

SCIENCE FICTION

15¢

JUNE

THE MAN WHO WAS MILLIONS

A GREAT NEW NOVEL

By WILLARD E. HAWKINS



THE WORLD IN WILDERNESS

By THORNTON AYRE

PAUL

**STRANGE MYSTERIES!
TALISMANIC POWER!**

Now it can be Told!

**MYSTIC RITES!
INCREDIBLE FEATS!**

AMAZING REVELATIONS of FORBIDDEN MYSTERIES!



Now These "Secrets of Power" CAN BE YOURS!

Do not confuse "Your Key to Power" with any other book of similar name or title! This sensational book is new from cover to cover! Just off the Press—with additional daring revelations which until now no one has had the courage to put into public print! Here is information that you will want to read! In it Igo says: "When I was right at the bottom—when I was without money, power, health, without even a little Luck to tide me over—I DISCOVERED SEVEN WORDS THAT CHANGED MY LIFE!" Igo gives you these words as well as his "Master Formula of Mind Magic."

Perhaps YOU have never thought it possible to have GOOD FORTUNE and GOOD LUCK come your way! Perhaps you have given up hope in WINNING WHAT YOU WANT FROM LIFE! If so—you need the Guidance which this Book will give; the reassurance that "Whatever ye ask for when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and YE SHALL HAVE THEM!"

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This Book shows the way! Never before have so many strange, exotic and mystic practices been exposed in one book. Never before have these hitherto unknown facts been made available for every one's benefit. Igo, student of the Occult, Interpreter of Mystic Phenomena, Seeker after Truth, reveals how the secret power of the ancients still lives on TODAY! Perhaps YOU are one of the very persons described in this baffling book! Perhaps YOU too, have sought MONEY, LOVE, POWER, HAPPINESS!

You Can Conquer Now!

This is not a book about religion but it tells little known facts about FAITH and explains the Miracle of Prayer. It tells how you can uncover YOUR HIDDEN POWER—how you can get out of life exactly what you desire—Here truly is a book which will inspire you to a solution of ALL YOUR PROBLEMS. You must read it and digest it to fully appreciate it. Some of the things in this spectacular book will OPEN YOUR EYES!



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- How Talismans are worn to attract good Luck, Power, Money, Success.
- How Sea Captains, jockeys, and travellers wear a certain Talisman to ward off evil.
- How Napoleon was saved by a Talisman.
- How 20 million people wear a certain charm for protection.
- About the Frankincense success Ritual.
- How the Serpent brought Mastery over all things to the Ancients.
- How a horseshoe protected a 65 million dollar investment!
- How a certain amulet WON over odds of 500,000 to 1!
- How Voodoo Priests prescribe rites for Winning Games, Drawings, etc.
- How girls can win the one they love.
- How to bring Happiness to Broken Lives.
- How Myrrh can give Success to everything that the hands touch.

Plus pages and pages on Mind Magic, the Power of Thought, The Miracle of Prayer and many other amazing and seldom told customary, strange, exotic and mysterious cultures.

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Your Desire for strange, mystic and little known facts or your money refunded. FREE for a limited time only—your choice of a "Lucky" Rabbit Foot, 3 Talismanic Seals, or a Real, Live Lodestone with each copy of "YOUR KEY TO POWER" at only \$1.00. RUSH your order now—today.

FREE
CHOICE OF
ONE
GIFT



TALISMANIC SEALS

3 Seals said to have been taken from the 6th and 7th Books of Moses. Used by thousands!



"LUCKY" RABBIT FOOT

A universal 'good Luck' token with gold plated cap. A fine watch chain or key chain charm.

REAL LIVE



LODESTONE

The genuine article! Guaranteed to draw! Usually sells for 50c to \$1.00.

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 - ☐ "LUCKY" RABBIT FOOT
 - ☐ 3 TALISMANIC SEALS

Name.....
Address.....
City..... State.....

NOTE: If you prefer we will ship C.O.D. \$1.00 but we will add postal charges. Send remittance and save the difference!

LEARN RADIO

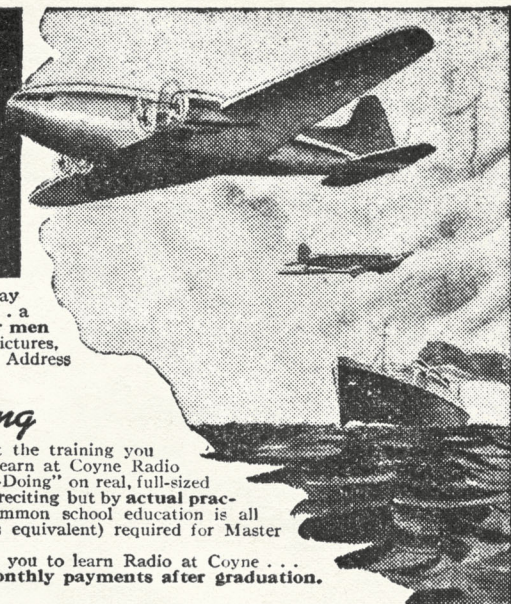
STEADY JOBS ... GREATER OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRAINED MEN

Don't put off your start in Radio any longer! Enjoy better pay (many earn \$35-\$40-\$50 a week) and up ... steadier work ... a brighter future. Big-time opportunities are waiting in Radio for men who are trained. Get into Radio Broadcasting, Talking Pictures, Television, Radio Servicing, Auto Radio, Electronics, Public Address System Work, Police and Aircraft Radio, Ship Radio.

I'll Finance Your Training

Mail coupon now for all details of my plans to help you get the training you need. Lists below show just a small part of what you will learn at Coyne Radio School. It's easy ... interesting ... practical. You "Learn-By-Doing" on real, full-sized radio equipment ... not by correspondence or by classroom reciting but by actual practical work. Right now, choose which course you want: common school education is all you need for Servicing Course; 2 years high school (or its equivalent) required for Master Operating Course.

Even if you don't have a lot of money, it's still easy for you to learn Radio at Coyne ... because I'll Finance Your Training. Pay tuition in easy monthly payments after graduation. Mail coupon for details.

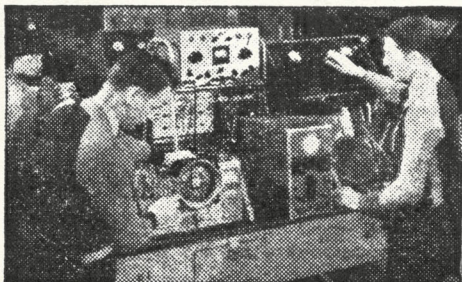


"LEARN BY DOING"

ACTUAL SHOP WORK ON REAL LIVE EQUIPMENT

RADIO SERVICE COURSE

8 WEEKS This condensed, easy course prepares you for a good-pay radio service job. Course includes: Elementary Radio and Electronics • Practical Television • Building and Testing Radio Receivers • Operation and Function of Various Types of Vacuum Tubes, Tuning Coils, Condensers, Transformers, Speakers, Power Supply Units, etc. • Auto Radios • Frequency Modulation Radio Receivers • Principles of Motion Picture Sound Work • Principles of Public Address Systems • Operation and servicing of sound heads, microphones, photo-cells, exciter lamps, lens adjustments, pre-amplifiers, power amplifiers, power speakers, tone controls, etc. • Elementary Acoustics, Etc., etc., etc. Full details in my big, free book.



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Many ambitious fellows work part-time to help out with living expenses while training at Coyne. If you need this part-time work, my Employment Manager will help you get it. After you graduate, my Employment Department will give you FREE LIFETIME EMPLOYMENT SERVICE — and many other services to help you to success.

