not to mention the crew of three."

"Please let me go!" entreated Carson.

"Why are you so eager?"

"I want to get away from here—from the earth—from all civilization!" A dull luster shone in his eyes. There was something almost compelling about his manner.

"We have enough now," said Cooms. "I guess your chances aren't so good."

"What's that?" demanded Baynes, his face mantling red. "Who told you to do any choosing?"

Cooms subsided under the verbal assault. The financier turned once more to the letter. Then he addressed Bret Carson:

"I'm not ken about taking any more with us, lad, but I owed your father a great moral debt years ago. He's asked that you be allowed to go with us. How old are you?"

"Twenty."

"Under age," remarked Professor Zander.

Baynes disregarded the remark. It was Kern Hilton who now spoke up.

"Guess we can take him if you like, Mr. Baynes. Don't see a reason for not letting him go."

"All right, Carson. You can go. We start in half an hour. Are all your affairs settled?"

"Yes, sir—I attended to everything! Thank you so much."

"Don't thank me," grumbled Baynes, scowling fiercely as he remembered the gloomy prophecy of the insurance agent. "Maybe we'll never come back."

AMID the roaring acclaim of enthusiastic millions, the spaceship broke its moorings near San Diego and headed skyward. The trip promised to be three weeks old before they neared Saturn. The velvet blackness of space enveloped the

ship. The earth grew small, dwindling away behind them.

They were forty hours away from the earth and well past the orbit of Mars when one of the crew made a stirring discovery. Into the control room came Smythe, pushing ahead of him a young girl. Yellow, wavy hair fell to her shoulders. Tilting her head bravely, she assumed a defiant stand.

"A stowaway!" explained Smythe. "Valerie and I found her hiding in the supply room!"

Baynes' mouth fell agape. The color drained from his face. Before he regained the ability to speak, the girl beat him to it.

"Well, daddy, here I am!"

"Rose!" he thundered, his face apoplectic. He rose to his feet. "What in heaven's name are you doing here?"

"Going to Saturn," she replied quietly.

"You little fool! I'll—I'll—" He paused, inarticulate, clenching his hands, staring about him wildly. "I thought you were in Chicago!"

Her eyes flashed, and she drew herself up proudly. "Not while there's a chance of going on this trip," she replied.

"Ah-h-h-h!" growled Baynes. "That's what comes of my spoiling you! Fine clothes—parties—" Once more he was at a loss for words to fit his anger.

"But I want to go. I—"

"We'll put about and take you back, that's what!" shouted Baynes.

"Please let me go, daddy!"

"Why not let her go?" interjected Cooms. His eyes sparkled strangely, his gaze fastened avidly on Rose Baynes' lovely figure.

"It's too dangerous!" maintained Baynes, weakening visibly under the reproachful eyes of his daughter.

"But she's here now," observed Cooms, noticing how Rose shot him a glance of approval for championing her cause. "We—"

"Shut up!" roared Baynes. "Damn it, man, I'll put you off on the asteroids when we get to them!"

Cooms' face turned darker, but he said nothing. For nearly an hour, Rose Baynes and her father argued the question, the latter threatening to return to the earth and put her off. He finally gave in to her.

CHAPTER II

LOST IN SATURN'S RING

IN THIS manner, Rose Baynes became one of the expedition, accepted on an equal footing with the men. She, too, was ready to brave the mysteries of Dian. In olden times, this moon of Saturn had been known by another name, Dione, but science had seen fit to change it.

It was plainly evident that Cooms was smitten with Rose Baynes. When time permitted, he was with her a great deal. He was handsome and affected a polite manner for her benefit. He fascinated her. It has been said, however, that "the ass in the lion's skin will eventually bray," and Cooms was no exception to this rule.

They were sitting in the lounging room of the space-craft, Cooms doing his best to create an impression of his importance with Rose. Bret Carson entered, saw that he was probably intruding, and started to leave.

"Say, boy," Cooms ordered in supercilious tones, "bring the television desk over here."

"Go and get it yourself, boy!" was Bret's sharp retort.

COOMS reddened with irritation and leaped to his feet, sending a

stinging blow to Bret's jaw. The latter fell to one knee but was up again almost immediately. A hard right hand smash to Cooms' face followed by a blow to his chin sent him to the floor cold, knocked out. Blood trickled from the corner of Bret's mouth.

Hilton, attracted by the sounds of conflict, dashed into the lounging room, his intuition quickly apprising him of the situation. "You'll have to appear before Baynes for this," he said. Hilton dragged the groggy Cooms to the kitchen where he splashed water on his face.

Rose dabbed the blood away from Bret's lips with a small square of white linen. "I'm surprised at Mr. Cooms," she said. "He was so ungentlemanly. It was right of you to do as you did. Don't worry about daddy. I'll tell him the truth."

Bret smiled at her. He realized for the first time how pretty she was. She smiled back at him. He became aware that the contact of her soft hands was like balm to a lonely heart, a heart which had not always been lonely.

Baynes dismissed the incident with a warning that another squabble would bring stricter measures. The financier was troubled with more important things.

The space-ship was well past the steroids and on the way towards Jupiter when a stirring message was received from the earth by radio-gram: "Five million dollars in jewels are reported missing from the vaults of the Phelon Gem Association at Cleveland. The thief has been traced to San Diego where it is believed he joined Lester Baynes' space expedition to Saturn."

The finger of suspicion wagged at Bret Carson.

"You came aboard ship under very

strange circumstances," reminded Baynes. We're beyond the law now, and just as soon as we pass Jupiter's orbit, we'll be past radio communication. Hand over the jewels, Bret, and we'll do the best we can by you on our return from Saturn."

"I swear I've stolen no jewels!" explained Bret. "You may search me!"

"What's the use?" sneered Cooms. "You've no doubt hidden them on the ship somewhere."

"Better give them up if you have them," advised Hilton.

"But I haven't!" replied Carson.

"Why were you so eager to leave the earth?" Professor Zander accused him suddenly.

"Well, you see—I—" Bret stammered a moment. "It is none of your affair," he finally managed to say.

For the next half hour, Bret Carson was questioned and cross-examined, but he made no incriminating admissions, refusing to state his reasons for leaving the earth. If he possessed the gems, they were artfully hidden. A search of his person and his possessions failed to reveal them.

"You'll be turned over to the police when we return from Saturn," he was told.

For the remainder of the trip, until the huge, ringed planet hove into sight, Rose Baynes courteously avoided Bret. Often, when he was not looking, her glance fell on him, but she was careful that their eyes never met.

Nearly everyone believed him to be a jewel thief. A few accused him openly. Kern Hilton was puzzled. He disliked thinking of Bret as a criminal, yet the evidence pointed against him. In the meantime, the

space-ship approached the planet of mystery, Saturn.

Saturn's ten moons became visible, one by one from near and far. It was Baynes' intentions to explore Saturn's ring first of all. Professor Zander frowned at the idea, anticipating the difficulty of movement among the tiny moonlets, many of them no larger than the space-ship itself. Slackening its mad speed, the ship plunged in among the cosmic bodies.

Deeper and deeper they threaded the maze of dull brown spheres.

"Strange," commented Baynes. "No sunlight reaches into the ring—we're beyond Saturn's reflection—yet we still see these globes without use of a searchlight."

"Their surfaces are luminous," said Zander.

"I feel like an ant on a billiard table," observed Hilton.

One of the crew approached Baynes. "We've lost our direction, sir. A peculiar influence has nullified our gauges."

"I warned you!" Professor Zander wailed. "We're lost—we can wander in this ring for years at the rate we're going, and never get out!"

"Shut up!" yelled Baynes, losing his temper. "We'll get out of this jam somehow!"

"Some of us had better go outside," Hilton advised. "May be able to get our bearings from there."

"Stop the ship!"

Hilton, Carson, Valerie, and Brunhild donned space-suits, entering the air lock. From the air lock, they jumped off into the void, floating about the space-ship. Bret Carson found himself clinging to a large moonlet. The impetus of his leap from the space-ship started the sphere rotating. When the globe had made a complete rotation in less than a minute, Bret joined his comrades

who were now swimming in space.

Through his radio speaker, Hilton addressed them.

"Come on, boys, let's give up the fooling and see what can be done."

THEY gathered close about the apparatus which Hilton and Brunhild were fastening to a moonlet.

"This should give us the direction of Saturn," said Hilton. "We can figure from that."

Valerie, looking up suddenly, drew the attention of the rest to a weird phenomenon. "Look! The mist—the white mist—over there!"

Ahead of them, a faint cloud, like fog, wound its way among the moonlets, slowly approaching the space-ship.

"What is it?"

"Can't say," was Hilton's reply. "Better not take chances—head for the air lock!"

The four men pushed off from the moonlet. An amazing transformation of the white cloud took place. Dividing into five separate pieces, it raced after the four men. Brunhild was last. The clouds overtook him, two of them enveloping him. The two sections of wispy white cloud clinging to Brunhild became smaller and denser. A terrified scream rang in the helmets of the little group. Brunhild was fighting desperately. The three remaining pieces merged once more, transforming into a dense circle which closed about Carson and Smythe.

Hilton sprang to Brunhild's aid, tearing at the ghostly material with the metal fingers of his space-suit. He tore handful after handful of the stuff away from Brunhild's helmet, but always it came back to join the main body. From a distance, more of the strange stuff appeared. Car-

son and Smythe had fought their way clear of the white, tangling mass. Brunhild and Hilton still battled with the eerie substance which now wrapped itself around both of them. Most of it was concentrated about Brunhild's helmet, dwindling in size, hardening and compressing. Carson and Smythe joined the struggle.

Under the constriction of the white substance, Brunhild's helmet was bending. The upper half suddenly snapped off. Free of the weird entity, Brunhild was rushed instantly to the airlock by his three companions. Those within the space-ship worked fast. The outer door clanged shut. Air was pumped into the chamber. Brunhild, minus his helmet, was dragged into the observation room. It was too late. Brunhild was dead, asphyxiated by the chill vacuum of space.

Outside swirled legions of the white clouds, more of which had just arrived. The live, intelligent material merged, split up, assumed strange, fantastic forms, became barely visible, solidified by compression and raced in and out among the moonlets.

"Get away from that damned stuff!" ordered Baynes. "I don't like it!" He shuddered—then cursed himself for it.

"Which way?"

"Any way—just get clear of it!"

The ship started forward. Instantly, the space-dwelling entity of Saturn's ring closed in about the craft. The misty material became denser, clinging to the space-ship. Loud knockings sounded against the metal sides.

Baynes peered out through the transparent fronting of the observation chamber. "Get going!" he yelled.

"The ship doesn't move!"

"What's wrong?"

"It seems we're being held back!"

Hilton sprang to Baynes' side—stared at the veiled mists of moving cloud. Long, tough strands of the solidified mist held the space-ship like anchors to the nearest moonlets.

"Put on more power!"

The farther spheres commenced racing past the nearer ones. The ship was moving, carrying with it the surrounding moonlets to which it was held like a vise. The ship was rocked by jarring concussions as the traveling spheres struck other moonlets.

"We can't get very far this way!" fumed Baynes.

"Open up with the radium rays!" shouted Hilton. "Ought to get rid of the stuff that way!"

Professor Zander and Cooms set up the radium ray ejectors, hooking them to the inside joints of the exterior muzzles. Iridescent gleams of light shot into the white material, burning deep holes. The remaining bits of cloud hurried away, joining, dividing, flitting rapidly out of sight. Not a particle of the white mist remained.

"Poor Brunhild—we won the fight too late to save him."

"What shall we do with his body?"

"Bury it in space," said Zander.

"For that damned stuff to get hold of?" demanded Baynes angrily. "I should say not! Wait until we reach Dian. Brunhild will have the distinction of being the first man buried on one of Saturn's moons."

"If we ever reach them," Professor Zander sighed dejectedly. "We're not out of the ring yet."

They continued on aimlessly through the vast labyrinth of moonlets, lost in Saturn's ring. Curiously, they saw no more of the white clouds. Many of the moonlets were dark, being scarcely visible. Others

shone with a dull brown phosphorescent glow. A few were spotted with dirty yellow streaks.

It was Bret Carson who noticed a peculiar type of moonlet they had not seen before. Not only was it decidedly different in color, but in size also. It was slightly oblate in shape, elongated at one end. A chunk seemed to be nicked from the other end. As they came nearer, Hilton's sharp eyes took in the details. He suppressed an exclamation.

"That's no moonlet, Bret! It's a space-ship—and it's wrecked—one end is gone!"

The discovery was jolting. Baynes was all questions.

"It's the ship Grenard used on his trip to Saturn—three years ago!" was Hilton's information. "I recognize it!"

"Let's board it!"

"Better make a few investigations first," advised Hilton. "Don't forget what just happened to us."

"But there's none of that cloudy stuff around now," said Cooms.

"Want to go out, do you?" queried Hilton.

Cooms was none too eager to risk his own neck. "Why—no!" he replied, his face flushing angrily at Hilton's forced play.

"Come alongside the wreck," said Baynes. "We'll play safe first."

CHAPTER III

A ROBINSON CRUSOE

PROFESSOR ZANDER leaned over and pointed towards one end of the derelict. "Hilton, do you see a line of some kind attached to the front of that ship, or is it my imagination?"

"Yes—there is a line. It leads to that large moonlet over there where

it's fastened with a cable. Yes, it's a cable. The moonlet looks quite a bit different than the others we've seen—a funny color."

All eyes were centered upon the moonlet to which the long cable was fastened. To their utmost surprise, a small section of the moonlet opened outward. A weird figure appeared in what looked to be a doorway.

"A man in a space-suit!" shouted Baynes. "He's waving to us!"

The man stepped out and waved both arms vigorously to gain their attention. Giving a kick with his feet, he sped through the vacuum to the side of their ship, entering the air lock. The outer door was closed, air was sent rushing into the compartment, and a minute later the strange individual stepped inside the observation chamber. Hilton helped him off with his helmet.

Scraggly gray hair adorned the man's head and face. He gazed about him at the various members of the expedition.

"Folks!" he cried in a voice tremulous with emotion. "Folks! Real folks at last!"

"Who are you?" Baynes asked. "How did you get here?"

"Jasper Jezzan is my name," came the reply. "I'm the only survivor o' that out there!" He pointed to the wrecked space-ship.

"Great guns, man!" exclaimed Hilton. "Your expedition left for Saturn over three years ago!"

"Well do I know it, friend. Ain't I lived in that little moon out there nigh on t' three years?" He sighed. "Just like livin' and bein' dead too!"

"How did you ever do it?"

JASPER JEZZAN cast a lingering eye at Hilton. "It's a long tale, and a doleful one, too."

"Out with it, man! We're listen-

ing! What happened to your expedition?"

"We entered the rings of Saturn," the old man narrated. "Got in here all right enough. Gettin' out was different. Some white devils as live 'mong these little moons took after us." Here the old man paused a bit. He swore volubly as he made mention of the misty clouds in Saturn's ring.

"We follow you!" spoke Zander eagerly. "They just killed one of our crew!"

"The damned, pesky devils got in our airlock, somehow—forced it, I guess. Then they came inside. Gosh—it was awful!" The survivor of the grim tragedy held an arm over his eyes as if to shut off a ghastly scene. "Our air leaked out. I was in the air rejuvenatin' room at the time. I felt the terrible cold comin' inside—my breath came a gaspin'—I knew we'd sprung a leak.

"I jumped in a air tank — had enough sense t' jerk a space-suit and helmet in with me, else I'd not be standin' here now. I went drunk with too much ox'gin, but I shut the inside gauge off when I felt I was goin'. When I come to, I got inside the space-suit, came out and looked around. Nothin' left but bones! They fell t' pieces when I picked 'em up. The white devils was gone."

"How have you managed to keep alive and away from the—the white devils?"

"They come down on us so quick, we hadn't time t' find a way o' fightin' 'em. When they did finally come back, I used the radium rays. They did the trick. A good share o' the little moons here are hollow, so I found. I dug in the one you see over there, riggin' it up with stuff I took from the ship. If it weren't for the supplies of synthetic food and air

machines, you'd 'a' found only a wrecked space-ship, friends.

"The white devils sure raised hell with the ship's mechanism. Wasn't no chance o' repairin' it. Best I could do was fix up my moon here and wait, I knew somebody would try t' come through the ring again, but I was afraid they'd never find me in this place. Just like a needle in a haystack."

"Isn't your moon over there pretty cold?" inquired Baynes.

"No," replied Jezzan. "I got all the heatin' equipment off the space-ship in there."

"What an adventure!" exclaimed Hilton.

"Have you been t' Saturn's moons —t' Dian?" queried old Jasper Jezzan, his blue eyes peering intently at them.

"No, Jasper. We're on our way there now. You can finish the trip you commenced over three years ago."

"Did anybody find out anything about the first expedition?" he asked. "The one which came here first?"

Hilton shook his head. "We're the first space-ship that's come here since Grenard tried."

The old man shook his head wistfully. "I had a pal, Ben Cartley, on that first expedition. That's why I came with Grenard, mostly, thinkin' maybe I'd find out what become o' Ben. He and I were pards since we were boys." A reminiscent light shone in his eyes. "Ben and I were on the first trip t' Mars. We were two o' the first settlers there, but we didn't settle long. Settin' wasn't in our blood."

"How'd it happen you and Ben became separated?" asked Hilton.

"I got laid up in a hospital in Vienna just after we signed up t' go. Didn't want t' see Ben lose out on ac-

count o' me, so I made him go just the same. They never came back. It was four years later when I left with Grenard."

The space-travelers marveled at the old man's pluck and courage, his steadfast loyalty. Baynes extended his hand.

"Jasper Jezzan, I'm mighty proud to have a man like you with us. I just lost a man back there. You can take his place."

THE grizzled old veteran of many adventures in the Solar System shook hands with Baynes warmly and became acquainted with the rest in turn.

"Know any way of getting us out of this mess, Jasper?" asked Hilton.

"Let me take the controls," said the old man. "Durin' my three years here, I've done a bit of explorin' hereabouts in my space-suit. I never been out o' the ring, but I've got so I can guess directions here just like a bird."

Jasper Jezzan proved conclusively that his instinctive sense of direction among the moonlets was infallible. He guided the space-ship out of Saturn's ring in nearly a straight line. Several times, they encountered the malignant white clouds, but always the radium ray repulsed the weird entity before any damage was done to the space-ship.

Emerging from Saturn's outer ring, they headed across the cosmic void in the direction of Dian, Saturn's largest moon. The daylight side of Dian represented a queer merging of colors. The light from the far-off sun was faint. Saturn's molten mass spread a reddish glow over the hemisphere which faced it. As Dian loomed large, the topography became visible.

"Fifty miles above!" called Valerie, reading one of the gauges.

"We're commencing to strike air!"

Professor Zander took samples of the atmosphere, testing it. "Pretty much the same as the air on Mars," he said, "breathable but rarified."

A red spot on the satellite lay directly beneath them. With the exceptions of this one place, the rest of the surface was blotched in yellow and blue. The moon seemed to rush up at them with tremendous speed.

"Slow down!" yelled Baynes. "You'll kill us!"

There was no diminishing of their speed. Like a plummet, the space-ship fell. The pilot's face went white. He worked frantically at the controls. Both Hilton and Baynes leaped to Valerie's side. Hilton threw the radium repulsion lever to its final notch.

"Too late!" gasped Baynes. "Look!"

Beneath them, a yellow forest leaped upward. There came a rending crash, the space-ship twisting and turning in its mad plunge. Roaring noises filled their ears, and they were tossed helplessly about.

Bruised and shaken, Bret Carson raised himself on one elbow, rubbed an aching head and looked about him. Dazed and half-conscious, Hilton still clung to the controls. Blood trickled from a scalp wound. Baynes and Valerie lay prone upon the floor. In a corner, Professor Zander, his head bent sideways, was humped over in an unnatural position.

Weakly, Bret came to his knees. Outside, yellow fronds waved against the transparent fronting of the craft. From another section of the ship, Cooms came stumbling into the control room, Smythe behind him. Bret bent over the recumbent financier.

"Is—is he dead?" asked Hilton.

Valerie stirred and lifted an arm, then came to his feet. Bret pressed an ear to Baynes' breast. "He's alive!"

"What happened?" asked Cooms in a bewildered manner. He pulled Professor Zander into a sitting position. The professor's head sagged to his chest.

"He's dead!" whispered Cooms. "His neck's broken!"

"Who's dead?" queried Baynes, recovering his senses in time to catch Cooms' final words. He gazed around him in a startled manner. "Where's Rose? Is she safe?"

"Quite all right, sir!" It was Smythe who spoke. "She's up forward with Jezzan and your secretary."

"Where are we?"

"In a jungle of some kind."

"Is Zander dead?" asked Baynes, noting the strange posture of the Professor's body.

Cooms nodded.

"We've wrecked the ship," said Valerie. He and Hilton were making a cursory examination of the controls and mechanism. "What brought us down so quick?"

"Haven't the slightest idea—yet," said Hilton. "What do you say we go outside and see where we are?"

Armed with electric pistols, Hilton, Baynes, and Carson stepped outside. Strange animals scampered out of sight into the dense, yellow foliage. The party waded through lush grasses. High growths of creepers and tangled vines grew up into the gigantic, spreading trees. It was exceedingly warm.

"Wonder where this moon gets all its heat? The sun's too far away, and Saturn doesn't radiate much heat."

"Probably from inside Dian."

THE three explorers ventured only a short distance from the space-ship. They saw few animals, being unaware of the many eyes that watched them from behind the lush foliage. On their return to the ship, Cooms greeted them with startling news.

"We've got to get out of here!"

"What do you mean?"

"We're in a swamp. The air is poisonous—unlike that we tested before the fall. If we breathe this swamp air a few days, we'll all be dead."

"But we can't repair the ship in that time—if we can repair it at all," protested Hilton.

"Then we'll have to find a way out. This swamp isn't very large. It's in the center of that red spot we saw on the way down."

"We can move our equipment in a few marches," said Hilton. "There's nothing else to do."

"What about putting the airship together?" suggested Bret.

Hilton pointed to the surrounding jungle with its interwoven maze of vegetation overhead. "How could we ever fly out of that?" he asked.

"Cut some of it away," said Bret.

"Take too long. Can't be more than a few miles to the edge of the swamp. We'll take everything to the camp site and set up our airship there."

In a little glade near where the wrecked space-ship lay half sunken into the soft ground, they buried Brunhild and Professor Zander with due formality. After much argument, it was decided that all nine of them, including the girl, would set out for the edge of the swamp, traveling lightly. Later, a group of them was to return for the heavier stuff.

Fenley, Baynes' secretary, was a little doubtful. "I don't like the idea

of leaving the space-ship here," he intoned dejectedly.

"What do you want to do?" snapped Cooms sarcastically. "Pack it on your back, or stay here until your lungs rot?"

"It's our only way of getting home again," was Fenley's reply.

Several hours later, the group of space-travelers turned their backs on the wrecked space-ship and started out. The way led through yellow mazes of giant trees surrounded by matted growths of long, scraggling plants. Vines and creepers interlaced the whole, making progress difficult in places.

Rose Baynes shyly accepted the aid of Bret Carson, much to Cooms' dislike. Once when Cooms offered to lift her over a decaying tree trunk, she openly disdained his assistance. Feeling strangely comforted by her acceptance of his services, Bret kept close to her in the line of march. The traveling was difficult enough for a man.

Shadowy forms slunk ominously out of sight. Once they saw two large, spidery creatures on long, spindly legs. They charged fiercely into the killing flashes from the electric pistols. Presently, two bird-like animals, resembling bats, circled above them on leathern wings. Long, taloned claws hung beneath them. They swooped low, uttering cries.

One of them dashed at Hilton, clutching at him. He fired. The second bird attacked from the rear, his talons tearing viciously at Rose Baynes, entangling her clothing, while the huge wings flapped fiercely in an effort to raise her from the ground. Bret Carson seized one of the bird's six legs. Old Jasper Jezzan courageously seized a wing and held tight. Rose screamed. Claws bit cruelly into Bret's arm. With his free

hand, he beat at the cruel head with its snapping black beak. He dared not use his gun with Jasper and the girl so near.

With a wild scream of pain, the giant bird released the girl and struggled free. Like a shot, it was gone, swooping out of sight through the tangled strands of trailing vines. One of the birds lay dead. Bret nursed a bleeding hand.

CHAPTER IV

SWAMP HORRORS

“WE’VE got to keep a better lookout,” warned Hilton. “First thing we know—”

A chorus of shrill cries shattered the silence of the swamp. Flying objects swarmed down from the upper foliage. A vicious horde of the winged demons had returned in full force. The swooping, flitting swarm fell before the withering fire of the electric guns, but their numbers were little diminished. More came to take the places of those fallen. They seemed entirely without fear.

A sweeping wing knocked Bret Carson from his feet. He hung doggedly to his pistol. Talons gripped Smythe who was borne screaming aloft. The bird with its human prey flew a short distance away, coming to light, that it might gain a firmer hold on the squirming man it held. Carson, Valerie, and Jezzan sprang into pursuit. Just before they reached the spot, the bird continued its flight, disappearing from sight, Smythe’s screams dying away into the distance.

A black, flapping rush of the creatures kept the three men cut off from their friends. Desperately, they battled, shooting down the winged ter-

rors before they came to grips with them. Using the dead bodies of the creatures they had slain, they crawled beneath them for protection, taking shots at those which ventured near. Hundreds of the great birds lay dead.

The red light in the sky changed to a deep purple, and this to complete darkness. With the fall of darkness, the birds suddenly abandoned their persistent attack and disappeared.

“They’re gone!” whispered Jezzan, nudging Bret in the darkness.

“Where’s Valerie?”

“Right here!” came the reply.

“Where do you suppose the rest are?”

“Yell out and see.”

Bret did so. There was no reply.

“Think the birds got ‘em?”

A CRASHING noise came to their ears. Strange cries mingled with the snapping of the underbrush all about them. Out in the blackness, they heard the crunching of flesh and bones as mysterious, nocturnal prowlers made a feast of the dead air monsters.

“Scavengers!” whispered Bret. “We’d better leave before they find us. Maybe they like live meat, too.”

Cautiously, the three men crept away from the sounds of feasting, feeling their way through the dark swamp, guided by the sounds behind them. Once, Bret put his hand against a soft, slimy body that whistled shrilly and ran off into the dark.

Suddenly, it became light. The darkness was of short duration, due to double sources of light which the little world of Dian possessed. The brilliance emanated from the distant sun. A short distance ahead of them lay the partially buried hulk of the space-ship. By mere chance, the three stragglers had returned the

way they had come. They debated their next move.

"We haven't many chances of finding them in this place by setting out and walking," said Bret. "We'd better assemble the airship and fly over the swamp towards the open country. It's our one good chance of finding them—if they escaped."

Jasper Jezzan shook his head pessimistically. "How'll you do it, lad?" He waved his hand upward. "Look at the tree-tops, vines, and all that mess."

"We'll cut all that away with the radium rays."

"That's an idea!" Valerie exclaimed.

Carson, Valerie, and Jasper Jezzan worked long and hard at assembling the airship and clearing a space through the tangle of foliage overhead. During the latter task, they made a discovery. It was Valerie who first realized the seemingly ineffectiveness of the radium rays.

"Now I know why we came down so hard," he announced. "These rays are working at only half their usual force—less than half."

"Out of order, are they?"

"No. There's something about this moon which partly counteracts their force."

The cutting away of the dense foliage proved an arduous task. During that time, two periods of pale light, three darknesses, and two red light periods had passed by, marking time. The airship was unboxed and assembled. The three explorers were ready to set out and search for their comrades.

"There's just one part of the airship I'm not sure about," said Valerie, after an examination. "The front compression tank was pretty well banged up when our ship fell, and it's apt to spring a leak."

"We'll just have to chance it," that's all," said Bret resolutely. He was impatient to start.

The little ship rose into the air, ascending the vertical passage which they had cut through two hundred feet of dense vegetation. They soared above the yellow, matted tangle, rising higher. On the horizon lay the end of the swamp. A dull red country lay beyond. In this direction, they guided the airship.

BAYNES' little group was having its troubles. Electrocuting birds fell all about them, but more came to take their places. Fenley, thoroughly frightened, broke from the huddled group and ran. A swooping flier seized him and made off into the air. Fenley let out an agonizing scream of pain and terror.

With a reckless side-snap of his wrist, Hilton let fly at the great bird. The monster fell quietly with its human burden, Fenley, lying still where he had fallen.

"Dig for cover!" yelled Baynes. "They'll get us all if we don't!"

Hilton ran over to where Fenley had fallen. Baynes' secretary had been knocked out of his senses by the quick drop. He arose dazedly to a sitting position, his face still chalky with fright. Hilton assisted him to his feet.

"All right, are you?"

Fenley nodded dumbly, limping after the adventurer who ran to join the rest.

In the protection of the gigantic tree boles, the five space-travelers held off the persistent air monsters. Firing upon the winged terrors, they moved from one place to another, hoping to elude them—but there was no escape. To live was to fight. The charges of their electric pistols grew

weak. Hilton warned them against any unnecessary firing.

Darkness fell. The birds suddenly disappeared. They had seen Smythe carried off earlier that day. Then Valerie, Carson and Jezzan had gone. Baynes feared that the birds had carried them off. Hilton, however, was inclined to a more optimistic opinion.

When the feeble rays of the far-off sun penetrated the gloom of the fearful swamp, the little party continued its way once more. They anticipated another attack from the winged monsters, but they did not return. The weak light changed to red as Saturn's dull brilliance lit up the satellite. Presently, the yellow vegetation thinned out and they stood on the swamp's edge.

Before them lay a broad expanse of lifeless country. The red, barren surface supported no plant life. Curls of smoke arose from scarred depressions and fissures. At the rim of the horizon, beyond the red vista of melancholy wasteland, a yellow line of vegetation was plainly visible, broken in spots by open country.

Above, the sky was a deep purple. The tiny disc of the remote sun shone feebly. Many stars were visible. Three of Saturn's moons were above the horizon, while Saturn itself represented a magnificent spectacle. The enormous globe occupied a large share of the sky, the vast ring crossing it like a huge bar.

Hilton pointed across the desolate waste before them. "We'll have to cross this," he said.

"I wish we had the airship here," remarked Baynes. "I don't like the looks of that smoke."

"Have to thread our way through, that's all," said Hilton. "It's a cinch none of us want to go back to the space-ship."

"I wouldn't go back to that place for anything!" gasped Fenley, shuddering at memory of the winged demons.

"Not while our pistols are dead, we won't."

"Let's eat."

They ate from the supply of concentrated synthetic foods they had brought with them in liberal quantities from the space-ship. Following a well-earned rest, the tired little group advanced into the red wasteland. They had estimated it to be about three miles across.

The farther they advanced into the smoking region, the more they found it necessary to skirt hot fissures and flaming pits out of which filtered acrid fumes.

"This is hell!" exclaimed Baynes. "My feet are getting hot!"

"Getting hot?" snorted Cooms disgustedly. "Mine have been burning for the past fifteen minutes!"

"We're about half-way across," Hilton announced.

THEY stopped at the edge of a crater hole. Hot flame seared upward; bubbling lava boiled in the depths. A pungent odor assailed their nostrils, smarting their eyes and choking their lungs. Hilton considered the situation with Baynes.

"No use turning back. If Carson and the others win through to the edge of the swamp, I've left signs and messages for them to follow. We can—"

Kern Hilton leaped forward and seized Rose Baynes. The girl had fainted.

"A little too much for her," said Baynes. "I feared it all along."

Hilton picked her up and slung her across his shoulder. "Better get across this as fast as we can," he advised, breaking into a slow trot.

Conditions became worse. The ground grew hotter, the heat unbearable. Pits of fire and liquid rock lay all about them. There were times when it seemed that only one direction lay open to them—the way from which they had come. Hilton doubted their ability, however, to retrace the maze. The yellow verdured lands, now much nearer, beckoned to them. Angry curls of smoke enfolded them. Flames swept out of ragged rents before them. All about lay the inferno.

"Head for that hill!" shouted Hilton. He had straggled behind the rest with his human burden.

A low knoll rose up before them. It was free of fire and smoke, offering a respite from the terrific heat and baked ground. Leaping across a deep, narrow fissure which vomited forth a thin curtain of smoke, Hilton joined the rest upon the fireless oasis. It was comparatively cool.

Baynes hastily withdrew his smoking shoes, cursing volubly. Fenley was nearly as exhausted as the girl. Rose opened her eyes and looked about. On all sides lay the fire country. Her eyes held a hopeless look. Then she realized that Hilton had aided her.

"Thank you—so much! I—I'm so weak!"

"You've done wonderfully," offered Hilton.

"Do—do you think Bret and the rest are—are really dead?"

"I can't say," replied Hilton kindly. "Maybe they think we're dead."

"It really is too bad he's a jewel thief," Rose murmured. "He seems so—so nice."

Hilton peered thoughtfully at the girl. "What makes you think he's a jewel thief?"

"Well— isn't he?" Her eyes opened wide in surprise at Hilton's strange attitude.

"I'll admit it looked funny the way he—"

An excited shout from Lester Baynes drew Hilton's attention. He ran to the spot where Baynes and Fenley were pointing to a small cave near the center of the hill. Cooms was just emerging.

"It grows larger inside!" he reported. "It heads that way!" Cooms pointed in the direction of the rolling, grassy hills and yellow forests.

"Got those radium lights?" queried Baynes.

"Mine's back in the swamp," said Fenley dejectedly.

Cooms and Hilton both came forward with radium lights.

"We'll go as far as the cave goes, anyway," said Baynes. "Maybe it leads over to the other side."

Illuminated by the radium lights, the walls and floor of the tunnel sloped downward at a rather steep angle into the ground. For several hundred feet, this was the case, and then the tunnel broadened into a level-floored cavern. Ahead of them flickered tongues of leaping flames.

The five travelers from another world advanced to the very brink of the subterranean holocaust. Below them raged a boiling chaos of molten rock.

"Internal fires!"

"Can we cross it?"

"Yes. There's a ledge to one side of it."

CHAPTER V

IN THE FIRE CAVERNS

THE ledge skirted the raging conflagration, finally ending in a sheer drop of several hundred feet. Black cave-mouths punctured the wall at this point. At right angles to the ledge, a thin, rag-

ged ridge of rock ran towards the center of the flaming pit, rising slightly into the haze of smoke where it became lost to view. Palls of smoke reflecting the hellish glare from below, fumed upward.

Baynes pointed towards the cave-openings. "The trail must continue through one of these—which one?"

"There's five. We'll try the first one."

The first ended in a blind pocket. The next three merged together less than a hundred feet from the ledge. The last tunnel came to an abrupt stop at the edge of a dark pit. Baynes nearly stepped off. Hilton seized him just in time. Cooms shone his radium lamp out into the blackness, revealing no opposite wall—only a vast emptiness. Rugged walls sloped downward into the gloom.

"Probably another fire pit—an extinct one."

Back upon the ledge, Hilton stared out into the hellish display of the yawning abyss. "There's just one bet left," he said, "unless we go back the way we came."

No one spoke for a moment. They grasped the terrible significance of his words. Then Baynes spoke.

"You mean—that!" He pointed with nervous forefinger at the thin knife of rock which slanted upward—out over the raging hell of the internal fires.

Fenley's eyes started out of their sockets. Beads of sweat, not born of the heat, stood out upon his forehead.

"No—no—I'd sooner go back to the swamp!" he screamed in desperation.

"Lead the way!" said Baynes, his face set white and firm. "I'll follow you, Hilton—but what about Rose?"

"I—I can do it, daddy," Rose interposed. A fluttering heart contradicted her brave smile of confidence.

"We'll take no chances with you,"

said Baynes. "You go behind Hilton. I'll come right in back of you. Then Cooms and Fenley can bring up the rear."

FENLEY jibbered in fear, his wild, staring eyes regarding the raging chaos of flame, smoke and boiling lava in abject terror.

"Brace up, Fenley!" snapped Baynes. "Damn it all, man, we've got to get out of this jam!"

"Stay on your hands and knees," advised Hilton. "Keep in touch with the one behind you. Don't move forward only a short distance at a time, and wait for the smoke to lift."

With these final words of advice, Kern Hilton walked out on the narrow crag, stooped to his hands and knees and commenced crawling into the smoky haze. Resolutely, Rose Baynes crawled out behind him. A rush of smoke enveloped them. When the smoke lifted, she looked steadily ahead of her, gained a mental picture of the rough, narrow bridge and shut her eyes. Slowly, she crawled forward until her hands touched Hilton's feet.

"Coming?" asked Hilton, his voice rising above the bubbling roar of molten rock.

A touch on his feet assured him of the girl's presence behind him. He heard Baynes coughing. Hilton continued his slow advance, his fingers clinging to either side of the knife-like ridge. He paused as a rush of smoke blinded and choked him. Behind Baynes crawled Cooms. Fenley followed Cooms, his body shaking in stark horror.

The rock commenced growing hotter. They were nearing the center of the abyss. A break in the smoke billows gave Hilton a glimpse of the farther side. He turned his head and shouted the reassuring news, but his

voice was drowned in the boiling, hissing and roaring beneath him.

The narrow ridge shook and trembled.

Once he glanced downward during a cessation of the smoke. The sight he saw was one which gripped at his stomach and prickled his scalp. Fully seven hundred feet below, a surging sea of fire bubbled, leaped upward, raged and roared. Columns of molten rock spouted upward, spraying the cliffs. The ridge to which they clung, a mighty peak, rose out of the fiery depth. Another rush of smoke shut out the view. Hilton was not curious to look again.

Nearing the other side, he looked back. Fear gripped at his heart. The ridge behind him was empty. He stopped. A minute which seemed like an eternity passed. Then he felt the familiar pat upon his ankle. When the smoke cleared, he moved onward. With a sigh of relief, he reached the other side and found a ledge joining the ridge.

He looked back. Emerging out of the smoke came Rose Baynes, her head drooping. Twenty feet from the safety of the ledge, she suddenly slumped forward, her arms dangling over the sides of the ridge. Her senseless body rolled sideways. Throwing caution to the winds, Hilton ran out upon the rough ridge just as the girl's body sagged over the awful depths. From behind her, a hand leaped out of the smoke, clinging desperately to her ankle. As Hilton grabbed her around the waist, staggering back to the safety of the ledge, the hand released its hold.

Baynes, a wild-eyed expression on his haggard face, drew himself along the remaining distance of the ridge, flinging himself down upon the rocky ledge. Cooms, a desperate glitter in his dark eyes, his complexion

a pasty color, followed Baynes to safety. Fenley was not in sight. Hilton peered into the fiery gloom.

Turning fiercely on Cooms, he demanded, "Where's Fenley? Didn't you wait for him—like I told you?"

Cooms gave no reply, but took advantage of his exhaustion, slumping forward on the ledge. And then Hilton saw Fenley coming. Baynes' secretary had gone stark, raving mad. He was not crawling—but walking upright—keeping his balance in some miraculous manner not granted normal individuals. He waved his arms wildly. A maniacal laugh issued from his mouth. Arriving at the ledge, he turned and started back across. Hilton seized him.

"Fenley, you fool! Snap out of it!"

He shook the crazed man vigorously. Fenley paid no attention to him, making another attempt to start out once more upon the ridge. Hilton rapped him smartly over the head with the useless, burnt out electric pistol.

"Terrible — it was!" shuddered Baynes. "I—I owe you a lot, Hilton! I thought she was gone! You saved us both! I'd have gone too—hanging on to her ankle!"

"Fenley's gone mad!"

"Don't blame him," replied Baynes. "It nearly got me too."