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RADIO DIVISION

500 S. Paulina St. Dept. 51-5E Chicago

RADIO OPERATING COURSE

5 MONTHS Here is our complete, practical course in Radio. Prepares you for Government Radio Operator's License exam., Radio Telephone 1st Class License exam., Radio Telegraph 2nd Class License exam. **COURSE INCLUDES EVERYTHING COVERED IN 8 WEEKS' COURSE, PLUS:** Handling and operating modern transmitting equipment, including short wave. • Radio Telegraph code practice. • Handling microphones and studio equipment • Construction, operation, care and testing of transmitting equipment • Handling studio programs • Microphone technique • Operation of recording machines, record players, and pick-ups • Frequency Modulation Transmission • Practical operation of radio control desk and remote control • Federal Communication Commission rules and laws • Operation of Mobile Radio Apparatus, Etc., etc., etc. My Big Free Book has complete details.

GET MY BIG NEW BOOK

I have prepared a brand new book called "Your Future in Radio". It tells all about my big Chicago shops and my plans to help you get ahead. Packed with facts and pictures of students at work in my shops. Mail coupon for this Big, New Book now! Coupon will also bring details on how I'll Finance Your Training ... facts on how I help you "Earn-While-Learning" ... information on FREE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE FOR LIFE ... and other plans to help you. ACT NOW TO MAKE SURE YOU GET MY GENEROUS OFFER. Sending for this interesting free book can be your first big step to success. No obligation. No salesman will call. Mail the coupon today.



H. C. Lewis

H. C. LEWIS, President
COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL, Radio Division
500 S. Paulina St., Dept. 51-5E Chicago, Ill.

Please send me your BIG, NEW RADIO BOOK, all details of your courses, and your plans to help me get ahead.

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY.....STATE.....



Vol. II, No. 5

June, 1941

BOOK LENGTH NOVEL

THE MAN WHO WAS MILLIONS

WILLARD E. HAWKINS 10

Millions of men, women and children sharing a single soul — that was Yogarth, the human spirit come down through the ages to possess the race of man in his very being! Shim and Tawanda, Yogarth's companions of the dim past, dare to oppose the Great One, only to find the entire world thrown into an orgy of madness!

THREE ASTOUNDING NOVELETS

LORD OF THE EARTHQUAKE..... LEIGH BRACKETT 60

Krim and Langham are cast through a Hole in the stream of time, into the realm of prehistoric Mu—to the last days of a continent about to disappear forever! There they find unparalleled adventure on ground that constantly rocked beneath their feet!

THE WORLD IN WILDERNESS..... THORNTON AYRE 82

Two mighty suns of space crash head-on millions of light-years away—Nick and Blake return from their spacial observations of the phenomenon to find themselves the only living men—for in some inexplorable fashion, every soul on Earth had vanished, leaving not a trace of animal life!

AN OLD MARTIAN PROVERB..... JOHN M. TAYLOR 49

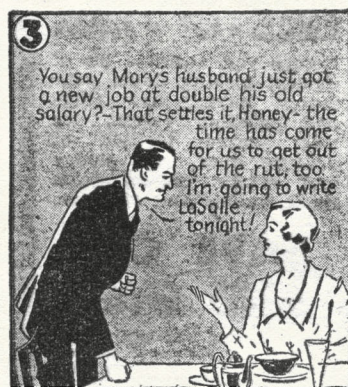
The Martians are a friendly lot, Clyde and Reid discover, except for Thullav and his followers, who like to act out nursery rhymes and old proverbs—and set fire to gun cartridges!

SPECIAL DEPARTMENT

THE FANTASY FAN 80

SCIENCE FICTION, published every other month by COLUMBIA PUBLICATIONS INC. 1 Appleton Street, Holyoke, Mass. Editorial and executive offices at 60 Hudson St., New York, N. Y. Application for second class entry pending at the Post Office at Holyoke, Mass. Copyright 1941 by COLUMBIA PUBLICATIONS, INC. Single copy 15c, yearly subscription 75c. Printed in the U. S. A.

When jobs are looking for men -that's news!



..... NOW IS THE TIME!

RIGHT now, in many lines there is a search for really good men—managers, leaders—men who can take charge of departments, businesses, branch offices, and set things humming.

As always, there are not enough ordinary jobs to go 'round—but rarely before in the history of American business, has there been so much room at the top!

Ordinarily, there would be plenty of men to fill these jobs—men in junior positions who have been studying in spare time. But most men have been letting their training slide during these dark years of depression . . . "What's the use?"—You have heard them say. Perhaps there has been some excuse for sticking to any old kind of a job one could get the past few years—but the door is wide open for the man with ambition **NOW!**

And don't let anyone tell you that "Opportunity Only Knocks Once"—that's one of the most untruthful sayings ever circulated. Opportunities flourish for every American

every day of his life.

Far more to the point is to be ready—be prepared—to make yourself interesting to the big-time employer—and, LaSalle offers you a short-cut method of qualifying for opportunity jobs in accounting, law, traffic, executive management, and kindred occupations.

LaSalle Extension is 30 years old—over 30,000 students enroll annually—60 American firms each employ 500 or more LaSalle-trained men—surveys show that average LaSalle students attain good salary increases after graduation—nearly 10% of all C. P. A.'s in the U. S. A. are LaSalle alumni.

Why not find out what LaSalle has done and is doing for men in your position? Send and get the facts; see what LaSalle can do for you personally!

There's no question about it—jobs are looking for trained men—the time has come for you to qualify for future prosperity. Mail this coupon today!

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY, A Correspondence Institution, Dept. 572-R, Chicago

Kindly send me your free booklet on the business field I have checked—and tell me how your training in that field can help me.

☐ Business Management
☐ Business English

☐ Business Correspondence
☐ Traffic Management

☐ Salesmanship
☐ Accountancy

☐ Law
☐ Bookkeeping
☐ Stenotypy

Name

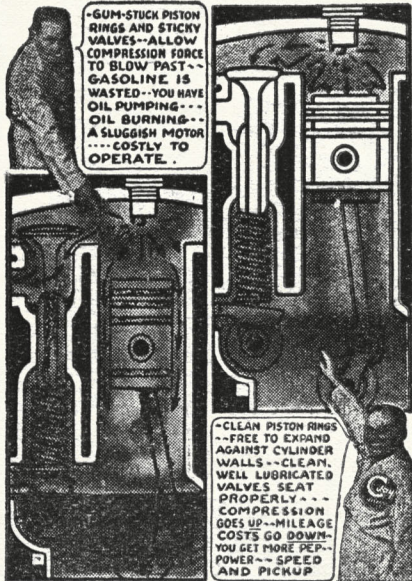
Position

Address

Age

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IF YOUR CAR HAS ANY OF THESE MOTOR TROUBLES



Sluggishness—Low Gas Mileage—Knocks on Hills—Hard Starting—No Pep — Stalling — Low Compression
(all due to Engine Deposits)

SEND COUPON TODAY

**FOR FULL-SIZED PACKAGE
FREE - OF - RISK**

Before you spend a lot of money, tearing down your motor, buying new rings and grinding valves, use this proved method of purging gum, wax, sludge and sticky carbon from rings, valves and oil lines.



SAVE OIL AND GAS

Amazing Results Quickly

There's no guesswork about the results of the "C and Jay Super Motor Tune-Up Service." Within 20 minutes after this remarkable product is used in your motor, you can see the benefits both in increased compression and on your speedometer. A single application lasts about 8,000 miles.