THEY rested on the ledge a long time. In the interval, both the girl and the demented secretary regained consciousness. Fenley became brooding and taciturn.

"It seems like a dream—a horrid nightmare," said Rose. "I can't remember it all—only the crawling, crawling, endlessly through a mist."

The experience had shaken the nerves of them all. The fire and smoke had seemingly drained from

them much of their strength and fortitude. A new line stood out in Hilton's forehead. Cooms appeared like a man who had been sick for some time.

They arose and continued along the ledge. It grew broader, assuming the proportions of a cavern, the pit of fire dropping off to their right. Wild, fearful yells suddenly came to their ears. Strange figures flitted like shadows ahead of them. With wild cries, they halted at a distance. They appeared to be men—strangely formed and strangely garbed.

Barbaric ornaments glittered from their trappings. Each one held a sword. For a moment, they stood and regarded the five weary wanderers. With terrific din, they suddenly charged. Hilton swore disgustedly at his ineffective pistol, hurling it at the foremost attacker. Superior numbers overwhelmed them.

They were held securely. No scabbards hung to the leather trappings, yet each carried a sword. On closer examination, the captives made a startling discovery. The swords were a part of the creatures themselves! They were natural swordsmen! One arm ended in a hard, bony protuberance, a rapier supplied them by nature. The other arm ended in a claw. In figure and feature, they appeared much like men. Their feet were encased in sandals.

Their features were strangest of all, though not wholly unattractive. The general color of the swordsmen was brown. Across the eyes and forehead, the texture of the skin was black. Their noses were straight and clean-cut, while a narrow slit of a mouth gave them a rather set, determined expression. They chattered loudly, urging their prisoners along with pricks from the sword-tips.

They entered a long tunnel. Ahead of them, the captives heard a low, muttering cadence. They were shoved into a cavern. Row upon row of swordsmen stood kneeling before a vivid picture artfully designed upon the wall, chanting incantations. All five of the space-travellers instantly recognized the effigy of worship before which the swordsmen kneeled. A huge, red, glistening ball was limned upon the wall, blowing phosphorescently. Across this lay a thin, silver bar.

"Saturn and its rings!" exclaimed Cooms. "It's their god—they are praying to it!"

"Swordsmen of Saturn," said Kern Hilton, "that's what they are."

The crazed Fenley, with a nerve-shattering laugh, leaped forward and placed his hand upon the glowing red disc. Instantly, one of the brown swordsmen sprang upon Fenley angrily. With a rapid slash of his blade, he severed the offending hand of Baynes' secretary. The latter screamed fearfully, leaping at the swordsman in a frenzy. Accepting this as a challenge, the swordsman plunged his bony blade through Fenley's breast.

Hilton lunged forward as Fenley slipped, dying, off the keen blade, but many hands and swords barred his progress. Wiping his bloody sword on the hair of the dead man, the brown swordsman screamed a challenge, then looked about to see if there were any to accept. A hush of silence fell over the group.

The leader motioned the four captives to follow him. The rest of the swordsmen fell in behind. The tunnel led gradually upward, emerging into daylight. They were beyond the fire country. Far behind them, smoke curls arose from the barren wasteland. They were now in a yel-

low thicket which skirted a plain of waving grass.

The swordsmen followed a well-defined path. Presently, a large black castle loomed before them. Swordsmen swarmed the gate towers, staring in surprise at the prisoners. The massive gates swung open for their entrance. There was much excited conversation among the swordsmen.

The swordsmen and their captives were still a hundred yards from the fortress when a strange noise above them caused Rose to look upward.

"The airship!" she cried.

Sure enough, above them rode the airship which they had left dissembled at the space-ship.

"It's Carson!" shouted Hilton. They're alive! They came through!"

"Without us!" sneered Cooms. They sneaked back to the ship!"

The girl's eyes blazed, and a hot retort came to her lips. A terrific explosion drowned out her words. The swordsmen shrieked in terror, urging their prisoners on a run for the gate.

CARSON guided the airship out over the fire country. "Keep an eye open for them. Maybe they tried to cross over."

"If they are, we can't do anything for them until they come out, that's sure."

"I see someone!" yelled Valerie. "Look! Over there!" He pointed to the country beyond the fire area.

Carson and Jezzan followed the pointing arm of Valerie. Fierce creatures swarmed about a defending man, leaping in and out at him viciously. Carson flew the ship over the fire country at a rapid speed, settling low over the melee. All three looked upon a strange sight below them.

A lone man, wielding a sword with

expert precision, fought with calm and deadly manner. Three beasts, much like mammoth wolves, were jumping close, then leaping backward as the whirling, dancing blade bit into their flesh. His body was red, a peculiar shade of red, and he was clad in barbaric trappings.

"We've got to help him!" said Bret. "He can't hold out against them much much longer!"

Already, the long-fanged beasts were crowding their prey desperately. Frantically, the red man wielded his sword.

"What a swordsman!" marveled Valerie.

The crimson man looked up in surprise at sight of the ship swooping so low over his head. The glance was only a fleeting one, however. Not once did he relax his ceaseless vigilance. The airship came to rest a short distance away. The three men jumped out. Their silent, electric guns dispatched the three animals, leaving the man with the sword a bit startled.

He raised his blade menacingly as they came near. Bret, realizing that this was one of Dian's inhabitants, made overtures of friendship. The swordsman lowered his blade a bit doubtful as the three men approached. To their surprise, they found that the sword was a living part of the red man! A black band of color lay like a mask across the swordsman's eyes. Fearlessly, he awaited them, his sword held half ready as if he anticipated an attack.

"Wonder if he can help us find Baynes and the rest of 'em?" suggested Jezzan.

Bret, by means of signs, tried to make the red swordsman understand his question, but the swordsman chattered volubly each time. A sudden warning from the red swordsman

put them on their guard. From a nearby wooded copse, fully two score of the beasts, like the ones they had killed, came running. Shooting down the nearest of the vicious, long-fanged creatures, they ran for the airship, urging the red swordsman to follow. For a moment, he balked at entering the mysterious flying craft, but a second glance at the attacking beasts made him change his mind.

He jumped into the airship just as Jasper Jezzan and Valerie let fly at the approaching pack which was closing upon them in a circle. Once more the craft swung into the sky. They circled the yellow land outside the fire-country for a long time and were just about to return over the swamp once more when the chattering of the swordsman attracted their attention.

He pointed to the far horizon across an expanse of yellow grass-land. Small black figures moved in the direction of a dark blot against the yellow background. Instantly, Valerie swung the telescopic sights in that direction.

"It's they!" he yelled. "They're prisoners!"

"Prisoners?"

"Yes!" replied Valerie. "I just saw Baynes get a jab from a sword. They're brown swordsmen!"

Putting on speed, Bret Carson flew the airship above the group of brown swordsmen and their captives.

"Drop a grenade! Maybe we can scare them!"

"Here goes!" Valerie threw a small cylinder over the side. The grenade exploded close to the castle wall at a safe distance. The swordsmen hurried for the castle, forcing Cooms, Baynes, Hilton and the girl ahead of them through the gateway.

"How many grenades have we left?"

"Four," Valerie replied to him. "When I fly over the castle, bombard it! Be careful where you let them drop!"

Bret circled the ship low over the grim pile. Brown swordsmen ran about the courtyards excitedly. A large, round object screamed past the airship, described an arc, and fell outside the castle walls.

"A catapult!" shouted Valerie, pointing to a strange contraption which the swordsmen were reloading.

"All right, Valerie! Let one fly!"

"At the catapult?"

"Yes! Take that tower near the gate, too!"

Another bulky object whistled close to the ship.

"Their aim ain't so bad!" said Jezzan.

The red swordsman chattered in excitement and delight as Valerie unloaded two more grenades. One of them blew the catapult and its operators skyward. The other shattered the gate tower to fragments. The red swordsman seemed to bear no love for his brown counterparts.

"Better get up higher," advised Jasper. "Can't tell what else they've got."

CHAPTER VI

DUNGEONS OF DOOM

A CONFUSED look spread over Bret's face. "The ship won't rise any higher!" he exclaimed.

"We're comin' down!"

"The compression tank—it's leaking!"

The airship listed badly to one side and dove for the black castle. The red swordsman screamed in terror. Brown swordsmen shouted in alarm as the airship plunged into the court-

yard with a crash, pinning two of their number underneath its wreckage. Dazedly, the three men and their red ally climbed from the ruins, uninjured by the short, belated fall. The brown swordsmen, at the shrill command of their leaders, sprang to the attack, overwhelming the three men from the earth before they had a chance to find their pistols.

With the red swordsman it was different. His weapon was always at hand, and he now made effective use of it, jumping against a nearby wall—ready to hold off his brown foes. A brown swordsman hacked viciously at him. With rapid movements, the red swordsman penetrated the other's guard, lunging his blade deep into his opponent's vitals. Almost instantly, before his rapier was scarcely stained with the brown swordsman's life fluid, his blade clashed with another of the overwhelming odds.

SHRILL orders were shrieked above the din of battle. The result was a foregone conclusion. Defense was a mere gesture. The red swordsman was taken—alive. Evidently, this had been the orders. All four were led into the dark, grim castle, down several flights of steps into a dimly lit corridor far underneath the building's ground level. Here they were separated. Jasper Jezzan and Valerie were escorted one way. Bret Carson and the red swordsman were led another way, being shoved into a dark, damp, ill-smelling dungeon.

"That you, boy?" Hilton's voice came out of a dark corner of the semi-gloom.

"Hello, Kern! Who's with you?"

"A swordsman—he's red and seems to be of a different race. He's certainly no friend of the brown

ones. You should have seen him fight before they took us!"

While Hilton and Carson discussed their position, the red swordsman walked about the dungeon, searching every corner. He went to the heavy, metal door, shaking it vigorously. Only a dim filter of light suffused the darkness. This came from a luminous patchwork on the ceiling far above them.

A stone balcony looked down upon them, well beyond their reach. The red swordsman gazed at it longingly. Carson and Hilton told one another their adventures and discoveries from the time they had become lost in the swamp. The red swordsman came back to stand beside them, listening to their strange talk.

With the claw of his left arm, he pointed to himself and spoke one word, "Drook!" Then he repeated it.

"He means himself," explained Bret, grasping the other's meaning. "His name is Drook!"

Hilton pointed to himself and said, "Kern." Then pointing to the red swordsman he said "Drook," in token of understanding. The swordsman smiled, pointing questioningly at Carson. After the latter's name had been spoken, Drook pointed to other objects, speaking various syllables.

"We're learning his language!"

Dark forms crossing the balcony brought them to silence. Soft footsteps were heard pattering down the stairs. A tray of food was shoved beneath the door.

The three captives had no means of telling how long they were kept in the dungeon beneath the grim pile. They ate and slept indiscriminately whenever they felt the urge. Their captors brought food at no standard time. The little stream which gurgled through one corner of their prison gave them drinking water. A

long time passed before the two adventurers became sufficiently conversant with Drook's language to speak it intelligently. They were then told a strange tale of Dian which Drook called Grish.

It seemed that the brown and red swordsmen of Grish were forever at war. Though the red swordsmen were by far the more civilized and cultured, the brown swordsmen outnumbered them fully ten to one. The red inhabitants of Grish resided in large cities. Their brown contemporaries lived a scattered existence in "degs," or castles, all over the country.

"They are forever trying to batter their way into our cities," said Drook, "but we always repel them. Our safety lies in the fact that the brown lords of the degs are extremely quarrelsome and jealous of one another, lacking organization. We are being held at Bendl Deg. Heeng is the ruler here. I come from the city of Laroos."

"Where were you going when we found you fighting the beasts?" asked Carson.

"When you saved me from the kralfs, I was on a trip to Vaaneen, the greatest city of the red swordsmen. I carried a message from Kaud, the lord of our city. Vaaneen is ruled by a god who descended from Oonul, the world with the great bar across it—where all our gods live, and where the bravest go when they die. With him in our midst, Vaaneen can never fall before the brown swordsmen, and warriors of Vaaneen can never be defeated while defending the other cities."

Hilton winked broadly at Carson, who smiled back. They humored Drook's superstitions, however, by inquiring about the fabulous deity who ruled Vaaneen. Drook answered their inquiries from what he had heard. He himself claimed that he

had never seen the god of Oonul.

"It was he who caused the wild skels to be tamed—that we might ride them through the air."

"Skels?" queried Carson. "What are they?"

Drook then gave a detailed description of the winged demons the travelers from earth had encountered in the swamp.

"And you tamed them so that they may be ridden?"

"To be sure, though they're vicious until their spirits have been tamed."

DROOK believed that Hilton and Carson had come from a remote portion of Dian, despite their explanations of their trip through space. He failed to understand. Many days passed. The clothing of the two men became soiled and ragged. Long, unkempt beards adorned their faces much to the surprise of Drook, whose face was utterly hairless. He had also been surprised at their lack of natural "built-in" swords.

One day, a small guard of brown swordsmen took them out of their dungeon. The language of the latter was little different from that of Drook's speech. From their captors, they learned that some form of judgment was to be meted out to them. They were led into a large hall thronged on all sides with ranks of the brown swordsmen, or degmen, as Drook called them.

For the first time, the two adventurers obtained a glimpse of swordswomen. They were smaller than the males, their swords short and blunt. At one end of the large hall sat a burly swordsman.

"That is Heeng," whispered Drook. "We can expect little mercy from him."

Before the raised platform stood Baynes, Valerie, and Jezzán. Both

Cooms and Rose Baynes were missing.

The three were led to a position beside their companions. In a low voice, Hilton inquired of Baynes, "Where's Rose—and Cooms?"

"That damned, lousy—"

Baynes' torrid outburst was quieted by a roar from Heeng.

"Silence!" he howled. "Or by Oonul, I'll cleave your skulls!" Heeng scowled, raising his sword menacingly.

From a curtain behind Heeng, a man stepped out, a white man in the trappings of a brown swordsman. It was Cooms. Baynes swallowed an oath, his fingers clutching convulsively.

"This is a great man," said Heeng, placing the claws of his left hand upon the shoulder of Cooms. "He promises to lead us in victorious conquest of his rich land across the great sea. The rest of you swordless ones are to be given into slavery with the red devil of Laroos."

"You dirty—" Hilton sprang in direction of the treacherous Cooms, but was blocked by several criss-crossed blades which clashed together before him.

Sword-tips jabbed him back into position once more. "You and Baynes aren't the big cheeses any longer, Hilton," Cooms sneered malevolently at him. "I've come into my own here."

"Wait!" hissed Baynes beneath his breath, his voice shaking. "That isn't the worst of it!"

Bret Carson's face turned white as he gathered the significance of what he had seen and heard. The worst of his fears were realized when a swordsman led Rose Baynes from an ante-chamber behind the black stone platform on which stood Heeng, Cooms and several servitors. She was brought before Heeng, clad in the

scanty trappings of a swordswoman. They enhanced, rather than destroyed, her beauty.

"I am giving this slave to Kumes," said Heeng, designating Cooms with a wave of his sword, "in reward for his promise to lead us across the sea and conquer rich cities guarded by men without swords!"

A tremendous ovation of approval arose from the degmen. Swords clicked and rattled.

"He lies!" screamed Baynes frantically. He leaped forward to be at the throat of Cooms. Degmen closed in upon him before he had taken half a dozen steps. Bret Carson sprang to his aid, Hilton at his side. A vicious cut was aimed at the latter. Bret planted a fist in the face of the brown assailant, crashing him to the floor amid the kicking, trampling feet.

Valerie and Jezzan joined the fray as the milling swordsmen closed in upon the group. A sinewy red arm shot forward and upward in a rapid lunge. Two brown bodies wriggled in dying gasps upon Drook's sharp blade before the remaining degmen closed in to overwhelm their captives. The degmen stood ready to hack them to pieces with their blades, looking askance of Heeng.

"Back to the dungeons!" screamed Heeng in rage. "The red devil lies tonight by torture! The rest will go to the fire caverns—to work until dead!"

Carson, Hilton, and their red ally were rudely hustled down into their dungeon once again, small trickles of blood oozing from slight sword cuts.

"We've got to get out of here!" Bret turned to Hilton and the red swordsman.

"There's a fighting chance," offered Hilton, pointing to a long ledge of rock which jutted out above the

dungeon. "We must reach that balcony."

"We can't do it," deplored Bret. "It's too high, even if we stood on each other's shoulders."

"I've got a better idea than that."

Hilton waved an arm in the direction of the steady stream of water which ran through one corner of their dungeon. "That will help us."

FOR a moment, Bret was keenly perplexed. Drook stood by uncomprehending—, for Hilton had lapsed into the language he and Bret knew best. Hilton explained.

"You mean to let the water fill our dungeon!" enthused Bret. "So we can float up to the balcony!"

"Sure thing. All we have to do is fill up the grating."

"Then we'd better hurry before they come for us again!"

The situation was explained to Drook. Gathering material from their bedding, the three prisoners clogged the interstices through which the waterway left the dungeon. As they worked, small pools of water grew and spread out over the hard, stone floor, little rivulets trickling beneath the heavy door, rising against the stone stairway outside. The cold, invigorating water crept slowly about the calves of their legs—then to their hips.

"So far—so good," observed Hilton. "As long as they stay away until we're ready."

Soon, they felt the water trickle about their chins. Bret gave a light spring, levelling his body with the water's surface.

"We'll have to swim for it now!"

To his left there came a bubbling gurgle. A bony blade cleft the surface of the water, waving madly.

"Drook! He can't swim!"

Bret grabbed the choking, gasping

swordsman by the hair, pulling him to the surface.

"We'll have to keep him afloat!"

The contingency of Drook's inability to swim was unexpected. They had overlooked the fact that Drook's heavy blade was not fitted for swimming. Nevertheless, the red swordsman had faced the issue bravely without one word of dissent.

"Be there pretty soon now!" Hilton panted. "Only a few more feet!" Hilton's outstretched finger-tips fell short of the rim by inches.

Then, there happened that which they had feared all along. The patter of footsteps broke the silence. A brown swordsman stepped out upon the balcony, an exclamation of surprise on his lips as he looked down upon the black water. He leaned out over the water for a closer view, and this proved to be his undoing.

Drook, alert to seize any opportunity, whipped his long blade upward in a rapid arc. The singing rapier severed the head of the degman who toppled into the watery depths. The swift motion submerged both Hilton and Drook for a few brief seconds.

"Quick! Get up there before more of them come!"

Supporting the swordsman with one arm, Hilton gave Bret Carson a violent shove.

CHAPTER VII

SWORDS CLASH

BRET managed to catch one hand upon the balcony's edge, pulling himself upward. A brown figure rushed down upon him from out of the gloom, another behind him, swords lifted menacingly. Bret dropped quickly to his

knees, the swordsman falling over him into the water. Before the second degman was aware of what had happened, Bret bowled him over with a crashing blow, leaping upon him, seizing the vicious sword-arm in a tight grasp.

The vicious thrust which Drook aimed at the drowning degman was unnecessary. Kern Hilton pushed Drook upon the balcony. The red swordsman reached down and pulled Hilton upon the ledge. Bret and the degman still rolled madly about on the rocky floor.

"Let him up!" exclaimed Drook, holding his blade ready.

Bret did so, springing clear of the wicked blade. Drook engaged the degman, their swords singing and clashing as they danced about the ledge, looking for an opening. Both were marvelous fencers, but Drook was by far the best. He kept his brown opponent backing up constantly. The latter, realizing that he was face to face with death, yelled for help. With a rapid series of disengages and cleaving thrusts, Drook sank his blade into the other's vitals.

Running footsteps pattered down the corridor.

"Quick!" hissed Drook. "Out of sight to one side of the doorway—until they come through!"

Four brawny swordsmen rushed into view. With a rapid stroke, Drook sliced the head of the first clean off his neck, recovering rapidly to clash blades with the second. The third sprang to his fellow's assistance, but a piston-driven fist from out of the dark caught him on the side of the head, sprawling him to the floor. Seizing him with both hands, Kern Hilton whirled the dazed swordsman above his head, casting him into the submerged dungeon.

IN THE meantime, Bret had charged the remaining swordsman, crashing him to the floor with a vicious tackle. Instantly, the ready blade slashed at him madly, grazing his shoulder. Bret seized it in a strong grip, giving a quick twist. There came a dull snap and an agonizing cry. He had broken the blade half off.

In pain and rage, the degman rolled over and over with Bret Carson. Over the brink of the rocky ledge and down through the cold water they fell. The swordsman's grip froze upon Bret who, with difficulty, broke the grip. When he came to the surface, only a string of bubbles marked the spot of his late adversary. The water was now nearly level with the balcony. Drook had dispatched his man and was wiping his blade on his victim's hair.

"Now I can realize why they call you the 'red devil'," said Hilton admiringly.

"Without a sword, you do very well yourself," commended Drook. "Both of you are true fighting men."

"Thanks, but hadn't we better be getting along?"

"Wait!" The red swordsman listened intently. Hearing nothing, he stooped over the bodies of the two dead swordsmen. From the decapitated degman, he took a bunch of keys.

"If doors bar us, we'll use these!" he exclaimed. "If Heeng's men bar us, we'll fight!"

Down the corridor they softly made their way. None of their brown enemies were in sight. "We killed all those stationed in the corridor; it must be," said Drook. "They ran into our dungeon."

A cry issued from a small grating at their right. Turning that way, Bret saw the face of Valerie pressed

close against the interstices. Beside him stood Baynes.

"Drook! The keys! Let them out!"

After a bit of fumbling, Drook finally found the right key. Baynes, Valerie, and old Jasper Jezzau were soon at their side. Hilton cautioned them to silence. From another grating across the corridor and farther down came a slight commotion. Drook became all attention.

"Red swordsmen—captives!" exclaimed Drook, running to the grating where three faces were pressed close to the grilled opening.

"Drook!"

"Imaak—Yeem—and Steeth! How did you get here?"

"Taken—like yourself!"

Quickly the red swordsman released his three companions. The escape party was now swelled to nine members. The four swordsmen waved their blades, eager for the fray ahead of them, scarcely able to keep down their voices.

"We've got to find Rose before we leave!" announced Bret firmly.

"Yes!" said Baynes. "I'll die here before I leave without my daughter!"

"And I want Cooms!" gritted Hilton, a hard light in his eyes.

"I know how you feel," counseled Drook. "I, too, would like nothing better than sinking my blade through Heeng's vile carcass, but we must use reason. Some of us must win through to Laroos—to bring help."

"If we—"

A sudden shout ahead of them brought a close to all conversation. Several of the brown swordsmen stood at the farther end of the corridor, gesticulating excitedly.

"This way!" yelled Drook. "They'll be reinforced!"

Brandishing their bony blades, the degmen rushed after them with loud yells. The fugitives now entered a

broad, high-ceilinged room, running into the midst of several more of Heeng's warriors. Blades clashed.

"To the right!" cried Hilton. "Up this stairway!"

With rapidity, the escaped prisoners bounded up a broad stairway, the surprised degmen in close pursuit. Steeth and Drook held them off in the rear. Somewhere in the great castle, a huge bell tolled dismally several times, announcing their escape. Cries of the degmen rose into a swelling roar. The stairway narrowed and spiraled upward several times before the fugitives found themselves upon a narrow bridge far above the ground. The bridge led to a remote tower set apart from the rest of the grim pile.

Four degmen rushed out of the tower, slashing eagerly at the white adventurers and the red swordsmen, their hereditary enemies. Hilton felt a searing sting in his right arm as a blade bit into his flesh. Rushing forward, he seized the brown warrior about the hips, hurling him over the bridge-rail to the ground far below. A wailing scream—a sickening thud—then with fierce cries the remaining swordsmen charged.

EAGERLY, the red swordsmen sprang at the degmen. Blades flashed faster than the eye could follow. The three degmen were quickly dispatched. A roaring, howling mob of Heeng's warriors rushed out toward the bridge with fierce battle cries. Drook, Imaak, Steeth, and Yeem sprang forward to defend the narrow passage. In their intense eagerness for combat, the brown swordsmen handicapped each other in their approach. The mob of degmen, forced forward by those in the rear, came swelling upon the narrow bridge in

a compact, close-pressed mass, their movements hampered.

"Run into the tower!" shouted Drook to his white friends. "We'll hold the bridge!"

"Like hell we'll run!" retorted Hilton. "We'll fight by your side, Drook, with the red swordsmen!"

The blades of the red swordsmen leaped in and out among the front ranks of the brown horde, slaughtering the degmen right and left. The foremost of the brown swordsmen, realizing the helplessness of their close-packed ranks, yelled a warning to move back. A swishing red sword decapitated him. Shrill orders were hurled from the rear. There was a temporary retreat for reorganization. The red swordsmen leaped bravely in pursuit, following up the advantage. With a crash, the railing broke on one side. Several degmen plunged to their doom. The red blades paused not for a moment.

Behind the red swordsmen, the space-explorers pushed forward, unable to aid their strange allies at the time. As the brown ranks thinned, and there was more room for fewer blades, a half-dozen degmen drove the four red swordsmen back upon the bridge once more, pressing them closely. Here, no more than two might battle abreast.

With a swift series of feints and counter-strokes, Drook sank his blade into the neck of his adversary. Imaak behind Drook, sprang to the front in his place, giving Drook a brief rest. The fighting continued. The brown swordsmen were no match for their red foes. Steeth had remarked to Hilton during a temporary lull in the fighting that they were four of Laroo's best fencers.

Heeng's men were fearless and persistent, and now the crafty, brown rascal was sending only his

best and most cunning swordsmen into the fray. The excessive effort and skill was tiring the red swordsmen. Several minor slashes warned them. They were weakening under the steady strain of meeting fresh warriors.

Snapping off the blade of a fallen swordsman, Bret rushed forward. "Let me in there, Drook!" Bret made a lunge at the nearest of Heeng's warriors.

"Back!" cried the red swordsmen, careful not to move his eyes from the flashing blade ahead of him. "Your efforts are useless in this kind of fighting!"

As if to verify the statement, the blade which Bret wielded was sent spinning from his hand, and he was laid open to the thrust which followed. Drook spun his blade about, swiftly countering the vicious jab at the unprotected man. The brown blade grazed Bret's head—and then Drook felt a piercing thrust catch him in the shoulder as he stood off guard for a fleeting moment. Desperately, he battled both men, bringing into play every bit of his superior skill. Yeem sprang into the breach over the crouched form of Bret Carson who was no match for these natural swordsmen.

With a fierce counter-attack, Drook's seething sword forced back the brown warrior who had nearly sent him to his death. Straight for the edge of the bridge, the degman retreated. As he stepped off, Drook's blade pierced his vitals in mid-air with a lightning thrust and withdrawal. Immediately, another of Heeng's finest swordsmen sprang forward to fill the place of his fallen comrade.

"Drook, this can't be kept up!" shouted Hilton. "You're weakening!"

The red swordsman made no reply. Sweat streamed from his brow. Still he wielded the tiring sword-arm. Then he spoke. "What else—is there to do—but fight?" A brown blade swished close to his head, much closer than Drook would have allowed, had he been fresh and strong.

Hilton's eyes darted over the situation. "Drook! If we tear this bridge down, they can't come at us!"

"Go to it!" shouted the red swordsman.

The bridge was a narrow, frail structure of timbers and thin stone slabs. With haste, the five space-travellers tore off the heavy stone slabs and ripped the timbers loose from the tower. The degmen redoubled their attack.

"Come—quick!" shouted Hilton.

Beneath his feet, Drook felt the bridge sag. Steeth looked backward. Only two timbers lay between them and the safety of the tower. Four of the swordless, white men held them up by main strength, ready to let them fall the moment the four red swordsmen were safely across.

"Run!"

THE red swordsmen raced for the tower. Several brown degmen followed. Yeem turned for a quick thrust at the very brink of the tower. The timber's end slipped from the paralyzed fingers of Baynes and Valerie, their arms strained almost to the breaking point. Yeem shot downward, but retained a temporary grasp on the remaining timber which Carson and Hilton supported. Releasing his hold, Bret grasped the slipping, swaying body of Yeem, dragging him to safety just as the remaining section of the bridge fell. Down it crashed, taking four of the degmen with it.

Across the intervening space,

Heeng raged and tore around. He and his brown swordsmen disappeared within the black castle, reappearing on the ground a hundred and fifty feet below.

"We're not out of danger yet!" cried Drook. "They'll come up through the tower!"

"Block them off!"

They raced into the tower and down a stairway.

"Here's where they come up!" Drook pointed to an oval aperture in the floor.

"Destroy the stairway!"

A series of loud yells from below announced the coming of the degmen. Rapidly, they set to work tearing at the stairway. Valerie and Jasper Jezzan held their weight against the door. The heavy bar bulged inward under the rush of the brown swordsmen, but the two held it securely.

"All set!" yelled Hilton. "Scramble up the pole!"

A single pole had been left in place. One by one, the fugitives climbed into the tower above. Valerie and Jezzan still held the door which threatened to burst at any moment. It was ripped and torn in many places, the long blades of the degmen flashing through in an effort to get at the two men.

"Up with you!" cried Valerie, motioning old Jasper to the pole.

"No—lad. If one o' us lets go, they'll all be in here. It's death t' remain. You go—I'm old—maybe I couldn't climb the pole!"

"Hurry!" snapped Valerie. "The door's giving!"

A yell from above drew their attention. Two ropes were lowered, their ends looped. "Hey, you fools! Up with you—quick!"

Hilton gave the pole a shove in the direction of the shattered door just as a rush of brown bodies crashed it inward. The pole struck several of them with force, retarding their progress while the two men were hauled up. Out of the chaos of yells came a scream. One of the degmen had snapped his blade off short against the heavy pole. Valerie cursed as a stinging sensation sprang into his leg—and then they were drawn to safety.

"Sure lucky Steeth found coiled rope up here."

Temporarily safe from attack, Baynes sank down exhausted. "Wonder what they'll try next?"

"If they have patience," said Drook, "they'll try and starve us out."

"Sure got a good long wait then," said Jasper. He drew several small packages from various pockets. "I been savin' these since we were took."

Valerie also produced similar packages, piling them alongside Jasper's contribution. "Here's food enough to last us all pretty close to a week—if we go easy on it."

"Impossible!" said Imaak. "There's little more than two good meals—if it is really good to eat!"

"You don't know this stuff," laughed Hilton. "Each one of those little cubes is a square meal all by itself." He turned to Baynes. "Have you—"

But Baynes was fast asleep.

"I don't blame him," said Drook. "I feel the same way. Right now, when there's nothing going on, we'd better rest up."

While the others slept, Carson, Hilton, and Yeem kept watch for a surprise attack. But none came.

CHAPTER VIII

"I'LL FIGHT HIM!"

DARKNESS fell. Flaring torches were set up about various parts of Bendl Deg. Figures flitted about in the lurid glare, but none came near the high tower.

"I wonder what happened to the wreck of the airship?"

"They destroyed it, so Valerie said," explained Hilton. "One of his jailers told him. What wouldn't burn, they broke and crushed. Superstition, I guess."

"I wonder where Rose is—over there?" Bret Carson pointed across to the grim pile.

"Bret, do you love Miss Rose?" queried Hilton.

"I'm afraid I do, Kern. When I left the earth, I didn't believe I could ever love again. I swore I wouldn't."

"Then you've sworn your love to some other woman?"

"No. You don't understand. I made that resolution for my own good."

In the darkness, Hilton grinned broadly. "And now you've weakened."

"Yes," came the admission, "I have—hopelessly. When I think of Cooms, there's murder in my heart!"

"I, too!" was the grim reply. "I want to see Cooms die for the sake of common decency. If you're sure of your feelings about Miss Rose, I'll try and afford you the opportunity of killing him."

"I'm sure now," said Bret in a strange voice.

In the dim light of several small moons, Kern Hilton saw his friend remove a square bit of paper from his pocket and throw it out of the window. A caprice of the breeze blew it back lightly against Hilton's

arm. He took it, leaning forward to give it to Bret. The latter was not there, however, having arisen and walked across to where Imaak guarded the oval opening in the floor. On second thought, Hilton placed the small, folded square in his pocket.

At dawn, a council was held. It was decided that two of the red swordsmen were to try a break for freedom when darkness came again. In this manner, help might be obtained from Laroos. When both the sun and its ringed planet settled below the horizon, silent forms in the tower lowered Yeem and Steeth to the ground with ropes. Each set out in a different direction to scale the castle wall.

They were scarcely upon the ground when huge bonfires sprang into brilliance. With shrill cries of alarm, the brown swordsmen rushed down upon them, having waited and watched for just such a move. With a sinking sensation, the besieged group in the tower saw Yeem go down, fully a dozen swords piercing his body. Out of their sight, around a bend in the castle, they heard a raging, triumphant mob bearing down on Imaak.

"They never had a chance," said Hilton.

The brown swordsmen threw the hacked body of Yeem onto a blazing pyre, having first removed the head.

"Where's Carson gone?" Valerie looked searchingly about. "He was here only a minute ago."

Carson was not to be found. He had disappeared, gone completely.

"You don't suppose he went with Imaak and Yeem?" suggested Drook. "He was strong for it, even when we convinced him of his folly."

"Here—here we are!" cried Jezzan. "Look at this!"

Jasper pointed to a rope that

stretched from the tower to the castle across the space which had recently been spanned by the narrow bridge.

"He's over there—in the deg!" exclaimed Drook. He shook his head despairingly. "Not much of a chance for him."

"You don't know him!" enthused Hilton. "He's gone over there on account of the girl!"

"For my daughter?"

"He loves her!"

"It's madness!" deplored Drook.

"He'll try and get Cooms, too."

"If he saves Rose from that mangy dog, and she wants him, he can have her!" swore Baynes. "Even if he is a jewel thief!"

"He's not a jewel thief!" retorted Hilton.

"How do you know?" challenged Baynes.

"I can't say right now, but I've got my reasons for thinking he didn't steal those gems."

WHEN Bret Carson saw the fruitless attempt of Yeem and Imaak to gain an escape, he made a desperate resolve. Silently, he swung a coiled rope in the direction of the castle where several jagged timber ends still remained of the bridge foundation. The noose settled and tightened. Carson fastened his end to the tower rail, testing it with the weight of his body. Satisfied, he swung out over the dizzy depths, heading for the castle, hand over hand.

Ordinarily, the degmen would have seen the rash action, capturing him immediately, but Imaak was still un-found, having hidden within the castle walls. The brown swordsmen were busy searching for him. No one saw the dim figure draw itself through the dark window amid the

shadows thrown by the flickering torchlight.

It was his intention to find Rose. Softly, he stole through the darkness of the chamber, a bit undecided as to where he might find her. He turned suddenly into a dimly lit room. A swordswoman opened her mouth to scream, but the palm of Bret's hand muffled the outcry. She swung at him viciously with her short blade, But Carson had learned to keep well away from these living rapiers. One hand held her sword arm like a vise.

"Quiet!" hissed Carson. He lent emphasis to his words by a slight pressure on her neck. "Speak!" he said. "Where is the swordless female?"

The degwoman, her heart beating wildly, stared in terror at the dirty, bewhiskered face of Bret Carson. He released his hand from her mouth, ready to clap it back if she tried to scream. She gasped a moment, then replied to his question.

"She is in the judgment hall of Heeng! The swordless warrior wants her! Gruk, too, wants her! The law demands a combat to settle the argument—but the swordless one cannot fight! They are still undecided!"

"Where is Heeng's judgment hall—tell me—quick!"

"Down the corridor by which you entered—through the arched opening—and through the door marked by Oonul! Go out the doorway at the other side of the room!"

Bret bound her securely with several thongs of leather from her trappings. Stuffing a gag in her mouth, he started across the threshold. His eye fell on a heavy metal bar which stood by the door. Seizing it, he ran down the corridor. Smoking, flickering lamps illuminated the way.

He had hardly left the room when

a figure flitted by him in the gloom, turning to peer suspiciously after him. Large eyes regarded him searchingly from a strip of black across the degman's face. Bret crashed the swordsman to the floor with his improvised weapon. Passing the archway, Bret instantly recognized the planet Saturn (Oonul) on one of the doors. There was no one in sight. He entered. A luxurious room met his gaze. This too was deserted. Beyond, he heard the hubbub of voices.

Stealthily, he tip-toed across the chamber, opened the door slightly and peered through. He looked upon an untenanted balcony overhanging the crowded hall of judgment. Draperies hung before it. He moved to the concealment of the long curtains which hung from ceiling to floor.

The majority of the brown swordsmen were just returning from the pursuit of Yeem and Imaak. One of the degmen bore the bloody head of Yeem on his uplifted blade, his companions cheering him wildly. Heeng, from his dais, clamored for silence.

"Did you get them all?" he asked.

"There were only two who tried to leave."

"What of the other—where's his head?"

"He is in hiding about the grounds. There are those who search and watch for him. Others patrol the wall. He will not escape."

"He will be found," said Heeng, appearing satisfied with the report. "Let us proceed with our business. Bring the swordless woman forward."

Bret heard a movement beneath his balcony. Two figures walked toward the center of the hall, facing Heeng. Bret's heart leaped in joy—and alarm. It was Rose Baynes, still garbed as a swordswoman. Her

female attendant guided her to a cushioned settee a short distance to Heeng's left. Instinctively, Bret stepped forward a bit as Roy Cooms, also dressed in the garments of a swordsman, stepped into view from a doorway behind Heeng's dais.

"I have promised this woman to the swordless Kumes in exchange for the vast holdings we are to capture and control," stated Heeng, as if opening an argument which had lain dormant.

"And I say that she belongs to any swordsman who may win her according to the customs of combat," affirmed a warrior, striding forward. "I desire her, and I am willing to meet any other to decide the case."

"But this Kumes has no sword," deplored Heeng, attempting to pacify Gruk. "People from his land are born without them. He says we shall overcome them easily."

"I claim her!" shouted Gruk, waving his sword menacingly. "Who will dispute me?"

"I will!" cried Cooms, his dark face mantled with wrath.

"Will you fight me for her?" Gruk inquired. "The first to receive a wound loses her."

"I will fight you in my own way! It is unfair for you to use your sword!"

"Without swords? Impossible!" The murmur ran through the crowded ranks of the degmen.

"What do you mean—your own way?" asked Heeng.

COOMS briefly described a rough and tumble fight. He was careful to include the stipulation that Gruk be barred from using his sword in any manner. The latter easily perceived how his blade would hamper him in such a combat.

"What kind of a fool do you think

me?" demanded Gruk. "You would have me nearly helpless!"

"Come—come!" exclaimed Heeng, a bit impatient at the haggling and unrarried parley. "There must be some way to settle this matter!"

Bret Carson leaped over the balcony rail—sliding down the long draperies—into the midst of the brown swordsmen.

"I'll fight him!" he cried. "On his own terms!"

Every eye was upon him. Cooms' face went suddenly white. Rose gave a little gasp of surprise and joy. Heeng arose to his feet, startled by Bret Carson's spectacular entrance into his hall of judgment. The degmen, overcoming their surprise, sprang for the audacious young man, pinning his arms to his side.

"Bring him here!" ordered Heeng above the bedlam of noise.

Bret was escorted before the lord of Bendl Deg.

"How did you get here?"

"I was chased about the grounds by your men," lied Carson. "I came in here to hide—to save myself. I heard your offer to fight him." Carson pointed to the scowling Cooms. "I'll meet him hand to hand!"

"I knew we'd get that second fellow!" roared Heeng mirthfully. "But I didn't expect he'd come here to give himself up! Take him away! Watch those others! Tomorrow, we build a fire under the tower!"

"Wait!" cried Gruk. "Let him fight this Kumes as Kumes wishes to fight! Let him battle for me! I will abide by the decision!"

"Unloose him—let him go!" shouted Heeng, signifying his approval. He turned to Cooms. "Are you ready?"

This was not entirely to Cooms' liking. Under the circumstances, however, there was no backing out.

He stepped forward. Bret Carson was more than pleased. His initial plan had worked. The brown swordsmen believed him to be the escaped fugitive for which they had been searching. He had thrown off the search for Imaak, greatly increasing the chances of the latter's escape. Opportunity for vengeance upon Cooms also lay within his power. Bret's love for the girl made his blood run hot. His muscles bulged involuntarily as he eyed Cooms grimly.

The latter, crouching low, circled Bret warily. The degmen formed a circle and watched eagerly, wondering how swordless men fought one another. Suddenly, Cooms made a flying leap. Carson dodged swiftly, letting a heavy fist fly into the face of his opponent. Cooms grappled wildly for a hold. Carson sprang clear as Cooms came up with his knee. Caught off balance, Carson went down from a smashing right-hand blow.

The brown swordsmen, catching the spirit of the fight, howled their approval—yelling advice and encouragement to first one and then the other. Gruk looked on anxiously. Cooms aimed a vicious kick at Carson's head as the latter came to his knees. Seizing the sandaled foot, Bret gave a terrific pull which brought Cooms to the floor upon his back. Both arose, coming at one another with hammer-like drives, fists pounding like pistons. A slashing up-percut sent Cooms to the floor—knocked out.

Cooms arose several seconds later. With a snarl, he rushed into Carson head first. Fingers clutched Bret's face—thumbs hooked under his eyes. Shaking him off, Bret lifted Cooms far above his head, hurling him into the close-packed ranks of the degmen. The swordsmen forced him back

into the circle. Cooms aimed several desperate blows at his opponent and then felt himself seized in a grip which threatened to break his neck. Slowly, Bret applied pressure.

"Enough!" shrieked Cooms in agony. "Enough—I've had enough!"

Bret Carson fully intended breaking the scoundrel's neck, but from a motion of Heeng's hand, he was pulled back by many strong arms.

"You have lost!" said Heeng to the beaten man. "She is Gruk's woman—unless there are any who would contest it!"

"I do!" cried Carson. "I'll fight him too—sword and all!"

"You'll fight nobody!" shouted Heeng. "You're a slave—less than a slave! I condemn you to death!"

With a rapid spring, Bret Carson leaped upon the dais, seized Rose Baynes in his arms and sprang for an opening in the ranks of the brown swordsmen. Simultaneously, the great brazier of burning torches crashed down from the ceiling, plunging the hall into semi-darkness.

WHEN Kern Hilton saw the method by which Bret Carson had gained access to the castle, he could not help but admire the nerve of the young man who had shipped across space with him. He knew full well that Bret's love for Rose had been the main inspiration for the reckless act.

Drook and Hilton decided that it was time for them all to change position.

"We'll make a dash for it!" exclaimed Hilton. "Carson's over there, and he'll need help!"

"And my daughter—we must get her!" cried Baynes in desperation.

"Come!" said Steeth, waving his sword in the direction of the castle. "Let us cross!"

In the darkness, several more ropes were thrown across. Soon, all six of them were in the castle. Their next discovery was the bound swordswoman. Removing her gag for a moment, Drook heard how Carson had passed that way. Rapidly, they made their way through the castle to the balcony—overlooking the hall of judgment. They were just in time to see Carson hurl Cooms into the ranks of the degmen.

Taking in the situation at a glance, they waited—until Bret Carson made a spring for the dais of Heeng. With a rapid slash of his blade, Drook cut the long rope which held the brazier.

With a crash, the great vessel of oil and flaming torches crashed to the floor among the brown swordsmen. For a moment, semi-darkness reigned amid furore and confusion. Burned swordsmen screamed. Like a pack of maniacs, they fought to escape the fire. A chaos of shrieking, yelling voices drowned Heeng's orders.

Into the melee leaped the two red swordsmen, followed by Hilton, Baynes, Valerie and old Jasper Jezzan. The latter picked up the heavy bar which Bret had dropped before sliding down the draperies.

"Stay together!" Drook instructed them. "Head for the door behind Heeng's platform! I'll get Carson and the woman!"

Close together, unnoticed by the terrified swordsmen, they moved rapidly towards the rear of Heeng's dais. Only once were they attacked. Jasper Jezzan swung the heavy bar, and the opposition was removed.

Drook sprang into the milling throng just before they reached the doorway. He did not see Hilton who stole after him. Bret Carson felt a hand upon his arm. As he turned

instinctively to battle his way clear, a voice whispered in his ear.

"Quick! This way! It's Drook!"

CHAPTER IX

HELL UNLOOSED

THE spreading oil burst into fire, the lurid flames shooting high. Bret now saw Hilton, who came up beside them. The three men and the girl were clearly revealed to the brown swordsmen. The degmen, stumbling and pushing to avoid the proximity of the burning oil, made only a half-hearted effort to cut them down. It was a fight to gain the protection of the doorway. Bret still carried Rose.

Once more, the degmen realized the disadvantages of close-packed numbers. Drook kept a space cleared before them, his keen blade hacking them unmercifully. Hilton seized the nearer ones, casting them back into the faces of their fellows. Bret set Rose upon her feet, and the three defenders formed a moving triangle of protection about her, fighting their way toward the door and their friends. Drook's sword-arm led the way.

From time to time, cruel sword points cut them. Drook's blade dripped red. As they neared the doorway, the opposition grew less, thanks to Jasper's furious attack with the metal bar and Steeth's flashing blade. The attack from behind came in a grand rush. Then darkness fell as the oil burned itself out.

"This way!" cried Steeth.

Down a flight of stairs, they rushed into a broad corridor. The way led into the open yard. Above them towered the high wall, blocking their escape. At the gate, three fighting degmen sprang before them.

Blades clashed as Steeth and Drook engaged them. Jasper Jezzan sprang forward with his bar of metal, but a lightning thrust from one of the brown swordsmen made him drop it, clutching his arm in pain. These were no mean opponents, and the two red swordsmen battled as they had never battled before.

Back and forth they danced and weaved, their glittering blades flying faster than the eye might follow. Valerie picked up the bar and swung it viciously at two more swordsmen who came rushing up, blades ready for action. Catching one of the degmen on the side of the head, he crushed the swordsman's skull. The other sprang forward and plunged his rapier through Steeth's unprotected back.

In the meantime, Carson and Hilton had shut the heavy door leading upon the yard, barricading it against the throng of raging swordsmen who battered it from the inside.

THE two degmen who had accounted for Steeth now turned upon Valerie. The latter swung the metal bar mightily to protect himself, but here in the open, he was at a disadvantage. One swordsman drew his attention. As Valerie swung, the other danced in and transfixed him with his blade. One of them moved too late. His blade snapped off, striking him across the face. Valerie fell dead beside the inanimate Steeth, two brave fighting men from two different worlds united by a common menace.

Baynes worked frantically with the crude mechanism operating the massive gates. Finally, he struck the right combination of levers and trip falls. The ponderous gates swung wide. From the windows and various entrances to the grounds swarmed

the brown horde after its prey. Showing a marvelous exhibition of super-swordplay, Drook stabbed his opponent, turning rapidly to engage the brown warrior who was backing old Jasper Jezzan to the wall.

The degman slashed at Jasper. From behind, a lightning swing of Drook's supple sword-arm sent the degman's head spinning into the air, saving the old man by inches. The brown blade buried its point in a wood column, holding the decapitated body upright.

"Hurry!" yelled Drook. "They'll be down here!"

Carson and Hilton who had held the door against the main body of the brown swordsmen now joined the rest. They raced through the gateway, the massive gates swinging automatically shut behind them. Rapidly, they made their way from the black castle under cover of darkness, the yells of their late captors ringing in their ears.

Keeping to the open country, they fled over low hills. A lurid glow marked Bendl Deg. Many bright lights came bobbing in their direction.

"There's no way of covering our trail," said Drook. "We'll just have to keep moving in the direction of Larroos. They can't gain on us during the darkness."

The rising of Saturn was preceded by a red glow on the horizon, night vanishing into a deep purple shroud. The sun had not yet appeared. Three moons dotted the sky. Yellow, waving grassland surrounded them. Here and there, rough, rocky buttes loomed out of the ground. To their rear, faint dots moved down the far-off hillside. The brown swordsmen were hot upon their trail.

"Don't look so good," said Hilton with a worried expression. "They're

bound to catch up with us soon."

"We'd better make for that." Drook pointed to a distant outcropping of rock which rose straight out of the grassy plain like a huge, squat chimney. "If we can reach it before they come, we'll stand a good chance of holding them off."

At a quicker pace, they headed for the rock formation, once the core of a raging volcano. When the fugitives reached the towering rock, the degmen were only a quarter-mile behind them. On three sides, the butte was steep. On the other side, it sloped a bit, representing a hard climb. The six fugitives scrambled upward, Bret Carson carrying the tired body of Rose Baynes.

"What will they try to do now?" gasped Baynes.

"They're cruel—relentless!" Drook panted from the climb. "They'll chase us just as long as there's one of us left!"

"I'd like a good electric gun—or radium ray!" exclaimed Bret. "What we couldn't do with—"

"We're much nearer Laroos now," said Drook. "Maybe a scout will pass this way."

Rocks were piled at the edges of the declivity, Baynes, Jezzan and the girl ready to shove them off on the heads of the degmen. Drook, Hilton, and Carson stood ready to repulse the invaders from the rocky path they had recently ascended. The degmen stopped for a parley before coming close to the butte. They were led by Gruk who came forward alone, halting a short distance from the rocky pile.

"Give me the swordless woman," he said, "and I'll permit the rest of you safe passage to Laroos."

"When hell freezes over!" Carson replied.

"Then you'll all die!"

"Start the fireworks—we'll fight!"

From all sides, the degmen made a rush for the natural stronghold. Agile warriors climbed the vertical sides while more of the brown swordsmen rushed up the winding pathway. Rocks crashed down upon them. Though outpointed in numbers, the defenders enjoyed the advantage of higher position.

Before leaving the castle, Hilton had snatched up the broken blade of Valerie's opponent. Bret Carson retained the metal bar which had wreaked such havoc at Bendl Deg. They were a formidable trio.

Drook's sword arm leaped forward to sever a brown throat. Bret wielded the bar with crushing effect. Hilton slashed, parried and cut savagely—strength pitted against skill. His impetuous attack forced the battlers backward—until a sudden, calculated flick of a sword sent his blade skimming into the air and over the butte's edge.

BRET was there with his weapon, and the degman went down with a crushed skull before his vicious lunge was scarcely started. Seizing the dead body, Hilton picked it up and hurled it into the faces and menacing blades of the brown pack which surged up the slope. This, and Drook's death-dealing blade, forced the remainder of the degmen backward into a stumbling, disorganized mass.

A scream from behind caused them to turn. The three upon the butte's edge were hard set. Several brown swordsmen had eluded the rocks and were clambering over the edge. One of them held Rose Baynes. Like a shot, Bret leaped up the rough trail. Hilton hesitated, knowing full well the results of leaving an unguarded avenue.

"Go!" cried Drook. "I can hold them alone!"

Hilton gained the butte's rim just as Carson sprang upon the degman who grappled with Rose. Releasing the girl, the warrior swung his blade at Carson, who dodged, seized the sword-arm, and clung tightly. Hilton saved Bret a jab in the back, kicking a degman over the butte's rim. Old Jasper rolled about at grips with a swordsman, while Baynes hurled rock after rock upon several more who were dangerously close to the top.

Bret gained an unbreakable hold. With a twist of his body, he sent the brown swordsman spinning dizzily to his death upon the rocks far below. Hilton disposed of Jasper's opponent, hurling his lifeless body into the faces of two more who climbed upward. Drook was hard set, meeting a counter-attack which was backing him rapidly up the slope. Busily, he parried the thrusts of four blades. Hilton, brandishing the metal bar, returned to his aid.

"Look!" cried Rose. She pointed to several flapping forms which beat toward them through the air.

"Those pesky birds again!" shouted Jezzan. "Just as if we didn't have enough trouble!"

"We're saved!" yelled Drook. "They're skels—with riders—red swordsmen from Laroos!"

Jasper's curses turned to cheers. The degmen also saw and withdrew their attack. The trained birds and their red riders settled down upon the butte. Drook rushed forward joyously to meet them, waving his dripping sword in greeting. The brown swordsmen had retired for a council of war.

"Imaak!" Drook recognized his comrade. "How did you ever win through?"

"By luck, I guess. I came close to being caught at Bendl Deg. They searched near my hiding place—were nearly upon me—then all of a sudden stopped hunting for me and entered the deg. I got over the wall."

A loud cry burst forth from the ranks of the brown swordsmen. "Tayoon Deg! Tayoon Deg!" they shouted.

The reason for their sudden burst of enthusiasm was apparent. Like a great war cloud, the horizon was dotted with a vast army of the brown swordsmen.

"Sineek?" queried Drook. "What does it mean?"

"It means that the swordsmen of the degs have united! Laroos is already hard beset by the legions from Craylt Deg and Eemot Deg! We have sent to Vaaneen for help!"

"These are from Tayoon Deg! They're on their way to Laroos!" Drook pointed at the advancing horde.

"What of us?" asked Hilton. "They'll wipe us right out of here!"

"Foot soldiers are on their way here to block the forces of Tayoon Deg," said Sineek. "If they attack our position, we'll all leave on the skels."

"When the forces from Vaaneen reach Laroos, the city cannot fall!" exclaimed another of the red swordsmen.

Once again, the space-travelers were amazed at the surety with which the red swordsmen spoke of Vaaneen's invincible legions.

"I'm afraid our soldiers will come too late," observed Drook gravely. "They are not yet in sight—and look there." He waved his blade at the thousand or more brown dots which came steadily out of the distant hills.

"Drook, I've got an idea!"

"What is it, Bret?"

"Are those skels very hard to ride?"

"No—unless you get one which has not been thoroughly broken."

"Then you and I are going to ride them to the ship we used in coming here?"

"You mean—in the center of the fire country?"

"Yes! There are many strange weapons we can bring back to use against the degmen!"

Instantly, Drook signified his willingness.

Bret mounted one of the skels a bit gingerly. He clung tight to the big bird, crouching in the leather saddle. With an abandon born of experience, Drook leaped upon the back of another skel, reaching over to slap Bret's bird into motion. They took off from the butte above the clamoring swordsmen of Bendl Deg, circling higher for altitude. Bret's fears were soon overcome, and he actually enjoyed the flight.

Far to their left, curls of smoke marked the fire country. For the second time, Bret flew across it. The yellow swamp with its fearful monsters loomed before them. Bret headed for the clearing they had previously made. During their captivity at Bendl Deg, the rank vegetation had grown partly together again. The skels, however, wound their way easily through the thickness of verdure to the side of the isolated space-ship.

At sight of it, Bret was seized with a touch of homesickness. It was the only thread of connection between Dian and the earth. Drook marveled at its intricate construction.

"To be so far away from the sea, it must fly in the air," he said.

Bret pressed a secret knob, and they both entered the wrecked space-craft.

"You must be of a wonderful

race!" enthused Drook, staring in awe at the intricate mechanism of the craft. "We never dreamed that such things as these existed on Grish!"

Eagerly, Bret Carson went to the arsenal of the craft. He found six of the electric pistols. For a moment, he considered the ponderous radium gun. It was too heavy a load for a skel, he opined, and besides, its action was partially nullified on Dian for some unknown reason.

"Come," he said to Drook, "let's return!"

BACK upon the butte, the red swordsmen and their white allies watched anxiously for the fighting men of Laroos. The combined forces of Bendl Deg and Tayoon Deg were nearing the butte.

The space travelers sat together watching the strange sight. The red swordsmen on their skels kept Gruk's degmen at a respectful distance from the butte. The latter waited for reinforcements.

"I—I wish Bret were back here," said Rose. "If we are to die, I want to see him first. I've something to tell him—what I should have told him before he left."

A worried frown wrinkled the brow of Lester Baynes. Kern Hilton, watching closely, guessed its import.

"Bret Carson is not the man you think him to be," said Hilton, reading the other's thoughts. "He's not jewel thief!"

Baynes started forward a bit. The point had struck home.

"But the evidence," deplored Baynes. "He came at the last moment—was desperate to leave."

"Baynes, were you ever in love?"

"Why—yes—certainly!" came the stammering reply. "What about it?"

"Were you ever disappointed in love?"

"Er—uh—yes, just once," he confided.

"So was Bret Carson."

"You mean—he left on account of a love affair—a scandal?"

"Who brought up anything about scandal?" asked Hilton, an amused smile playing about the corners of his mouth. "There was no scandal."

Baynes face reddened, perhaps from the fit of coughing he suddenly experienced. Kern Hilton drew a folded paper from his pocket. In the center was a photograph. It bore the face of a beautiful lady.

"The Countess Condon!" exclaimed the financier.

"If you remember," said Hilton, "she married the Chancellor of Africa just a few days before we left the earth."

"Quite right—I remember it distinctly."

"The countess was a lady of many love affairs—a siren, a vampire, if I must say so. Men often died mysteriously for love of her."

"And you mean that she threw her spell about Carson?"

"I gather as much from his manner—and this photograph he carried with him on the trip. When the countess married, he, like many another devoted suitor, became—well, you can imagine. Above all, he wanted to leave the scene of his unhappiness. He was ready to go with us to Pluto—or even farther."

During the explanation, Rose Baynes had become virtually a statue. Her love for Bret Carson was all too apparent.

"The other night in the tower, I pieced together the whole truth," continued Hilton. "He took this photograph from his pocket along with a small locket." He paused long

enough to glance at Rose Baynes. The girl listened intently, her hands clutching tightly at the trappings she wore. She waited for Hilton's next words. "He threw the photograph out the window where the breeze carried it back to me. He pressed the locket to his lips and—"

"Oh!" Rose gave a sharp exclamation of joy. "It was my locket!"

CHAPTER X

LEGIONS OF WAR

ACRY from the red swordsmen drew their attention. The fighting men of Laroos were in sight. Though farther off than their brown foes, they were coming at a swifter pace.

"Can they make it in time?"

Imaak shook his head.

"No," he said.

The degmen reached the vicinity of the butte first. Loud shouts, curses, and yells filled the air. The red swordsmen rushed across the plain to engage their hereditary enemy. The degmen forgot those besieged on the butte for the moment.

The red swordsmen were far in the minority, but this did not stint their valor. Bravely, they came to grips with the degmen. Sword clashed on sword. Blades smote living flesh. Individual duels and group duels took place. Red swordsmen on skels swooped downward to slash off a brown head or a sword-arm. The weird mounts screamed and wailed above the din of battle.

The fight waged with unrelenting fury. Red and brown corpses strewed the ground which was crimson with carnage. Every inch of ground was contested in desperation, becoming muddy with gore. Where the fight was thickest, the dead were fairly

heaped up. By dint of terrific fencing and deadly swordsmanship, the red legions of Laroos forced the enemy backward by sheer driving force.

Suddenly, a score or more of the degmen came on a run for the butte. Imaak raised his voice in a weird cry, like that of the skels. Instantly, a dozen or more of the riders flew above the fighting ranks and landed on the butte.

"On the skels, quick!" urged Imaak. "Make haste!"

"Will they carry double?" asked Hilton.

"A short distance—to safety!"

With their double load, the skels wobbled off the butte a bit uncertainly, their black wings flapping furiously. Jasper Jezzan leaped upon the back of a riderless skel which had stood on the butte since the arrival of the first red swordsmen. Reaching down, old Jasper swept Rose Baynes into the saddle, urging the big bird off the butte's edge. A brown climber just appearing over the butte's rim swung his blade in a flashing arc. The sword cut deeply into the bird's wing.

The great bird wheeled, knocking the degman to his death with a mighty sweep of leathery wings. With a piercing wail, the skel lost altitude, striving vainly to carry his riders to safety beyond the lines of the red swordsmen. The wounded skel came down behind the brown ranks, Jasper and the girl clinging tightly to its back.

Several swordsmen seized the old space-traveler and the girl, pulling them rudely to the ground.

DROOK and Bret Carson headed for the yellow land beyond the fire country, each carrying three electric pistols. Leaving the fire country far behind, they flew high above the

yellow forests in the direction of the grassy plain. In the distance, they saw the fighting, milling throngs of combatants.

"War!" cried Drook. "Our fighting men have arrived!"

Bret Carson felt a sudden anxiety for those on the butte, especially Rose Baynes. He urged his skel to greater speed. Arriving at the scene of bitter conflict, they rode their black mounts twice above the butte. It was now occupied by brown swordsmen who were busy erecting several catapults. Red swordsmen on skels harassed their movements.

"Where have they gone?" Carson looked for his friends in vain.

"Look—there's Hilton!" Drook pointed to the rear of the red swordsmen's fighting ranks.

Dismounting from his skel, Bret ran to meet Hilton. The latter had been impatient for Bret's return. He told him what had happened.

"She and Jezzan were both taken back to Bendl Deg!"

"Couldn't you stop them?"

"Not a chance for red swordsmen to get through on foot," protested Imaak. "We followed on skels to the castle, but they were too well guarded."

"Are—are they still alive?"

"Unless they killed poor Jezzan. Gruk wants Rose. So does Cooms, if he can get her by trickery."

"Is Cooms here—with the degmen?"

"Think you'd catch him here where he's got a chance of being run through?" laughed Hilton. "He's safe at Bendl Deg."

"Then we're going to Bendl Deg!" swore Bret.

"We were just waiting for you, boy. How did you make out at the space-ship?"

Carson brought forth six electric

pistols. "We'll fight our way into the castle!"

"Here is Menaalt," said Drook, motioning one of the red swordsmen forward. "He has the deadliest blade in Laroos, perhaps in all Grish. We'll take him with us."

Bret divided the weapons among Hilton, Baynes, Drook, Menaalt, Imaak, and himself. Briefly, he instructed the red swordsmen in their use. Reinforced by a dozen or more mounted swordsmen, the six avengers flew off in the direction of Bendl Deg. Flying above the butte, Hilton and Carson let fly with their pistols. The degmen around the catapult fell dead like flies.

On they flew, soaring above the dark, grim pile. At a low altitude, they picked off the brown swordsmen. The marksmanship of the three red swordsmen was poor, but occasionally they dispatched one of the degmen. They took great delight in this novel, effortless means of killing.

Red blades, however, thirsted for the blood of brown flesh. Hilton had a specific plan in mind. He allowed the landing of a dozen red swordsmen in the courtyard. The six snipers circled a short distance above. As Hilton had expected, the brown swordsmen rushed furiously into the courtyard to get at their hereditary enemy. Back to back, fighting in a circle, the red swordsmen hacked and parried viciously. From their skels, the snipers took heavy toll.

Heeng ordered a retreat into the castle, well out of sight. The great doors closed. The attacking force settled down upon the ramparts of Bendl Deg for a council of war. The degmen had sealed themselves up. Knowing Rose to be in the castle, Bret was anxious to enter. He suggested a battering-ram to force open the high central dome into which the

brown swordsmen had disappeared.

A voice spoke from somewhere beyond the dome. "Heeng has a bargain to make with you."

"We want no bargains," replied Hilton. "We want the man and woman you took from the butte."

"Are you willing to fight for them?"

"Yes!"

"An individual combat?"

"What does he mean?" asked Bret, turning to Drook for enlightenment.

"That one of our swordsmen meet one of theirs to decide honors for both sides."

"If the red warrior wins," continued the voice faintly from beyond the dome, "you shall have back your two friends and be free to leave unmolested. If our warrior wins, you will leave without the swordless ones we now hold."

"What shall we do?" queried Baynes.

"There's trickery in it," said Bret suspiciously.

"No," was Drook's reply. "Heeng means fairly if he offers a combat. It is an unwritten law of Grish."

"Let's rush them! They fear us!"

The degman who spoke to them must have heard Bret Carson's impetuous words. "If an attack is made, both prisoners will be put to death," he warned. "You shall not find us when you enter."

"It is so," Imaak told them. "They will do what they say. Many secret passages lead underground from the deg."

"Let me fight!" cried Menaalt resolutely. "I can best any of them!"

"Menaalt is our best swordsman," said Drook. "Shall we agree to their proposal?" He looked askance of the space-travelers.

"There seems to be no other way,"

replied Baynes helplessly. "It's a gamble."

"Not on Menaalt's sword-arm," said Imaak. "He's more than a match for any degman I ever saw battle."

"Bring forth your warrior!" Drook challenged. "Menaalt of Larroos will meet him in combat to decide the issue!"

BBROWN swordsmen poured forth from the castle. The trigger fingers of all three men tightened as they saw Cooms walk out beside Heeng on a high balcony overlooking the court.

"No!" cautioned Drook, realizing their feelings. He clapped his hand over Carson's arm. "Hold yourself!"

"It's hard!" gritted Hilton. "Cooms should die!"

"Why not include him in your bargain?" urged Drook.

Bret Carson hurled forth the offer to Heeng. Heeng considered the matter thoughtfully. Cooms drew backward, pleading with the lord of Bendl Deg, his face a pasty color. Heeng was plainly dissatisfied with Cooms' abject terror.

"If your fighter wins, you can have him too!" roared Heeng. "He is a big talker—not a fighter! But you're not going to win! Jeng of Tayoon Deg will fight our cause!"

A gigantic brown swordsman strode out upon the courtyard, a smile upon his big face.

"Jeng!" echoed Drook. "We have heard of him—but have never seen him before! Menaalt, you have the fight of your life on your hands, if what we hear of this degman is true!"

"He's a giant!" exclaimed Carson, glancing a bit anxiously at Menaalt.

Previously, the red swordsmen had believed Jeng to be merely a fabled figure in the folk-lore of the degmen.

Here before them in amazing reality stood the mighty, invincible Jeng! Where there had been extreme confidence on the countenance of Menaalt, there was now a firm determination.

The red swordsmen flew down into the courtyard accompanied by their white allies. Red, brown, and white all jostled together in a broad ring around the combatants. Jeng loomed high above his adversary. A mighty muscled sword-arm, longer than Menaalt's, flexed itself ready for the duel.

A parry—a slash—and the two circled warily, watching for an opening, their blades clashing noisily, both on the defense, feeling for each other's weaknesses. The world's two greatest swordsmen pitted skill, cunning and muscle against one another, their blades flashing too fast for the eye to follow. Jeng hopped nimbly about on his toes, suddenly wielding his blade in a slashing attack. Menaalt was the faster of the two, but this advantage was sorely outweighed by Jeng's great strength and superior reach.

Baynes, Hilton and Carson stood silent, aghast at the marvelous super-swordsmanship. Never had a man of the earth ever witnessed such peerless swordplay. It put to shame the best blades which Europe had ever produced during her heyday of medieval history.

Menaalt forced his huge opponent toward the wall in a supreme burst of fencing skill, his rapier darting in to draw blood in three places. Jeng howled in rage and fought back savagely, the crowd of swordsmen giving way behind him. The red swordsman fought like a demon, driving Jeng back with the lightning play of his blade. Jeng was on the defensive, but he was not tiring like Menaalt.

The brown swordsman's longer reach had saved him from being pierced by Menaalt's skilled blade. Even so, blood streamed from several small cuts. The red swordsman was nicked in but one place—across the leg.

Never before had the swordsmen of Saturn witnessed the remarkable fencing they saw in the courtyard of Bendl Deg, accustomed as they were to the deadly pastime. There were no loud cries. It was a fight to the death. The degmen were hushed by the skill of Laroos' famed champion, while the red swordsmen waited in an agony of suspense, knowing full well the natural advantages Jeng possessed.

It was incredible that Menaalt had done so well—but now he was becoming tired from the terrific speed he was forced to employ in holding his own. Like a frightful genie from out of a nightmare, Jeng forced his weakening opponent backward. Sweat stood out upon the face and body of the red swordsman. Jeng's long blade drew blood from Menaalt's sword-arm. The brown giant laughed lustily, beating at the other's defense. Again and again, Jeng's blade drew blood from the red swordsman. Menaalt felt death's icy clutch upon him as Jeng rushed him more and more, forcing him back across the courtyard.

Menaalt was now fighting mainly by force of his iron will, mechanically. Jeng was eager to finish his dwarfed opponent. Laid open for a split second by a vicious parry, Menaalt invited slaughter. Jeng slashed, but Menaalt leaned his body close to the ground, one leg stretched far behind his body.

Giving a terrific spring, he shot through the air. The blade of Jeng ripped through his left arm. His own blade drove clear through the vitals

of the giant swordsman, Menaalt's furious charge carrying them both backward. The rapier of the red swordsman snapped off with a sharp crack beneath the broad back of the dying Jeng. Swordsmen of both factions leaped forward and pulled the exhausted Menaalt from his vanquished opponent. With difficulty, they withdrew from Jeng what was left of Menaalt's blade.

"You have won—fairly!" shouted Heeng. "You may now have the prisoners, and you can do as you like with Kumes!" He turned to his degmen beside him. "Go and fetch them!"

Three of Heeng's men rushed inside to do his bidding. They were gone only a short time when they returned. During their absence, Hilton, Carson, and Drook flew their skels to the balcony beside Heeng. The three degmen returned with looks of blank surprise on their faces.

"The swordless female is gone!" one of them announced. "Kumes is gone, too!"

"What treachery is this?" shrieked Drook, advancing angrily upon Heeng.

"That blasted Cooms' treachery!" cried Jasper Jezzan who ran out upon the balcony. "He came t' get Rose! Look!" Jasper pointed to a faint speck on the horizon. "There they go!"

"Quick!" snapped Drook. "We'll take after them! The skel is carrying double! He can't get far!"

With a flapping of wings, the skels took off from Mendl Deg, heading for the tiny dot on the sky line.

"Good luck!" Heeng yelled after them. "But when we meet again—it's death!"

"The same to you and many of them!" retorted Hilton.

CHAPTER XI

THE GOD OF OONUL

THE distance between the pursuing skels and their quarry closed. Out of a forest beneath, came a party of the red swordsmen from the direction of the butte. They were heading for Laroos. Far ahead of his pursuers, Cooms dropped suddenly among the red swordsmen. He released the girl on the ground and then arose into the air once more, continuing onward.

"What's his game?" asked Bret, swinging close to Drook.

"I don't know—unless he realizes he can't get away riding double! We'll see!"

Bret's skel had hardly skimmed to the ground when he was racing toward the girl and the party of red swordsmen. She was arguing with them, pointing at Cooms who was now a good distance away. It was plainly evident that the swordsmen had mistaken Cooms for a friend, allowing him to continue in haste. It had been a bold stroke.

"Don't worry," said Drook. "He'll be caught. The skel is carrying him straight for Laroos."

"Are you all right, dear?" Bret looked adoringly into the girl's eyes.

"Oh, Bret, how horrible it has all been—like a nightmare—but, yes, I'm all right! Where's daddy?"

Baynes' skel had just settled to the ground. Baynes came forward and embraced his daughter.

"Let's move on to Laroos!" cried Drook.

Cooms was out of sight by the time they were on the wing once more. They headed for the city of the red swordsmen. Far in the distance, the travelers from the earth had their first view of Laroos. It was

built almost entirely of red and white stone, surrounded by a high wall. Skels flew thickly above the city.

Laroos was surrounded by myriads of brown swordsmen. Rush after rush they made upon the walls, the brave defenders still holding them off. Drook and his fellow-swordsmen were appalled at the vast numbers of the degmen. Waving banners fluttered from various standards outside the embattled walls.

"There are warriors from a dozen degs fighting us!" cried Drook. "What an uprising!"

They flew high above the melee, landing on a lower section of the high-domed city entrance. At this point, the fight was waging furiously. A swordsman ran up, greeting Drook and Imaak.

"It's a terrible fight! Some of the degmen are already inside the walls!"

"Where are the forces from Vaaneen?"

"On the way here!" cried Drook's informer. "They were held up by the degmen of Eemot Deg!"

HUGE catapults of the brown swordsmen threw boulder after boulder into the city, into the fighting ranks of the red swordsmen and against the massive wall. Brown and red warriors fought desperately on the wall. Scaling ladders were thrown up, degmen mounting them to be thrown bodily backward, their ladders on top of them. It was a raging chaos, the brown swordsmen overcoming their foe by sheer weight of numbers.

Bret heard a small object whistle past his head. Hilton pointed to a group of degmen outside the wall. They were using slingshots, miniature catapults, into which they loaded small stones. Raising his pistol, Bret fired several times at the group,

bringing down a degman with each shot. Hilton, Baynes and the three red swordsmen now joined the shooting, spreading electrocution among the front ranks of the attacking degmen. The menace at this end of the city was removed for the time being.

The electric pistols grew weak from so much firing. Degmen fell stunned only to arise a minute later and continue the fighting. After a time, the pistols refused to even stun their victims. Brown reinforcements gathered before the entrance.

None of them noticed a skel which came to rest on a small section of roof behind the entrance dome. Cooms, his face gloating fiendishly, stole softly and unobserved upon those whom he called friends during the trip across space. In his hand, he held a small object partially concealed. He raised his arm to throw. His head snapped backward—he tottered—and fell.

The space-travelers and the swordsmen were startled by a terrific explosion behind them. Turning, they saw the mangled remains of Cooms laying beside a ragged hole torn in the roof. The chance shot of a degman's slingshot had terminated the career of Roy Cooms.

"A grenade!" exclaimed Carson.

"Where did he get it?"

"Must have been saving it. Maybe the degmen didn't destroy everything when the airship came down."

Cooms' body was nearly torn to pieces. A red welt on his forehead and a sharp stone on the roof testified to the manner in which fate had blocked his murderous designs. With an exclamation of surprise, Menaalt picked up a small, dazzling object by the side of Cooms' head. More leaked out from a small bag around the dead man's neck. Hilton poured the contents out upon his hand.

"Jewels!" exclaimed Baynes. "Cooms was the jewel thief!"

"Well, I guess that clears me, doesn't it?" Carson inquired.

"You were cleared a good while ago, Bret," was Hilton's reply, "only you didn't know it then."

"They're worth millions—millions—on any o' the three worlds!" said Jezzan.

"If we ever do get back to the three worlds, which I doubt," said Baynes, "they'll be returned."

Cries of triumph came down from the red warriors astride the skels. "Vaaneen! Vaaneen!" they shouted.

"They're coming!" yelled Drook exultantly. "Now we can't lose—if they only arrive in time!"

The degmen were making a united rush, the red swordsmen fighting desperately. As the hordes from the degs scaled the high wall, battling fiercely for a wholesale entrance into the city, it seemed as if nothing might stop them. But the city's defenders hewed them back with exhibitions of hard fighting spirit and masterly swordsmanship.

"Another grand rush like that and Laroos will be conquered!"

Topping a rise of ground a quarter mile away, the red swordsmen of Vaaneen became visible to those within the city. A swelling roar of voices arose. Several detachments of brown swordsmen ran to combat them. Few skels were in evidence among the newcomers. Their front ranks glistened strangely in the light of the far-off sun. For a moment, the space-travelers from the earth were at a loss to account for it.

"Armor!" Hilton cried. "Their bodies are protected with metal!"

LINE after line of armored swordsmen marched into view, falling upon their brown enemy. In

the background, many of Vaaneen's red swordsmen moved excitedly about several large, ponderous objects.

"Catapults!" said Baynes.

"They seem too far away for effective use."

The brown legions from the degs were now gathered for another strong attack upon the walls. With loud cries, the brown wave of conquest swept down upon the city. A terrific roar shook the ground and split the air, a belch of flame spurted from the ridge. An explosion in the center of the brown swordsmen sent a cascade of soil and degmen high into the air, blown to fragments. Ragged fire tore again and again from the ridge into the ranks of the degmen, wreaking fearful havoc.

"Catapults nothing!" yelled Hilton above the explosions, screams and howling of the swordsmen. "If that isn't old fashioned cannon, then I—" Another loud roar drowned his words.

Repulsed, disorganized, and stricken with awe, the degmen broke into retreat. Rank after rank of armored swordsmen, partially-armored swordmen, and swordsmen without armor, clashed with the degmen, cleaving their way through. Death followed in the wake of their advance.

"The god of Oonul!" cried Drook.

In amazement, they stared at a strange figure which came towards the city, leading column after column of the red swordsmen. He was heavily encased in armor—armor wrought from pure gold. Dazzling and scintillating, he glittered in the combined rays of Saturn and the distant sun.

Approaching the wall, he seemed piqued and interested in the queer, swordless creatures about whom he had already heard. Through the grilled front of a visored helmet, he

regarded them intently, swinging his sword beside him. The blade also shone golden, plated with the brilliant metal. The god of Oonul looked about the battle field. Red swordsmen from Laroos and Vaaneen now had their brown enemies in full retreat.

Ordering skels, the swordsman in the golden armor flew with his chieftains to the platform overlooking the city entrance. In reverence and superstition, Drook and his fellow swordsmen drew into the background. The god of Oonul walked slowly, silently towards the little group from the earth. They grew a bit uneasy at his protracted silence and strange manner.

Then he performed an amazing act. he dropped his golden sword which fell clattering to the roof at his feet. Slowly he lifted off his helmet with two mailed hands.

The space-travellers gasped in surprise. Before them they saw the wrinkled, kindly face of an old man, his head crowned with silver hair. Jasper Jezzan gave a shriek of delight.

"Ben!" he cried. "Ben Cartley!"

With sobs, the two old men embraced one another. For the first time, the space-travellers heard the god of Oonul speak.

"Jasper, you old coot, where you been?"

It was a weird sight, the strangest ever witnessed on Saturn's moon. In the distance, the fighting men of Vaaneen were returning from the rout of their brown enemies, accompanied by swordsmen of Laroos.

"What happened t' your space-ship, Ben?"

"We came down in the ocean, disabled. Floated around for a long time. When we floated in t' shore,

all kinds o' things took after us. We kept losin' men. With only three left, two besides me, our food and weapons run shy. My two pals caught some kind o' disease as choked them t' death. I'd given up hope when these swordsmen found me. They made me what I am, thinkin' I was from up there." Ben pointed to Saturn whose rings gleamed like a silver bar across the ruddy sphere.

"Where's your space-ship?" asked Hilton. "Can you find it again?"

"I had it brought t' Vaaneen," replied the old man. "It's there yet."

"Our ship is in the swamp inside the fire country with the hull crushed," said Hilton. "We've probably got what your ship lacks. We can all return to the three worlds."

Old Ben Cartley smiled and shook his head, scratching in the depth of his grizzled beard. "You can all go that wants t', but I'm stayin' on here," he said.

HILTON'S guess was right. Enough remained of Baynes ship to equip the one in which Ben Cartley and his expedition had come to Saturn's moon. A month later, according to earthly standards, the space-ship was ready to head back for the earth. To make up for the lost crew, several red swordsmen had been enlisted and trained.

With great pomp and ceremony, Ben Cartley had arranged a fitting farewell. Rank after rank of armored swordsmen stood at attention. All Vaaneen had turned out to view

the occasion. Swordsmen from the other red cities, including Laroos, were also present.

Just before they were ready to start, Jasper Jezzán came forward in an apologetic manner, stopping before Hilton and Baynes.

"I'm not goin' back," he said. "I'm stayin' on with Ben. He's makin' me a grand duke o' somethin' or other. Besides, I wouldn't leave him even if he put me t' work shovellin' skel dung."

"That's all right, Jasper," replied Hilton, shaking the old timer's hand. "I know just how you feel. Ben couldn't get along without you."

As a fitting end to the occasion, Ben Cartley, lord of the red swordsmen, married Rose Baynes to Bret Carson.

The space-ship rose into the sky, manned by six red swordsmen, including Drook, Menaalt, and Imaak. In Vaaneen, Menaalt's broken blade had been beautifully tipped with steel. Menaalt had become vastly proud of his new blade.