BACKED BY 20 YEARS' EXPERIENCE

The names of Craver and Jay have been favorably known to the automotive industry for nearly a quarter of a century. The "C and Jay Super Motor Tune-Up Service" was developed and perfected to meet the demands of millions of motorists with oil and gas eating cars and fleet owners as one of the great discoveries to lower car and truck upkeep costs. Sells for less than a filling of oil—and makes friends wherever introduced. Exclusive territories open on a fully protected basis.

Exclusive Money-Making Territories Now Open

To men of ambition between the ages of 26 and 60 years, we offer a real opportunity to connect with this fast growing, well-established organization. Pleasant contacts with well-rated jobbers and helping their salesmen call on garages, fleet owners, repair shops and automobile dealers, etc., and seeing that dealers are supplied with C and Jay advertising displays. Qualified automotive jobbers are supplied on open account and our direct factory representatives receive their earnings monthly on a regular basis. Exceedingly interesting merchandising deals for jobbers, jobbers' salesmen and dealers' floor servicemen already have indicated C and Jay will be exceedingly profitable to any one holding the exclusive C and Jay territory.

PHONE, WRITE OR WIRE. Let us show you how you can get started with us. The market is there—we have the product. You may be one of the very men we need. Write, wire or phone today.

CRAVER-JAY CORP., Dept. 14-51X, Kansas City, Mo.

References — Automotive Trades Association, Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, any bank or trust company.

ENDORSED BY MECHANICS AND AUTOMOTIVE ENGINEERS

The "C" and Jay Super Motor Tune-Up Service" has been especially designed to take the place of old-fashioned, costly methods of tearing down motors. Created by experienced automotive engineers. Put through most exhaustive laboratory and road tests, C and J now has the **UNQUALIFIED ENDORSEMENT** of automobile dealers, truck operators and motor car manufacturers who are now being supplied. Give your car new power, pep and top speed. Cut oil and gas consumption. Increase the life and use of your motor.

If your motor has lost power, pep and top speed—if oil and gas bills are a drain on your pocketbook—if compression is low due to stuck rings and valves, use this modern method of removing power-stealing substances present in oils and gasoline. Simple and quick to use. No special tools needed.

Rush Coupon for Full Size Free-of-Risk Offer

If your car is gum-choked, wasting gas and oil, we want you to test a full-size package of the "C and Jay Super Motor Tune-up Service" without risk on your part. Let it prove to you, as it has to thousands of other car and truck owners, how you can condition your motor in a few minutes' time without any special tools. Send no money. Just mail the coupon today.

CRAVER-JAY CORP.

Dept. 14-51X, Kansas City, Mo.

MAIL THIS COUPON TODAY

CRAVER-JAY CORP.
Dept. 14-51X,
Kansas City, Mo.

(Paste on
postcard
and mail)

I want to take advantage of your **FULL-SIZE PACKAGE, FREE-OF-RISK OFFER.** Also tell me how I can make **BIG** money on C and Jay.

Name

Address

CityState



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

I WILL SEND A SAMPLE LESSON FREE to PROVE I can Train You at Home in Spare Time for GOOD RADIO JOBS

I Trained These Men



**Chief Operator
Broadcasting
Station**

Before I completed your lessons, I obtained my Radio Broadcast Operator's license and immediately joined Station WMPC where I am now Chief Operator. **HOLLIS F. HAYES**, 327 Madison St., Lapeer, Michigan.

**Makes \$50 to
\$60 a Week**

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



**\$10 to \$25 a
Week in Spare
Time**

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

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

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

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

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

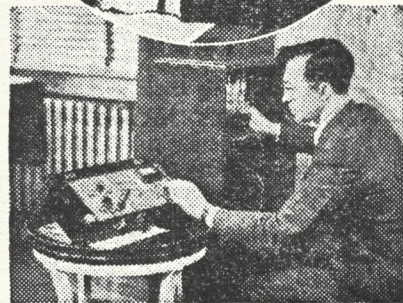
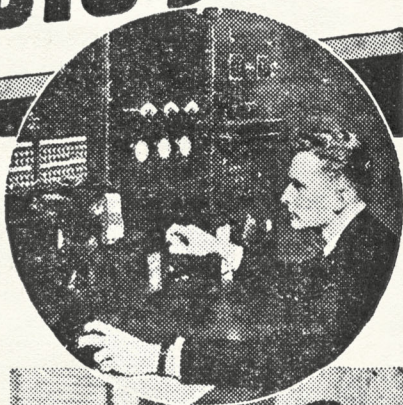
BEGINNERS QUICKLY LEARN TO EARN \$5 TO \$10 A WEEK EXTRA IN SPARE TIME

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

MAIL THE COUPON BELOW

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

J. E. Smith, President
Dept. 1EA2, National Radio Institute
Washington, D. C.



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

**Mail Coupon
Now!**



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

**Mr. J. E. Smith, President, Dept. 1EA2
NATIONAL RADIO INSTITUTE, Washington, D. C.**

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

Name Age

Address

City State.....2FR

WHAT MYSTERIOUS POWER LIES WITHIN THIS RING?



**YOUR SEARCH
HAS ENDED!**

**THE SECRET AT
LAST REVEALED!**

POWER! MONEY! SUCCESS! LOVE! HEALTH! HAPPINESS! For countless generations, man has sought all these things but *only to a few* have all of them been given! The Ancients believed that *all* of them could be acquired by every man and woman if the *Key to the Universal Truth* could be found.

Even today there are people who believe, that they have found this Key to Power and claim that the secret lies in the use of MYRRH as proven by their own successes.

MANY MYSTICAL POWERS

were attributed to MYRRH as far back as the time of Moses and reference to it may be found in Exodus, Chapt. XXX, Verse 34. The ancient Sassamans, Zoroastrians and Egyptians used it in strange rituals which they claimed induced the vibration of a Lucky Planet toward them; and followed them into the Astral Plane of Good Fortune and Success.

Old Folklore manuscripts relate that these ancient Metaphysicists burned an incense made of Myrrh and bathed their hands in its smoke in the belief that whatsoever their hands touched thereafter met with success. Could this have been the source of the seemingly supernatural powers which have been attributed to these ancient Mystics in so many old manuscripts?

THERE ARE MANY WHO BELIEVE

that this is so and accordingly use Myrrh as a Talismanic Symbol of Power. Since followers of this old custom claim that Myrrh *must* be carried in the hands, a beautiful 14 Karat gold plated ring has been designed with a secret compartment in which Myrrh may be placed and kept on the hand at all times.

STRANGE, ALMOST FANTASTIC INCIDENTS

are related about this Talismanic Ring in Folklore, Legend and Tradition. It has been written that the hand which wore the Talismanic Ring with Myrrh won at the Wheel of Fortune, Brought Success to contracts and other written documents, brought Favor to requests for Jobs, Gifts, Money and other petitions; gave Power to overcome obstacles and hidden fears.

WE GUARANTEE

that you will be in every way satisfied with the beautiful Rings which we offer—not at their originally labelled price of \$5.00 but for the amazingly low price of \$1.97. Each ring has a Hidden, secret compartment in the top which contains genuine imported Myrrh.

USE THIS COUPON

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890 Sixth Ave., Dept. DA-6
New York, N. Y.

I have read your offer and Guarantee and would like to have a genuine 14K gold plated Ring with Secret Compartment containing genuine imported Myrrh—ready to wear. I understand that this will cost me only \$1.97 instead of the label price of \$5.00.

- ☐ I enclose \$1.97 Money Order. Please send PREPAID and enclose FREE Talismanic Seal and Psalm.
- ☐ Send C.O.D. I will pay postman \$1.97 PLUS Postal charges on delivery. (NOTE: No Free Talismanic Seal on C.O.D. Orders.)

Name.....

Address.....

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

SEND NO MONEY!

NOW! GET BIG HUSKY MUSCLES

WITH NEW
37 FEATURE BODY
BUILDER

OK! AMERICA
LET'S GET
IN SHAPE!



Posed by Professional Model

HERE'S WHAT YOU GET

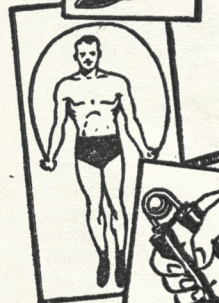
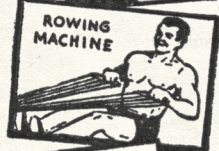
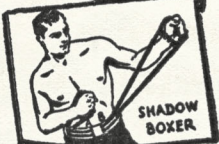
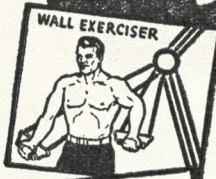
Send No Money Now

With the complete HERCULES MUSCLE BUILDING TRAINING COURSE you get everything needed to whip yourself into superb shape and at the same time learn the inside tricks of physical culture. You get a big, husky TEN CABLE EXERCISER adjustable to 200 pounds resistance. These adjustable cables allow graduated and regulated muscle development. You can start with but 4 or 5 cables and gradually add on more as you feel yourself getting stronger.

In addition, you get real durable TEN CABLE HANDLES... actually built for ten cables and not two five-cable exercises. All cables are woven in tough extra heavy strands to give long life.

The WALL EXERCISER equipment is an ideal builder of big biceps, strong backs, stomach muscles... great for reducing waistline.

If you like boxing you will find the SHADOW BOXER just the thing you need. A regulation SKIP ROPE is also supplied. ROWING MACHINE ATTACHMENTS for back and shoulder muscles. HEAD HARNESS and FOOT HARNESS (adjustable) for strong neck and ankles. Heavy-duty HAND GRIP like boxers use. Food Facts for vitality. How to develop chest expansion. What to do for strong legs. Special feature for men only. Comprehensive illustrated charts. How to get strong. Muscle gauge to test your own strength. Special 30-day training program. What to do each day. Jiu Jitsu and wrestling holds. Popularity. Success. Here is everything you could possibly need to give you that strong healthy body you have always wanted.



TRAINING FOR MEN ONLY HOW TO GET STRONG

Can You Qualify as PHYSICAL DIRECTOR?

Are you physically equipped to teach and train physical development exercises and conduct mass calisthenics? America will need thousands of qualified physical directors as part of the vast new National Defense and Health Program. Right now, many large industrial organizations are planning regulated physical training for employees. The call is already going out for qualified and competent instructors...men who know how to lead others in building strong, healthy, rugged bodies. ARE YOU READY?

You can't hope to be eligible for one of these good-pay jobs if you are thin, weak and puny. Nor can you make the grade if you are big, soft and flabby! Why not whip yourself into shape now. GET YOUR HERCULES OUTFIT TODAY.

You get all this for only \$3.49. Think of it. Practically a complete gymnasium right in your own home. Send no money now. Just fill out the coupon below with your name and address and we will ship everything out by return mail. When package arrives, pay postman only \$3.49, plus postal charges. Outside U. S. cash with orders. Institute for Physical Development, 39 W. 60th St. (Dept. E-84), New York, N. Y.

\$3.49
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New York, N. Y.

Please rush me the complete Hercules Muscle Building Training Outfit by return mail. I will pay postman \$3.49, plus postal charges when package arrives.

Name.....
Street.....
City..... State.....

THE MAN WHO WAS MILLIONS

By WILLARD E. HAWKINS

Through the ages came the spirit of Yogarth—the human soul that played God—spreading its being into the brains of millions! Soon all Mankind would come under the dictatorship of the ancient Hindu—for Yogarth would be humanity! Only Shim and Tawanda, his companions of all eternity, have the knowledge or the will to oppose the unseen conquest!

CHAPTER I THE STOLEN FORMULA

“I’m glad you came early, Zella. I could hardly wait to show you this.” Dave Dren-

nan dropped before his laboratory assistant a sheet of paper filled with a neat array of figures and chemical symbols. His eyes were bright with fatigue and triumph.



AN ASTOUNDING NEW NOVEL



Suddenly, men, women and children went berserk!

"There, Zella—" he tapped the paper almost reverently—"you see the boiled-down essence of three years of intensive work. Zellanite—a motor fuel inconceivably more efficient than any other yet developed by man."

The girl picked up the sheet and studied the symbols.

"So this is Zellanite," she murmured.

"Named for you," he reminded her—a tremor in his voice. "I—I could

scarcely do less, after all your help and encouragement."

"This is the only copy?"

"Yes. I'll have you make others, of course. But not today. Suppose we close up shop and relax—take a holiday—see what it's like to behave like normal human beings. We could motor down to the beach—bathe and lie on the sand. And tonight we could take in a show—or dance. Jove! It's been so long since I've done any-

thing but work twenty hours a day that—Oh, just a minute! I'd better take that."

For Zella Winlow was calmly folding into her purse the sheet of paper containing the formula.

Drennan's face flushed with embarrassment as she turned and walked swiftly down the narrow laboratory aisle.

"Zella! Please!" he cried out, starting after her.

He would have caught her by the arm, had not his own arms been suddenly pinned in a grip of steel. He twisted around to discover an impassive face towering over him. Immediately behind stood a second intruder, ready to take a hand if need arose.

The devastating truth burst upon him in a flash, stunning him, paralyzing him. Zella Winlow, his lovely assistant—his coworker for more than a year past—the girl, if truth be acknowledged, who had become inextricably entwined with his dreams—was a spy! She had worked herself into his confidence—into his heart—so that she might betray him.

Abruptly the paralysis vanished and Drennan went berserk. With a lunge that sent an equipment rack crashing, he wrenched free from the grasp of the intruder, then swung at his jaw. Both men closed on him. In a moment, that section of the laboratory was a mass of wreckage. The men were powerful, but for a brief period they had their hands full in subduing the furiously aroused young scientist.

Inevitably, in the end, they conquered. Unemotionally and efficiently they pinned his arms to his sides. Then, half dragging, half supporting him, they started toward the door.

The path leading from the entrance of the bungalow laboratory to the

street was well screened by vegetation. Its isolation, in a suburban district of Los Angeles, had been one of Drennan's reasons for choosing the place.

As the trio emerged on the pathway, Drennan's captors paused, as if sensing the approach of danger. Then, as a lanky figure swung into view on the path ahead, they urged him forward.

In the moment that he recognized the newcomer, Drennan caught sight of a girlish figure stepping into a taxicab at the curb.

"Harry—stop her! It's Zella. She—!"

Harry Flint's bewildered senses took in the general situation, but not the words. He started forward at a run and lunged at one of the thugs. His onslaught gave Drennan an opportunity to renew his own battle for freedom.

The two young men, though outclassed in weight, were giving a good account of themselves. But the battle was brought to a sudden close when a man in chauffeur's uniform ran down the path and deftly landed the heavy end of a wrench on Drennan's skull.

CONSCIOUSNESS slowly returned to Drennan through a blur of jolting agony. Above the throbbing pain in his head, he became aware of motion. He was crowded into a corner of the darkened taxi. Across from him sat a blurred and disheveled version of his friend Harry Flint, while the heavy arm of his captor rested over his shoulders.

Flint's lips—bloody from the battle—twisted into a sardonic grin as Drennan blinked at him.

"What—? What—?" demanded the scientist. Then, as memory re-

turned: "Zella!" he gasped. "Where—?"