Bret held his lovely bride close to him as they watched the city of Vaaneen grow small below them. They were on the first lap of their eight-hundred-million-mile honeymoon. Nearby sat Hilton and Baynes. Drook entered to report that everything was ready for an ascension into space.

With blades pointing skyward, the red swordsmen in the city waved a farewell to the tiny speck which shot out of sight into the vast cosmos.

WE INVITE YOU

to send in your contributions to our three reader departments:—

"THE ETERNAL CONFLICT"

"THE FANTASY FAN"

"THE TELEPATH"

DWELLER IN THE DARKNESS

by EDMOND HAMILTON

Public Enemy Number One forces Dr. Geary to give him the secret of invisibility, so that he could better prey upon his victims—but he does not suspect the awful horror that accompanies the experiment!



Geary shut the switch.

THE little auditorium of the Scientific Academy was filled tonight to overflowing by scientists, newspaper reporters, and feature writers. On the platform stood the man whose radical experiment had brought them all here, Doctor Thomas Geary.

He was a tall young man with a mop of disordered black hair and a diffident expression on his spectacled face. He stood beside a great box-like apparatus with a huge quartz lens in one of its sides, and this mechanism commanded almost as

much attention from the audience as the young bio-physicist himself.

Doctor Geary started to speak with a little stammering hesitating. He was plainly wishing himself elsewhere.

"I don't intend to make any long speech," he told the audience, "but the president of the Academy has pressed me to give a demonstration of my new experiment, and I can do that quickly."

He paused a moment and then added more diffidently, "What I have succeeded in doing is, I believe, with-

out precedent. I have found a way to make a living animal completely invisible."

A little hum of astonishment passed through the audience. Geary did not appear to notice it as he took a fat, kicking rabbit from a wire cage and held it up to the audience.

"You all see this rabbit," he went on. "You see it because light-rays strike it and are thence reflected to your eyes, imprinting on your retinas the animal's size, shape, and color. But suppose no light rays struck the rabbit, suppose light curved around it? Then, of course, it would be invisible.

"I can cause light rays to do that, to curve around this animal no matter where it is," Geary continued. "I can do that by impregnating the living tissues of the rabbit with a new radio-active force I have discovered. That force is strongly repellant to light radiation, so any animal charged with it is repellant to light-rays, making them curve around it, and is therefore quite invisible."

The hum of amazement in the audience rose to a chorus of exclamations. At the back of the hall, a beady-eyed, dark, tight-faced little man who looked oddly out of place leaned tensely forward.

Geary was fastening the struggling rabbit onto a pedestal in front of the quartz lens of his mechanism. Then he turned switches. A green, uncanny glow of force shot from the lens.

The rabbit, bathed in that force, began to glow. For moments, it shone with wan green luminescence and then its outlines grew misty; it began to become a mere shining ghost of a rabbit—then that too faded from sight. The animal had disappeared!

The audience was on its feet, voic-

ing its incredulity. Doctor Geary calmly picked up the invisible rabbit and handed it to those in the first rows.

"You can pass this animal among you and assure yourselves that, although invisible, it is still real, still living and breathing."

The invisible, warm, breathing animal caused a sensation as the astounded scientists passed it from hand to hand. When it was finally returned to the waiting Geary, he was surrounded by a crowd tendering him eager congratulations.

The beady eyes of the dark little man at the back of the hall had narrowed strangely. In the excitement no one noticed him get up and go quietly out.

TWO hours later, Doctor Geary was in his own laboratory carefully covering the big mechanism that he had brought home with him. That done, he went over to a wire pen and looked thoughtfully down into its apparently empty interior. In it were the invisible rabbit and several invisible guinea pigs.

A harsh voice behind him said, "Turn around, Doc."

Geary whirled, startled. A beady-eyed, tight-faced little man was covering him with an automatic pistol.

"What is this, a hold-up?" demanded the young scientist.

The other nodded, a crooked smile on his thin lips. "You can call it that. I'm Fred Kells, just for your information."

"Fred Kells? The criminal they call Public Enemy Number One?" cried Geary.

Kells nodded. "I've had my face changed enough to get by the cops, but I'm still Kells. And from now on they're going to have reason to call me Public Enemy."

Geary's expression changed. "What do you want of me?"

Kells told him, "Doc, I saw you make that rabbit invisible tonight. I went there because I read something in the papers about what you were going to do, and thought it was worth my while to investigate it.

"Doc, you said there tonight that you could make any animal invisible the same way. That means you can make a man invisible. All right, you're going to do it—to me."

"Make you invisible?" cried the stupefied Geary. "You think that I'll do it so that you can prey on the country with ease, as an invisible criminal?"

"That's just what I do think," said Kells coolly. "A lot of fun I'm going to have with the cops and the FBI boys from now on, when they can't even see me! I'll make the country wish I'd never been born, before I'm through!"

He took the cover off the big mechanism and ordered curtly, "Get going, Doc. Don't try any tricks, because visible or invisible, I'll have this gun pointed at your heart."

Geary pleaded, "Listen, you can't do this thing! If you were a scientist, you'd understand that I can't use my discovery on you for—"

"No arguments, Doc!" said Kells in a dangerous voice. "Your scientific code of ethics don't mean a thing to me. You start work this minute or I'll plug you and try to do it myself."

His beady eyes had the killer flare in them. Geary, pale and shaken, gave up resistance and walked to the mechanism.

He rapidly made the necessary connections and turned the machine so that the lens pointed at the little criminal leader.

With his hand on the switch, he made a final appeal. "Won't you

listen to me before I do this? You can't—"

"Go ahead—now," gritted Fred Kells, his trigger finger tightening. Hopelessly, Geary shut the switch.

Green force sprang from the big lens, a broad fan of radiation that bathed the criminal from head to foot. His whole body began to shine with that eery green glow.

Then, just as had the rabbit, his shining form began to grow misty, ghost-like, to disappear. A moment more and Kells had completely vanished from before the trembling Geary.

Out of the apparently empty air where the criminal stood came a wild cry of terror: "Doc, everything's dark!" cried the unseen Kells. "I'm in complete darkness—I can't see anything!"

There was the crash of a chair as the invisible criminal blundered blindly into it.

"Doc, what have you done to me?" raved the unseen man. "You've put me into this darkness somehow—I'll kill you! I'll kill you—"

The pale, quivering Geary heard the criminal bump into the door, saw it torn open and heard wild running steps as the invisible man blindly staggered out of the laboratory.

Geary heard a dull thud and a scream of agony from the street outside. He ran out. An automobile had stopped up the street and its driver was running back in alarm.

"I thought I hit somebody—I heard a scream!" the driver cried. "But I swear I didn't see anyone in front of me."

Geary bent down, groped in the street until his hands found the limp, dead, invisible body of Fred Kells.

The scientist straightened, his face strange. "If he'd only let me warn him," he said slowly to himself. "But

then, if he'd been a scientist, just as I said, he would have known without need of being warned.

"He'd have known that when all light rays curve around an animal, that animal is indeed wholly invisible to others, but that it is itself in per-

petual darkness, and must stumble blindly through the world without ever seeing a ray of light. The process could not have been undone—I think it's best for him you hit him, driver."

THE END

ON A FROSTY MORNING - WATCH YOUR BREATH TRAVEL

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ESPERANTO

In our June issue, we published a little two-page article entitled: "Esperanto—Tongue of Tomorrow." You will notice that we print many little articles throughout the magazine, but this one in particular seemed to call forth an amazing amount of enthusiasm.

We suppose that anything to do with "tomorrow" would interest the science-fiction fan, whose eye is on the future—and it is evident that this interest includes an auxiliary language that will be common to all civilized persons.

Science-fiction fans seem to realize that our modern methods of transportation and communication have lowered the barriers of distance, and therefore the necessary of a single world-wide language is of growing necessity.

We believe that Esperanto is the language to serve this purpose. You can convince yourself of this fact by writing to Mr. Joseph Leahy, General Secretary, Esperanto Association of North America, 1410 H Street, Washington, D. C. He will be glad to send you more information about this language of the future—the tongue to be used by your descendents.

STRANGE VISITORS

by CHARLES D. HORNIG

ONE night, a Western astronomical observatory charted the paths of a small group of meteors and discovered that they were headed toward the earth. Other astronomers throughout the world checked the figures and agreed that the little objects would indeed strike this world. This information did not cause a panic, however, for there were only about a dozen of the meteors, and it was estimated that most of them would be burnt to ashes before they hit the surface, and the few that might reach the ground would be too small to do more than local damage.

The chances of the meteors striking homes or other inhabited buildings was comparatively slight, the astronomers announced—so the coming of the meteoric group was anticipated by the general public with considerable anxiety, but not panic.

The great surprise came when the dozen meteors changed their courses, obviously of their own accord, just prior to entering the atmosphere of the Earth. They circled the Earth a few times in the upper stratosphere, and the entire astronomical world was awed by the apparent disobedience to natural law. The objects did not even disintegrate on their downward spiral, for their speed had mysteriously slowed.

Well, everyone knows the rest of the story. The objects landed near a small town in western Kansas and proved to be space-ships filled with intelligent creatures from the planet Mars. Of course, the whole thing was thought to be some gigantic

hoax at first, but the genuineness of the voyage was soon established and, with the aid of the Martians, Earth soon had its own space-fleet and the friendly interplanetary commerce between Earth and Mars that we know today.

OF COURSE, the above "historical" excerpt is fictitious—but not too fantastic to the minds of science-fiction fans. It is a possibility.

At the present moment, we have no positive proof that interplanetary voyagers ever did visit our Earth. Narrow-minded persons, those lacking the superb imagination of science-fiction fans, use this information (or lack of it) as proof that interplanetary travel is impossible.

They say: "If Man were supposed to travel to other worlds, God would not have impeded him, with a force of gravity that prevents airships from making the trip. Besides, if there is intelligent life on other worlds—as the science-fiction fans contend—why haven't we had visits from other planets?"

The science-fiction fan answers: "God created Man with an intelligence, so that he can solve the riddles of existence through his own ingenuity—and this includes the eventual success of interplanetary travel. It is Man's duty to make the best use of the brain that God has given him. As for visitors from other planets—the universe is a tremendously huge place, and the chances of intelligent creatures of alien planets even finding the Earth in a million years of search are very slim."

We might add that no one knows where or how life originated—and it may be an extremely rare phenomenon. The Earth may be the only planet within billions of light-years to have life upon it. If the Arrhenius theory is true, on the other hand, and life can be transmitted through space in the form of spores, it may be true that Mars, or Venus, or other bodies in our solar system may also harbor life.

WE ARE safer to deal with possibilities rather than impossibilities in dealing with such broad subjects as the origin of life and interplanetary travel.

But there are two ways that we can be shown the actuality of a fact—either by proving it ourselves, actually doing it—or the fact may be visited upon us.

The American Indian was subject to such visitations late in the fifteenth century—from out of the limitless sea came great canoes carrying the White Gods! This first visitation was just as strange to the Indian as an arrival of Martians on the Earth would be to the white man today.

The Indians had legends about White Gods dwelling beyond the great sea, but they had no proof until the arrival of Columbus—who made the voyage before the Indian had made sufficient progress to build his own great canoes and travel eastward. So may we have our own Strange Visitors—living proof of our own hypothetical ideas—before our science has carried us far enough to search for them ourselves. The mountain may yet come to Mohammed.

Our fans live in a world of fantasy, when they read science-fiction stories—a world of possibility, an ex-

tension of the world that is, into the world that may be. It is difficult to bring the general public to realize these possibilities. But science-fiction fandom received a preview of public reaction to the future arrival of interplanetary travelers in the famous Orson Welles radio hoax of last October. Yes, the public may deride the “fantasies” of science-fiction, but it is gullible enough to accept the most fantastic proposal when offered a scrap of “proof.”

We of the science-fiction world anxiously await the advent of atomic power, interplanetary travel, and the other possibilities of the future. We hope that Man will attain these things within our lifetimes—but we are ever ready to extend a hearty welcome to the Strange Visitors (providing they are not hostile, of course)—those superior beings of possibility, who may at this very moment be on their way from the depths of space or from some lost kingdom in some unexplored region of our own Earth—on their way to offer us the secrets of Creation.

We may be barbarians to such a superior civilization—just as the African Zulus are barbarians to us—but we have progressed sufficiently far to recognize the marvels of invention and discovery without the bias of superstition.

Who will these Strange Visitors be—and when will they come?

THE END

NEW AUTHORS
are invited to send
their manuscripts to
us for consideration.
Perhaps you are an-
other Weinbaum!



EARTH ASUNDER!



People stumbled unexpectedly into flaming pits

Rodney Dawson matches his wits with the power-mad Volan, conqueror of the world! Blindly, Dawson assists the emperor in the construction of underground cities as protection against an asteroid doom—until he learns of Volan's mad plan to split the world in two!

IT WAS in September 2436 that the asteroid was first sighted, pursuing a steady but inevitable course towards the earth. The astronomers found it when it was still many millions of miles away;

names still remained unchanged throughout the centuries.

As was usual, Volan himself presided over the meeting, occupying the centermost chair amidst his silent advisers. The Asiatic was a small man,

by EPHRIAM WINIKI

**An Astounding Novelette
of the World's End!**

from then on the world soon knew of the impending disaster.

The voice of the chief announcer of the World-Television Hook-Up was heard in every quarter of the world, in public edifice and private apartment alike. "For the first time in history, disaster threatens this world of ours. An asteroid, about half the size of the earth, from somewhere unknown in space, is traveling inexorably towards our world. Scientists are agreed that the world cannot escape being struck. In consequence, the only safety lies underground—deep underground, and it is to this end that scientists are now working. Below we stand a chance of survival; above, none whatever."

The people agreed. They had no other alternative. They looked vainly into the night sky in an effort to behold the visitor, but only the giant reflectors of that advanced age could reveal the relatively microscopic fragment in the firmament that spelled, unless human ingenuity could overcome it, disaster for the earthly race.

It was in response to the command of Volan, the calm, inscrutable Asiatic ruler of the world, that Rodney Dawson and his partner Lance Hapacre, recognized as perhaps the two greatest subterranean engineers of the time, presented themselves at the Emergency Council, which had its headquarters in New York — for

sallow as became his race, but upon his visage was stamped all the hidden ferocity and diabolical cunning that had made him, nearly a decade before, the master of earth itself. Since that time there had been peace; none dared defy his edicts.

"You are here, my friends, to take your orders concerning the erection of underground shelters, indeed cities, as protection for the populace against the approaching asteroid," he announced steadily, addressing Dawson and Hapacre as they stood silently in the center of the enormous room. "I understand that the erection of cities two miles below the surface is not impossible."

"Not by any means, sir," Hapacre answered quietly.

"And that depth, you believe, would be sufficient to save us from damage?"

"I think so, sir—yes. We will build roofs for the cities of comparatively unbreakable steel, which in itself will form the underpinning of earth's own surface. Even so, there is the contingency that some of these cities may be smashed. It all depends upon which side of the earth the asteroid strikes; as yet, the astronomers have not determined the point."

"If the underground cities are not made, it will mean the end of all earth's peoples," Volan said grimly. "They must be built:—with all possible speed! I sent for you both be-

cause I believe that one of you is perfecting the most efficient earth-borer yet known to science, utilizing atomic energy as its basis of motivation. Is that correct?"

"I am the inventor, sir," Hapacre assented quietly.

"Very good, then. The finances of the Emergency Council are at your disposal. The instant your atomic borer is an established fact, you will get in touch with the Council; then plans for the cities, which are now being drawn up, will be handed to you for execution. Remember—urgency is the element we are fighting! That is all."

"Yes, sir." The two engineers nodded and quietly left the chamber . . .

Half an hour later found them in their own experimental workshops, surrounded by the employees directly under their control, employees trained in every branch of science, all at present bending their labors to the final problem of atomic energy, working entirely to the ideas of Hapacre himself—ideas evolved through years of tireless searching into the mysteries of energy and matter.

Concisely, Hapacre made the facts clear to the waiting workers.

"You will proceed with experiments so far as possible to date," he concluded. "I expect the final solution within twenty-four hours. I am released from all other tasks—I have nothing to do but concentrate on the problem, and that I intend to do. Dawson here will assist me, and so will my sister, Miss Hapacre. That's all for the moment. Just carry on."

The men and women technicians nodded quietly and departed, leaving behind them the slim form of Elsa Hapacre, sister of the engineer, and herself a scientist. Her dark blue eyes were fixed pensively on her brother's lean face as he seated him-

self before his desk and began to figure industriously.

"Lance," she said quietly, "do you really think you can solve atomic energy?"

"I'm sure of it," he replied steadily, looking up. "Why?"

"Because I was thinking that, even if you do succeed, Volan is not the sort of man to let you get away with such a secret! Don't you realize, Lance, that with such knowledge you could become—become a god? A ruler? Volan's control would be shattered."

"Maybe you're right," Hapacre admitted, brooding; then he shrugged. "Still, sis, even if you are, I've got to go on; the safety of humanity depends on it no matter what my personal reward is in the affair. Forget it, Elsa! Just go straight on with your work and leave me to mine. Thanks for the tip, though."

The girl nodded and turned to her own specialized work. Side by side, Hapacre and Dawson studied in silence the formula the former was slowly building up, a formula of tremendous complexity that Dawson only half understood, involving, as it did, both the known and unknown laws of physics and electricity.

CONTRARY to Hapacre's optimistic expectations, he did not arrive at the solution within twenty-four hours. In all, it took him ten days of brain-flogging effort to perfect his formula, but at the end of that time he, his sister, and the employees were rewarded by the perfect control of disintegrated copper atoms, performed by a process of narrowing electron orbits until they united with the nucleus of the atoms themselves.

"The idea's good," Hapacre muttered, absorbed in watching the

amazing electrical display as the released energy was transmitted to a model earth-borer. "It is almost the perfect formula—reversible, too. In a while, I'll figure out the other method—accomplish something so far unknown to science. You see, Rod, up to now we've proved that we can disintegrate matter to produce energy, but no man has yet found how to turn energy back into matter! I think I can do it—given time, that is."

Dawson nodded. "Mebbe—but our time is too limited for that, old man. In any case, what use would it be?"

"Isn't it obvious? Chasms and gaps in the earth, which are bound to occur during our work, can be sealed up by the creation of fresh matter to fill them. But as you say, it's still a tenuous theory. I'll have to work it out—"

"And in the meantime, you'd better report to Volan," commented Elsa practically. "We've lost a tremendous amount of time already."

Hapacre nodded. "Right enough. Come on, Rod, let's go."

A fast private air machine took them directly to Volan's massive domain. After the usual curriculum of attendants and guards, they were ushered into the Asiatic's presence. As was customary in his private life, he was seated at his broad desk, literally the eye of the world, whereon every detail of the planet's behavior was recorded hour by hour by various machines.

"Be seated, gentlemen," he invited gravely. "I take it that you have at last succeeded?"

"Yes, sir," Hapacre assented. "All we require now are the underground plans from you. The model borer works, so it's giant contemporary will do likewise. In another week, the finished machines will be ready. They

will progress at tremendous speed, under earth and water, turning both these elements into pure energy as they advance; hence, there is nothing left in their wake."

"Excellent—excellent!" Volan nodded. "You have accomplished a feat which I, in my scientific career, have sought in vain. I extend my congratulations. It is proposed to erect the underground cities in every country beneath the existing cities. As your borers progress, shields of unbreakable steel will be slid into position. You will find the full details in the plans. In six weeks, the approaching asteroid will hit the earth; in four weeks, therefore, every underground city has to be completed. That will be your task."

"It can be done, working at full pressure," Hapacre nodded.

"It will have to be done, Hapacre," Volan answered, his lips tightening. "I myself will personally review your machinery when it is in operation. I shall expect you to start simultaneous drilling in all countries exactly ten days from today. You, Dawson, will take charge in New York here; you, Hapacre, will take charge of the Adelaide, Australia, sector. Thus you are both in opposite halves of the earth and other engineers in either of those halves can communicate with one or other of you, according to which side they are on. Incidentally, Hapacre, how do you propose controlling these borers of yours?"

"Remote control, by radio. It's the only way. Each borer will have its own separate control unit."

"I understand," the Asiatic nodded calmly. "Thank you, gentlemen. Ten days hence you will commence operations."

The two engineers rose and departed. For a moment, Volan sat in

thought, then he summoned the chief astronomer of the city.

"Tell me, Carter, have you yet determined which side of the earth the asteroid will strike?"

"Yes, sir," the astronomer nodded. "The entire western hemisphere will be exposed to the visitor; the eastern will escape. Figures irrefutably prove it."

"That is all I wanted to know. You may go."

Again Volan pondered when the astronomer had left. Gently he spun the globe that stood poised on his desk and broodingly watched it revolve. The ghost of a smile was on his hard face.

CHAPTER II

TO CLEAVE THE WORLD!

THROUGH the days that followed the earth-boring machines, monstrous objects resembling gigantic old-time torpedoes—save that they were fitted with specially designed tractors, were manufactured at record speed and dispatched to the various centers of activity.

Up to the very last moment, Dawson and Hapacre found themselves occupied in the supervision of their vital remote-control apparatus for the guiding of the machines.

"It's a pity we've got to part," Hapacre commented ruefully, on the last day. "Still, orders are orders. The only thing I'm worried about is that you don't know as much about this apparatus as I do. If anything goes wrong you'll have to send for me. I can be over from Adelaide in an hour, anyhow."

Dawson smiled. "Don't worry about me, Hap—nothing will go wrong. Still, I think you might give

me a break and leave Elsa behind. After all, we are to be married, you know. The Council has approved it."

"That'll have to wait, I'm afraid. There are more important things on hand. And besides, I must have Elsa—she's my closest assistant."

"I know," Dawson laughed. "It was only my fun, anyhow." He turned and patted the girl's shoulder affectionately. "We'll make up for it afterwards, eh, kid?"

"If there is any afterwards," she assented somberly.

"Why, of course there will be! Then we'll really come into our own—so much so that Volan himself will be out of it. The people are already turning to us; they realize that we can give them far more than Volan—peace of mind and security in one of the biggest dangers that ever threatened the human race. Then, when all the fireworks are over, old Hap will be able to solve his energy into matter problem, and I'll be able to finish my ideas on space-travel."

"Space-travel!" Hapacre echoed cynically. "That idea's no good, old man."

"It wasn't till you found atomic force; now it's a very logical theory. I'll tell you about it—when the asteroid has gone."

For a moment there was silence, then Hapacre shrugged. "Well, we'd better be moving off. Best of luck, old man—keep in touch on the teleradio. If we ever can squeeze in a minute, we'll have a chat on mutual scientific advancement—my ideas for energy-matter, and yours for—er—space-travel," he concluded dryly. "For the time being, goodbye!"

"And you look after yourself!" Dawson admonished the girl, as he gently embraced her. "I want a perfectly whole woman for a wife when this stuff is done with. If Hap starts

any of his crazy stuff, you come right back to me."

"I will!" she laughingly promised, then turned and followed her brother from the machine-room.

RIGHT on schedule, ten days later, operations commenced. In every city-site in both eastern and western hemispheres, engineers were able to keep contact with their respective master-engineers. Hence the men operating in London, Leningrad, Shanghai, Cairo, Durban, and Madras were able to keep in touch with Hapacre, whilst Dawson had plenty to do in giving orders from New York to those situated in Greenland, Alaska, and South America.

In New York itself, operations commenced from the vicinity of the old-time Central Park, it being intended to create underneath Manhattan Island itself the new underground city. The old-time Long Island, Brooklyn, and New Jersey no longer existed in any case—desperate air war had seen to that!

So on October 9, 2436, simultaneous boring began the world over. Volan himself duly arrived, without ostentation, and watched the preliminaries.

From the high tower of the remote-control rooms, he stood at Dawson's side, watched him make the universal signal that was the sign for simultaneous boring, then turned his gaze to the immense juggernaut as it began its amazing journey. As far as the eye could see, excepting for the mile-radius around the machine, people swayed eagerly to obtain a close look at the monster that was to provide their safety.

Tensely, Dawson threw in the power-switches; the massive machinery began to hum gently, emitting the vital transmissions. Instantly the bore

released itself from its supports, dove its nose into the hard earth, and within an incredibly short space of time, completely vanished below surface, consuming the earth and turning it into energy as it went.

"At two miles' depth it will be guided to turn parallel with the surface, and then pursue a varied course of tunneling and boring," Dawson explained. "There is every reason to expect success. As fast as the results of the borer's work are transmitted automatically to the surface, men will descend and use the magnetizers for placing the supporting plates into position."

"Very good," Volan nodded, his eyes on the machines—then he turned and walked quietly between them, Dawson stayed at his post; all his attention was demanded. His eyes were glued to the meters which registered the progress of the borer. So far everything was perfect. The thing was already three-quarters of a mile down and progressing with ever-mounting speed.

WHEN he reached the far end of the immense room Volan signaled a lean-faced engineer to him. The man promptly advanced and touched his cap in salute.

"Everything is checked, sir," he said in a low voice. "Experiments were made on the wave-lengths generated by these machines for remote control, and the correct heterodyning frequency was easy to discover. Henson worked it out and perfected it. He installed a heterodyner in your tower control-room as you requested, then . . ." The engineer stopped and smiled twistedly.

"I know," the Asiatic nodded, smiling faintly. "Poor Henson—a pity he met with so terrible an accident. Still, we must bear these blows. As

for you, Bates, you had better come with me. I need you."

"Yes, sir." A sub-engineer moved up to take his place.

Volan departed silently with Bates at his side. Within fifteen minutes, they were back in the ruler's headquarters, standing side by side gazing at the squat bulk of a complicated radio heterodyning-frequency transmitter.

"You could not wish for anything better, sir," Bates said presently. "This machine radiates a heterodyning frequency sufficient to overpower the radio waves which control the New York atomic-borer. Also, it blocks all teleradio transmission and reception for an area of nearly thirty miles in all directions, with this transmitter as the center of the circle. So long as this machine is at work, there can be no atomic-borer control—and no communication. And since the borer has a motor entirely motivated by smashing atoms, which can only be stopped by radio control, it becomes obvious that, uncontrolled, it might keep on going for years."

"Yes, I had thought of that," Volan nodded calmly, gazing out over the city towards the scene of the boring operations.

The engineer hesitated for a moment, then asked, "Am I permitted to inquire, sir, what your plan is? Why do you desire to break the control of this particular atomic motor?"

Volan turned from the window. "You have done a lot for me, Bates—I will reward you. Here is my plan—" He pointed to the immense wall-map of the modern world, divided into two hemispheres.

"You see, in the western hemisphere, ending at approximately London, we have the entire American continent. That will be the hemisphere to receive the full force of the

asteroid. The other hemisphere will probably survive easily. Now, when the New York borer is facing approximately north-east, I shall cut off the control. In consequence, it will keep on going at a terrific pace, at a two mile depth, straight out into the Atlantic Ocean, across to Iceland, through the Arctic Ocean, Europe, the Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean, the South Pacific, and so on back to New York. In other words, it will pursue a straight line—and keep on pursuing it, dividing the world into two distinct halves."

"But, sir!" The engineer stopped in amazement, then backed away as Volan came menacingly forward.

"You wonder why, eh?" the Asiatic asked bitterly. "Simple, my friend. By the time these underground cities are built, I shall have lost control—the people are already turning to Hapacre and Dawson whom they regard as their benefactors. The side that will be struck by the asteroid is this side; it is probable that the people will be annihilated. But the people on the other side, which includes Australia and all Asia, will escape scot-free, almost. I shall continue, then, to rule the eastern hemisphere, for by that time it will comprise the world! The earth will smash in two when the asteroid comes—the borer's preliminary cutting will see to that. Needless to relate, I shall not have Hapacre to worry about; I will attend to that matter—and Dawson will be cut off here. For me to rule a world but half the normal size will be simple. And lastly, the people being deep underground when the rupture occurs, they will suffer little damage from the sudden transit into space."

"I—see," Bates breathed in an awed voice. "But what a terrific chance!"

"Yes, isn't it?" The Asiatic smiled grimly, then he shot out his powerful hand and seized the engineer by the lapel of his tunic. "And now that I have told you everything I am, not unnaturally, obliged to take precautions as to your silence. You may remember that Henson, poor fellow, died very mysteriously. You remember, eh?" The Asiatic grinned viciously. "Well, you're going to follow him!"

"Wait, sir!" the engineer panted. "I'm with you—all along! What are you going to do?"

"Kill you, of course. What else did you expect?" And with a sudden swift movement, Volan whipped a lethal gun from his belt. Inflexibly, he pressed the button and watched the sobbing, shaking Bates collapse gently to the floor and lie still, all life blasted out of him.

Only for a moment did Volan gaze down at him, then he seized the body by the collar and dragged it uncereemoniously into his adjoining laboratory, afterwards throwing it into the bath of acid he had specially prepared for the purpose. Within seven minutes, there was no evidence that Hubert Bates, engineer, had ever been on earth at all . . .

Thoughtfully, the heinous incident forgotten, Volan returned to his own office on the floor below. Within a minute, he was in contact with the feverishly working Dawson by tele-radio. His perspiring face appeared on the screen.

"Yes, sir?"

"What is the exact position of the New York borer at the moment, Dawson? How are you progressing?"

The engineer looked at his meters. "It's reached the two-mile depth, sir, and is now working on the horizontal tunneling."

"Good work, Dawson. That's all."

Volan switched off, then quietly walked upstairs again—surveyed in silence the bulk of the heterodyner, then transferred his attention to the walls and tiny door.

"Impregnable," he murmured. "Ray-proof walls, explosive-proof windows—a room which nothing can pass through except radio waves. Even if they trace this heterodyner, they'll never be able to stop it. . . ."

He ceased soliloquizing and went over to the machine itself, checked its controls, then threw in the main switch. The motor, driven by atomic force, the motive power of which the dead Henson had deliberately stolen from Hapacre during the erection of the control-units, hummed deeply. The wires and filaments on the summit of the apparatus began to glow steadily.

The Asiatic nodded, dusted his hands, then quietly left the room. Behind him the door closed and automatically locked itself. Certainly a combination code could open it—but only Volan knew it.

Ten minutes later, he was seated within a fast air machine, piloting himself, heading for Australia. . . .

DAWSON first became aware of trouble when the face of Clements, sub-engineer in charge of the men working on the steel shafting, appeared on the televue screen.

"Hey, Dawson!" his voice roared through the loud-speaker, and Dawson started up from a few minutes of well-earned rest. "Hey, what the hell are you doing? The damned borer's going straight on! It should have turned upwards again three minutes ago. For God's sake, do something! I've got men waiting to make contacts; the darn thing will mow them down if you don't alter the course—"

Dawson swung around and glared at his instruments. A violent start shook him as he surveyed the direction-indicator. According to his former switch movements, it should be indicating a vertical movement, but instead, it registered complete horizontal. Frantically, he swung over the massive controlling wheels, slammed switches that diverted the current, but the direction-indicator remained unchanged.

"Vacate the site!" he shouted hoarsely. "Borer's out of control! There's electrical interference somewhere. . . . I'll join you. Get an ordinary mine-comber prepared—we'll chase the borer and see if the control unit is broken. I'll be with you in five minutes."

"O. K.—but for heaven's sake hurry!"

Dawson did not hesitate a moment. Desperately, he sped from the building, raced out into the busy street, and joined the anxious Clements at the top of the shaft within the stipulated time. Together they entered the cage and dropped down the smooth, mechanically made pit at a tremendous pace.

"Any idea as to the cause?" Clements asked cryptically—and Dawson compressed his lips.

"None whatever, yet. I don't like it, Clem—it isn't a natural accident, I'll swear."

A silence fell between them, and presently they reached the base of the shaft. Here men were lounging about, almost stripped, in the glare of hastily erected electric arcs, their machinery idle, awaiting further orders. One of them moved forward quickly as the two appeared.

"The borer's two miles to the northwest, sir," he panted. "You can catch it up in the mine-comber. It's all ready. Hop in."

The three of them climbed into

the swift tractor device used extensively for the exploration of underground workings. The door slammed shut and in another minute the massively powerful contraption was moving at maximum speed through the newly bored tunnel, gathering tremendous speed along the semi-circular floor the borer itself had so smoothly made.

Dawson and Clements stared fixedly through the front observation windows at the onrushing emptiness, pierced by the glare of searchlights. Then at last the darkness ahead began to lighten; an immense brilliance filled the darkness. Rumbings and thunderings akin to a gathering earthquake beat on the men's ears even through the thickness of the comber's walls.

"Stop!" Dawson shouted. "Stop! Go no further!"

Instantly, the order was obeyed. He stood looking at the rapidly receding borer, surrounded by its aurora of incandescence.

"No use, Clem," he groaned at last. "We can't examine it—it isn't humanly possible. The motor must be shot to pieces—probably the sudden removal of radio control pressure created a recoil or backlash. Whatever it is, energy is escaping in all directions and the damn thing's traveling at a terrific speed, entirely without the braking effect of radio! It's as destructive, and more so, than a perpetually exploding high-powered shell. We've got to get back and contact Hap right away. Quick—there! Reverse!"

BY NIGHT, the runaway borer had reached the Atlantic Ocean, pursuing its way with less resistance now, along the bed of the sea, turning the water into a boiling, death-dealing vortex as it pursued its inexorable advance towards Newfound-

land. Just as it consumed matter in the form of the toughest rock, so it consumed water, hence pressure was practically a negligible factor. Everywhere it touched, everything ceased to be, an effect that was doubled with disastrous consequences by reason of its uncontrolled, incredible speed and perpetually escaping, radiating energy.

Dawson, nearly frantic with dismay, tried desperately to get in touch with Hapacre, but without success. The heterodyning wave did its work thoroughly. All transmission failed utterly; all reception resulted in whining and violent static.

"Trace that infernal heterodyne to its source!" Dawson barked out at last. "It must be deliberate! All ordinary radio transmission ceased when we began, for fear of this very thing happening. Get all the experts you can, Clem, and don't eat or sleep until you track it down. Oh, if only we had the old-fashioned telephone now! How it would help!"

Clements swiftly departed. Wounded, Dawson rose to his feet and gazed out towards the harbor. There, distinctly visible in the darkness, was the presence of the borer. Illumination, faint but still distinguishable, poured up from the blackness of the horizon. The borer was on its way, without resistance.

And overhead, just visible now to the naked eye, a solitary scrap of hurtling matter swept ever nearer towards the earth. . . .

CHAPTER III

DISASTER AND RUIN

IN THE meantime, in Australia, Hapacre was pursuing his work with entirely satisfactory results. Everything was in order;

all borers were working perfectly. As yet, he knew nothing of the disaster that had befallen the western hemisphere, but he certainly did wonder when his efforts to communicate with his friend received no response. Finally he decided it was a temporary defect at the American end and calmly returned to his work.

The problem of creating matter out of energy still obsessed his active mind, but it was an obsession perforce relegated to those few moments when he knew the essential boring work could proceed without his actual supervision. To his sister, on the second night of work, he explained his views in the little apartment assigned specially to their use.

The girl tried the televisior. Repeatedly, she operated the contact controls, without result. As a last effort, she tried other stations, but since all were within the radius of the American heterodyner, her efforts were futile.

"Can't figure it out at all," Hapacre muttered, frowning. "Hope nothing's gone wrong—but I'm an ass for worrying! What can be wrong? Here, sis, give me a hand at working this energy formula. The sooner we get it, the better."

Elsa nodded and drew up to the table, as unaware as her brother that, on the opposite side of the world, Dawson was at his wits' end to know what move to make. His experts had worked desperately through the night with detectors, and had finally traced the source of the heterodyne, only to find, exactly as Volan had calculated, that the tower housing it was impregnable.

"You could fly to Australia within the hour and tell Hap with your own lips," Clements observed. "Is there anything wrong with that idea?"

"You know there is! I'm the only

one here who understands these directional instruments. They're still functioning, and while they are, I can chart ahead where the borer will be next and so send out warnings in time by scout planes. But you could go, though! Yes, that's it! You go and tell Hap what's occurred. Get going right now."

"O. K." Dawson turned back worriedly to his instruments as Clements departed. His mind was on the gaping chasm being torn in the surface of the earth—the destruction of both land and sea. The borer had already made enormous progress, had indeed passed clean through the center of Iceland and was careening towards the Arctic Circle, blasting ocean and ice into energy as it traveled.

Reykjavik, the old-time capital of Iceland, was rent through as though with volcanic fire and afterwards hurled piecemeal into the ocean, wiping out those of the populace who had been too luckless or too obstinate to escape. The only method of warning was by fast planes from New York, but even then it was a prodigious task to advise everybody.

Norway and Sweden first became aware of the danger when a fast flier from New York alighted with the usual exodus order. Even so, the messenger could not possibly cover all the ground necessary, and his radio efforts at warning failed deplorably to convince the natives. Soon, boiling, thundering tumult passed two miles under Norway and Sweden and produced a colossal earthquake. An immense canyon was torn through the two countries, wiping out Oslo and dropping it into the depths of a vast ravine. . . . And the borer went on, advancing inexorably in a line for Europe, Persia and the Indian Ocean.

Dawson heard of these things

from his scouts, and accordingly dispatched more warnings—but it came to him with grim clearness that the borer was proving too fast for him, with its speed increasing hour upon hour. He had, too, to cope with the obstinacy of various peoples who refused to believe that a mere machine could wreck a country, so little understood even then was the demoniacal power of uncontrolled atomic energy.

DAY after day, Dawson waited tensely for the return of Clements from Australia. Already he was enormously overdue; scouts, too, were mysteriously disappearing. As to Clements, only the tortured gales of a battered planet could bear testimony to the fact that a tiny piece of wreckage on the frothing Atlantic gave the clue as to where Clements had gone. A defect in his machine, a nose dive, a sudden whirlwind. . . .

The waters rolled on!

"Elsa, something has got to be done!"

It was Hapacre who spoke—grimy, tired from hours of sleepless work, both physical and mental. The underground borings were proceeding perfectly; for a few hours he had relaxation of a kind.

"Elsa, you'll have to go and find him," he went on fiercely. "Something's terribly wrong—I can't forget those messages filtering in from Asia—the story of an atomic machine gone mad!—the silence of the radio bands—no word. Go to him, sis—he needs help, I'll swear it."

"And the formula for matter creation?" she asked quietly. "You've finished it. If this story of a crazy atomic machine is true, we could use a matter-forming machine to build up the gaps made by this runaway."

"Right enough—you must take

the formula with you. As to stopping the runaway machine, I don't see what can be done. Uncontrolled atomic force is impossible to stop. If you can find Dawson, get him to come here at all costs; we'll try to figure out something. In the interval, he must have a matter machine to repair the damage. Every minute is precious now. Get going, sis."

The girl took the stiff roll of metal held out to her, slipped it into the zipper pocket of her overall, then went directly to the flying fields. Within five minutes, she was in the clear upper air, far above the teeming activity of the vast pit that marked the Adelaide underground workings. Faster and faster she streaked towards the Indian Ocean; within ten minutes she had gained it and was flying across its rolling expanse.

Far below, ships plied steadily on its waters. A strange unformed fear was in her mind; far ahead, in the hazy outlines that denoted mid-ocean, there lay a queer curtain of incandescence, for all the world like an illuminated waterspout, filled with blazing lightnings and energies. Already her little craft began to bob violently with atmospheric currents. Wind shrieked in the fuselage of the machine; the deep booming roar of an incredible thunder reverberated through the empty sky—an indescribable resonance that came to her clearly in the silence, for the plane motor was noiseless.