He struggled unsuccessfully to rise.

"Easy there," Flint observed. "I don't know what this is all about, but there's no use struggling — now. Maybe you can give me some idea of what I stepped into. These mugs are about as communicative as oysters."

"It's simple enough," retorted Drennan; "but damned serious—to me. I completed the formula last night—you know something of what I've been doing. And this morning Zella—with the help of these bruisers—calmly stole it."

"Zella!" Flint's tone was incredulous.

Drennan nodded bitterly. "Yes. A dirty little spy. It's incredible—I'd have staked my soul on her. My God! Harry — I still can't believe it!"

Despairingly, he dropped his throbbing head in his hands.

"Any chance of getting a line on where you're taking us?" Flint demanded.

The men facing him replied calmly: "You will be told everything in good time."

"They *can* talk!" exclaimed Flint, in mock surprise.

Neither of the captors revealed any annoyance at his sarcasm, but when he leaned over to peer beneath the window shade, one of them drew it a trifle lower. Neither of the two looked like a criminal. Undistinguished except for their size, they appeared commonplace, rather than vicious.

"There's something screwy about this," mused Flint. "Zella was the perfect assistant—loyal to the drop of a hat, devoted—so devoted that—well, hang it, Dave, I've sometimes

wondered if you were so lost in your work that you couldn't realize the young lady was—in love with her boss."

"Shut up!" Drennan's lips tightened in pain. Then, after a moment: "I'm sorry, Harry. That just caught me in the raw. I'm grateful—and sorry that you had to be dragged into this. What I can't understand—"

He stopped, glancing uncertainly at the stolid countenances of their captors.

"They're soaking this all in," warned Flint.

"Let them! What I started to say was that I can't quite understand their taking me along. They've got the formula—what more do they want?"

"That's easy. They're going to see that you don't reproduce it for some one else. But what they want of me—"

"You're the only witness. You'd have given the alarm and put the police on their trail."

"I guess that's it," acknowledged Flint.

CHAPTER II

THE SILENT ONES

THE car sped on. Drennan, his head still throbbing, tried to review the thirteen months of his close association with Zella. She had come to him on the recommendation of Senator Wheelan, who was intensely interested in the development of the atomic motor fuel and to whom Drennan expected to deliver his report for submission to Washington. The scientist sought to remember some inadvertent act or word of hers that would give a clue

to the sinister influences back of her. He could recall none.

But it was useless to wonder, or to bemoan the past. One thing remained—to recover the formula, whatever the hands into which it had fallen. If it had been stolen by a foreign power—the most likely assumption—the possession of this new fuel for tanks, airplanes, explosives, would give that country an enormous advantage in time of war—or even in peace.

The car abruptly stopped; the guards opened the doors. As all four stepped out, Drennan glanced sharply around.

They had stopped beside an isolated boathouse. Adjacent to the wharf was a waiting launch. A second launch was already drawing away over the distant waves. Drennan felt sure that one of its two passengers was a girl.

The guards transferred their prisoners to the waiting launch — and Drennan, his eyes on the other craft, offered no resistance. In a moment, they were bounding toward the open sea.

Apparently no attempt was being made to keep the destination secret. Flint's alert eyes took in the outlines of the coast, and though he said nothing, it was probable that he recognized the locality. To Drennan it might have been any section of the beach.

The launch followed the coast line for several miles, then swung away. Eventually it seemed to be approaching a cloudy mass on the horizon.

"I know that place," Flint shouted, above the din of wind, wave, and motor. "It's an island—Duffer's or Druffer's, or some such name. Owned by some millionaire."

Drennan nodded. He was peering ahead, trying to focus his eyes on the

other launch, which had become a mere bobbing speck and finally was lost against the background of the island.

IN a few moments, their own craft swung into the comparatively calm waters of a small bay, and was deftly maneuvered to a stop. The other launch, now empty, had been fastened against the wharf. At the end of a winding stair-like path, the doors of a huge turreted structure were closing behind a feminine figure.

The guards started toward the castle, indicating that Flint and Drennan were to follow. There seemed no point in disobeying. An opportunity for escape might occur later; nothing could be gained by starting a fuss now.

The path wound upward through a rock garden of rugged beauty. At their approach, the massive doors swung open. A servant in livery appeared. In dignified silence, he stood aside for them to enter, then conducted them up a broad stairway to a third-floor apartment. The suite was richly furnished, with lounging room, bath and bedroom.

"Luncheon will be served in a few moments," the servant observed, with courteous inflection. "If you desire anything, please ring the bell."

"We'd like to know right now who runs this place—and when we're going to see him."

"You will no doubt be entertained by Mr. Drukker at luncheon," replied the servant, as he closed the door.

The two looked at each other, bewildered.

"Well," observed Flint. "We're here."

"Sure. We're here because we're here, I guess. Anyway I can't figure

out any more sensible reason. Honestly, Harry, what do you make of it?—of this place?—all these silent people? Is there something unnatural about it—or is it just that I'm light-headed from that rap on my coco?"

Flint hesitated. "Dave, I'm going to admit something. It's got me scared stiff. The whole thing is screwy."

"I know." Drennan struggled for expression. "It's — it's the people. They don't seem—real. Not but what they're solid enough." Gingerly he touched the aching bruise on his head. "But they don't act human. They're too coldly efficient. Too — well, why doesn't anyone talk?"

"They do talk."

"Not to each other."

"You noticed that too?" Flint stared soberly at the carpet. "I was hoping—well, I thought I must be imagining things. Anyway —" he brightened—"according to what that factotum says, we're going to meet the head man at luncheon. Drukker—that's the name of the millionaire owner. Better get busy and clean up."

CHAPTER III

"WE'RE A RACE APART"

BY the time they had more or less removed traces of their recent combat, there came a tap on their door, followed by the entrance of another servant.

"Luncheon is being served."

They followed him to the second floor, which seemed to be devoted to the general living quarters. The dining room was furnished on a scale of quiet magnificence. The table, in a small alcove, was laid with service for three.

As they approached, another door

opened and a well-groomed man of perhaps fifty years hurried toward them.

"My friends—this is indeed a pleasure."

Bewildered by a reception so contrary to their every reasonable expectation, Drennan and Flint allowed themselves in turn to accept the cordial grasp of their host's extended hand.

"You are Mr. Drennan, I take it—and this—your friend, Mr. Flint. Permit me to introduce myself. I am Adolphus Drukker. Shall we be seated?"

It was difficult not to respond to the evident desire of their host to make them feel at ease; but a realization of the incongruity of it all suddenly swept over Drennan. Abruptly he rose to his feet.

"Mr. Drukker," he said sharply. "I've no appetite to eat with a man who sends his spies and hired thugs to steal my life work, beat me, and kidnap myself and my friend. Let's forget this foolishness and bring things to a showdown. What's your game?"

Flint, also, pushed back his chair. "Attaboy, Dave! The rascal had my head whirling for a minute. I'm with you!"

With great deliberation, Drukker rose and faced them. He had lost none of his poise, nor did he seem especially shocked.

"Gentlemen," he said quietly, "it is my intention to explain everything. I do not wonder in the least at your impatience. I can only express the hope that you will feel differently—when you understand."

Uncertainly, Drennan looked at Flint. The calm words made him feel crude—precipitate.

"You mean that?" he demanded.

"You'll explain—what this is all about?"

"Certainly. I would not have brought you here if I had not fully intended —" Drukker paused. A slight flicker of alarm appeared in his eyes. For a moment he stood as if listening intently to something. Then his tone altered.

"I must humbly apologize. An emergency has arisen which demands my immediate presence—in person—at a directors' meeting in Los Angeles. I am compelled to excuse myself. Will you make yourselves perfectly at home?"

As he hastened from the room, a servant met him at the door. Drennan saw him hold a coat while Drukker struggled into the sleeves, and then hand him his hat and cane. With one accord, the two guests hurried to the window. They saw Drukker on the path below, followed by a valet with a traveling bag. Even as he stepped from the wharf to one of the waiting launches, the boatmen were casting off the line.

"Did you ever see the like of that?" gasped Flint. "Gets a telepathic flash from fifty miles away—servants are all ready standing to meet him at the door and at the wharf."

"It's too perfect," returned Drennan grimly. "All planted, if you want my opinion. Saved him from answering our questions—just when he'd agreed to do so."

They turned—and stopped still. Beside the table stood another Adolphus Drukker.

At least, this was the first impression. A second glance told them that the man merely resembled their host closely.

He smiled, "Let me add my apologies to those already expressed," he said. "I am Ernest Drukker. May

I hope to substitute in some measure for my brother?"

Reduced by astonishment practically to a condition of non-resistance, the two returned to the table. Waiters stood at their elbows, offering food that tempted their healthy appetites. It was Ernest Drukker who, leaning back toward the close of the repast, suggested:

"You were assured—by my brother—that your questions would be answered. My answers will be exactly the same as those he would have given."

Drennan stared. How did this man know what his brother had said? "If that's the case, perhaps you can tell us what this is all about."

DRUKKER smiled. "By which I assume that you mean: For what reason were you brought here? What do we intend to do with you? Who are we?"

"That just about expresses it — for a starter, anyway."

"Shall I take up the last question first? There is a saying, 'What can't be cured must be endured.' You do not struggle against the wetness of the sea, the hardness of the rock, the forces of gravity, the inevitability of death. Much as you may be inconvenienced by these things, you accept them as unavoidable."

"I don't get your drift."

"The meaning is this: When you have realized that we are invincible, then, as an intelligent person, you will accept the fact and make the best of it. As a consequence, everything will be so much more pleasant. For, believe me, Mr. Drennan, we are not your enemies. You are a brilliant young man and we can give you unbounded opportunity to use your talents. This assurance applies equally to you, Mr. Flint. And in

time you will both discover that the world has become a better place in which to live, under our rule."

"Your rule!" Startled, Flint repeated the words.

Drukker nodded gravely. "Yes, our rule. For the world has already, without its knowledge, passed under our control—under the control of the Great One."

A chill raced the length of Drennan's spine. The statement was preposterous, of course, but the matter-of-fact way in which it was uttered—the strange atmosphere that pervaded the castle—the evidences of wealth and purpose behind it all—impressed him in spite of his common sense.

"Is this—Great One of whom you speak, your brother?"

"Yes—and no. He is—In time you will understand. Perhaps already you have noticed things about us—things which seemed strange from your point of view?"

"We've noticed that you seem to communicate—the servants—you and your brother—those bruisers who kidnaped us—by some sort of telepathy. Is that right?"

"It is more than telepathy—yet the word will answer. And if I admit to you that there are an enormous number of us—men, women, and children of all races and all countries—bound together as one in this bond of communication—what do you say?"

"If anything like that is going on, I'll say the world is in a devil of a fix," returned Drennan levelly. "One thing I'd like to know. How long—has Miss Winlow been in on this?"

"The little eighthling? A strange question, Mr. Drennan. But you will understand later. Would you like to see her?"

"Very much," Drennan answered grimly.

"And she will be delighted to see you," was the cool rejoinder. "Suppose we join her for a walk. The grounds are well worth seeing at this season of the year."

As they started down the broad stairway, Flint touched his friend's arm significantly. They fell a few steps behind.

"There's only one boat left at the wharf," muttered Flint. "I can operate it. Be ready for a quick getaway."

Drennan hesitated. Zella—apparently summoned by the strange telepathic communication of these creatures—was waiting in the hall below. He made a sudden resolve. "O. K.," he muttered, and they hurried down to where Drukker and Zella awaited them.

She seemed incredibly at ease.

"Hello, Dave," she said demurely. "And how do you do, Mr. Flint. It was nice of you to want to see me."

Drennan devoured her with his eyes. Suddenly he caught her wrists and compelled her to face him.

"Zella!" he commanded. "Look me in the eyes!"

Her gaze was as innocent and untroubled as a child's. "What is it, Dave? Have I done something?"

"Done something! Are you crazy? Isn't it 'something' that you've betrayed me—that you've stolen my work of years—that you—?"

With a dismal sense of futility, he released her.

"You will understand, dear," she told him compassionately. "It was for the best. The formula is safe. Don't worry, Dave. It's all right."

She spoke with evident sincerity. He groaned. "Come on," he said hopelessly, and they stepped out into the sunlight.

Drukker offered no objection when Flint turned down the stair-like pathway to the wharf. He seemed intent only on entertaining them as honored guests. Drennan fell in beside the man. His voice was harsh with bitterness. "You've got her all right. I suppose we're next. But you won't succeed. If ever I find myself coming under the spell—under whatever power you have over people's minds—I'll kill myself—but not till I've accounted for a number of you, too."

Drukker seemed genuinely amused. "You do not realize how quaint that sounds to our ears," he observed. "You may calm your fears. We do not steal people's minds. We are a race apart."

"But you are not above stealing the fruits of their minds!" retorted Drennan savagely.

"All forces of nature are ruthless. The Great One seeks only to consolidate his power. Under his reign wars will cease, there will be no strife, no destitution."

"Are you implying some sort of dictatorship?"

"A dictatorship such as the world has never known—a rule of iron, against which resistance will be unthinkable—yet a rule of wisdom."

They had reached the wharf. Flint turned. "Do you know what I think?" he demanded.

"No; but I am interested."

"I think you're a psychopathic case. I think you've got delusions of grandeur."

AS he spoke, Flint suddenly swung on the boatman. The man was felled by the impact of a crashing left to the jaw.

The instant Flint sprang into action, Drennan seized Zella in his arms and swung her into the launch. While

Flint leaped aboard and turned his attention to the starter, Drennan struggled with the rope which moored the craft to the wharf. Drukker attempted to grapple with him and he twisted furiously, shoving the man away with all his strength. He saw Drukker fall heavily over the edge as he leaped into the launch, forcing Zella back onto the seat.

Flint's face was strained. He was having difficulty with the starter. And now, from the rock garden, from the castle itself, and from the slope below, figures were running, converging toward the wharf. Drennan groaned. Again Flint spun the starter. The little craft plunged crazily away just as one of the gardeners made a flying leap toward them.

Almost by a miracle, Flint managed to clear the rocks at the inlet opening, and headed toward the open sea.

He was shouting something. Drennan leaned over to hear.

"You idiot!" Flint flung into his face. "Why'd you bring her? We'll never make it now!"

The scientist recoiled. In that instant he realized his blunder. The girl was a menace. Undoubtedly she was sending telepathic messages every minute, acquainting the others with their position. Very likely several craft were already putting out from the mainland to head them off.

He turned toward her.

"Zella!" he shouted, pleadingly. "Try—try to break away. You're out here—with me—away from their power. Try to throw off the influence—won't you?"

She drew his head down until their lips met.

"Poor, poor Dave," she murmured. "I love you so."

"And you will—you have broken

away—from this terrible thing back there?"

"There isn't anything terrible back there, Dave. They—" she paused and shrank away. For a moment there seemed a brief realization of horror in her expression. "They've taken his body from the water—he's dead. His head struck something—when you pushed him over."