Puzzled, she veered away to the left, but the odd atmospheric mystery still moved steadily towards her, seeking to cut her off. Then, quite suddenly, her startled eyes beheld the disturbance distinctly. Far below, the sea itself was being carved in two by invisible, radiating power, carved by the machine two miles below the surface. For a moment only

did she glimpse the bottomless depths occasioned by the disintegration, then the waves roared back into the gulf, thundered and cascaded in vast boiling walls into the abyss, hurling spume and brine thousands of feet into the air.

"It is a machine!" she breathed, half to herself. "An escaped machine!"

Only for a moment did she ponder, then she swung around violently and headed towards the rear of the disturbance—but here again she was beaten. The wind currents were too great for her slender machine. Helplessly, it was hurled backwards; by an enormous effort she regained control and went with the wind back towards Australia's shores. Ten minutes later, she had landed back at the flying grounds. At a run, she returned to her brother's apartment, then paused on the threshold, only stifling an outcry by enormous effort.

Within the room stood her brother and Volan, the latter with his lethal-gun leveled.

"Don't try to tell me you haven't discovered the secret of matter out of energy, Hapacre, because I've had you watched for days!" Volan snapped. "Where is it?"

Hapacre shrugged and smiled grimly. "Wouldn't you like to know?" he asked bitterly. "As it happens, the formula is on its way to New York. My sister is taking it there. There's just a chance Dawson may find it useful."

"Why should he?"

"Oh, don't try and be innocent, Volan! You know as well as I do that a machine is loose—and ten to one it's the New York machine. The earth is slowly being mown in half, and only my formula can save it and rebuild the matter that has been destroyed. . . . And, don't forget, the asteroid is coming! We have enough

on our plate without your outside interference!"

"Interference, eh?" Volan snarled. "What about you? You send your infernal sister with the very formula that will wreck my plans! She's got to be found—and I'll find her. As for you, I've no further use for you!"

The lethal gun flared; Hapacre smiled again, tauntingly, then he gently collapsed to the floor. Every instinct urged Elsa to hurl herself into the room, but the remembrance of the formula within her pocket stayed her movement. Blindly she turned and fled down the corridor, out into the open, towards the flying grounds.

Somehow—someway—she had got to get through the aerial disturbances, and with this resolution in mind, she took to the air again. The borer had moved on a tremendous distance in its journey—that much she discovered—but the air was still tempestuous.

Setting her teeth, she gripped the speed levers of the engine and drove with all speed into the tumult. The disturbed air in the wake of the runaway borer struck her with overwhelming force. The machine lunged and twisted mightily, swept wildly to one side, then dove downwards with dizzying speed. Far below, an isolated island stood in solitary state in the churning waves. Dazed with the speed and air-pressure, the girl operated her switches, flattened the machine out, skimmed the very top of a solitary tree, then crashed with tremendous force upon the rocks.

Immediately, the machine crumpled, but, being fireproof, did not ignite. The girl slumped unconscious in the cockpit.

PURSUING its inexorable course from the Indian Ocean, the borer continued its straight-line movement

through the open sea towards Antarctica, through that world of ice, and back again into the South Pacific Ocean. The American people grew alarmed, in particular the people of New York. The borer was returning! In a little under five days, it had circumnavigated the world, furrowed it to a depth of two miles, divided the earth into two distinct hemispheres, and was now moving at enormous velocity along the same track.

There was nothing that could be done; Dawson knew that. The asteroid's steady and inevitable approach was forgotten now, except by the harassed astronomers. Everybody was fighting a menace on land—a machine that wouldn't stop—that gave warning of its approach towards New York on the fifth day by means of buried rumblings and atomic energy disruptions. Immediately, New York was evacuated, and the less-important slave cities in contact. Every man, woman, and child left the metropolis and headed for the north of America.

When they returned, they found the city carved in two as though with a knife. An enormous chasm separated them from the other hemisphere of the earth, a chasm filled with the lambent flames of volcanic upheaval, emitting poisonous and deadly fumes.

In one respect, the borer had done some good; it had smashed Volan's fool-proof tower into masonry, stopped completely the heterodyning effect. Certainly, this liberated television and radio waves, but it did not render the control of the atomic machine any nearer, for the simple reason that the unit controlling the machine—granting the machine's engine could in any case have been repaired—had been wiped out of existence.

Dawson accompanied by the little band who still stuck loyally to him, took up his headquarters in a none-too-secure building half a mile from the chasm. Grim-faced, he had the televisions connected up, tested the air-waves, then made contact with Adelaide. To his surprise, it was not the face of Hapacre that appeared on the screen, but Volan's, calm and sneering.

"Well?" he inquired coldly. "What is it, Dawson?"

"Sir, something terrible has happened! You must know of it! A machine has broken loose, is pursuing a constant line around the earth! It has made one circuit and is now on the second. We've got to stop it! We've got to!"

Volan smiled. "It is rather unfortunate, Dawson, isn't it? Earth is being divided into two sections; the chasm between is filled with poisonous fumes and deadly air currents that prevent any airplane getting through. The oceans are tremendously lowered; the chasm exists on the ocean bed as much as on land. You are, I admit, on the worst hemisphere—the side the asteroid will strike. I am on the other side, and the shelters are practically finished. I'm sorry I can't help you—I am, really. Literally, we are in two separate worlds, or will be when the asteroid comes!"

"Get me Hapacre!" Dawson demanded. "I've got to speak to him!"

"Hapacre is dead," Volan answered curtly—and switched off.

Dawson sat staring dully at the screen; his men were respectfully silent.

"Elsa," he breathed brokenly. "Elsa! Hap—dead! But Elsa—What can have happened to her?" Then, suddenly, he recovered from his lethargy, turned with frantic

haste to the transmitters. Just as he did so, the communicator-bulb lit up brightly. Puzzled, he switched on. To his supreme joy, the face of Elsa appeared on the screen, white and tense. To her rear lay a blurred vision of creaming breakers against massive rocks.

"Rod!" her voice exclaimed hoarsely. "Thank heaven I located you! I had my television in action when you spoke just now—it intercepted my efforts to try and get aid from your side of the world. I daren't try Australia—Volan is after me."

"But where are you, kid? What on earth are you doing?"

"Trying to get through to you with Lance's formula for matter-creation. It could repair the damage done by the borer; long enough to get the thing back in control, anyhow. My plane can't get through the disturbances existing in the chasm. I crashed—only recovered some hours ago. I must have been unconscious, off and on, for days.

"Oh, Rod, what on earth am I to do? I have the solution to your difficulties, but you can't get through to me, and I daren't ask my own side to help me. It means my finish. Volan's already had his scouts after me, but I've thrown the wreckage of my plane into the sea and hidden in a cave here, so that he can't trace me. The only things I have saved are a gas-mask and a portable television—and some provisions."

"What gave you the idea I couldn't get through?" Dawson demanded fiercely. "I'm coming to get you if it's the last thing I do! Hang on—I'm coming for you!"

"I'll wait. . . ." The girl's voice faded as she cut contact. Dawson leapt to his feet and seized Kemp, his most loyal supporter, by the shoulders.

"Kemp, I've got to have an assistant—" he began urgently.

"Rely on me," the laconic engineer interrupted. "Heavy plane?"

"The heaviest we've got. You others stay here and send out warnings from the borer's computed path. Come on, Kemp!"

Five minutes later, the two were at the remains of the flying grounds. Dawson clutched the chief mechanic by the arm.

"Johnson, we want a heavy plane in perfect condition—desperate mission through the death-line."

Johnson smiled coldly. "You do, eh?" He waved a grimy hand to the empty masses of the half-shattered hangars. "There's not a plane available. Every one was smashed by falling masonry in the last earthquake."

"What!" Dawson gazed with dismayed eyes around the empty, tumbled expanse. "But—but I've got to have a machine!" he insisted desperately. "The safety of the world depends on it!"

"I'm not a magician, Dawson," Johnson said. "The only way is to build one. We have the materials. Under pressure, we could do it in, say, about two weeks—no, three weeks, pressing every available man into commission."

"Three weeks! Don't be idiotic! I can't wait that long!"

"After all, Dawson, you can't walk it," Kemp commented quietly. "It's the only way around the difficulty. Since this is the central depot for air machines, there certainly won't be any in the subsidiary hangars. We'll have to build. Get in touch with Miss Hapacre again and tell her."

Dawson snorted savagely and strode back to his official building. It did not take long to get Elsa back on the air and tell her of the disas-

trous news. She smiled very faintly.

"All right, I'll wait," she assented wearily. "I have my cave and provisions, so I guess I can hold out long enough. My gas mask will keep me safe from the volcanic fumes. But Rod, please hurry! The borer passes within twenty miles of here. The island may be wrecked in the next onslaught. Besides, the asteroid is due in a trifle over three weeks. . . ." She stopped and shrugged. "In any case, why struggle?" she asked hopelessly. "When you get the formula, it will be too late to use it, anyhow."

"Too late to use it to stop the atomic machine's wreckage, maybe, but think of its use after the asteroid has gone! I'm coming! We're going to shelter on the eastern hemisphere. Whatever happens, formula or no formula, I'm coming to get you! Now I must cut off—good-bye."

"Good-bye, Rod—but do hurry!"

CHAPTER IV

THE GREAT DIVIDE

FROM that moment onwards, various events built up to their ultimate crises. Dawson, all his energies concentrated on the building of the massive, high-powered fireproof plane, had little time to think of anything else.

The borer, in the interval, pursued exactly the same track as before, but delving deeper and ever deeper into the earth and sea, exposing each time fresh volcanic fires, hurling tremendous chasms of flame and death onto both hemispheres. The eastern half, in the main, escaped any hurt; Volan saw to that. The people, even though the underground cities were not fully completed, were all below surface and safe from the disturbances—and,

steadily, the cities were taking shape. The dead Hapacre's sub-engineers knew enough of the general construction to proceed without him, but work was certainly delayed without his individual guiding genius.

Astronomers reported the advance of the asteroid into the Solar System. Within seventeen more days, it would strike the earth exactly as calculated—the western hemisphere.

On the Indian Ocean island, alone, fighting against terror and the exhaustion occasioned by the strict rationing of her tabloid supplies, Elsa beheld the borer's second and third visits through the ocean, felt her island shaken enormously with the upheavals; but to her relief, it stood the strain. Indeed, it seemed to rise much higher in the air in consequence; actually the ocean level dropped lower. Rain descended in torrents, typhoons screamed and roared around the little cave in which she had made her temporary home. With frightened eyes, she peered out on the tempestuousity of maddened Nature; then, with the calmer moments of the borer's passing, she beheld the vision, low down on the horizon, of the risen asteroid, outshining even Venus in brilliance. . . .

Throughout the weeks of airplane construction, Dawson was akin to a raving madman. He refused to sleep, only ate when sheer exhaustion demanded it, then returned to force work onwards at a terrific pace. As the borer made its third circuit, at an unguessable depth below the surface of the earth and sea, more of the ruined city of New York fell to pieces—the bridge between hemispheres was enormously widened. The gases became denser, filling the cloud-ridden sky and producing a dim and perpetual twilight. The workers toiled on in gas-masks, in the

midst of air so hot that it registered a steady 124° F.

But the Herculean labor was not without result. The machine was finished in just under three weeks. Dawson and Kemp slept only long enough to refresh themselves, then took off into the sullen darkness of the threatened planet towards the Indian Ocean, guided only by compasses in the foggy atmosphere.

"We're headed straight for disaster, old man," Kemp muttered, hands on the controls and gaze glued to the opaque view outside. "Elsa Hapacre will never survive this!"

"Why not?" Dawson demanded grimly, turning a sweat-streaked face. "She has a gas-mask. Two hours ago she was just about living, according to the televisior message. She'll live all right. . . . Heavens, Kemp—she must live!"

He took over the controls as he spoke. Kemo retired and tested the televisior, without results. Violent electrical disturbances rendered it useless.

"Must be hell ahead," he muttered dubiously—but Dawson took no notice. He drove on rigidly through the murk, holding the lurching monster as best he could in the tempest raging outside.

On the earth below, supreme chaos was reigning. The more fortunate ones of the eastern hemisphere, under Volan's control, were already deep underground. The asteroid was due in eight hours, according to calculation. As to the borer, it was presumably still pursuing its eternal journey.

Comparative safety embraced the eastern world, yes, but in the western, disaster strode over the land: tempests, landslides, tremendous concussions, oceans raised to the boiling point—people without shelter flying

hither and thither in choking fumes, or stumbling unexpectedly into flaming pits in the shattered earth. Overhead, hidden, a brilliant orb swept ever nearer through the desolation of infinity, already adding its own equilibristic disturbances to the tottering world. Gravity was shifting; balanced planes were changing. The world was on the rack.

DEEP in the Indian Ocean, the island of Elsa still stood, surrounded by a sea that had become a boiling caldron, lashed by furious, colossal waves that slowly encroached on the land, waiting only the final tidal wave that would sink the island forever. Unconscious, overcome by exhaustion, lay Elsa, her mask mercifully on, entirely oblivious to the choking fumes that enveloped her.

"Must be somewhere near!" Kemp shouted, nearly an hour later. "Go easy, man—go easy! We're driving over that damned earth-chasm now. A bottomless pit of flame! Look at that!" He pointed in awe to a stupendous coiling mass of dense, sulphuric smoke, etched out against a hellish background of writhing fire. The air was choked with dust, cinders and volcanic matter. Invisible below, there thundered the incomprehensible fury of a sea, a world, dividing—crumbling in the last gravitational deflectings into two parts, a work already patterned by the still-exploding, detonating borer.

"We can't make it!" Kemp shouted, perspiration streaming down his face. "I tell you, Dawson—"

"Shut up! We're going through!" Dawson snarled back, slamming the lever over the maximum speed. "Elsa's out there in that hell! If she dies, we die too!"

The machine jolted and gathered speed—then there rose from the un-

known dark outside a terrific vortex of air. The ship, mighty though it was, was blown upwards like a feather, heeled over, and careened through the blackest darkness.

In that second, earth split in twain, an incredible sight as the sundered lands and oceans cascaded into infinity a tremendous and instantaneous reshuffling of gravitative power! The two halves flew apart at tremendous speed, each retaining its own atmospheric envelope. It snapped into place with diabolical force, produced stunning thunder concussions that were heard even above the roar of the disintegrating landscape.

Further and further the two halves flew apart. Those on the western hemisphere reeled and fell, buried under shattering tons of brick and earth. Those on the eastern half lay buried underground, almost protected, but in places there were enormous subsidences.

And the asteroid. It swept into the position of earth's orbit to the pretimed second, but when it finally arrived, the two halves had parted company, and in consequence, it hurtled between them, without resistance, into the further depths of space.

Infinity heaved; two worlds came slowly to a standstill, moved in a little towards each other, claimed a dual hold on the more distant moon and sun, then began to move in newly defined orbits—two worlds, clouded in steam and vapor, but from which the horror of a mad atomic machine and approaching asteroid had gone.

Dawson's next clear recollection was of being in a ramshackle building, stretched on a makeshift bed, with a party of grimy, tattered men beside him. Amongst the many faces, he recognized only that of Kemp.

Slowly, wincing, he sat up, asked almost soundless questions.

"It's over," Kemp said very quietly. "Earth split in two. We landed in a mud plain and escaped serious hurt. You've been unconscious a long time. There are people left on this hemisphere. It can be rebuilt—"

"But, Elsa—" Dawson panted, and Kemp shrugged.

"Interplanetary radio seems to work. I managed to get into contact with Volan. They seem to be doing o. k. up there—he's ruler, of course. Elsa is alive, but hurt, and of course under Volan's control. At the time of the disaster, the Indian Ocean was drained off into space. Her island was left untouched in consequence. When she came back to consciousness she saw only a smoking wilderness and scouts picked her up."

"Then the gulf of space is between us?" Dawson breathed. "Kemp, do you begin to realize—?"

"I realize that we have to build anew," he answered steadily. "Take it calmly, old man. We may bridge space, and then . . ."

"Space!" Dawson rubbed his forehead wearily. "I once had an idea to conquer space by atomic energy. I believe I could do it, too."

"You'll have willing helpers. Everybody is against Volan—those few who are left, that is. We're in complete control."

Dawson rose shakily to his feet and stared out of the glassless window at the vision of the still imperfect globe amidst the mists of the horizon.

"Earth, born of Earth," he murmured tensely. "Kemp—space must be conquered! Elsa must be brought back, Volan overthrown."

"We know," Kemp nodded simply—and Dawson continued to gaze, untiringly.

THE END

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SCIENCE AND DREAMS

by DERWIN LESSER

THE study of dreams and their interpretations is a particularly interesting scientific perusal because it allows us to see ourselves as we really are and analyze our own characteristics. The censor that guards our conscious thoughts does not work when we are dreaming, and, when we remember our dreams, we are allowed, in a measure, to penetrate the subconscious. In a normal state, the subconscious transfers some of its hidden mental material to the conscious mind only during sleep.

We remember very few of our dreams, and even those escape us almost entirely soon after waking. If you have a particularly vivid dream, and you wish to perform some self-analysis, it is best to write the story of the dream on a piece of paper immediately upon awaking, so that you have it recorded before it becomes dim in your memory.

Dream material is drawn from several sources—from recent and old memories, from unfulfilled activities, from “wishful thinking,” from latent desires, etc. We can accomplish things in dreams that are impossible in real life, for the subconscious knows no material barriers. We can’t kid ourselves in our subconscious minds, and, in our dreams, we act exactly as we would like to. We do things that would shock the conventional world, for civilization has taught us that we must not give way to all our desires.

A short time ago I had a compara-

tively complete dream, which I jotted down immediately, and will here attempt to interpret. You will notice a good deal of symbolism and substitution that is supplied by the subconscious.

THE DREAM

IT IS the closing of a high school session somewhere in North Carolina. I am one of the students. During the general confusion in leaving the classroom, I tell a joke (to no one in particular). I say, “You act like a bunch of high school kids!” with mock disdain. This seems funny because they are a bunch of high school kids. However, the only ones who laugh are those students on the other side of the class, who are still seated.

Outside of the school, I am anxiously looking for a time-table in my pocket so that I can see what time my train leaves for home. At this point I meet Gilbert. Gilbert has an old car (an “English Chevey”) that is in a dilapidated condition—he has trouble keeping the motor running at times. Gilbert needs a dollar to treat his girl-friend that evening. He becomes brotherly and asks me to lend him a dollar for a short while. Gilbert is a good friend, and I promise to get it for him before I leave the vicinity, but I can’t spare it myself (although I have two dollars in my pocket—excuse, if necessary, would be that I had to buy my meals for the next day with the money).

There is still time to catch the train (desire to get dollar for Gilbert now lessens greatly in importance). I drive Gilbert's old car down to the corner. I am guiltily conscious that I haven't a license, and therefore drive on the sidewalk, as though that made everything right!

At the corner, we are stopped by an officer in plain clothes. At first, I pretend that I don't notice him. Feeling that it has to do with driving an automobile on the sidewalk without a license, I become nonchalant. At this moment, the automobile becomes very tiny, so that I can turn around (now walking) and drag it by my side, like a scooter.

The officer catches up with us, asking us where we came from—so I mention the nearby school. He then brings us into a private home next to the school that is oddly unoccupied, but it seems proper that we should be there. On the way into the house, the officer murmurs something about "destroying geraniums," a few of which I see near the house upon entering.

"Destroying geraniums" seems to be the charged crime, and not driving a car on the sidewalk. All this time, I am very anxious to break away so that I can catch my train. I am still looking for my time-table in my pocket as we take seats (the three of us) in one of the rooms in the house. We find, to our happiness, that we are to be pardoned for the crime of "destroying geraniums," with a warning to be careful in the future.

I become very friendly with the officer at this point, and start talking about where I came from. In looking for my time-table, I pull out of my pocket a complete copy of the Elizabeth Daily Journal (my local newspaper), and present it to the officer, saying, "Here's a real newspaper."

He looks it over, saying that he wants to visit Elizabeth (New Jersey) this summer. I mention that he can make the trip for only sixty-five cents (from North Carolina!), but that he ought to pay a little more and go right into New York. He says that he'll have at least a week for the trip, and can visit both Elizabeth and New York.

At this moment, I find my time-table and notice that I can just about make the train. At this point I awaken.

THE INTERPRETATION

CLOSING of a high school session: This is taken directly from the memory of my high school days.

Somewhere in North Carolina: There are three reasons for bringing North Carolina in at this point—(1) I first made a journey to that state when I attended high school. (2) I have a friend who attends a university in North Carolina. (3) I constantly desire warm weather (it was cold at the time of this dream).

The only ones who laugh are those students on the other side of the class: This denotes a subconscious belief that I am most appreciated by those furthest away (in California).

I am anxiously looking at my time-table: This shows an urgent desire to wake up at nine o'clock (to "get away on time").

Gilbert has an old car (an "English Chevey"): The old car refers to a dilapidated affair I possessed many years ago, and the "English Chevey" goes back several years to one that I had seen in the street—a well-buried memory.

Trouble keeping the motor running: This goes back a few days to an incident in which a friend of mine stalled his car several times.

I can't spare it (the dollar) myself: Shows an appreciation of the fact that I was at present low on funds.

I promise to get it for him: This shows a desire to satisfy my friends without shouldering all the responsibility.

I haven't a license, and therefore drive on the sidewalk: A case of substitution. I intend to secure a permit to aid a friend of mine in driving a long distance. In the dream, the street reflects the license (which I haven't got—and therefore do not use), and the sidewalk represents the permit (which I intend to get). Here the dream uses the greater restrictions of the sidewalk over the street in place of the greater restrictions of the permit over the license.

The auto becomes very tiny: This reveals a desire on my part to underestimate the value of a situation, or an attempt to minimize a misdeed.

It seems proper that we should be there (in the private home): Last summer I felt out of place in a certain house, and the dream fulfills my wish to feel at home in this place.

"Destroys geraniums": The geraniums come directly from a book I had read the previous day, in which these flowers were discussed.

The charged crime: The changing of the nature of the crime reflects a recent error I had made in which my mistake was of a different nature than I suspected.

I am very anxious to break away: Once again, my desire to wake up on time shows its effect in the dream.

I am still looking for my time-table: This difficult search is very real, as I find my time-table very elusive amidst the other papers in my pocket, in real life.

We are pardoned for the crime: The ease with which the crime is pardoned denotes the conscious over-

rating of the seriousness of many situations—in direct contrast to the previous incident of the automobile becoming tiny—an obvious inconsistency.

He wants to visit Elizabeth: The discussion in the dream here about the visit refers to an experience I had several months ago in urging a friend of mine living some distance away to take a trip into this vicinity.

I mention that he can make the trip for sixty-five cents (from North Carolina!): Reasoning and mathematics are notably bad in dreams—usually because each figure belongs to an entirely different memory. In this case, the sixty-five cents is the fare I pay from Elizabeth to New York.

I notice I can just about make the train: This presages the end of the dream. The anxiety to awaken has its full effect here, and I actually wake up within a minute or so of the desired hour of nine.

To the psycho-analyst, dream material is an important element. He can learn many things about his subject through the interpretation of dreams that prove of great value to his work. Many neurotics have been cured through the proper application of information gained in this manner.

THE END

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

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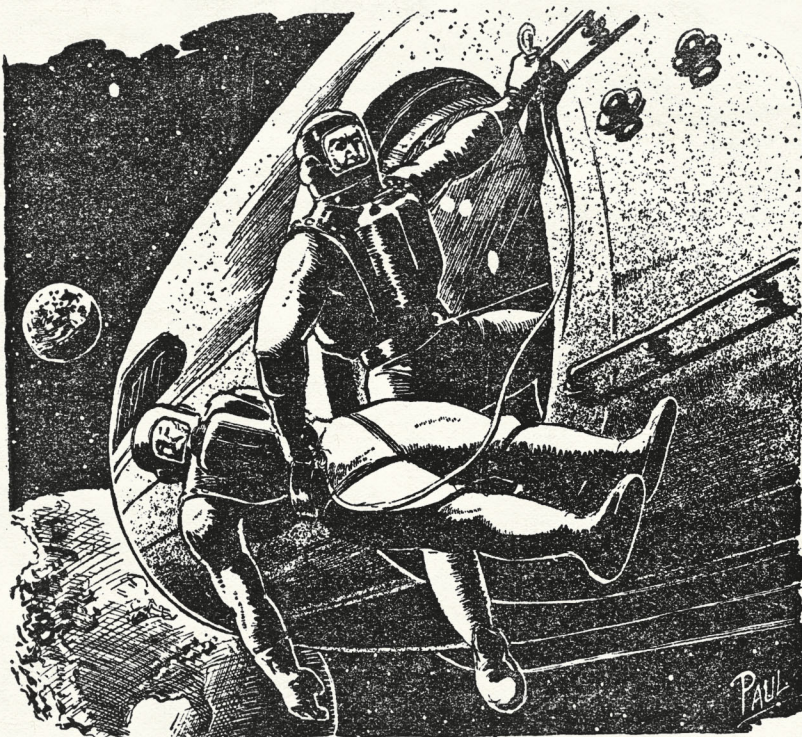
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LITTLE PLANET

by THORP McCLUSKY

Old Joel was a weak, aged man. It would be easy for Black Thom to get rid of him before they landed on Earth! Then he could claim for his own the platinum-laden asteroid—but Old Joel had a plan of his own!



He carried Old Joel's body through the airlock and secured it outside the ship.

IT WAS midnight. Ten minutes ago had been noon, five minutes from now would come the dawn. The day was twenty minutes long.

Old Joel Rutledge, silvery-haired, and pasty-faced now from the long months in space, lay on his bunk in Black Thom Arnold's small space-ship's single tiny sleeping-cabin. Old Joel was listening intently for some expected sound; even his faded blue eyes—as though he could hear as

well as see with them—were riveted on the half-closed, beryllium-steel door set in the curving, ribbed, bulk-head wall.

At last the soft chuck of the inner airlock door, twenty feet away, told him that Black Thom was leaving the ship. He would not, of course, hear the outer door close—

He waited until the faint, electric-blue sunlight, lancing down the narrow corridor, told him that dawn had come. Then, quickly, he swung his

long, emaciated legs over the side of the bunk. In long, effortless, gliding strides he floated from the cabin, into the corridor and forward into the control room.

Within the control room he wasted no time. He did not even glance through the quartz port at the weirdly desolate landscape that sloped away from beneath the ship's nose like the side of a tremendous mountain incredibly rooted in nothing but star-studded blackness. Swiftly, with definite purpose, he went directly to the panels of control switches and dials set to the right of the port, almost in the nose of the ship. Hurriedly his trembling old fingers loosed the clamps that held a section of fibro-glass over a panel, swung the panel open, and fumbled for a brief instant within the complexity-jammed compartment.

Then he withdrew his hand, replaced the transparent panel in its rubberoid socket, and retightened the clamps. Turning, he returned as quickly as he had come to the cabin he shared with Black Thom, and lay down upon his bunk. After listening furtively for a moment, and hearing no sound, he reached beneath his air-mattress and drew out a small, thin steel disk—an ordinary emergency meteorite patch. From within his metasilk shirt, he produced a small silver of diamond-hard metalloy—and began at once feverishly making deep scratches in the meteorite patch with that odd writing-implement.

And as he wrote, he listened with the sharp-eared alertness of one who knows that death stalks close—listened for the grating sounds of the opening airlock that would warn him of Black Thom's return—

MEANWHILE, Black Thom Arnold, a fine-mesh, link-chain sack lying close by on the pitted and

riven-nickel-stone of this numberless, nameless asteroid, was attacking with pick and electro-flame torch the vein of raw platinum that lay at his feet.

It was slow work. The tiny asteroid's gravity was so meager that with every stroke of the pick Black Thom's body recoiled aloft the full length of a fine steel cable anchored to a steel pin wedged in the metal-scamed rock—sank back each time with grotesque, maddening slowness to the asteroid's surface. Too, although the superbly insulated space-suit Black Thom wore protected him with almost one hundred per cent efficiency from both the crackling fury of the sun and the absolute cold of space, it also retained his accumulating body heat; after a mere ten minutes' labor salty rivulets of sweat were streaming from every pore. The vacuum-window in his space-helmet kept clouding over; every few minutes he had to pull his arms out of the rubberoid sleeves and mop the inside of the quartz-glass with a bit of dry rag.

Black Thom, whose disposition and temper were as sinister as his name, alternately cursed and grumbled and gloated to himself.

"Joel Rutledge—the damned old fool!" he chuckled softly, as he watched the bright arc from the electro-flame torch cut through the naked platinum like soft cheese, "—to believe that I'd ever be satisfied with half the metal. He was broke when I found him—down and out—without even metal enough in his pockets to pay for a bed at a spacerat flophouse or a pint of Earth whisky—let alone a room at the Grande Hotel Mmlloth or a pitcher of vuol! Said that somebody had grabbed his ship while he was outfitting—Well, that was probably true enough—"

Briefly he grinned, stood erect to wipe the sweat from his eyes.

"Half the metal—while I furnish the ship, pay the expenses, and dig the platinum besides. Damned old weakling—to get so sick that I have to do all the work. Half the metal—Faugh!"

The grin became a cruel, cunning leer.

With a flick of a rubberoid-protected finger, Black Thom shut off the valve at the throat of the electro-flame torch. For an instant, the nozzle still glowed whitely, then faded swiftly as its accumulated heat was dissipated into the incredibly cold rock. Black Thom dropped greedily to his knees and commenced stuffing the mesh-chain sack with the sheared platinum ore. The sack full, he rose to his feet, unfastened his safety cable from the wedged pin, and started for the ship. He left the almost empty electro-flame torch where it lay, it was no longer worth the fuel weight it would cost to transport it to Earth—

Back beside the little sixty-foot ship, Black Thom opened the outer airlock port, bundled the sack of ore through the small circular aperture, and clambered inside. Sealing the vacuum-walled outer door, he manipulated a valve that released air from within the ship into the airlock. When the air had finally ceased hissing into the small chamber he shut off the valve and waited a few more minutes while the interior warmth of the ship permeated the airlock. Not until then did he clumsily clamber from his bulky spacesuit and place the limp garment in its rack on the steel-ribbed wall. Last of all he opened the inner airlock door and entered the true interior of the ship.

Dumping the bag of platinum ore into the tiny cargo hold, he sighed

greedily; the hold was now full to the brim with lumps of the dull, metal-streaked rock. With an avaricious grunt, he slid shut and fastened the grating over the platinum; for an instant he bitterly regretted that the hold was so small—for he knew that, with his scant knowledge of space navigation, he would never be able to find this mountain of precious metal again. And Old Joel Rutledge—damn him!—was too cunning to plot the asteroid's orbit on paper. Yes, Black Thom Arnold well knew that once this incalculably rich mass of rock and metal vanished from his sight in the depths of space, it would be lost to him forever. Yet, after all, what matter? The ore he had already secured would make him—if all went well—one of the wealthiest men in the system—

WITH a deceptively genial smile on his wolfish countenance, he sauntered into the cabin. Old Joel Rutledge, wan, sunken-cheeked, turned rheumy eyes toward the open doorway as Black Thom entered.

"The hold's full," Black Thom announced abruptly, baring long yellow fangs in an amiable grin. "Enough white metal to make us both rich for the rest of our lives. We're blasting off for Earth at once." He paused, his eyes narrowing to thin slits as he stared at the old man. "Smile, old one, damn you! Why don't you smile?"

Slowly, wanly, cryptically, Old Joel Rutledge smiled—

"We're blasting off for Earth at once, eh, Black Thom? For Earth—where we'll both be rich for the rest of our lives? Sure. I'm smiling, Black Thom. Not so much because of my own good fortune—but because of what my share of this wealth will mean to Wilma, my widowed sister—

and my motherless daughter, Noreen. Nineteen years old Noreen is now, Black Thom—and I haven't seen her since she was twelve. Seven Earth years is a long time for a man to spend blasting about among the asteroids without a strike, Black Thom; it was in the stars that I should find this metal at long last. I've told you how my sister and daughter have been living through those weary years—the woman and girl struggling out a bare existence on a miserable little free-claim in the Oregon District. Oh, I've told you all this before, Black Thom; why should I repeat it now? You know my only wish—that even should I not live to see Earth again, my share of the metal is to go to my daughter. I've written and you've witnessed my will—”

Black Thom nodded shortly. He was beginning to be irritated by the old man's sentimentality.

“You'll live to see Earth, old one—never fear,” he insisted jovially. “Still,” he added slyly, “you should make more of an effort to get this asteroid's orbit plotted on paper. You never know what might happen. And your daughter, of course, would always be entitled to half the profits from the asteroid's metal—”

Old Joel slowly shook his head.

“I don't feel—strong enough—now,” he whispered. “Later in the voyage—if I am able—”

No slightest expression of disappointment crossed wily Black Thom's saturnine face—but inwardly he was seething with cold, frustrated rage.

“Shall I strap you in your bunk while we blast off?” he asked abruptly.

Again Old Joel shook his head.

“It won't be necessary. You can use moderate acceleration; this peb-

ble we're on has little gravity. You understand your orientation?”

“Point toward Jupiter, behind and to the east of the Sun—line Uranus up astern and fifteen degrees to port?”

“That's right. You'd better angle about thirty degrees toward Vega from the plane of the ecliptic until we're well out of the asteroid belt.”

“Is that necessary?”

“It's not necessary—but it's common sense.”

“All right,” Black Thom said sourly. Briefly he glanced about the cabin to reassure himself that all movables were secure in their clips. Then he went out into the corridor, closed the door behind him and jammed down the retaining clamps. Alope, Old Joel Rutledge lay quietly in his bunk, staring thoughtfully at the steel-ribbed ceiling.

Then a dry, muffled rattling began astern. The small ship trembled—jerked slightly. Swiftly the rattling increased until it was a roar that set everything within the ship—human flesh and blood, the dials on the instrument panels in the control-room, the tightly-packed platinum ore in the cargo hold, even the welded hull itself—into terrific, jarring vibration.

THE MURDER

THIRTY-FIVE days later, the Earth-moon system crept out of the Sun's glare into visibility. Black Thom Arnold, sitting alone before the heavy quartz port in the control room, quietly cursed, for Old Joel Rutledge still lived. There was no possibility, now, that he would die a natural death before the landing on Earth.

“Now is as good a time as any to get rid of him,” Black Thom, squint-

ing through the circular port at the familiar pair of brilliant crescents ahead, mused. "I don't need his damned reckoning from now on to get me to Earth."

That was true. With Earth less than a million miles away all that Black Thom—who was long on violence but deplorably short on space navigation—had to do was merely keep the nose of his ship on the planet and he would soon be home. But the problem of disposing of Old Joel was considerably more ticklish—

It would have to be murder, now, but it couldn't look like murder. Black Thom knew full well that he would have to bring the body in; he couldn't just dump it through the airlock and let it drift away through space; that would be, in the eyes of the Earth authorities, positive proof of foul play. There was a definite, set procedure that had to be rigorously carried out in the event of space death; the proper entries had to be made in the logbook; the body had to be placed in a spacesuit and kept attached outside the ship at all times except when the rockets were actually firing. Bodies have even been transported from Neptune to Earth under such circumstances, and without perceptible decomposition.

Black Thom was confident that he could make Old Joel's murder appear like a natural death. There was an old, old trick he had learned in his youth from a Eurasian spacerat; it was an Oriental refinement of murder that—except in a most painstaking investigation—would pass undetected, and the investigation of a supposedly penniless old space-prospecter's death would be mere perfunctory routine, Black Thom knew.

Chuckling softly to himself, Black Thom got up and walked into the

galley, where he filled two fibrotex bowls with a mixture of food-concentrate and water. Then, from the medicine cabinet, he took a single, harmless sedative tablet, which he carefully crumbled into powder and stirred into the thick broth in one of the bowls. Placing metalloy spoons in the two dishes, he picked them up and walked down the corridor to the cabin.

"Hungry, old one?" Black Thom grunted genially as he entered. "I've brought you your supper. Earth is big in the sky, old one; thank the stars that we won't have to down very many more messes of this hog-wash."

He came across the metal-ribbed cabin, set one of the bowls on the edge of Old Joel's bunk, and, lifting the other to his lips, noisily siphoned up the unsavory-tasting stuff.

The old man said nothing. But, after a moment's hesitation, he rolled over on his side and drank his food. When he had finished, he lay back again and stared thoughtfully at Black Thom.

"You know," he said abruptly, "it has occurred to me several times that you might be planning to murder me before we reach Earth—and claim my share of the metal for yourself."

Black Thom, the two empty bowls in his hands, stiffened into instant, tableauxque immobility. Through a long moment he did not move, then he relaxed and laughed harshly.

"You're space-mad, old one," he said, in a queer, strained, unnatural voice. "You'd better forget such fantasies, doze off and get some sleep. A few hours' sleep will do you good."

He turned abruptly to leave the cabin.

"Wait!" The command was so surprisingly strong, so unexpectedly vi-

brant, that Black Thom felt an involuntary thrill of apprehension strike through him as he halted.

"Well?" Black Thom growled.

Old Joel spoke softly, but with a curious premonitory assurance. "Black Thom, you are weak in space-navigation. It is possible that you might need my assistance in landing this ship. Perhaps it would be best to plan now to have me in the control room while we are entering Earth's atmosphere and landing. Even though I'm too weak to help you in any way with the controls, my brain is still alert—and in the event of an emergency, you might discover that two heads are always better than one—!"

"Very well," Black Thom, in apparent acquiescence, agreed. "Before we start to spiral in, I'll carry you into the control room. You'd better get some rest now. There aren't many hours left."

DROWSILY Old Joel nodded. Surprisingly, his fear of Black Thom had left him; he only felt overpoweringly sleepy. His eyelids felt heavy as neutronium; he let them sag wearily shut, and in an instant he was asleep.

For a moment Black Thom stood silently watching him. Then, with a satisfied nod, he stalked from the cabin, forward to the control room. Best to wait a little while, until the drug had thoroughly permeated Old Joel's system. There must be no mark of struggle on the aged man's body when Black Thom surrendered it to Earth's space-police.

After an hour had passed, he returned quickly down the narrow corridor and re-entered the cabin. Old Joel lay supinely in his bunk, snoring slowly and stertorously. Black Thom

slapped the old man's face, hard. But the exhausted, aged muscles beneath the sunken flesh did not even twitch.

Grinning, Black Thom climbed onto the bunk and knelt above Old Joel's unconscious body, facing his head. He reached out strong, predatory hands and carefully placed his thumbs on the carotid arteries on each side of Old Joel's shriveled neck, in the soft vulnerable spots at the base of the skull, just behind the ears. His forearms knotted as he pressed his thumbs in—hard.

He remained kneeling there for a long time, motionless as an image cut from stone, watching the slow, shallow movements of Old Joel's chest and the feeble, fluttering pulse in his throat. When at last Old Joel had ceased to breathe and his pulse had stopped forever, he clambered off the dead body and stood flexing his aching thumbs and wrists.

The murder accomplished, he returned to the control room, where he removed a number of pages from the ship's log, and replaced them with an equal number of pages he had previously prepared. The log now looked perfectly in order—yet it clearly and plainly stated that Old Joel had died of natural causes while the ship was still sixty million miles from Earth. Even the sleeping-tablet Black Thom had given the aged man was mentioned!

Carrying the pages he had taken from the log, Black Thom went back to the cabin and took Old Joel's will from the locker. Placing both sets of papers in a metal container, he burned them, then sealed the container. Finally he dragged Old Joel's body off the bunk, bundled it inside a spacesuit, and, after pausing to put on a spacesuit himself, carried it through the airlock and secured it

outside the ship. The cylinder of burned papers he hurled out into space. Months later, he knew, they would fall into the Sun.