In the mingled emotions of that instant, Drennan scarcely knew whether his sense of dismay was greater at the thought of himself as a killer, or at this revelation of Zella's telepathic communication with the menace of Drukker's Island.

He shouted to Flint.

"Did you hear that? We—I killed Drukker. He's dead."

Flint nodded understanding. A gentle hand crept soothingly over Drennan's tightly clenched fist. "It doesn't matter," she assured him. "His place can be filled."

He looked at her incredulously. "Doesn't matter? Killing a man doesn't matter? Does human life mean nothing to you?"

"Oh, very much. But the life of an individual—that is nothing."

He would have asked her more, but a shout from Flint drew his attention. Two launches were bearing down on them from the direction of the coast.

"They're after us," Flint called grimly. "But I think I can make it interesting. Hang on—we're going places!"

CHAPTER IV

DR. FU YIN

THE anticipated race failed to materialize. The two craft did not attempt to compete with their burst of speed, and after

a moment, Flint slowed down. Perhaps, after all, the boats were merely passing by chance. But this theory was shattered with Zella's next words.

"They will not race you," she observed complacently, "because your fuel is nearly exhausted. When it is gone they will tow you back to the island."

With a gasp, Flint bent over the fuel gage.

"She's right," he announced. "In ten minutes we'll be stalled."

"Is there enough to take us back—where the launches are waiting?" Drennan asked.

"I guess so."

"Then let's swing around. I'd rather give up than prolong this ghastly farce."

"You mean—" Flint's voice was shrill with incredulity. "You mean—give up without a struggle?"

"Certainly. Why struggle? What's the use?"

Flint met the steady gaze of his friend, and suddenly the light dawned.

"I get you," he said briefly. "Sure. We're sunk. No use putting up a fight."

Whether this by-play had convinced Zella, they had no way of telling. At any rate, the idea was sound. Whatever Zella thought as to their intentions, she would probably telegraph to whoever lay in waiting. A surprise attack might give them a chance against superior numbers.

As they drew toward the launches, their ears caught the approach of another motor. From the north, a speed-boat was bearing down on them with terrific velocity. The "Great One" seemed to be taking no chances.

"Surrounded!" Flint's lips shaped the words grimly. Then, deliberately,

he slackened their speed. Better to cope with this craft alone than to delay until all three were upon them.

But the maneuver was in vain. Already the two launches were darting toward them. The three seemed destined to converge on the one little craft at about the same instant. Flint allowed the motor to die and tensed himself for a spring.

Jerking free from Zella's restraining arms, Dave leaped to his feet, crouching as he maintained his balance with feet wide apart. At least they could put up a good fight.

And now the powerful speed-boat, leaping over the waves like a thing demon-possessed—was bearing down upon them—heedless it seemed, of the danger of a head-on collision with the two small craft sweeping in from the opposite direction.

In the moment before the impact, Drennan's eyes had time to take in but few details. The speed-boat, though powerful, was dingy and unpainted. A huge Chinaman, stripped to the waist, leaned far out from the side, clinging to the cabin.

Like a projectile, straight toward their bobbing craft, shot the speed-boat. As he poised himself for a leap at the outswung figure of the Chinaman, Drennan sensed that a crash was inevitable.

THEN, with a concussion that left him gasping, the impact came, and Drennan found himself struggling in mid-air against a powerful arm. The anticipated collision was avoided by a miracle of seamanship. The Chinaman, leaning far out, had swept Drennan from the launch as neatly as a mail sack is caught by the grappling hooks of a passing train.

As they hurtled onward he caught a flashing glimpse of the launch

bobbing in the wash of the larger boat—Flint struggling to regain his footing in the stern, Zella straining after him with upraised arms.

It was all over in a matter of seconds. Through the confusion of his impressions, Drennan was aware that the boat had swung around in a wide arc and was now heading back in the direction from which it had come, leaving the two launches and the debris of a third bobbing far behind on the waves.

Stunned by the impact with the Chinaman's massive frame, Drennan was vaguely aware of one thing. Whatever its purpose, this craft was not an ally of the intangible force from which he had escaped. It might portend no good, but at least it had swooped down in time to snatch him from the grasp of that sinister organization of which Zella evidently was a member.

And now he became aware of a dim figure beckoning to him from well back in the shadowy interior of the low-roofed cabin. He lurched within.

The passenger was a very old Chinaman, his wrinkled, leathery countenance peeping out from a heavy fur coat and cap.

"You are partly known as Mr. Drennan, I believe?"

"Yes," inquiringly.

"This is great good fortune," the Chinaman smiled. "We can be of most important assistance to each other."

"Who are you?"

"My humble name is Fu Yin—Doctor Fu Yin. We are, in certain sense, compatriots in science."

Drennan considered. "I suppose I should be grateful to you, Dr. Fu Yin—for my rescue. But I'm sorry my friends were left behind. More-

over, I haven't the least idea why you did this."

Dr. Fu Yin nodded, voicing a low chuckle.

"Confusion is most natural. As for your friends—they are not in danger. I have been observing you for long time, Mr. Drennan. When my worthy agents reported that certain ones had spirited you away, we lost no time in pursuit."

"You knew—where to look—even before we escaped?"

Once more the aged Chinaman gave voice to a low chuckle.

"There is wise saying that luck favors him who is alert to catch its smile. It was our intention to make reconnaissance near the island, perhaps to land upon it as navigators in distress. While on way to carry out such purpose, my boatman, Chang, whose gift of eyesight is amazingly keen, recognized in approaching launch the two whose abduction he had witnessed at an early hour from viewpoint near your laboratory."

Drennan shook his head. "It's too much for me," he admitted. "First I discover that I've been under the eyes of this other bunch—for no one knows how long—and now, that you've been watching me. What, in heaven's name, is this all about?"

"It is for enlightenment on such questions," assured the old man, "that you are here. But let us wait for more propitious place. Talking in present surroundings presents difficulty."

Exhausted from lack of sleep and a strenuous day, Drennan found the silence a relief. There was plenty to think about, but presently he woke with a start to the realization that he had been asleep. How long, he could only surmise.

The sun was setting behind the Western horizon when they hove to

in the lee of a small, flat, mud-baked island. Its bareness was in decided contrast to the garden spot of Drukker's retreat. And the contrast between Drukker's palatial castle and the cluster of dingy shacks on the island was even greater.

A ramshackle dock extended out over the water. The huge boatman made the boat fast; then he lifted Dr. Fu Yin as if he had been a child.

The old man led the way tottering-ly along the warped planks of the dock. At the end, a wheel-chair was waiting, in which he settled himself stiffly. "Walk beside me," he requested. "Chang will wheel my decrepit bones to their humble abode."

Several men, women, and children of Dr. Fu Yin's race were in evidence near and about the low dwellings of wood and sheet metal—most of them working in neat garden patches. As the wheel-chair squeaked slowly up the slope, they looked up with smiling greetings, to which Dr. Fu Yin chaffingly replied.

The dwelling they entered was no more prepossessing than others surrounding it, but the interior was comfortably furnished and clean. There were a few old-fashioned chairs, faded rugs on the board floor, a table supporting a lamp and scattered books, a smoke-darkened fireplace, and shelves filled with well-worn volumes. A few decorated fans and knickknacks furnished the only oriental touches.

Fu Yin opened a door, leading into a cubicle barely furnished with a bed and washstand. "Not the luxury of Drukker Castle, but I assure you it is clean," he observed. "Does not the saying run that the sleeper whose conscience is serene knows not if he rests on a couch in mansion or in hovel?"

They were served presently with

supper—a succulent stew of meat and vegetables—by Ah Sin, a silent oriental who apparently ministered to the doctor's simple needs.