Returning to the cabin, he meticulously remade Old Joel's bunk, then paused to consider if he had forgotten anything. No, everything was in order; the job was done. He was safe.

Content, and whistling softly to himself, he went back into the control room and sat down to consider his good fortune. He was rich at last; there was no doubt about that. Nothing to share with Old Joel, now! He squinted through the bow port at Earth and Moon, ahead; planet and satellite seemed to grin broadly, benignantly upon his approaching ship. Everything on all the inhabited planets a man could want would be his, now; rich clothes, exotic foods and liquors and drugs, lovely women.

Noreen Rutledge! By Arcturus, but there might be a girl for him, ripe for the taking! Black Thom closed his eyes and mentally recalled the spectro-color portrait of the girl Old Joel had shown him so many times, so pridefully—a tall, gangling, big-eyed kid when that portrait was placed on metal, but she would be different now—let's see; she'll be nineteen, a tasty morsel.

"I'll swear! And she'll be grateful to me. After all, I picked her father up in a hell-hole on Mars at a time when he didn't have even a grain of metal to his name and was sick besides. I took him to my ship and fed him and clothed him and cared for him until he died, and now I am bringing him back to Earth; all that should make her grateful to me. Of course"—and Black Thom chuckled lewdly—"the real truth she'll never know!"

THE RETURN

IT TOOK him only a moment more to decide to land at the Portland spaceport. Old Joel Rutledge had told him innumerable times that the Rutledge free-claim was only about fifty miles back in the mountains from Portland City—and all ports on a planet are the same to a spaceship coming in from outer space. Why, he could land at Portland City, turn his ship, his log, and Old Joel's body over to the space-police, get a credit draft against his metal immediately after the government metallurgist had certified that it was platinum, charter a rocket-gyro, buy a bottle of vuol and a few flashy trinkets, and be out to the girl's place the same day. Ah, but life was good!

When the ship had approached to within ten thousand miles of Earth and the home planet, a great, black, light-fringed ball, had grown until it filled half the sky, Black Thom brought Old Joel's body, stiff now as metal from its exposure to the cold of interplanetary space, back inside the airlock. He didn't trouble to remove the spacesuit. That would be done by the Portland City space-police.

Fifteen minutes later, the ship whistled into Earth's tenuous upper atmosphere. Black Thom sighed with relief and wiped beads of perspiration from his forehead; there had been one or two very ticklish moments during deceleration. But the remainder of the job would be simple; just a matter of blasting away occasionally with the bow rockets and watching the oceans reel away beneath until he came over the broad expanse of the Pacific.

By sheer murderer's luck—he himself would have been the first to ad-

mit that he could never have navigated so well—Black Thom's ship came across the southern tip of Africa, diagonally northward across the East Indies and into the dusk that was just deepening over the Pacific. There was no need to steer; the ship was headed straight as a die for the Oregon coast. Black Thom opened up the bow rockets and let her toboggan down into the atmosphere. The ship was dropping fast, but Black Thom didn't mind; he liked those spectacular, brute-force landings—and there was plenty of reserve fuel in the tanks. He began, from sheer exhilaration, to shout and yell as the bow rockets' drumming rose to a roar and the wail of the rushing atmosphere changed to a banshee scream. The purplish-green coastline of the Americas rose out of the watery curve ahead.

There was this about Black Thom: his mind and body always worked together almost as fast as chain lightning. When he saw the deep bay at the mouth of the Columbia River, he let go with the port rockets and veered the ship in a split second; she screamed down upon the coast like a plunging eagle.

The ship came hurtling down upon Portland faster than a bullet fired from a gun. Three hundred miles from the city she was still forty-five miles up; Black Thom opened the bow rockets another notch and let her fall. Earth came plunging upward with express-train speed. Two miles up and twenty miles to the south and west of Portland City spaceport Black Thom threw in the keel rocket switch. The spaceport was only seconds away.

"GREGG, I've been wondering tonight; will we ever hear from Father again? Will he ever come back—to Earth?"

In the star-softened, velvety darkness, Gregg Morrow turned to peer quizzically and fondly at the slim young girl who was sitting, chin cupped meditatively in hands, so close beside him. He smiled somberly and, placing his right arm about her shoulders, drew her closer still.

"It's been a long time since you last saw him, hasn't it, Noreen?"

The girl sighed. "Seven years. And he is an old man, Gregg. Were it not that I have never received any official notification, I would begin to believe him dead. But there has been no word—no word of any kind. The last letter I had from him was dated over two years ago, and was postmarked Mmlloth, Mars. In that letter he hinted that he hoped to return to Earth soon—that he had found platinum on one of the asteroids—but that he was without a ship. He wrote that he was trying to get someone with a spacecraft to go in with him on shares. But—there has been no word from him since—"

"Poor old fellow," young Gregg Morrow mused. "I hope—for his sake—that he has succeeded."

"And I," Noreen Rutledge whispered. "It would make him happy, and—oh, Gregg!—if there were metal enough he might be able to outfit a ship for us so we could prospect the asteroids ourselves! You've been so good to me, Gregg—helping me out here ever since Aunt died, a year ago! But there's no real metal on our free-claims, Gregg; we can't even get enough ahead to leave this place—or be—married—"

Gregg Morrow's arm tightened about his sweetheart's shoulders. "I've passed my Interplanetary sub-pilot's examinations; maybe I'll be called soon—"

His false optimism did not deceive

Noreen. She knew how many months—sometimes years—it took to get on Interplanetary's payroll—how long the great trans-space company's waiting-list of accredited applicants was. . . .

In that moment of black despondency, they simultaneously heard the faint, distant drumming of a rocket motor in the black sky. The sound rapidly grew to a roar, culminated in silence as a small rocket-helicopter settled to the rocky soil not a hundred feet from Noreen's small hut. Two men in official gray climbed lightly from the ship and walked toward Noreen and Gregg.

"Miss Noreen Rutledge?"

Both Noreen and Gregg had risen to their feet, were standing close together before the hut's steps.

"I am Miss Rutledge." Noreen caught her breath sharply. "You're—you're space police, aren't you? Is it about—Father?"

"Yes," the older of the two space officers replied gravely. "It's about your Father—"

"Perhaps you'd better—come inside," Noreen whispered.

Silently the girl and the three men filed into the small, cheerless hut, and sat down.

"You haven't television here, so we flew out to notify you—"

"Father's—dead?" Noreen choked. The men slowly nodded.

"Yes, your Father is dead. He died enroute to Earth—aboard a ship owned and registered by Thomas Arnold—a space-pro prospector and trader. The circumstances of his death are clearly set down in the ship's log. He died peacefully, in his sleep—"

Noreen was crying bitterly. The space officer, feeling acutely uncomfortable, hurriedly continued:

"But there is other, happier news

for you. Aboard Thomas Arnold's ship is a rich cargo of platinum from an asteroid your father discovered and charted. You are a wealthy girl, Miss Rutledge! Your father, though he died before he could again see you, has brought you a legacy from the skies!"

Noreen did not speak, only sat there stilly, with warm, bitter tears coursing down her cheeks. Her grief was too new, too overwhelming for her to take any comfort, now, in her suddenly acquired fortune—

"Your title to the asteroid is clear, Miss Rutledge. Your father left a will, written with a sliver of metal-loy on a meteorite patch, concealed in the mattress of his bunk. Apparently he distrusted Arnold—and it is a good thing that he did leave this will, for only by perusing it did we learn so quickly of the claim to the asteroid he filed two years ago in Mmloth, Mars—and of your indisputable title to the asteroid—"

"But—but the man Arnold?" Noreen asked wonderingly.

"Arnold is also dead. In landing at Portland spaceport tonight his ship crashed. Funny thing about that crash, too—"

"When we examined the control panels in the nose of Arnold's smashed ship, we found an ordinary rubberoid glove wedged between the keel rocket distributor points. The most logical explanation is that Arnold, at some time during this last voyage, had been adjusting the timing, and, removing the glove to make some particularly delicate adjustment, forgot all about it. For if Arnold had remembered it was there, he could have yanked it out the instant he realized that the keel rockets were not firing—but, unfortunately, he didn't remember—!"

FLAME OF LIFE

by FRANK BELKNAP LONG, JR.

For an hour, the mob acclaims Thomas Marshall for reaching the greatest height in the stratosphere ever attained by man—but he soon finds himself one accursed and shunned as his body burns with a weird, cold light!

*It was snarling,
hissing at him!*



THE world's opinion of him bitterly amused him. A tragic irony burned in his gaze and twisted his features into a strange, somber mask of derision.

He had always been a shy and solitary dreamer. Visions that soared to the high mountain peaks could not compensate for the tragic loneliness that gnawed at his spirit. Even now,

descending from the great silver helicopter, with the applause of thousands assailing his ears, he felt estranged from humanity—alone and apart.

His scholarship, his genius—the long years of research, the brilliant essays he had contributed to scientific journals—all had brought him nothing but a wretched pittance and the scorn of all practical people everywhere.

Yet now the world was acclaiming him. He had captured the imagination of the world. He had become a popular hero, an idol of the multitude. Strange and incredible irony! Wealth had lifted him as though on a magic carpet into the golden light that played about the heads of idols of sport and the cinema.

He was not ungrateful as he descended from the helicopter, perhaps the wealthiest young man in the eastern United States—not ungrateful to his uncle Jonathan, who had conveniently died and left him a fortune.

With funds from his vast inheritance, he had purchased the helicopter, equipped it with instruments of science and ascended twenty-three miles into the sky. He had escaped from the world in an ecstasy of flight.

He climbed out of the helicopter in his cumbersome stratosphere suit and descended awkwardly to the ground. All about him were representatives of the press. Flashbulbs exploded on all sides of him. Crowding, shouting, wildly gesticulating men and women strove to seize him and lift him into the air.

Fortunately, the police did not stand idly by. They were amazingly aggressive and efficient. They closed in and strong-armed a path for him through the milling throngs.

His one thought was to escape. He

wanted to conceal himself in the vast desert of the city—somewhere, anywhere, where people would not shout and scream at him. He wanted to become a spiritual Robinson Crusoe again.

He had his wish. He was a somebody now, and the authorities were reluctant to oppose him. He was permitted to strip off his stratosphere suit in the quiet seclusion of the airport's vast new administration building, then—a swift, torrential shower which sent spirals of steam swirling up about his tall, lean-fleshed body.

He stood in the buff while the torrent descended, seeing again the sun glowing in the black heavens—a dull red disk with a visible corona, and all about it white stars glowing.

Twenty-three miles above the surface of Earth he had felt god-like and proud, but now he was deflated again—an embittered and apprehensive young man taking a shower while all about him waited the battalions of the world, battalions that threatened to take his seclusion by storm, to elevate him into an appalling glare of publicity where he would be helpless and alone.

He would be more terribly alone than ever in that glare! If only he had someone to turn to—someone who could sympathize and understand. Some girl who—

He shook himself in the torrential downpour. He pushed a palm across his forehead, brushing his hair back. Nature had endowed him with handsome features and the body of a Greek god—a Greek god unaging in the morning of the world.

IT WAS strange that romance should have passed him by—strange, but not inexplicable. His temperament alienated women—his excessive shyness and almost savage

compensatory bitterness, his too scholarly talk, his inability to relax and be human.

He stepped from the shower and toweled himself dry. He dressed quickly, donning summer slacks, a cream-colored shirt, and a soft felt hat. He pulled the hat down over his eyes, loosened the knot of his tie and lit a cigarette. He paced impatiently about the locker room, cursing softly under his breath.

A minute ticked away into a steam-vaporish eternity. Then the door opened and an airport official peered into the room.

"Your car is waiting, Mr. Marshall," he said. "It's a limousine with drawn blinds. A state trooper will accompany you."

Thomas Marshall groaned. "The blinds are okay," he said. "But I don't want a police escort."

He had his way. Five minutes later, he left the airport in a long, black car that purred, but with no motorcycles trailing him. Being a somebody had its advantages. His slightest whim was satisfied. The car picked up speed as it left the airport. It was soon an ebon cylinder flashing through the night.

A wide, macadamized state highway stretched between the airport and the city. It bisected a long stretch of level marshland, ascended in a gradient over meadows that shone with a blue luster in the light of a spectral moon, tunneled under viaducts that quivered with the passing of ponderous trucks, and entered the city through a region of docks and abysmal slums.

The change occurred gradually. It began when he left the airport, making him shift about restlessly in the depths of the car. He was shivering violently when the damp marsh air assailed his nostrils. When he passed

between the blue-lit meadows, he stared excitedly out of the window. When the dismal dwellings of the waterfront region loomed up on all sides of him, he seized the communication tube and shouted to the driver: "Stop here. Stop at once."

The driver swerved to the curb and stepped on the brakes. There was a squealing of tires as the car came to an abrupt halt beneath the red-brick facade of an enormous, deserted warehouse.

With incredible agility, Marshall leapt from the limousine. He stood for a moment teetering on the curb, his eyes shining, his breath coming fast. The edifice that towered up behind him contrasted strangely with the streamlined magnificence of the big, foreign-make limousine.

Broken and blankly staring windows gave the warehouse an air of desolation and squalor which was accentuated by the weather-eroded bricks of its precipitous facade. Utterly cliff-like it seemed, a cyclopean stone barrier blotting out the stars.

Beneath it swarmed the furtive, ugly night-life of the slums. The driver leaned out of the car and stared at Marshall on the curb. His eyes widened; his mouth fell open. Utter terror shone for an instant in his gaze.

Marshall said: "I'll walk the rest of the way, Collier. You can drive the car back to the airport, if you wish."

The driver cried: "Good God, sir, the light—"

"The light? What light? Are you crazy, Collier?"

The driver nodded. "I must be. You seem to be all—"

"Never mind, Collier. Just leave me."

The driver said: "You bet I will." The car swerved out into the center

of the street and shot away into the night.

Marshall threw his arms up over his head. He waltzed about on his toes. He shouted; he laughed. A savage exaltation had him in thrall.

A reeling drunk emerged from a dark alley near at hand. He swayed toward Marshall, cursing. Then suddenly he stopped, stared. His eyes got too big for his face.

Thomas Marshall began to run. He ran swiftly along the narrow pavement, keeping close to the warehouse. He ran exultantly through the sordid slum. He encircled a lamp-post and brushed swiftly past an old woman who stared. He tripped over an alley cat and went sprawling. The cat screeched, erected its tail and backed away, saliva drooling from its bared teeth.

Laughing, Marshall picked himself up. He brushed himself off and started talking to himself. "It's just nerves, I guess. The long strain, ten hours of strain. But it's incredible how light-headed I feel. I could hug and kiss that old woman and she's as ugly as sin."

The old woman was backed against the warehouse, her scrawny hands clutching at her throat. She was staring at him and shaking. All the blood had drained from her face. A shabby shawl dangled from her bony, emaciated shoulders. Her skirt was torn and mud-bedraggled. She was so old she seemed ageless—ageless and incredibly ugly—a fragile, desiccated shell.

Marshall murmured: "It's incredible. She didn't seem as old as that a moment ago. She didn't seem—"

Suddenly he felt the muscles tightening along his jaw.

The old woman was shrinking before his eyes. The flesh of her face was shriveling, darkening. Her

clutching, bony hands became destitute of flesh. Her eyes burned like tapers of flame in the depths of her skull-like face.

And then, suddenly, her face was a skull—a fleshless skull surmounting a skeleton body against the blood-hued bricks of the warehouse.

THE AURA

A COLD chill itched across Marshall's scalp. He wiped a hand across his brow and staggered back into the gutter. The skeleton image did not pursue him. It began to dwindle and dissolve. It became a nebulous white blur in the wan light of the street lamps, a vaguely articulated shadow-shape that hovered for an instant upright in the gloom.

The next instant, it was gone. Between Marshall and the warehouse stretched merely the narrow pavement and the small, elusive shadows of the night.

He stood for a moment giddily swaying in the gutter, feeling a constriction about his throat, his tongue parching as he strove desperately to summon reason to his aid.

It was an illusion, of course, an illusion of sense. His tortured nerves had distorted the impressions. From vague shadows, he had conjured up a fantastic shape that resembled a shriveled old woman. Seemingly, it had the same reality as the bricks of the warehouse and the cat which had tripped him. But a strong illusion—

Perhaps it was more than an illusion!—an actual hallucination, perhaps. He had read somewhere that hallucinations could occur in all the senses simultaneously. Such images were more real than reality. They had a terrible clarity; they burned themselves into the senses in filaments of flame.

What was he muttering to himself? He was behaving like an idiot! He must shake off these mad tremblings of sense. Nerves; nerves! Rest, complete and utter repose, would heal and restore him.

He drew himself up. He stepped back onto the pavement, squared his shoulders. He was beginning to feel light-headed again. His terror was dwindling. He felt a giddiness sweeping over him, a reckless defiance which banished fear.

He began to walk. Presently, he was running again. He was nearly at the end of the block when a flash of sudden light leapt out at him, half-blinding him. He whirled about in sudden dismay. Confronting him was a shimmering oblong of glass that blazed with little, weaving coruscations of light.

The window was unbroken. It was low down, on a level with his chest and not more than eight feet from the northern extremity of the warehouse. It was one of the few unbroken windows in the great, cliff-like building.

For an instant, he stood rigid and appalled, staring—staring! Mirrored in the tall window was the image of a man, the image of himself. Spirals of white and saffron flame streamed from his head and shoulders, aureoling him in a blinding incandescence!

He was literally blanketed in flames that danced and swirled continuously about the upper portion of his body! He could not see his limbs in the glass. Tremulously, he raised his hands and looked at them. They were faintly luminous, but not ablaze.

Utter consternation engulfed him. In blind terror, he turned from the window and tottered along the street. Twice he stumbled and nearly fell.

He was afire!—yet he felt no pain,

no searing torment as he reeled drunkenly through the night.

How he reached the wharf, he never knew. There were intervals of terror and confusion when he was obscurely aware of his surroundings alternated with a blackness that blotted out the world. He seemed at times to be running, at times to be staggering in circles through the shadow-thronged murk. He had a vague recollection of cries of fright, of scurrying human shapes.

His faculties were confused for a long while. It was not until he found himself on the wharf that his mind became lucid again and reality assumed sharp and agonizing contours.

He found himself standing on the wharf gazing down at a gleaming, black expanse that mirrored all the stars of heaven. He could hear the murmur of the tides as they swirled and eddied about rotting pier-heads and sucked at barnacle-encrusted piles. An odor of brine assailed his nostrils. Far out over the water, a tug-boat shrilled.

Slowly, he raised his hands and stared at them. They were still faintly luminous, nebulously aglow. He leaned out over the wharf and gazed down into the dark water. In the depths of the water, he saw human shoulders that blazed, a human head aureoled in flame! Despair enveloped him like a shroud.

The girl was standing a few feet away on the opposite side of the wharf. Her head was lowered in somber contemplation of the dark water. Her back was turned to him; she seemed unaware of his presence.

Her face was deathly pale in the moonlight. It was a very lovely face. The girl was of medium height, with fair, exquisite features. The moonlight haloed her red-gold hair, dap-

pled her white throat, descended in silver curlicues over her slender young body.

She was staring intently at the black water, her body swaying a little. Suddenly she moved to the edge of the wharf, cried out in despair and raised her arms. The next instant she was gone.

Marshall stared thunderstruck. The water below whirled dizzily to his gaze. The star reflections were shattered as though some cosmic hammer had shattered the mirror of the sea.

Sweat started out over Marshall's face. His horror forgotten, he bent swiftly. With feverish fingers, he unlaced and removed his shoes, ripped off his coat. As he dived from the wharf, the girl's thrashing body seemed to spin through an ebon vortex immediately beneath him.

Straight into the vortex he plunged, his body bent like a bow. He went down into cold blackness. His body sliced through the water in a perfect arc and emerged twenty feet from the wharf. Frantically, he trod water, turning swiftly about and searching the gleaming expanse for the girl's struggling form.

Presently he saw her. She was bobbing about under the wharf, her face obscurely visible in a swirl of foam. Swiftly, he swam toward her. Their bodies collided in a churning maelstrom. He turned on his back, grasped her about the waist, and drew her relentlessly to his side.

SHE struggled a little as he swam backwards with powerful leg strokes. In a moment, he had reached the sloping stone underpinnings of the wharf. He pulled himself to safety with his free arm, dragging the girl up beside him.

He stared at her apprehensively as she sagged on a horizontal ledge

of stone, her back resting against a huge, circular pier-head. Her hair was a sodden mass, her face utterly bloodless. She was choking and gasping for breath.

Presently, her breathing shortened into sighs. She shifted about on the slippery stone ledge, raised her eyes and stared at him. Her white face seemed to go a shade whiter. She raised her hands to her throat in terror.

Marshall said: "Do not be afraid. The radiance is just—just fluorescence. I am a chemical worker in a laboratory. Radiant particles lodged in my skin. It will wear off in a little while."

He lied feverishly, hoping, praying that she would believe him. He needed someone to cling to in his despair—someone warm and human and alive.

The terror went out of her eyes. She slumped on the ledge, her shoulders drooping, her lips twisting.

"Forgive me," she said. "The radiance frightened me. For a moment I thought—"

Marshall laughed hoarsely. "You thought me Lucifer in shining raiment, perhaps?"

A wan smile crossed the girl's face. "Why not an angel of light? You risked your life to save me. Only I—I wanted to die."

He was studying the girl closely now. Her clothes were pathetically shabby. She was wearing cotton socks and shoes with plugged soles.

Compassion shone in his gaze. "Poverty?" he asked.

The girl nodded. "It nearly always is, isn't it?"

"Yes," he said. "Nearly always." He thought of the long years of poverty and frustration which had corroded his own youth and filled him with bitterness and despair.

"You poor kid," he said. "You look half starved. How long since you've had a decent meal?"

The girl said: "Three days."

"And how long since you've had a job?"

She smiled again. "Four months. I guess I'm not very brave."

"Nonsense," he said. "I can tell by your eyes that you're brave—and much too young to die."

She said again: "I wanted to die."

"I know, but you'll feel better when you've had something to eat."

She was looking at him queerly now. Suddenly she said: "You're Thomas Marshall, aren't you?"

Momentarily, he had forgotten that he was Thomas Marshall. The girl's tragic loveliness had absorbed him to the exclusion of all else.

Her recognition dismayed him. He said, falteringly. "Yes, I'm Marshall—but I know what it means to be wretched and lonely and—lost."

The girl stared at him incredulously. "Why should you be lonely? You have everything. Wealth, fame—"

He smiled bitterly. "I'll tell you about that when you're warm again. We'll find a restaurant and talk. You're shivering."

They found an all-night cafeteria located on a dingy, winding waterfront street. It was a welcome haven after their strenuous ascent in the cold darkness to the wharf. Compared to the wind that pursued them as they fled to cover, it seemed very warm and friendly.

The proprietor was a little gnome-like man with an atrophied sense of curiosity. He raised his eyes and nodded when they entered, passing them a menu over a long counter. He scarcely seemed to notice their drenched and dripping clothes.

The girl sat on a revolving stool

facing her companion, her face still deathly pale, her eyes shining.

"The fluorescence doesn't show in the light," she said.

His hand went out and gripped her wrist. "I'll get you a job," he said. "Tomorrow. A real job. You won't—ever go out on that wharf again. Promise me you won't."

"I promise," she said.

"You might tell me your name."

"Barbara Ellison," she said. "I am twenty-three. I spent four years in a business college before I came east. I was born in the middle West, but I came east to look for a job in an office. I didn't get one."

"You'll have one tomorrow," he said. "Now let's eat."

Standing on the counter before them were two cups of coffee and a platter of doughnuts. The girl took one of the doughnuts and broke it apart with fingers that trembled a little. She said: "I'm grateful, believe me."

"Nonsense," he said, feeling a little of the horror stealing over him again, feeling that she must never leave him. "I'm grateful to you. You'll never know how grateful."

"But why? What did I do? You risked your life—your life that belongs to so many people, and all for a girl with no courage at all."

He said: "It takes courage to jump. The world says it's cowardly, but it isn't, really. The Greeks had a kindlier word for it. They honored Socrates and his cup of hemlock."

She smiled suddenly. Her face was less harassed now, less pale. "But you just said I mustn't, ever again."

"Not at your age," he said. "You have too much to live for."

HER nearness was a healing balm, her sweetness a protective cloak. Her face was very close now

and her breath fanned his cheek.

In confusion, he picked up a doughnut and raised a steaming cup of coffee to his lips. "I'll take mine black," he said, and smiled at her when she pushed a pitcher of cream toward him.

Then, suddenly, the smile vanished from his lips. The girl beside him was changing before his eyes! She was changing, receding into a nebulous haze. She seemed to be shrinking, too—growing smaller, her limbs shortening, her face becoming plump and rosy!

Horror blazed over him again. He turned as white as a sheet and began to tremble. The girl seemed to be still sipping her coffee, but her body was enveloped in a nebulous mist that swirled up about her in rippling waves. Her clothes were concealed by the white opacity. Obscurely through the mist he saw short, plump legs that dangled and above them the rosy, innocent face of a little child!

She was a child of four, a cherubic infant sipping a cup of coffee almost as large as its face!

Then, slowly, the mist evaporated and the girl was beside him again. She was staring at him with troubled eyes. She said: "Why did you start so? You frightened me."

Sweat beaded Marshall's forehead. He passed a hand across his damp brow, stared at the huge silver coffee percolator which stood at the end of the counter and the proprietor dozing in shadows a few feet away. The proprietor was leaning over an oyster bar at the rear of the restaurant, his eyes three-fourths shut, his elbows supporting him as he drowsed.

He had not changed at all—neither had the coffee percolator, the long counter, the dingy plate glass windows and all the rest of the shabby

little restaurant. Only the girl had changed—for a brief, appalling instant.

White-lipped and trembling, Marshall picked up the checks.

"Shall we go now, Barb—Barbara?" he said.

The girl glanced swiftly up at him. A strange tenderness came into her face. His hesitant use of her Christian name touched her, thrilled her. He seemed to be reaching out helplessly to her in some extremity which she couldn't fathom.

She said, simply: "Yes, if you wish."

He was trembling uncontrollably when they left the restaurant. As soon as they emerged into the street, she linked her arm in his and stared up into his white, tormented face, her eyes luminous with concern.

"Are you ill, Thomas?" she asked.

He shook his head. He had an impulse to take her in his arms, to murmur: "I can fight it now, dear. I am no longer alone now."

Instead, he walked with her in silence through the chill grayness that precedes dawn. Their linked shadows danced grotesquely on dim-lit pavements and flickered over deserted, tenement-house doorways.

Suddenly he said: "Where do you live, Barbara?"

She mentioned a mean street on the north side of the city. Marshall was familiar with the north side. Relief surged up in him as he visualized long rows of shabby-genteel rooming houses. The neighborhood was desolate and down at heel—a dismal region of decaying brownstones dating back to the Mauvre decade. But it was not a slum.

It was about a fifteen minutes' walk to the girl's home. Marshall seized her hand and held it tightly while they threaded their way out

of the waterfront maze into a region where the squalor was less oppressive.

He did not speak again until they arrived at the high stoop of the rooming house. The flames which poured from him enveloped the girl without harming her, swirling up about her slender body in a golden blaze. She was clinging to him and shivering, her face illumined by the lambent glare.

His fingers tightened on her hand. He said: "I'll phone you in the morning, Barbara. Promise me you'll go straight to bed."

She said: "I promise, Thomas." But she did not move away from him. Instead, she moved closer to him.

She moved tremulously closer until she was in his arms. He cried out in sudden wonder and strained her to him, all else forgotten. The horror of the enveloping glow, the strange confusion which had descended upon his faculties—all was forgotten, swallowed up in a blinding ecstasy such as he had never known.

She was in his arms and he was kissing her hair and lips and eyes. The bleak rooming house towered up behind them—unseen. He was only aware of her warm and clinging arms and the wild beatings of his heart.

When he released her, her eyes were glowing. She turned and ran swiftly up the stoop into a dim-lit vestibule. Stunned, tremulous, he watched her fumbling in her bag for a key. Suddenly she turned and blew him a kiss.

"Tomorrow," she called, and was gone.

A NEW LIFE

HE STOOD for an instant staring up at the shabby facade above him, scarcely seeing it, thinking

only of the girl who had vanished.

Suddenly he felt a chill creeping over him. The dismal brownstone was becoming nebulous, was receding into mist.

It was unmistakably dwindling, receding! All about it whirled a tenuous haze. Gradually, a new mass seemed to collect behind it—a smaller, more graceful mass that emerged obscurely from whiteness.

Marshall was held transfixed. The impossible was happening before his eyes! A huge, substantial house was dissolving and another taking its place. As he watched, the new dwelling assumed sharp and distinctive contours.

Before him on the deserted street stood a three-story house of Georgian brick with antique chimney pots and glowing, square-paned windows. Silhouetted in its fan-lighted doorway was the figure of a young man with pale, aristocratic features.

The young man was startlingly attired in sky-blue small-clothes and snow-white periwig. Silver buckles gleamed on his satin pumps and he wore silken breeches. As Marshall stared, there appeared beside him in the doorway a slender, white-haired girl dressed in the costume of the eighteenth century.

Marshall cried out in stunned wonder! The mist was returning again, was obscuring the outlines of the second dwelling. Gradually it receded until it was a vague, amorphous blur.

In the depths of the blur, an enormous shape was stirring. As the second dwelling dwindled, a Gargantuan animal form loomed obscurely out of the mist. Gigantically, it towered in the still night, while on both sides of it the air seemed to quiver and recede with a curious glimmering over silent houses of decaying brownstone.

In the mist-filled void between the

houses loomed the terrifying apparition of an enormous cat. It was like no cat Marshall had ever seen before. It was fifteen feet in height and it sat immobile on its haunches menacingly regarding him!

It was snarling, hissing at him, its eyes glowing balefully in the darkness—but it was not so much the appalling size of the animal or its menacing ferocity that filled Marshall with blind, unreasoning terror.

What sent him reeling back across the gutter, his mind a jumbled ferment of incredulity and horror, was the cat's long and curving tusks! Curving out from the creature's feral jaws were two enormous slivers of ivory that glowed dully in the darkness.

Mercifully, the mist returned, obscuring the monstrous feline—but Marshall did not wait for the shape to vanish. He turned and reeled blindly along the street.

He was still reeling when he woke David Rand at three in the morning. He appeared at Rand's door disheveled, wild-eyed, his face the color of tallow.

David Rand was Marshall's only friend. He was not a very close friend. There had been no close friends in Marshall's life—but he was a loyal friend and a kindly one.

Calm and scientific was David Rand, eyes palely discerning behind steel-rimmed spectacles, hair close-cropped, long, sallow face impeccable in its poise and restraint.

He was Marshall's counselor in youth, the confidant of his years of struggle—ten years older than Marshall, but still on the pleasant side of forty—biochemist, physicist, astronomer—dabbler in a dozen sciences, but a competent and gifted dabbler.

He met Marshall in pajamas, his

face showing surprise and concern, guided him into a spacious, book-lined study and mixed him a whiskey and soda.

Five minutes later, Marshall was talking. He sat in an old-fashioned easy chair, leaning forward a little, his eyes glowing feverishly. He stopped occasionally to puff on a cigarette. Occasionally, he sipped at the glacs in his hand.

Rand listened in silence to Marshall's incredible recital, nodding his head thoughtfully from time to time. Finally, Marshall ceased to talk. He sank back exhausted and stared at his listener in mute despair.

Rand sat regarding him for an instant in silence, his fingers plucking at the gray frogs on his black silk pajamas. When he spoke, his pale eyes were glowing.

"There is much, of course, that we still do not understand about the strange new reality which we are accustomed to refer to as space-time.

"But this thought has occurred to me, Thomas. You ascended twenty-three miles. The rays that beat continuously upon Earth—the cosmic rays and the rays of infra-light—are tremendously potent in the upper stratosphere.

"Earth's dense, lower atmosphere acts as a barrier, weakening all of the rays—but high up in the stratosphere, cosmic radiation is potent enough to mutate fruit flies.

"Think of it!—sufficiently potent to alter the micro-carriers of inheritance. You were exposed to those potent rays, Thomas."

HE STROKED his chin thoughtfully. "You are of course familiar with the speculations of that gifted biochemist, Dr. Crille. Crille believes that all our body cells are endowed with microscopic suns, ra-

diogens, continually radiating micro-specks of searing light.

"He believes that life itself is a by-product of billions of tiny suns which suck energy from light — of tiny suns that glow in us, microscopic batteries of life."

He paused an instant, then resumed: "Now consider the mysterious new space-time of the physicists — of Einstein, Eddington, De Sitter and the rest. Our awareness of space-time is limited because human perception is three-dimensional. We do not perceive time as an aspect of space. But we know that time is an aspect of space! If human perception were four-dimensional, we would not be aware of time as a flowing of events.

"We would not be aware of time at all. The past, the present, and perhaps the future would exist as static realities. We could examine one segment of space-time and see the past, another segment and see the present. I am not so sure about the future.

"But space-time would exist as a definite entity—timeless, static. All the past would exist in that entity—all the past, the present, and perhaps all the future.

"To express it differently, we would perceive space as it really is—and that includes time. Space-time is simply true or four-dimensional space. Time is simply an aspect of true space.

"We cannot perceive true space because our faculties are biologically limited. But suppose we intensified our life forces. Suppose we transcended our protoplasmic limitations!

"Assume that life is a by-product of the tiny suns in us, the radiogens. Suppose those radiogens sucked new energy from the cosmic rays, expanded, became Novas in our body cells.

You understand—new suns, brighter suns.

Marshall was leaning forward in his chair now, his face strangely taut.

"You mean," he said, "that up in the stratosphere—"

Rand nodded. "The cosmic rays charged your radiogens, which are microscopic batteries of life, with undreamed-of new energies! They flared more brightly in you, Thomas. That would explain the glow, the fierce exaltation that swept over you, the desire to run and shout.

"Life burned more fiercely in you, Thomas. Your faculties expanded. You transcended your biological limitations. You perceived the fourth-dimension, or true space—only momentarily, of course—in flickers, but you perceived the past, which still exists in true space. You had momentary, evanescent glimpses of the past.

"You saw the girl you spoke of as a little child. And you—wait a minute, Thomas. You did see the future! The future must exist. You saw the old woman shrivel and become a fleshless skeleton!"

Rand sprang up and strode about the room. "You saw the future! Do you realize what that means, Thomas, the implications?"

Marshall did not reply. When Rand saw how pale Marshall had become he sat down abruptly.

"It was chiefly the past you saw," he said, "sporadically, in flashes. You saw an eighteenth century house. Then you went back across wide wastes of years. You saw—a saber-tooth tiger, a *Machaerodus*!—the largest, most sinister cat that ever walked the earth. You went back to the dim Eocene, to the age of the asphalt pits!"

Marshall felt very weak, tired, soul-sick and appalled.

He said: "But when Barbara became a little child, the restaurant did not recede or change. And when the house vanished, the street and the adjoining houses remained unchanged. And when Barbara was really a child, she was somewhere else in the world—not sitting beside me on a stool. Yet I saw her sitting there."

Rand said: "You're assuming that relationships in space-time or true space are similar to relationships in our three dimensional space—but it is an unlikely assumption. With the expansion of your faculties of perception, all relationships would change.

"We can only speculate as to just how they would change. It is probable that human beings preserve a definite continuity in true space which transcends their orientation in our space. You saw the girl sitting beside you because her past in true space was not chained down to her actual position when she was really a child in our space.

"Remember that plants, animals, and human beings are complex examples of entropic inversion. Entropy, as you know, means dissolution, disintegration. The universe as a whole is running down—but organic life is not. Organic life is building up, swimming against the swift entropic currents. It is possible that living organisms maintain a certain integrity in true space that makes them independent of our space when you perceive them as space-time units."

Suddenly Rand stood up again. His eyes were glowing. "Thomas," he said. "You have no idea how I envy you. You are frightened and distraught, but you have no need to be. Never before, in the whole history of

our race, has a man been so gloriously privileged. You are no longer a wretched Earth-bound biped akin to the apes! You have become god-like in your perceptions!"

Marshall groaned. "I do not want to be god-like, Rand. I want to be a normal human being again, not enveloped in flames, with all the world unstable about me. Rand, what am I to do?"

Rand's impassivity was completely gone now. He strode up and down the room, no longer able to control himself. Suddenly he whirled on Marshall.

"It is regrettable that the flames you spoke of are invisible in this light. I must see them. Thomas, I am going to turn out the light."

MARSHALL leapt up in protest, but before he could reach Rand's side, the other had stepped to the wall and switched off all the illumination in the room.

Utter darkness engulfed the two men. Rand could hear Marshall's agitated breathing and Marshall was aware of Rand moving about close to the wall. But utter darkness engulfed them. There was no light at all in the room!

Suddenly the light was on again. Rand was staring at Marshall with set lips. He seemed shaken, disappointed. He said: "You are no longer enveloped in flames, Thomas."

Marshall swayed a little. "You mean, you think—"

Rand nodded. "You are obviously normal again. You have had your wish. You have ceased to be god-like. Evidently, the radiogens flared with fierce new energies and then burned themselves out—or rather, dwindled to normal tiny suns again."

He was scowling disappointedly, as one who regretted to admit an unwelcome and unpleasant truth.

"It is significant that you were not immediately luminous. When you descended from the helicopter, you were not luminous. Evidently, you were flooded with rays, drenched by your ten hours high above Earth. It is probable that the radiogens absorbed the energy slowly, flared into brief novae, and then dwindled again to the smaller suns of normal protoplasm."

The color crept back into Marshall's cheeks. He straightened, seemed to increase in height. He said: "Nothing has changed in this room, nothing. The other changes occurred swiftly—at fifteen-minute intervals. For over an hour, there has been no change at all."

Rand nodded. "I am quite sure

you are normal again," he said. "You are restored. It is a pity—a great and tragic pity! For a brief hour, you were god-like. You could even see into the future and predict human events. You might have altered the destiny of our race."

Marshall said: "I am god-like now! A man in love is very close to the eternal."

"In love," said Rand. "I had forgotten. In love, Thomas?"

But Marshall did not hear him. He saw again moonlight haloing red-gold hair, dappling a white throat. He saw her face again, luminous with tenderness. He saw her standing in a dim-lit vestibule, waving at him. He heard her whisper: "Tomorrow, Thomas. Tomorrow!"

Happiness enveloped him like a flame, swirling up about him in a golden blaze.

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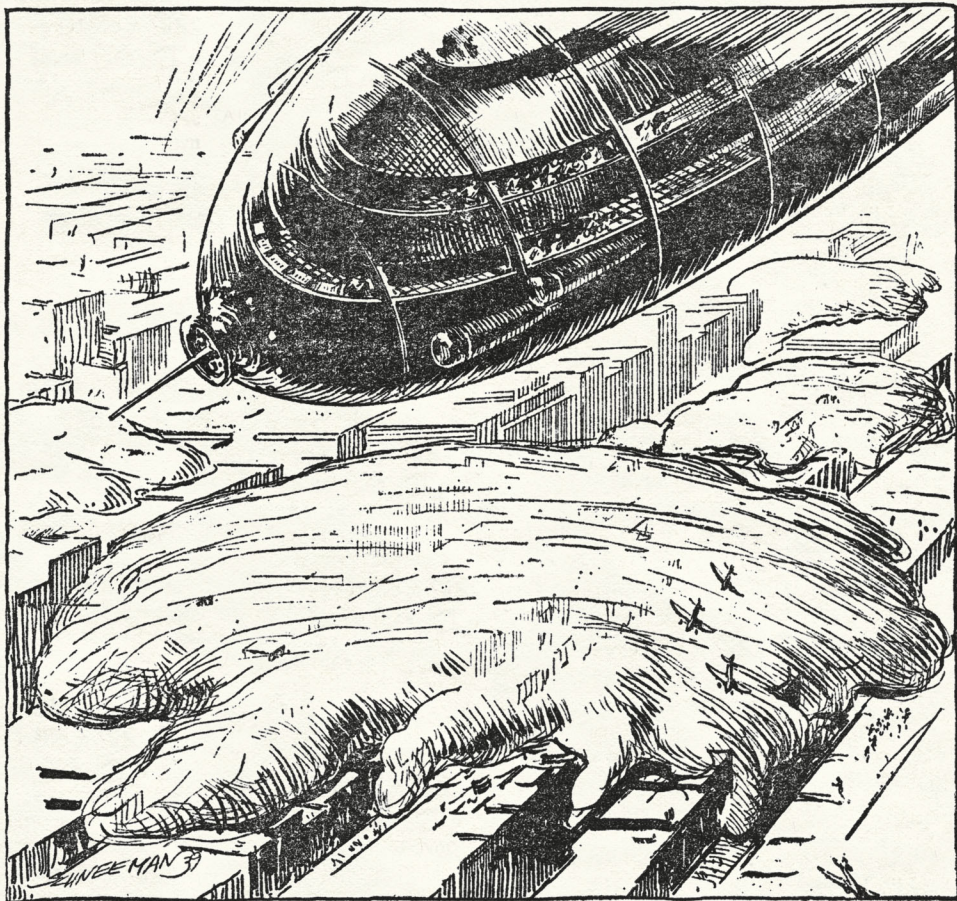
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THOUGHTS THAT KILL

by JOHN RUSSELL FEARN

Kilran, super-scientist of the dim future, finds that the destruction of life on Venus is essential to the continuance of the human race—it seems a simple accomplishment for this great master, until the hordes of Venus hurl forth a death on the wings of thought!



The great vessel jerked around in a wild half-circle.

THE enormous telescopic reflector, balanced on heavily lubricated universal bearings and motivated by softly humming engines, reared in a five hundred foot tower of rare and gleaming metal through the roof of the great observatory.

At the base of the amazing structure lay the reflecting mirror, polished

and ground with a flawless care that immediately evidenced the high intelligence of these, the last men of Earth—numbering five hundred, only survivors of a once-mighty race.

Kilran, master of the five hundred, stood in silence as he gazed into the reflector. Like his fellows, he was a small man, pinched and under-de-

veloped, seeming almost top-heavy by reason of his immense and highly-developed head poised on skinny neck and shoulders. His entire cranium was hairless and tight-skinned, overshadowing a face that was a pinched, set mask, expressionless and inflexibly cold. Centuries of science, a heritage of supreme achievement, had stamped from him all traces of natural sentiment and humanity.

He was purely a pitiless intellect, always probing, always searching for new fields wherein to pursue the still unsolved problems tabulated and cross-indexed in the recesses of his ultra-developed mind.

His scarcely blinking black eyes, large and hypnotic, gazed with smoldering steadiness into the reflector and studied the young and lovely planet it depicted—Venus!—no longer the cloud-sheathed world of olden times, but a thriving world covered on its sunward side with dazzling blue oceans and bright green foliage. Here and there a cloud drifted in the dense atmosphere, casting a spot of shadow on the landscape over which it moved . . .

The sunward side of Venus was an intolerably hot land, but none the less a possible habitation, a place whereon to continue progressive existence.

The gaze of the master-scientist shifted and took in the details of the curiously designed cities that showed here and there in the clearer portions of the forests, low built and straggling edifices of stone, without order or symmetry, product of Venus' lowly life forms—queer life, semi-plasmic, utterly unlike Earth's and obviously little higher in intelligence than Man himself had been in the earliest times . . .

At a sudden sound beside him, Kilran looked up from his scrutiny.

Ajikon, astronomer in chief, had paused beside him. Behind him, their big eyes on the mirror, were the remainder of the five hundred—leathery, big-headed monstrosities revoltingly unlike the ancestors that had once fought and vanquished and died.

"Well, Kilran?"

Ajikon did not speak. Vocal organs had long since ceased to exist. His highly sensitive brain merely hurled the thought into Kilran's brain pan.

"A fair world indeed, Ajikon," the Master impacted slowly. "The more I study it, the more it appeals to me—a world of similar dimensions to our own, habitable on the sunward side and, according to our spectroscopes, possessing air only slightly denser than that of this world when it was at its apogee. It has life, of course, but then . . ." His scarlike lips tightened bitterly.

"Life!" he went on grimly. "Low in form! Ugly! Plasmic! It can be—will be—destroyed. It is the inevitable law of the cosmos that the fittest must survive. We shall do that, with our highly trained telepathic brains, our thought responses, our vast knowledge. . . . As for those lowly forms!" He gestured with contempt to the mirror.

"Everything is prepared," Ajikon's thoughts went on smoothly. "The last details of the space-machine are finished. We only await your command before transferring into it the last heritages of this exhausted world."

"Then proceed at once," Kilran ordered briefly. "I am satisfied by now that Venus shall be our future home. Dismantle all machinery. At sundown, every man will be in the vessel at his appointed post."

Ajikon bowed his great head, turned, and quietly departed.

The ruler stood on, lost in specu-

lations — planning, devising, and scheming with all the power of his super-sensitive mind. There would be vast new accomplishments—total elimination of all Venusian life. Earth brains must and would go on! The infra-intellect of Venus could not possibly stand against them.

Kilran nodded slowly at last, removed his leathery, warped hand from the reflector rail and turned to watch the rapid disassembling of the laboratory machinery about him.

THE reddish-gold glare of the sun was flooding the gaunt spires of the mountain range when the enormous space-vessel finally swept upwards from the last habitat of Mankind. Within moments, the city had been left below in the valley, a crumbling, shining mass of metal, last legacy to the intelligence of a race seeking newer, fresher fields.

Within the space-ship there was a gentle stir of activity, efficient but unhurried. Kilran and Ajikon stood together at the major observation window, both of them gazing in silence at the blackness of the void, the eternal stars, the still-but-little dimmed sun with its leaping prominence arms—and, far away in the chaotic darkness, Venus—world of the future, to be mastered by super-human intelligence. Kilran smiled bleakly as he thought of that. Little life! Infra-intellect! If he had any emotions at all, they were those of profound contempt for the lesser and ineffectual. . . .

In various quarters of the enormous vessel, the other Earthlings were at their varied tasks, some tending the powerful atomic engines by which the ship was driven, others assiduously watching air-conditioning plants; still others were examining and testing the mammoth de-

structive machinery with which to blast all traces of Venusian life from the face of that planet. Ofttimes in the past, Earth had been subjected to the merciless fury of raiders from outer space in search of new lands; now it was the Earthlings' turn to invade, conquer and progress!

Presently, Kilran turned from his phlegmatic survey of the outer dark and moved silently across the vast control room to the observational section. From a rack, his mummy-like hand extracted a series of metal light-prints. Meditatively, he studied them. Each one was carefully marked with queer symbols, giving both chemical and mathematical meanings to the weird photographs.

His black eyes noted in silence the queer whitish-yellow substance depicted on the plates—Venusian life, queer, almost revolting, yet manifestly intelligent enough to build its own strange cities.

"Strange life indeed, Kilran," came Ajikon's mental impulses, as his powerful brain read every reaction of the ruler's thoughts. "In a fashion, it is protoplasmic, and yet intelligent."

"That I know already." Kilran's thoughts were without emotion. "I merely seek to refresh my memory—and the more I see of this lowly life, the more easy does our victory appear. Strange indeed that we have on Venus a life that has never built itself up into recognizable form, but has remained quasi-plasmic, semi-fluid, obtaining its energy by oxidation and feeding by incorporating within itself the organic matter so abundant in the Venusian oceans on the sunward side. Later, presumably, it will obtain its food by the simpler constituents of carbon dioxide, water, and inorganic salts—granting, that is, that it survives!"

He turned and replaced the prints in the rack. "Obviously a form wherein the intelligence has moved faster than bodily development," he went on. "Yet, in another sense, it certainly must be an advantage to separate or flow together as occasion demands. Such a state, I imagine, would mean a unity or separation of intelligence at will. Peculiar life indeed!"

He became silent for a while, then returned to the main observation window. Already, Venus was larger in the firmament. The ship was moving with slowly mounting velocity, timed to produce an exact replica of Earthly gravitation. Before many hours were passed, it would reach the planet, and then—

Kilran's black eyes burned a trifle brighter as he stood in silent, brooding malignance.

AS THE time passed and the distance to Venus correspondingly decreased, the instruments of the Earthlings became active. This, the first journey of any extent into space, meant also the rechecking of data upon Venus formerly obtained at a considerable distance and mainly through Earth's disturbing atmospheric veil.

Now all the profound science of their astronomy came into being—complicated spectroscopes, reflectors, highly efficient calculators, humidity detectors—a hundred and one bright and shining devices that operated with smooth accuracy.

The great laboratory control room became animated with the busily moving figures, dominated by the brooding form of Kilran himself, taking stock of everything, evolving his plan of attack.

The new data checked almost identically with that already obtained. Venus, on her sun side, was a

distinctly promising world for future progress, possessing only a slightly higher oxygen content than Earth. Gravity was identical; surface temperature was extremely high—nearly 115 degrees F. in the shade and never any night. It would mean insulated buildings able to shut out the glare at will.

The reflectors, trained across the narrowing gap, revealed a peculiar state of perturbation existing now amongst the Venusian people—if such they were. In all directions in the open spaces around their strange cities they were moving inwards towards a rapidly swelling central unit, converging and assimilating with it in the fashion of true protoplasm. From being composed of thousands of individual units that had stretched forth protoplasmic limbs at will, they were now swelling into one solid sea in the approximate center of their major city, overflowing to its boundaries.

Kilran's immense brow furrowed in vague puzzlement as he watched them in the mirror.

"It seems fairly evident that they have seen our ship approaching," commented Ajikon, standing by his side. "Maybe they have crude telescopic devices. Considering the immense size of our ship, it could possibly be seen. Evidently, by flowing together in that fashion they are seeking safety."

Kilran nodded slowly. "Yes, and by that very act they have simplified matters for us. We have nothing to do but to strike at the one unit. . . ." He turned aside and directed his thought waves to the experts congregated around the weapons of destruction. "Be ready to release on full fire when I give the order," he commanded briefly. "We have not much time to go."

THE ALIEN THOUGHTS

IT WAS during the next hour that a strange change became revealed amongst the master-scientists. At first, they scarcely noticed it, their attention was entirely trained on the rapidly increasing globe ahead of them. They hovered around their machinery and observational centers ready to rain destruction and death on the now completely massed strange life-form covering a good portion of Venus' land surface.

Then there crept into the smooth working efficiency of the space-machine a note of error. The principal control pilots, immovable at their posts, both made simultaneous mistakes in their tasks, and just as quickly recovered themselves—but the slips were noticed by the keen brain of Kilran as he mentally tabulated every beat, every rhythm, of the lesser minds around him. He turned from his survey of the enlarging planet and regarded the two men with his cold black eyes.

"What is the matter?" His thoughts had the icy venom of intolerance, biting contempt for the slightest flaw. "For an instant you both lost control of your minds. What is the meaning of such a retrogressive act?"

The men were silent, half from shame, half from bafflement.

"It must not happen again!" Kilran turned back to the window.

Hardly had he done so, however, than the effect came again—this time with more force. A wave of mental power, so low, so gross in conception that it pained, moved through the ship and passed on. The inmates gasped slightly at the sudden wrench on their sensitive brains, then fought their way back to balance.

"You felt that, Ajikon?" Kilran questioned, face slightly bewildered.

The astronomer nodded. His lean hand was tenderly stroking his immense brain case.

The slightest disturbance was sufficient to upset those extraordinary convolutions, nurtured as they had been through centuries of evolution in compact machines of pure efficiency. To meet up with a coarse mental element was equivalent to pouring crude oil in a priceless mechanism.

Kilran's tiny mouth and chin tightened into a vicious line as he stared down on the fast-approaching bulk of Venus. It was only a few thousand miles away now. The great white mass of the unified Venusians was distinctly visible to the naked eye.

"Can it be possible that such lowly forms . . ." his thoughts began, appreciable to everybody in the laboratory; then he shook his great head impatiently. "No, the thing is absurd! They are a low, unintelligent form of matter—cannot possibly do anything against minds like ours. We probably crossed a mentality warp from an unknown source. It is not uncommon in outer space—"

He broke off suddenly and began to issue swift instructions for the guidance of the vessel as the planet loomed perilously close.

The engineers obeyed, lean hands gripping their switches, great heads shining in the light of the softly flooding lamps. But before they could execute the orders to the full, a truly devastating wave of mentality engulfed them. Their brains rocked under its force; their hands, jerking up in reflex movements under the sudden pain, caused the great vessel to jerk around in a wild half-circle that flung several of the intellectuals off their feet.

Kilran spun around, just in time to see the two engineers go reeling from their chairs to the floor, hands clasped wildly to their heads. The mad beatings and surgings of their tortured brains hammered into his own; frantically, his own cells tried to form a coherency out of their impulses. They were in the grip of a searing mental power; it was slowly oppressing all traces of their normal intelligence.

"Control yourselves!" thundered his own hammering thought waves, charged with fierce command. "Control, you fools! Control!"

He moved forward quickly, Ajikon by his side, but before either of them could reach the raving, helpless pair, they were themselves stricken with the same awful, overwhelming force.

It hurled Ajikon to the floor, left him writhing in exquisite torture as the waves beat into his highly sensitive cells. Kilran still stood erect, gazed through blurred eyes at the extraordinary sight of his followers reeling and toppling in all directions, some of them even retrogressing far enough to find the old ridiculous emotion of hysteria. The vast control room began to ring with the sound of wild, insane laughter.

With a certain fierce desperation, Kilran fought for control, stood with little hands clasped at his sides, great brow wrinkled in a tremendous effort to offset the supreme tortures raging through his brain. To his mystification, they were not thoughts of menace or deliberate mental attack—that he could have understood; they were instead chaotic, jumbled impulses, incredibly low in meaning, the products of beings but dimly evolved and certainly not in possession of the art of pure thought-transference.

As he stood struggling to master his brain, he felt the ship sweeping

through a great uncontrolled circle, traveling madly around in the great void of space.

HHE LIKENED the hammering thoughts, increasing now in intensity, to the beating of a myriad of mighty bells in discord, each carrying a certain impression, and each impression was, to his advanced state, extremely revolting in the scale of knowledge. The Venusians were only intelligent slime, able to fuse or divide at will. They were puzzled by his ship, half afraid. . . . That much he could grasp amidst the beating insanity.

Then he dropped to his knees, holding his head in both tiny hands. Sheer and absolute mental defeat was biting through him in a million shafts.

"Ajikon!" he vibrated desperately. "Ajikon! Listen—if you can!"

By an enormous effort, he held his concentration on the astronomer as he stirred dully and looked up.

"What?" His thoughts were feeble, chaotic. He was like what an ancient would have been in the grip of a lethal gas.

"I believe I understand!" Kilran dropped flat as his anguished brain vibrated with growing feebleness. His thoughts were those of a being on the verge of death from mental torture. "We—we are too clever, Ajikon! We have overlooked one thing! Our brains, evolved through generations to receive and transmit thoughts also receive the thoughts of other beings—the Venusians. So far—" He broke off and mastered extinction by a supreme effort. "So far we have only communicated amongst ourselves, but here, from Venus, we receive the low, terrible thoughts of the Venusians, creatures

far below us in intellect. Their thoughts are veritable poison to our mentalities. They have converged into one unit purely for safety, but in so doing, all their thoughts are merged in one and we receive the full impact of a myriad primitive minds. . . . You—you understand?"

The astronomer nodded weakly. "Yes, and—and to a brain there is no relief!" His thoughts were anguished. "Light you can shut out with your eyes, sound you can stop with your ears—but thought is eternally there! We can never cease to think; there is no known insulation against it! Beating—hammering! Our brains are too sensitive to stand it!"

His huge head sagged and fell backwards. With a low exhalation of breath, he relaxed and became still. . . .

Kilran moved slowly, concentration blurred by the raging tumult within him. He gazed down the long laboratory at the strewn figures of those who had already died.

With a sudden return of fierce endeavor, he fought to gain the control board—anything to drive the ship out of this mad chaos. But in that desire he had met his physical master too.

Specialization, centuries of brain usage at the expense of the body, had deprived him of almost all power

of muscular effort. His little bony limbs sagged weakly under the pressure he strove to give to them. Brain, muscles, and nerves were no longer working in intelligent coordination. With the weakest of groans, he sank flat on the floor. . . .

Thoughts, memories, bitter regrets, wildly intermingled with the confusions of Venusian minds, surged through the turmoil. The future, the idea of progress, the intended ruthless destruction of these low life-forms. . . . How futile! How impossible! The end of the mighty Earth race was to be this—mental destruction at the hands of creatures thousands of generations behind in intelligence!

Irony! Cold, merciless irony! The vaguest suggestion of a bitter smile crossed Kilran's little face as he sank for the last time—

The space-machine whirled on, still following its self-made orbit around Venus. It had provided that world with a satellite.

For generations, it would continue to circle, until Venusians finally found a way to cross space and examine it. Until then—and perhaps not even then—they would never know how they had defeated a ruthless menace, how the very quality of their thoughts had driven the last mighty brains of Earth to their ultimate extinction!

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How Scientific Scalp Treatments ENCOURAGE HAIR GROWTH



1 You, who are worried because of excessive falling hair and approaching baldness, will be interested in the story on this page which is published through the courtesy of the Vitox Hair Institute, 521 Fifth Avenue, New York. You will find pictures showing how subjects are treated to encourage hair growth.



3 Once the cause is determined and belief that treatment will help, the scalp is peeled—a cutaneous layer is painlessly removed. This peeling effects a clean, healthy condition absent of unwanted, clogged conditions, so the hair can breathe and function naturally without interruption.



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2 A microscopic examination of your scalp would probably reveal that there are foreign agents attacking and clogging up hair growing areas and interfering with natural hair growth. In many cases science and chemistry has been able to correct this condition by encouraging increased circulation.



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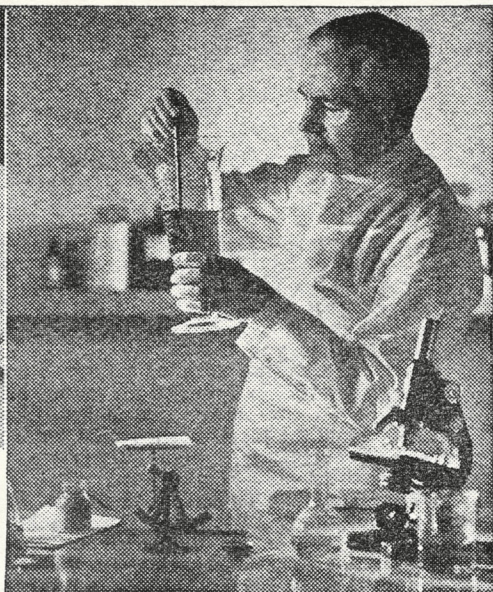
6 Our patient becomes marvelously relaxed as he feels the surge of nourishing fluid in the network of blood vessels.



7 The treatment continues with intermittent vacuum and massage to activate the nerve system and loosen up lazy circulation. Many dermatologists agree that in many cases increased circulation is most helpful because it is scientifically acknowledged that stagnation makes it improbable that proper and sufficient nourishment is being supplied to the hair for natural growth.



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VISION OF ANOTHER WORLD

(The Story Behind the Cover)

by EANDO BINDER

IF a fifty-foot monster, such as depicted by artist Paul on the cover, confronted you on an alien planet, what would be your chances of coming out of the predicament alive?

Better than you think!

Let us take the case of young Harvey Chandler, who has brought his young bride to Mars, on the theory that a honeymoon there would be ideal. They would be more "alone", certainly, than anywhere on Earth!

They step out on the little planet. It is somewhat chilly, with the sun's radiation 50% less than on Earth. The air is thin and their lungs pant to absorb enough oxygen. Gravitation is 2-5 of Earth's, so that he weighs only 75 pounds, she 50. The horizon is close, foreshortened.

The scene is alien, unearthlike, and the girl shivers in her husband's arms. "Harvey, I'm afraid!" she whispers.

"I'll protect you from any harm!" he returns, as young lovers have said since time immemorial. "I'd lay down my life for you, Darling, you know that!"

THEY wander from the ship, not expecting danger. Suddenly something looms beside their ship, a giant monster fifty feet high!

It kicks at the shiny top and hurts its foot. With a bestial snarl of rage, it uproots a great tree and brings it down like a club on the ship. It raises the trunk for another blow to do even further serious damage.

Dismayed and horrified, the two young Earth people stand rooted in fear. Harvey breaks from his paralyzed trance at last and jerks out his proton-gun, but it is jammed somehow, and won't work!

Cold sweat breaks out on him. A moment before he had blithely spoken of protecting Helena, even laying down his life for her. Now is his chance to prove it!

But he doesn't have to. He comes to this conclusion after a few seconds of lightning thought, and observation of the fearsome creature. He is going to attack the monster—and defeat it! He, Harvey Chandler, bare handed!

He runs forward boldly, yelling at the top of his voice. The towering horror, about to bring down the tree-trunk, hears the sound—to him a shrill tone—and turns to look at the fearless little fool coming forward.

The colossus forgets the ship. He will crush this insignificant little pigmy. He crunches down the tree-trunk at him. But Harvey isn't there. With reflexes ten times

as fast as the lumbering creature, Harvey has easily avoided the blow. He runs up to the monster's left leg and gives him a sharp, painful crack on the shins, with the butt of his pistol.

When the monster kicks at him, Harvey is out of the way like a dancing insect. And like an insect, he stings again and again, darting from one leg to the other. The creature's slow brain realizes he must change tactics and finally stoops to scoop up the arrogant little mannikin. His great, clumsy paws clutch nothing but air, and the gun butt raps him smartly on the knuckles. Soon both his mighty paws, that could tear the little being apart like a rag doll, are hurting painfully, and this further enrages the giant beast.

To Harvey, it is all working out as he had hoped. The blindly enraged monster bellows his wrath and goes for his tiny antagonist with stamping feet. At will, Harvey dances out of range, runs between his legs, beats continuously at his leg muscles. Trying to execute like maneuvers, the monster is completely outclassed and becomes dizzy. He stumbles, falling to the ground.

IT is the chance Harvey has been waiting for. Before the clumsy, slow-witted brute can get up, Harvey has picked up a great rock and hurled it at the monster's skull. The blow stuns him, and the great beast groans and tries to roll away.

Harvey quickly follows his advantage. He hurls a second stone, larger yet. The fallen colossus cannot arise. As Harvey well knew beforehand, any creature his size is relatively weak compared to his great bulk. And Harvey knows another rule of nature—because of the light gravity, the beast's body is comparatively light-boned.

The third stone Harvey casts, straight for the temple, crashes through as if it were an egg-shell. David and Goliath. Harvey had known he would win, moving ten times as fast, and at least that many times more quick-witted. Nature cannot deal out bulk and hugeness without sacrificing speed and brain-power.

He runs back, and watches the monstrous body thresh around in its death-agony. Finally the gargantuan corpse lies still, dead, defeated by a being one-tenth its size.

Helena wordlessly kisses her magnificent hero. "You were so brave and strong and wonderful, dearest! I'll love you forever!"

"I was scared stiff!" confesses Harvey, and faints in her arms.

Vitex HAIR Institute Home Treatment Offer

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This sensational and unusual offer is made to out-of-towners who find it inconvenient to visit our Fifth Avenue Treatment Salon. No matter where you live, you can now use the same products we have successfully used here at the Institute without risking a single cent. You must be satisfied or your money back in full. VITEX'S TRIPLE ACTION CONDITIONER will help to stop scalp itch, excessive dandruff and help promote normal hair growth. VITEX'S HAIR CONDITIONER helps promote three important hair benefits.

1. Stimulates Growth Areas: After applying Conditioner, you will note a pleasant tingling or "drawing" sensation. Evidence of how effectively your scalp is being stimulated in the areas where blood must nourish the hair roots.

2. Helps dispel dandruff, stops itching. Effective in dissolving accumulated waste matter that strangles the hair and causes irritation by clogging up the follicle "funnels." Thus the Conditioner quickly helps create correct conditions for healthful and natural growth.

3. Purifies as it cleanses. After you have allowed the CONDITIONER to "work" as directed, it saponifies easily with water and rinses completely clear, leaving the scalp healthfully clean and the hair naturally brilliant.



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Men and women who are anxious to stop excessive hair loss and help correct local scalp disorders, should order VITEX'S TRIPLE ACTION CONDITIONER at once. A leading magazine thought enough of the Vitex Method to give it a two page pictorial story in their March 1939 issue. Prove to yourself that VITEX'S CONDITIONER can help you. A special 8 treatment size costs only \$1.00. Not sold in stores. Only obtainable direct from us.

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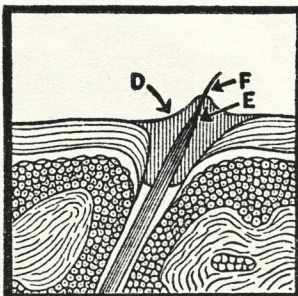


\$5.00 WORTH FOR \$3.00

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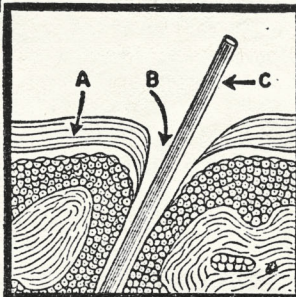
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If you live in New York or expect to visit World's Fair, you are invited to visit our Fifth Avenue Treatment Salon. A hair and scalp expert will gladly give you a free scalp examination. Many New York Business Leaders (Ladies too) visit here regularly to benefit from these personal scalp treatments.



Save The Roots and Save HAIR

The highly magnified cross section (see top cut at left) shows that either clogged up follicles keep choking it back or else poor circulation prevents hair from growing through with the necessary degree for hair health. When hair is strong and healthy a cross section reveals (see bottom cut) a clean, loose and well lubricated scalp. Use VITEX'S CONDITIONER.



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Read What Users Say!

A BARBER WRITES

One of my customers bought a bottle to try on his hair. Already I have given him 3 treatments. We have no proof it will make his hair grow but in 30 yrs. of barbering it is the first time I'm convinced that your conditioner will stop hair from falling. S. B. A., Fresno, Calif.

FRIEND RECOMMENDS

My friend uses your conditioner for his hair and it seems to help him, so he told me that he thinks it will help me also. I would deeply appreciate your opinion and I'm enclosing \$3 for a large 16 oz. bottle. B. E. R., Westfield, Mass.

DECIDED IMPROVEMENT

Enclosed find check in amount of \$3, for which send the 16 oz. size. In March issue of "Click" I noticed various pictures pertaining to VITEX'S Conditioner and decided I would try same. I sent for \$1 size, and, much to my amazement, after using it was quite satisfied. There is a decided improvement in my hair and others have noticed it. Words can't express my thanks for your wonderful discovery.

W. G., Chicago, Ill. FIRST BOTTLE SHOWS IMPROVEMENT

I have received your trial bottle and am using it according to instructions. About ten days ago I started massaging my scalp morning and evening. It seems to me that my hair started looking much better and the short thinning hair seemed to be growing some. P. L., Vandalia, Ill.

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A special supplement department for the active science-fiction fan and collector. Send your items of fan interest to **THE FANTASY FAN**, SCIENCE FICTION, 60 Hudson St., New York.

ARE YOU A FAN?

IF YOU belong to a science-fiction club, issue or work on a science-fiction fan publication, or come in contact with science-fiction notables, why not write us about it? Readers of **THE FANTASY FAN** are anxiously awaiting to know what you are doing to spread the gospel of science fiction! Share your experiences in the fan field with advocates all over the world! This department is open to all fan, author, and publishing material, so don't hesitate to make free use of it.

JULIUS SCHWARTZ

WE HEREBY dedicate this issue of **SCIENCE FICTION** to Mr. Julius Schwartz of The Bronx, New York.

If you look in the telephone directory for The Bronx, you will find listed there hundreds of Schwartzes, and even several Julius Schwartzes—but to the mind of any science-fiction fan, that name does and can conjure thoughts of but one individual personality—the veteran fan who has lived and breathed science fiction for a decade or more, and who is responsible for numberless published articles and propaganda activities to further popularize science fiction over the Earth. Though he is by no means a world-traveler, his name is a “household word” wherever science-fiction is under discussion.

Back in the dim days of the remote past, scientifically speaking, Schwartz was the co-founder and co-editor of the very first fan publications in the fantasy field—“The Planeteer,” “The Time Traveller,” “Science Fiction Digest,” and “Fantasy.” All of these regularly-issued booklets (ranging in date from 1930 to 1936) are now extremely rare collectors’ items. Most of them were neatly printed—few being mimeographed, and those among the earliest ones.

Personally, Julie is a very likeable chap and numbers among his personal friends most of the best science-fiction authors, editors and prominent fans within a thousand miles of New York—plus all others who have visited the city during the past few years. In a desire to become personally acquainted with most of science fiction’s great, Mr. Schwartz has made several extensive tours of the east in order to visit various authors and fans in their home towns.

Now in his mid-twenties, Julius Schwartz is science-fiction’s leading literary agent—a result of his untiring efforts to provide the science fiction world with the best stories available. Many top-notch authors avail themselves of his services, because they know that *he* knows his science fiction, and where each of their tales will be most welcome. Many of the really great yarns of recent years have first passed through the discerning hands of Mr. Julius Schwartz—a boon to any science-fiction editor!

Thus we elect Julius Schwartz to a Most High Place in Science Fiction’s Hall of Fame!

FAN MAGS

FOLLOWING are listed a number of worthy science-fiction fan publications that have been sent to the Editor during recent months. These little magazines are mimeographed (most of them very neatly) except when otherwise stated. If you know of a good effort of this nature that is not listed here, please send us a copy for review in an early issue of **SCIENCE FICTION**.

FANTASY NEWS, published weekly by James V. Taurasi, 137-07 32nd Ave., Flushing N. Y. Science-fiction’s best newspaper—the latest doings in all branches of the field. 3 issues for a dime.

YEARBOOK OF 1938, published annually by Bob Tucker, Box 260, Bloomington,

THE FANTASY FAN

III. A double index of all science fiction and fantasy published in magazines during last year. Invaluable to the collector. Fifteen cents.

FANTASCIENCE DIGEST, published bi-monthly by Robert A. Madle, 333 E. Belgrade St., Philadelphia, Penna. Thirty-page, perfectly mimeod collection of excellent fan articles. Nothing better in fandom. Fifteen cents.

D'JOURNAL, published bi-monthly by Bob Tucker, Box 260, Bloomington, Ill. Fantasy Fiction's First Fun-fan Folio Featuring Fantasy Foolery! Real science-fiction humor—articles burlesquing science fiction. One dime.

NEW FANDOM, published bi-monthly by Sam Moskowitz, 603 S. 11th St., Newark, N. J. The Scribner's of science fiction—thought-provoking articles of fan interest by the leaders in the field, including professionals. Distributed to members of New Fandom, membership one dollar per year. New Fandom is the organization that sponsored the World Science Fiction Convention in New York City last July.

FAN-FACTS, published monthly by Daniel McPhail, Comanche, Okla. Features informal autobiographies of notables—Editors, Authors, Fans. One nickel.

AMATEUR SCIENCE FICTION JOURNALIST, published quarterly by Daniel McPhail, Comanche, Okla. A newsy, helpful publication for publishers of amateur magazines in fantasy. Not of general fan interest. One dime.

VOICE OF THE IMAGINATION, published now and then by Forrest J. Ackerman, Box 6475 Metropolitan Station, Los Angeles, Calif. An unusual journal composed of correspondence by active fans. Sent on request—dime after you receive it.

NEW WORLDS, published by Ted Carnell, 17 Burwash Rd., Plumstead, London, S. E. 18, England. One of the better British publications. Voice of the Science Fiction Association. A dime to non-members.

VADJONG, published by Sam Moskowitz, 603 S. 11th St., Newark, N. J. Official organ of the Queens Science Fiction League, issued monthly. Consists mostly of interesting biographies of famous science-fiction fans. No price noted.

FUNTASY, published quarterly by Jim Avery, 55 Middle St., Skowhegan, Me. Humorous science-fiction items—"The Pan-Mag of Science-Friction!" One dime.

SCIENTI-SNAPS, published bi-monthly by Walter E. Marconette, 2120 Pershing (Continued on Page 118)

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462 Niagara Street, Buffalo, N. Y.

SCIENCE FICTION

(Continued from Page 117)

Bldg., Dayton, O. Articles and departments of general fan interest. One dime.

SCIENTI-TALES, published bi-monthly by John Giunta, 1355 80th St., Brooklyn, N. Y. Specializes in amateur science fiction—also contains some interesting fan articles and mimeod illustrations. Fifteen cents.

WORLD SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION

AS THIS issue of **SCIENCE FICTION** goes to press, active fans in the New York area—James V. Taurasi, Sam Moskowitz, William S. Sykora, and others co-operating with the New Fandom organization, are busily preparing for the first World Science Fiction Convention, a gathering in New York City of many hundreds of notable science-fictionists from every corner of the United States, Canada, Mexico, and England—featuring, among many other activities, a revival showing of science-fiction's greatest movie—the UFA production, "Metropolis."

By the time this magazine is circulated, the great Convention will be a thing of the past, the treasured memory of the world's most active science-fiction advocates and authors.

If you attended the Convention, send us the notes of your personal experiences in New York among the authors, fans, and editors. Why not share them with those who were unable to make the pilgrimage?

LA FEMME IN SCIENCE FICTION

FOR many years, science-fiction fans have lamented the fact that so few of the fair sex are interested in our literature, as fans, pointing out such isolated cases as Mildred Virginia Kidd of Catonsville, Maryland, and Myrtle Douglas and Patti Grey of Los Angeles.

However, the present aspect shows that there have been quite a number of female enthusiasts, some of them are now coming out of their self-enforced obscurity, as shown by the six or eight new girl-fans (and real fans) in the Queens Science Fiction League, and a high number in the Los Angeles club as well—not to mention a new influx of correspondence from the fair sex.

How about some obliging young lady writing to this department, giving us males the low-down on why she is a fan, and what science fiction means to her?

The Telepath

Where Editor and Readers Exchange Thoughts

SCIENCE FICTION invites you to write letters to this department, giving your views and criticisms. Address your letters to EDITOR, SCIENCE FICTION, 60 Hudson Street, New York City. Write us today!

Dear Reader:

Every editor, naturally, wants to give his readers a magazine that will hold their interest—but still we find fans who lose their enthusiasm for publications that print material that is certainly *good*. Wonder why? I think one of the essential things that a magazine should contain, besides *good* material, is *variety*.

In our June issue, we presented you with a novelette ("Moon Heaven," by Dom Passante) that you seemed to like very much—at least, most of those who have written us letters recently. In fact, that story was rated first in the issue, by popular vote. Well, I'm glad you liked it. Some of you commented upon the fact that the story was written in the masterful style typical of the late Stanley G. Weinbaum, which fact made the tale so enjoyable. But if we gave you a magazine full of Weinbaum-type tales, every issue, I think you'd soon get tired of them—regardless of the fact that they would all be *good* science fiction.

So if you like a variety of good stories, I don't think you'll ever get tired of reading SCIENCE FICTION—because I try to get as much variety into one issue as possible, without passing out of the realm of fantasy. Not all interplanetaries—not all laboratory yarns—not all world dooms, but a generous sprinkling of all types.

Getting back to the June issue, the book-length novel by Eando Binder, "Where Eternity Ends," took second honors in popularity, and "Telepathy Is News!" by Paul Edmonds is in third place. I was in doubt about the reception the last named would receive, but I'm pleased to note that you like an occasional rip-roaring, blood-and-thunder action tale. I've got another along this line by Paul Edmonds coming up in the near future.

Aside from the fiction in the June issue,

(Continued on Page 120)

FISTULA

Anyone suffering from Fistula, Piles or Non-Malignant Rectal trouble is urged to write for our FREE Book, describing the McCleary Treatment for these insidious rectal troubles. The McCleary Treatment has been successful in thousands of cases. Let us send you our reference list of former patients living in every State in the Union. The McCleary Clinic, 1025 Elms Blvd., Excelsior Springs, Mo.

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28x4.50-20	2.35	30x3.75-15	2.55
30x4.50-21	2.40	30x4.00-15	2.65
30x4.75-19	2.45	30x4.25-15	2.75
30x4.75-20	2.50	30x4.50-15	2.85
30x5.00-19	2.55	30x4.75-15	2.95
30x5.00-20	2.55	30x5.00-15	3.05
30x5.25-18	2.60	30x5.25-15	3.15
30x5.25-19	2.65	30x5.50-15	3.25
30x5.25-20	2.70	30x5.75-15	3.35
30x5.50-18	2.75	30x6.00-15	3.45
30x5.50-19	2.80	30x6.25-15	3.55
30x5.50-20	2.85	30x6.50-15	3.65
30x5.75-18	2.90	30x6.75-15	3.75
30x5.75-19	2.95	30x7.00-15	3.85
30x5.75-20	3.00	30x7.25-15	3.95
30x6.00-18	3.05	30x7.50-15	4.05
30x6.00-19	3.10	30x7.75-15	4.15
30x6.00-20	3.15	30x8.00-15	4.25
30x6.25-18	3.20	30x8.25-15	4.35
30x6.25-19	3.25	30x8.50-15	4.45
30x6.25-20	3.30	30x8.75-15	4.55
30x6.50-18	3.35	30x9.00-15	4.65
30x6.50-19	3.40	30x9.25-15	4.75
30x6.50-20	3.45	30x9.50-15	4.85
30x6.75-18	3.50	30x9.75-15	4.95
30x6.75-19	3.55	30x10.00-15	5.05
30x6.75-20	3.60	30x10.25-15	5.15
30x7.00-18	3.65	30x10.50-15	5.25
30x7.00-19	3.70	30x10.75-15	5.35
30x7.00-20	3.75	30x11.00-15	5.45
30x7.25-18	3.80	30x11.25-15	5.55
30x7.25-19	3.85	30x11.50-15	5.65
30x7.25-20	3.90	30x11.75-15	5.75
30x7.50-18	3.95	30x12.00-15	5.85
30x7.50-19	4.00	30x12.25-15	5.95
30x7.50-20	4.05	30x12.50-15	6.05
30x7.75-18	4.10	30x12.75-15	6.15
30x7.75-19	4.15	30x13.00-15	6.25
30x7.75-20	4.20	30x13.25-15	6.35
30x8.00-18	4.25	30x13.50-15	6.45
30x8.00-19	4.30	30x13.75-15	6.55
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30x8.25-18	4.40	30x14.25-15	6.75
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THE TELEPATH

adolescent and inconsequential, I thought, certainly "Where Eternity Ends" was advanced enough for veterans. An imaginatively excellent interplanetary yarn. Eando's explanation of Paul's pic on the cover was quite good, too.

I especially enjoyed "Telepathy Is News!" and was not influenced in its favor by the fact that its author just recently let me play to my heart's content "Fwee Lil Fittys in a Itty Bitty Poo" on his radiofonograf, and offered me chocolate milk and vanilla wafers. In fact, I had forgotten for the time being that it was written by—but, oops! I almost gave his pseudonym away, didn't I? The publishers probably wouldn't like . . . !

Incidentally, "samideano," a vote of thanks to you from the Esperanto Klubo de Los Angeles. As "sekretario," I called to our members' attention your special article on the "Tongue of Tomorrow" in "Junia numero." If a dozen sales didn't result from this, I miss my guess! And by the way, most everyone is familiar by now, I imagine, with the fact that the Liberty 4-Star film "Idiot's Delight" features the future-language for the inhabitants of its mythical-country; but, members of the imagi-nation, watch for "The Lady of the Tropics" (Hedy LaMarr,) wherein, in one brief scene with Bob Taylor, you will be able to see a science-fiction reader . . . and hear her speak in the Universalanguage! The dialog was shot just the other day out at MGM, and we'll pray it won't be edited out before or after the preview. Listen for "Estas bone"—which will sound like "es'tahs bo'neb" and means, a la Skylark Smith: "It's all x!"

Interested parties may obtain a beginner's Grammar and Vocabulary for 10c postpaid from Box 6475 Metropolitan Station, Los Angeles, Calif. I became interested in Esperanto by reading about it in scientific stories; "Emperor of Space," "The Planet Juggler," "Frontier of the Unknown," and Francis Flagg's memorable "An Adventure in Time" are some of the tales in which it's played a part; whilst Wells, Burroughs, Bellamy, Haggard, Capek, for example, may be secured in translations in the artificiallanguage. I should be glad to make

(Continued on Page 122)

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NAME
ADDRESS

THE TELEPATH

(Continued from Page 121)

the acquaintance of any Esperantists among SCIENCE FICTION'S audience when attending the 32nd Annual "Kongreso" of the "Nord-Amerika Asocio" this "somero" in "Nov-Jorko!"

FORREST J. ACKERMAN
236 1-2 N. New Hampshire
Hollywood, Calif.

(How better can we start off an edition of THE TELEPATH than with a breezy letter from science-fiction's veteran number one fan—the man who has given the greatest number of hours to the furtherance of fantasy? Now, I don't mean to embarrass you, Forrie, but facts are facts.

My only regret is that your letter arrived too late to see publication before the Esperanto Congress in New York. By the time these words see the light of day, you will have come and gone, six thousand long and weary miles. Your many days of meeting countless unseen friends—unseen, that is, until your visit—both scientificationists and Esperantists, will have passed. I'm glad to have shared in acting as one of your many hosts during your brief visit to the east.

I'm sure that many of our readers will be interested in your notes about the use of Esperanto in the movies, and I hope that many secure your Esperanto vocabulary.

I've known lots of people around here who have visited California and wished that they could have stayed there. Tell me, Forrie, now that you, a Californian, have seen our fair city of New York—how does it compare with Los Angeles?—EDITOR.)

ANOTHER ESPERANTIST.

Dear Mr. Hornig:

Your magazine is very interesting. It's the first magazine of this type I have read in years. Stories with a plausible scientific background, interesting plot, absence of weirdness are my idea of ideal scientification. Thought-provoking narratives should be the rule. Everything that even remotely resembles the utterly impossible, the ludicrous, should be excluded from your publication. Short articles such as the two that appeared in the June issue, should be included every time.

And here is something that would make

THE TELEPATH

the magazine even more sought after. A short article or even a short-short story in Esperanto. Why not? Esperanto is an established trade language, the official translation language of the League of Nations and the official language of several scientific societies. SCIENCE FICTION could be a great help to spread the knowledge of this universal language. Why not try just one short article in Esperanto and see the reaction you have?

At this point of my letter you have no doubt guessed that the article which caught my attention and held it was the one entitled "Esperanto—Tongue of Tomorrow."

There is a great deal of interest, renewed interest in Esperanto on account of the use made of it in the picture "Idiot's Delight." I know of several fellows here in the city who have begun to study it. If they could find something written in it, in as interesting a magazine as SCIENCE FICTION, they would be spurred to learn it as quickly as possible.

For myself, I had heard of this language about five years ago, but paid no attention to it. Last year I read Shenton's "Cosmopolitan Conversations" and Guerard's "A Short History of the International Language Movement," and was very much surprised to find that Esperanto was not an imaginary and impractical thing, but a well-seasoned and proven medium of expression. I think that if more of these facts about Esperanto were more widely known it would begin to be used more and more frequently among the peoples of the Earth.

So I'll be waiting to hear what you have to say about the suggestion.

ROBERT J. WALKER
3060 West 39th Ave.
Denver, Colo.

(We're willing to give the readers of SCIENCE FICTION short articles in the Esperanto language, if enough of them want them, Mr. Walker, but it wouldn't be fair to our fans to do this unless an appreciable percentage show enthusiasm over the idea. We're all for Esperanto, but those who wish to learn the language can do so very easily and inexpensively by writing to the address given at the opening of this department.

Readers, what's your verdict?—EDITOR.)

(Continued on Page 124)

Arrest Him, Officer!

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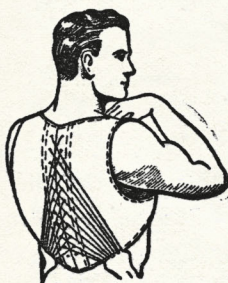
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10

SCIENCE FICTION

(Continued from Page 123)

COMING OUT FROM BEHIND

Dear Charlie:

You're turning out a pretty good little magazine.

With so much science fiction on the market now, I'm following a policy of only skimming the cream off each, or what looks like the cream. Haven't time for more. So I haven't read but four of the seven stories in the June **SCIENCE FICTION**, plus the article on Esperanto, for which bravo.

Oh, yes—"Vision of Possibility" was good, too.

Same rating applies to "Moon Heaven." Interesting characters, though the idea of Betts remaining permanently as manservant to the Briges strains the credulity a bit.

"Short-Wave Madness" was a top-flight story. Sets the imagination roving.

Of the short-shorts, "The Traitor" wasn't so hot. The plot certainly can't be called anything new, and there was nothing extra about the manner of presentation.

"Brothers of Fate," however, was excellent; I even give it the edge over "Short-Wave Madness," since it embodies no retreat of science.

How about giving us the names of the authors—all of them?

One thing I most like about **SCIENCE FICTION** is your personal style of speaking to the readers, of coming out from behind the editorial anonymity and signing your name. Was somewhat surprised to see you speaking openly of Wonder—most mags, you know, regard the name of a competitor as tabu, especially for the editor to voice.

Paul's cover was good, but can't say much for the interiors.

Be seeing you.

JACK SPEER
1812 R St. N. W.
Washington, D. C.

(In "Moon Heaven," you will remember that Betts was the perfect servant. All his ancestors back to the cave-man days were servants—and Betts would just about die if he ever stopped being one himself. So you see, Jack—it was in his blood, and he had to continue his job, even while stranded on the moon Io of Jupiter!

Guess I've got a lot of courage signing my name to this department, eh?—considering some of the pannings I've gotten!—**EDITOR.)**

Make Records of Your Singing or Instrument

Now a new invention permits you to make a professional-like recording of your own singing, talking or instrument playing. Without experience you can quickly make phonographic records which we furnish and immediately play them and listen to them yourself. Record friend's voices, instrument playing, orchestras or your favorite radio broadcast entertainment right off the air and hear it as often as you like.



Test Your Voice At Home!

Before spending money for an audition, make a "home record" of your voice or musical instrument and mail it to a reliable agency . . . you might be one of the lucky ones to find fame and success thru this easy method of bringing your talents before the proper authorities.

IT'S LOTS OF FUN TOO! HAVE RECORDING PARTIES!

You'll get a real thrill out of HOME RECORDING. Surprise your friends by letting them hear your voice or playing right from a record. Record a snappy talking feature. Record jokes and become the life of the party. Great to help train your voice and to cultivate speech. Nothing to practice . . . you start recording at once . . . no other mechanical or electrical devices needed . . . everything necessary included. Nothing else to buy. Just sing, speak or play and HOME RECORDO unit which operates on any electric or old type phonograph will do the recording on special blank records we furnish. You can immediately play the records back as often as you wish. Make your home movie a talking picture with HOME RECORDO. Simply make the record while filming and play back while showing the picture.

COMPLETE OUTFIT

INCLUDING 6 TWO SIDED
BLANK RECORDS ONLY

\$2.98

Everything is included. Nothing else to buy and nothing else to pay. You get complete HOME RECORDING UNIT which includes special recording needle, playing needles. 6 two sided unbreakable records. Also guide record and spiral feeding attachment and combination recording and playback unit suitable for recording a skit, voice, instrument or radio broadcast. ADDITIONAL 2 SIDED BLANK RECORDS COST ONLY \$.75 per dozen.

SEND NO MONEY! HURRY COUPON! START RECORDING AT ONCE!

HOME RECORDING CO.,
Studio D.A., 130 West 17th St.,
New York, N. Y.

Send entire HOME RECORDING OUTFIT (including 6 two-sided records) described above, by return mail. I will pay postman \$2.98, plus postage, on arrival. (Send cash or money order now for \$3.00 and save postage.)

Send additional blank records at 75c per dozen.

Name

Address

TYPE OF PHONOGRAPH
OR RECORD PLAYER

Note: Canadian and Foreign \$3.00 cash with order.

Dealers Write!

Reliable dealers are
invited to write for
full particulars.

OPERATES ON ANY A.C. OR D.C.
ELECTRIC PHONOGRAPHS
RECORD PLAYERS
RADIO-PHONO COMBINATIONS
Old or New Type
PHONOGRAPHS and PORTABLES

HOME RECORDING CO. Studio D. A.
130 West 17th Street, New York, N. Y.



A Money-Making Opportunity for Men of Character

EXCLUSIVE FRANCHISE FOR
AN INVENTION EXPECTED TO REPLACE
A MULTI-MILLION-DOLLAR INDUSTRY

**Costly Work Formerly
"Sent Out" by Business Men
Now Done by Themselves
at a Fraction of the Expense**

**This is a call for men everywhere to handle
exclusive agency for one of the most
unique business inventions of the day.**

Forty years ago the horse and buggy business was supreme—today almost extinct. Twenty years ago the phonograph industry ran into many millions—today practically a relic. Only a comparatively few foresighted men saw the fortunes ahead in the automobile and the radio. Yet irresistible waves of public buying swept these men to fortune, and sent the buggy and the phonograph into the discard. So are great successes made by men able to detect the shift in public favor from one industry to another.

Now another change is taking place. An old established industry—an integral and important part of the nation's structure—in which millions of dollars change hands every year—is in thousands of cases being replaced by a truly astonishing, simple invention which does the work better—more reliably—AND AT A COST OFTEN AS LOW AS 2% OF WHAT IS ORDINARILY PAID! It has not required very long for men who have taken over the rights to this valuable invention to do a remarkable business, and show earnings which in these times are almost unheard of for the average man.

**Not a "Gadget"—
Not a "Knick-Knack"—**

**but a valuable, proved device which
has been sold successfully by business
novices as well as seasoned
veterans.**

Make no mistake—this is no novelty—no flimsy creation which the inventor hopes to put on the market. You probably have seen nothing like it yet—perhaps never dreamed of the existence of such a device—yet it has already been used by corporations of outstanding prominence—by dealers of great corporations—by their branches—by doctors, newspapers, publishers—schools—hospitals, etc., etc., and by thousands of small business men. You don't have to convince a man that he should use an electric bulb to light his office instead of a gas lamp. Nor do you have to sell the same business man that he should use a certain device something like this invention. The need is already there—the money is usually right next right at that very moment—and the desirability of saving the greatest part of this expense is obvious immediately.

**Some of the Savings
You Can Show**

You walk into an office and put down before your prospect a letter from a sales organization showing that they did work in their own office for \$11 which formerly could have cost them over \$200. A building supply corporation pays our man \$70, whereas the bill could have been for \$1,600! An automobile dealer pays our representative \$15, whereas the expense could have been over \$1,000. A department store has expense of \$35.60, possible cost if done outside the business being well over \$2,000. And so on. We could not possibly list all cases here. These are just a few of the many actual cases which we place in your hands to work with. Practically every line of business and every section of the country is represented by these field reports which hammer across dazzling, convincing money-saving opportunities which hardly any business man can fail to understand.

**Profits Typical of
the Young, Growing Industry**

Going into this business is not like selling something offered in every grocery, drug or department store. For instance, when you take a \$7.50 order, \$5.83 can be your share. On \$1,500 worth of business, your share can be \$1,167.00. The very least you get as your part of every dollar's worth of business you do is 67 cents—on ten dollars' worth \$6.70, on a hundred dollars' worth \$67.00—in other words, a third of every order you get is yours. Not only on the first order—but on repeat orders—and you have the opportunity of making an even larger percentage.

**This Business Has
Nothing to Do With
House to House Canvassing**

Nor do you have to know anything about high-pressure selling. "Selling" is unnecessary in the ordinary sense of the word. Instead of hammering away at the customer and trying to "force" a sale, you make a dignified, business-like call, leave the installation—whatever the customer says he will accept—at our risk, let the customer sell himself after the device is in and working. This does away with the need for pressure on the customer—it eliminates the handicap of trying to get the money before the customer has really convinced himself 100%. You simply tell what you offer, showing proof of success in that customer's particular line of business. Then leave the invention without a dollar down. It starts working at once. In a few short days, the installation should actually produce enough cash money to pay for the deal, with profits above the investment coming in at the same time. You then call back, collect your money. Nothing is so convincing as our offer to let results speak for themselves without risk to the customer! We others fail to get even a hearing, our men are making sales running into the hundreds. They have received the attention of the largest firms in the country, and sold to the smallest businesses by the thousands.

EARNINGS

One man in California earned over \$1,600 per month for three months—close to \$5,000 in 90 days' time. Another writes from Delaware—"Since I have been operating (just a little less than a month of actual selling) and not the full day at that, because I have been getting organized and had to spend at least half the day in the office; counting what I have sold outright and on trial, I have made just a little in excess of one thousand dollars profit for one month." A man working small city in N. Y. State made \$10,805 in 9 months. Texas man nets over \$300 in less than a week's time. Space does not permit mentioning here more than these few random cases. However, they are sufficient to indicate that the worthwhile future in this business is coupled with immediate earnings for the right kind of man. One man with us has already made over a thousand sales on which his earnings ran from \$5 to \$60 per sale and more. A great deal of this business was repeat business. Yet he had never done anything like this before coming with us. That is the kind of opportunity this business offers. The fact that this business has attracted to it such business men as former bankers, executives of businesses—men who demand only the highest type of opportunity and income—gives a fairly good picture of the kind of business this is. Our door is open, however, to the young man looking for the right field in which to make his start and develop his future.

No Money Need Be Risked

In trying this business out. You can measure the possibilities and not be out a dollar. If you are looking for a business that is not overworked—a business that is just coming into its own—on the upgrade, instead of the downgrade—a business that offers the buyer relief from a burdensome, but unavoidable expense—a business that has a prospect practically in every office, store, or factory into which you can set foot—regardless of size—that is a necessity but does not have any price cutting to contend with as other necessities do—that because you control the sales in exclusive territory is your own business—that pays more on some individual sales than many men make in a week and sometimes in a month's time—if such a business looks as if it is worth investigating, get in touch with us at once for the rights in your territory—don't delay—because the chances are that if you wait, someone else will have written to us in the meantime—and if it turns out that you were the better man—we'd both be sorry. So for convenience, use the coupon below—but send it right away—or wire if you wish. But do it now. Address

**F. E. ARMSTRONG, President
Dept. 4013-K, Mobile, Ala.**

**RUSH FOR EXCLUSIVE
TERRITORY PROPOSITION**

F. E. ARMSTRONG, Pres., Dept. 4013 K, Mobile, Ala.
Without obligation to me, send me full information on your proposition.

Name _____
Street or Route _____
Box No. _____
City _____
State _____

LIONEL SCALE MODEL

"LOCOSCOPE"

Given Free

An Exciting Picture Show Seen Through Headlight Lens

Made by Lionel and offered here for the first time ever—the new, ingenious, accurately detailed, scale model Locoscope. More realistic than any miniature railroad engine ever made in its scale! More exciting than a motion picture show! Because, it's both... a model engine that can display as a mantel ornament or trophy and, a pocket-size, magnifying, 16-millimeter-film-viewer.

Just hold this marvel to a light and you'll see one by one, in all their realism, 75 of the world's most famous railroad photographs, selected from files containing over a hundred thousand views.

The Locoscope is a plastic casting, small enough to hold in the palm of your hand yet so completely detailed that pipes and hand rails stand out in sharp relief. You can count its tiny bolts and rivets and the engine contains some details that even larger models do not have.

Locoscope Is Given to Introduce a New, Bigger, Better Magazine

The Locoscope is free! Offered to you by Lionel, the publishers of Model Builder magazine, as a gift, in order to introduce to you the new, bigger, greater Model Builder of 1939. If you've received previous issues of this magazine, you've had only a tiny taste of the good things that are coming. If you have never been a subscriber, then there's a big treat in store for you. Anyway, you'll want every good thing that is coming. It will tell you everything you want to know about trains, big or little. How to build a model railroad system. Plans. Ideas. Exciting adventures of real railroad men. A dictionary of Railroad Slang. Pictures by the dozen. A Trading Post for model engineers who want to swap train equipment. What to do to get more fun out of a train outfit. Contests and prize awards announced in every issue.

How to Get This Lionel Locoscope Offered Free With Model Builder

If you are NOT a subscriber to Model Builder, then hurry and mail your dollar at once for a 2-year subscription so that you won't miss a single issue. Print your name and address plainly to avoid delay and confusion. The "Locoscope" will be shipped to you, prepaid.

If you are now a subscriber to Model Builder you can obtain a Lionel Locoscope by sending \$1 for a 2-year extension of your subscription. Or, the Locoscope will be sent to YOU as a prize if you obtain a 2-year subscription from a friend, neighbor or relative. Be sure to print plainly the name of new subscriber in the top two open lines of coupon and your name in the bottom two open lines of coupon. The coupon will be shipped to you, prepaid.

Quantity is limited. This offer is automatically withdrawn and money will be refunded when supply of "Locoscopes" is exhausted. Please act at once to avoid disappointment.

Costs You Nothing

Sent Postpaid for one 2-Year \$1 Subscription to Model Builder

THE MODEL BUILDER, 17 East 26th Street, New York, N. Y.

Enclosed is \$1 (check, money order or stamps) for a model Locoscope and 2-year subscription to Model Builder.

- ☐ I am not a subscriber. Please enter this subscription to start at once.
☐ I am a subscriber. Send Locoscope and extend my subscription for 2 more years.
☐ I am a subscriber. Send Locoscope to me for obtaining a new subscription.

Send magazine to..... Name—Please Print.....

Street Address..... City..... State.....

Send Locoscope to..... Name—Please Print.....

Street Address..... City..... State.....

The Money Making Marvel of the Age!

PICTURE RING SELLS TO EVERYONE!

SAMPLE RING From Any Photo You Send Only

48¢

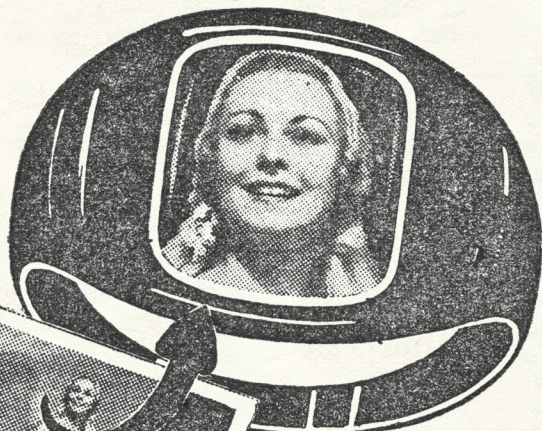
Hand Tinted in Natural Life Like Colors, 10c Extra!
It's here! The hottest, most sensational, most gripping selling idea of the age! THE PICTURE RING — the ring men and women everywhere, rich and poor, young and old want to wear and keep their whole lives long. Why? Because on this beautiful ring is permanently reproduced any photograph, snapshot or picture of some loved one. Yes — reproduced clearly and sharply and made part of the ring itself so it can't rub off, come off or fade off. This sensational new idea is making an unbelievable hit. Men and women—even those without an hour's selling experience—are taking dozens of orders a day and making dollars of profit by the handful. And now, in your territory, YOU can cash in big, every day, with this exciting sure-fire profit-maker and earn money so easily, it will seem more like play than work.

SELLS TO EVERYONE! A Treasure Remembrance Its Value Beyond Price!

Once women carried pictures of their loved ones in lockets; and men carried them in watch cases. Those days are gone, but the desire to carry the portrait of a loved one is as strong as ever. Not until the amazing secret process for transferring pictures to rings was discovered, was it possible to revive this grand old custom and to satisfy the hunger of every human being to express again this grandest of all sentiments. How mothers and fathers will welcome this opportunity to wear a ring with the most precious setting of all—a picture of their beloved child. How happy every man and woman will be to keep alive the memory of a departed one by carrying with them always, night and day, this beautiful Picture Ring.

Order Your Sample Ring Now! You Don't Risk a Penny!

Never before has anything like this come your way. No competition from anyone—no looking for prospects (they are all around you)—no carrying a big stock or putting any money into goods. Simply showing your sample ring a few times a day, if you only start with your friends and neighbors, will be enough to give you an endless chain of orders. We cut away all red tape and are ready to send you a SAMPLE RING at sensationally low special wholesale price of only 48c. The minute you take it out of its beautiful Gift Box you are ready to go after the orders. Rush the coupon below for YOUR sample ring NOW! That's all the outfit you need. It will do all your selling for you. And we make it easy for you to obtain this sample ABSOLUTELY FREE OF A PENNY COST under our liberal offer.



Beautiful Permanent Picture Ring Made From Any Photo or Picture

For only \$1.00 retail—look what you offer. A made-to-measure onyx-like ring adorned with the most precious setting in the world—a reproduction of the picture of a loved one. The ring itself can't tarnish. It will wear forever with ordinary care. The picture of the loved one is clearly, sharply reproduced with surprising faithfulness and becomes an inseparable part of the ring. It can't wear off, rub off, or fade off.

Make Pockets Full of Dollars Just Wearing Ring!

Can you imagine a more novel, more unusual gift than the Picture Ring? How can any man or woman find a more beautiful way to express loving sentiment than giving a wife, a child, a parent, a friend, a sweetheart a Picture Ring with the donor's portrait expertly reproduced! What a surprise! 10 orders a day is an easy goal—20 orders a day are not too much to expect.

SEND NO MONEY!

Hundreds of customers write they wouldn't take a fortune for their rings if they couldn't get others. \$5.00 and even \$10.00 would be a small price for the PICTURE RING—but as a special offer we send you the beautiful PICTURE RING, made from any photo or picture you send for only 48c! Don't wait. Rush the coupon at once for the sample ring on our NO RISK plan and see for yourself what a whirl-wind money maker this is for you. ACT RIGHT NOW!

MOTHER

HUSBAND

BABY



SEND YOUR RING SIZE NOW

PICTURE RING CO.,
Dept. F-45,
12th and Jackson Sts.,
Cincinnati, Ohio.

RING SIZE

Enclosed is photo. Please rush my individually made Picture Ring and starting equipment. Will pay postman 48c plus few cents postage. It is understood that if I am not entirely satisfied I can return ring within 5 days and you will refund my money in full.

Hand Tinted in Natural Life Like Colors. 10c Extra

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____

YOUR RING SIZE: Wrap strip of paper around second joint of finger, trim to snug fit. Measure strip down from top on this chart. Number at end is your size.

PICTURE RING CO.

DEPT. F-45 12 TH. & JACKSON STREET
CINCINNATI OHIO



THIS BEAUTIFUL DESK FOR ONLY \$1.00

WITH ANY

REMINGTON PORTABLE TYPEWRITER

A beautiful desk in a neutral blue-green—trimmed in black and silver—made of sturdy fibre board—now available for only one dollar (\$1.00) to purchasers of a Remington Deluxe Noiseless Portable Typewriter. The desk is so light that it can be moved anywhere without trouble. It will hold six hundred (600) pounds. This combination gives you a miniature office at home. Mail the coupon today.

THESE EXTRAS FOR YOU LEARN TYPING FREE

To help you even further, you get Free with this special offer a 24-page booklet, prepared by experts, to teach you quickly how to typewrite by the touch method. When you buy a Noiseless you get this free Remington Rand gift that increases the pleasure of using your Remington Deluxe Noiseless Portable. Remember, the touch typing book is sent Free while this offer holds.

SPECIAL CARRYING CASE

The Remington Deluxe Noiseless Portable is light in weight, easily carried about. With this offer Remington supplies a beautiful carrying case sturdily built of 3-ply wood bound with a special Dupont Fabric.

SPECIFICATIONS

ALL ESSENTIAL FEATURES of large standard office machines appear in the Noiseless Deluxe Portable—standard 4-row keyboard; back spacer; margin stops and margin release; double shift key; two color ribbon and automatic reverse; variable line spacer; paper fingers; makes as many as seven carbons; takes paper 9.5" wide; writes lines 8.2" wide, black key cards and white letters, rubber cushioned feet.

MONEY BACK GUARANTEE

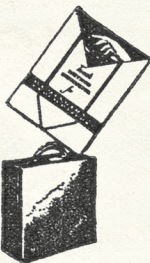
The Remington Noiseless Deluxe Portable Typewriter is sold on a trial basis with a money-back guarantee. If, after ten days trial, you are not entirely satisfied, we will take it back, paying all shipping charges and refunding your good will deposit at once. You take no risk.



ACT NOW!
ON THIS BARGAIN
OFFER.

THE COMBINATION FOR AS LITTLE AS 10c A DAY

How easy it is to pay for this combination. Just imagine! A small good will deposit and terms as low as 10c a day to get this combination at once. You will never miss 10c a day. Become immediately the possessor of this combination. You assume no obligation by sending the coupon.



SEND COUPON

NOW!

Remington Rand Inc. Dept 164-10
465 Washington St., Buffalo, N. Y.

Tell me, without obligation, how to get a Free Trial of a new Remington Noiseless Deluxe Portable, including Carrying Case and Free Typing Booklet, for as little as 10c a day. Send Catalogue.

Name.....

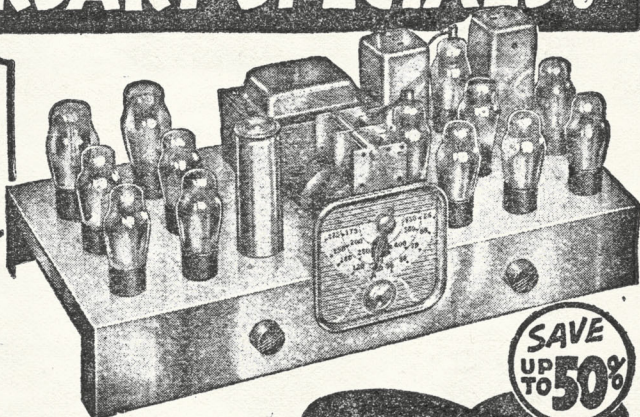
Address.....

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

40 MIDWEST FACTORY-TO-YOU 20th ANNIVERSARY SPECIALS!

WITH **TELEVISION**
ADAPTATION

14-TUBE POWERFUL MIDWEST



SAVE
UP TO **50%**

PUT THIS CHASSIS IN YOUR PRESENT CABINET.

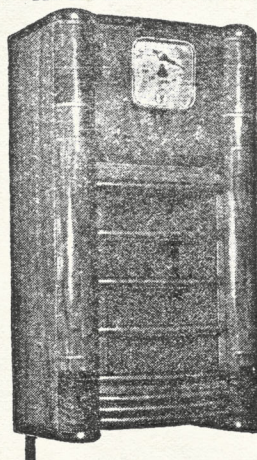
HERE is what we believe is today's biggest radio value—the 1940 TELEVISION-ADAPTED Midwest. Not since 1920, when this firm was established, have we been able to offer you such a bargain. Now, you can enjoy the mighty power of 14 latest type tubes—plus an advanced circuit—plus advanced features—plus astonishing foreign performance—plus TELEVISION ADAPTATION—for little more than the cost of new tubes—and on 30 days trial in your own home.

**COMPLETE
CHASSIS**

Only

\$19⁹⁵

**WITH TUBES
AND SPEAKER**



**14-TUBE
CONSOLE**

only **\$29⁹⁵**

COMPLETE

**HERE IS THE
BARGAIN OF
THE YEAR—
a 14-tube radio
complete with
console, at a price
you would ordi-
narily pay for a
7 or 10-tube set.**

This "Twentieth Anniversary", designed - for - tomorrow radio is offered you at a sensationally low factory-to-you price—making it possible for you to modernize your old radio—with an "up-to-the-minute" model—to be prepared for the developments of tomorrow.

The many advantages and features which characterize this 1940 radio result in unusual naturalness of tone realism, in amazingly faithful reproduction, in unusual sensitivity, and hair-line selectivity. But don't just take our word for it—write for the new 1940 "Twentieth Anniversary" catalog. See for yourself the features and advantages of this and many other radios in the new 1940 TELEVISION-ADAPTED Midwest line. See for yourself why only Midwest offers Organ-Fonic Tone Filter, Organ Key Tone Control, Antenna-Scope and other exclusive features on its 17-Tube, 5-Band radios. No installation problem . . . no outside antenna . . . just PLUG-IN and play!

**[30 DAYS]
TRIAL**

**NEW
LOW
EASY
TERMS**

LIBERAL TRADE-IN ALLOWANCE UP TO \$40.00 FOR YOUR OLD RADIO

The famous Midwest 30-day Trial Plan enables you to try any Midwest radio for 30 days *before* you make up your mind. You can trade in your old set and receive as much as \$40.00 trade-in allowance. Tell us the make and age of your present radio—so we can determine how much to allow you on it. Our new Easy-Pay Plan makes it easier than ever before to own a Midwest. Absolute satisfaction guaranteed on a money-back basis. Write today for FREE 1940 "Twentieth Anniversary" catalog.

MIDWEST *Factory-to-You* RADIOS

DEPT. 68-A, MIDWEST RADIO CORPORATION...CINCINNATI, OHIO, U.S.A.
Manufacturers of Quality Radios Since 1920

PASTE COUPON ON 1¢ POSTCARD... OR

Write Today!

**MIDWEST RADIO
CORPORATION**
Dept. 68-A, Cincinnati, Ohio

Send me your new
FREE 1940 catalog,
complete details of
your liberal 30-day
Trial Offer, Factory-
To-You Wholesale
Prices, and big
TRADE-IN Offer.

Name.....
(PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY)

Address.....

Town..... State.....

User-Agents Make Easy Extra Money.
Check ☐ Here for details.

"Give Me Your Measure and Let Me Prove I Can Make You a NEW MAN!"

WILL you give me a chance to prove that I can turn you into a man of might and muscle? Let me prove that I can help you build the kind of strong, evenly-developed body you have always longed to have. A big, deep, husky chest. A powerful back. Biceps like iron. Arms and legs that never tire. A stomach ridged with bands of muscle. And a general physical condition that increases the fun of living.

Write your name and address carefully on the coupon below. I'll send you absolutely free a copy of my new book, "Everlasting Health and Strength." It reveals the secrets of "Dynamic Tension" that changed me from a 97-pound flat-chested weakling into a husky fellow who twice won the title of "World's Most Perfectly Developed Man" against all comers!

Are You Underweight? Or Too Fat?

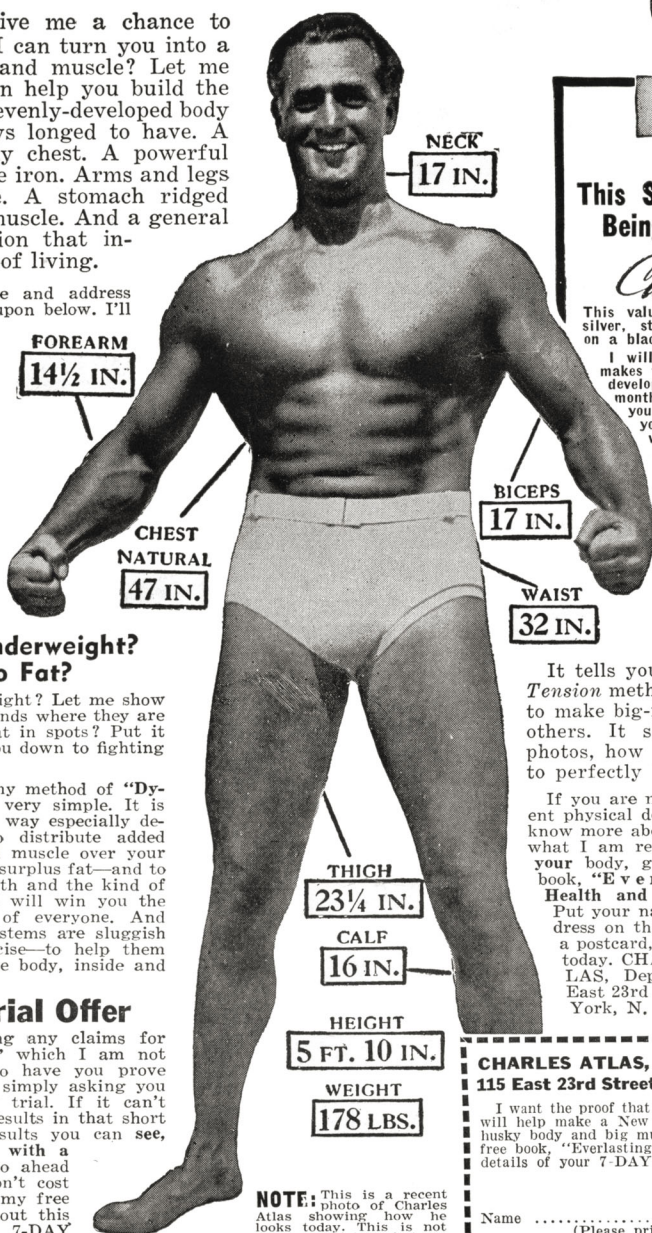
Are you underweight? Let me show you how to add pounds where they are needed! Are you fat in spots? Put it up to me to pare you down to fighting trim.

The purpose of my method of "Dynamic Tension" is very simple. It is an entirely natural way especially developed by me—to distribute added pounds of powerful muscle over your body—to get rid of surplus fat—and to give you the strength and the kind of physical build that will win you the envy and respect of everyone. And for those whose systems are sluggish from lack of exercise—to help them tone up their entire body, inside and out.

7-Day Trial Offer

I am not making any claims for "Dynamic Tension" which I am not perfectly willing to have you prove for yourself. I am simply asking you to give it 7 days' trial. If it can't show you enough results in that short period of time—results you can see, feel, and measure with a tape—then don't go ahead with it—and it won't cost you one cent! Get my free book telling all about this "prove-it-yourself" 7-DAY TRIAL OFFER. Mail coupon at once.

MAIL COUPON FOR FREE BOOK NOW!



NOTE: This is a recent photo of Charles Atlas showing how he looks today. This is not a studio picture but an actual untouched snapshot.



This Sterling Silver Cup Being Given Away by

Charles Atlas

This valuable cup, made of sterling silver, stands about 14 inches high on a black mahogany base.

I will award it to my pupil who makes the most improvement in his development within the next three months. Therefore, no matter what your measurements may be now, you have an equal chance to win this cup for permanent possession—and with YOUR name engraved on it!

Get my free book by mailing coupon below!

48-PAGE BOOK FREE

It tells you all about my *Dynamic Tension* method, and what it has done to make big-muscled men of so many others. It shows you, from actual photos, how I have developed pupils to perfectly balanced proportions.

If you are not satisfied with your present physical development—if you want to know more about "Dynamic Tension" and what I am ready to prove it can do for your body, get my free book, "Everlasting Health and Strength." Put your name and address on the coupon or a postcard, and mail it today. CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 4K, 115 East 23rd Street, New York, N. Y.



**CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 4K,
115 East 23rd Street, New York, N. Y.**

I want the proof that your system of *Dynamic Tension* will help make a New Man of me—give me a healthy, husky body and big muscle development. Send me your free book, "Everlasting Health and Strength," and full details of your 7-DAY Trial Offer.

Name
(Please print or write plainly)

Address

City State

Men and Women WANTED for Local Coffee Agencies



Big Value Complete DISPLAY OUTFIT! FREE!

NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED... NO WAITING... YOUR EARNINGS START AT ONCE!

W!—without sending me one penny!—reliable man or woman can PROVE the ear round money-making opportunities simple-to-run Local Coffee Agency. If are in earnest about wanting to make y—if you want to enjoy the independence of having a simple, profitable little business of your own—I will gladly give you big, valuable Outfit shown above—FREE. Complete Free Outfit contains a large assortment of regular full size packages and everything else you need to start making money your very first day. With my simple Plan, you need absolutely no experience. And you can devote either full time or part time. I give you this highly valuable and complete business equipment FREE! I don't ask you to send me one cent! Certainly, there could be no greater proof of my plute confidence in the money-making opportunities in this remarkable Plan. If you an active and reliable man or woman means business—if you want cash to d—money to save—the means to live in fort—I want you to have this big Money-making Outfit FREE. You start making money immediately. Furthermore, I'll extend credit so that you can do business on capital.

Be a Food Distributor

nder my simple, sure-fire, proven Plan, I distribute delicious food products and y other daily necessities direct to the e. You make regular calls on your customers, take orders, make deliveries and et a big part of every dollar you take in. average gross profit is from 30 to 40 s on the dollar.

e nation-wide success of this Plan is e due to the powerful and instant ap-of good things to eat! There's scarcely

a man, woman or child who doesn't love deliciously tempting pies, biscuits, puddings, and other food delights. Wouldn't you like to turn this universal appeal into cash for yourself? Wouldn't you like the exclusive right to all the profits waiting to be made in your locality on this nationally famous line? A line that includes, not only these tempting food specialties but also over one hundred other daily household necessities—all fast selling, quick repeating products. Produced and tested in our own pure food kitchens and laboratories, these products are of uniform high quality—guaranteed to satisfy or money back.

Your complete line of food products will also include high quality coffee, teas, spices, flavoring extracts, etc. In addition, you will have an extensive line of marvelous time-and-labor saving laundry and kitchen supplies and many other daily household necessities always in big demand. Attractive and unusual Premium Offers, Cut-Price Sales, One Cent Sales, Prize Contests—make your business a profitable and fascinating all year round occupation.

Big Earning Possibilities

I wish you could read the glowing reports I receive. Here are a few: George Chit, New York, reported \$73.00 clear profits in one week; H. D. Morris, Virginia, \$80.00 in one week; S. D. Moran, California, \$19.00 in one day; Phyllis Lyons, Minnesota, \$50.00 in one week. I frankly admit that these are unusual earning records, but they show the big money that has been made and can be made in this business. Of course what you make will depend largely upon yourself and the time you put in.

Your Home Is Your Headquarters

You won't have to rent an office or a store, and you won't have to invest in furniture fixtures or large stocks of goods. Your own home becomes your office.

I Send Everything

With my Complete Free Outfit containing a big assortment of full size packages, I also give you a simple, sure-fire Plan which anyone can follow. I give you advertising material, trial-size samples to give away, and everything else you need to start earning your very first day. In addition to your cash profits, you can get groceries and other household necessities for your own use at wholesale prices; so you can save money as well as make money.

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This is a sincere offer made by a reliable, old-established company operating from Coast to Coast. Write at once for full particulars. Unless you take advantage of my remarkable Free Outfit offer now, you may never know the money-making possibilities in a simply run Neighborhood Coffee Agency of your own. I show my complete faith in this money-making business by offering you this big value Outfit—FREE! All I ask in return is that you give it a FAIR TRIAL! Strike out for yourself! Be independent! Make Money! Enjoy Life! Remember—you don't send me a penny. Just send the coupon and I'll mail you full particulars. DO IT TODAY!

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