The meal completed, Dr. Fu Yin led the way to the fireplace and settled his frail body in a well-worn chair.

"You may desire to smoke," suggested the old man. "Unlike many of my race, I do not indulge." Then, as Drennan produced his pipe:

"Tonight, my friend, you may hear many things strange to your ears. Shall I evince hope that you will bear patiently with the rambling garrulity of an old man?"

"Fire away," returned his guest succinctly. "Needless to say, I'm all ears."

CHAPTER V

THE BEE HIVE

"**S**TRATEGISTS agree," began Dr. Fu Yin, "that in order to make successful combat one should understand the foe. You, Mr. Drennan, have been somewhat prepared by recent strange adventure. Had I spoken but yesterday of things within your present knowledge, you would have condemned speaker to asylum for mentally deranged."

"I shouldn't wonder."

"It requires great strain on credulity to accept idea than an indefinite number of persons are so linked together in mind that one communicates with the rest over great distances?"

"Yes," admitted Drennan. "I've seen it, but I still scarcely believe the evidence of my senses."

"Reason is a good watchdog," observed Fu Yin; "but let not the watchdog turn away benefactor bear-

ing treasures, as well as prowler who comes to steal."

"I'll try to keep an open mind," responded Drennan dryly.

Fu Yin smiled. "Please forgive roundabout approach to the subject. Have you ever hunted the duck?"

"Hunted ducks?" Drennan could not altogether repress his astonishment at this abrupt change of topic. "Why—yes."

"And have you perhaps observed that the duck, when passing overhead, employs distinctive arrangement of flying wedge?"

"You mean they always fly in a V-shaped formation? Sure. If you pick off the leader, another takes his place."

"And to what do you attribute such characteristic?"

"I suppose it's instinct. The same instinct that causes birds to fly north and return south at certain seasons."

"But this instinct—please to explain nature of same."

"The assumption is that it's due to memories somehow stored up and passed on with the genes and chromosomes which govern the individual type. But aren't we—getting off the subject?"

"Please bear with me, Mr. Drennan. Have you ever observed the bee in his hive?"

"In a general way, yes. Of course instinct is a pronounced factor throughout the insect world."

"Thanks, Mr. Drennan. Now in further taxing of your patience, may I ask you to observe closely?"

Dr. Fu Yin had gained his feet and now produced a square of cloth with several small holes in it, which he pinned to a line extending across the room.

"Now," came his voice from behind the curtain, "report please what you see."

"I see nothing but your fingers sticking through holes in the cloth."

"Is that scientific observation, Mr. Drennan?"

"I don't get you."

"As a scientist do you state what is actually seen or do you draw conclusions? How do you know it is not artificial hand of which fingers appear through apertures?"

"Well, of course—" Drennan smothered an impulse to laugh—"if I were making a strictly factual statement, I would say that I see ten objects shaped like fingers."

"Are fingers connected?"

"Speaking scientifically, I see no connection."

"Excellent! But see, the fingers move. They wiggle, as you would say—this way and that. Will you hand me some object, Mr. Drennan? There is a ball on the shelf at your shoulder."

Drennan extended the sphere.

"Observe," called the old Chinaman. "The fingers have grasped the ball. The fingers exhibit powers of coordination. Each one has fitted into its place. Do you still assert that they move independently of each other?"

"I should have to assume a connection which I do not see, in order to reach any other conclusion."

"But if I allow you to peer behind curtain—as I do now—you are no longer puzzled—eh, Mr. Drennan? There is connection, after all, between the fingers of each hand."

"Yes, of course."

"In fact, ten fingers previously observed are not separate, but parts of one thing—the most humble Dr. Fu Yin?"

"Yes."

"Ah, Mr. Drennan, you speak short. You are impatient with such child's play. I perceive that I must

get quickly to point, or you will, as your people say, walk out on me."

Drennan relaxed with a grin. The old man wasn't so far off in his surmise, at that.

Dr. Fu Yin resumed his seat by the fire.

"After all, Mr. Drennan, have we not assumed reasonable explanation for phenomenon of instinct?"

DRENNAN glanced at him, startled. "You mean that — well, when ducks fly in a V-shape, or birds migrate, or insects go through their remarkable paces, they're connected up somehow, behind the scenes?"

"Behind the curtain — sometimes referred to as veil of matter," suggested Dr. Fu Yin, smiling. "Perhaps, after all, our little game was not in vain.

"Ancient philosophers—who were scientists of their day—knew much of such facts. They called the entity which ruled creatures of same species by such names as the 'group soul.' Modern scientists might prefer a different term—'group intelligence,' or 'collective mind.' Important fact, Drennan, is that every insect species, every category of bird and animal, has its group intelligence. You think of a bee hive as collection of many individuals; but the hive is conscious of itself as single entity. The single bee is a cell in the collective entity, and the hive again is but one expression of the great bee—collective entity which includes all of species. Thus we explain phenomenon of instinct. The young bird has no wisdom in his tiny head which tells him snow and cold are on the way. But age-old group spirit retains this memory and directs the annual flight. The beaver has not enjoyed advantages of education in

engineering school, yet when its first impulse occurs to build a dam, it goes about the task with correct assurance."

"It's an interesting theory." Drennan stirred uneasily. "But still I don't see where it's getting us. Have you any suggestions leading up to definite action?"

The old man chuckled. "I would not have brought you here, Mr. Drennan, for mere dissertation on life of the bee."

"Well, that's a relief. Are you implying that this fellow Drukker somehow functions through the group spirit of mankind?"

Dr. Fu Yin bent forward to stir the embers of the fire. The flames sent eerie shadows over the wrinkled features.

"You leap at conclusions, Mr. Drennan. No—man is not governed by group spirit. Of all animals, he alone is endowed with individual intelligence. He has sacrificed much by rising in evolutionary scale and losing protection of group intelligence, but has gained more. He can think. He can aspire to magnificent attainment of knowledge and progress. His mind is directed from a consciousness which lies within—that of the animal is directed from consciousness which lies without."

Drennan slowly filled his pipe.

"I'll not attempt to argue, Dr. Fu Yin. But—assuming that you are right—if this group intelligence doesn't apply to humanity, I fail to see where Drukker and his gang come in."

Fu Yin's voice grew solemn.

"I will tell you, Mr. Drennan. Man, as I say, achieved the priceless boon of individuality long ages ago. *But a group spirit has found entrance to the stream of mankind. This is the menace which we must combat. Un-*

less circumvented, this devouring entity will undo all the gains achieved by evolution."

For a moment the tiny room was silent. A blackened log in the fireplace fell apart.

"You—expect me to believe that?"

Fu Yin smiled imperturbably.

"All I request, Mr. Drennan, is the open mind. Consider. You find yourself among group of people who possess strange faculty of communication — even at great distance — without words. If thought is entertained by one, it passes to all the others. If isolated member of this group sustains attack, immediately all others in the vicinity hasten to his assistance. When you escaped from the island, what caused two launches immediately to put out from mainland to intercept you? Simple fact, Mr. Drennan, is that these persons are not individuals like yourself. They exist like the bee, as cells in one dominant intelligence."

Drennan felt his lips go dry. The evidence was crushing. It might be true. A wave of nausea overwhelmed him.

"Then Zella—my assistant — she too is one of them—just an outlet for that loathsome group intelligence? The girl I thought I loved just doesn't exist!"

"You had—" the Chinaman spoke with a show of sympathy—"become fond of the little one?"

Drennan nodded miserably. "She worked with me for over a year and never was anything—like this. Then — at the crucial moment — she changed. Something brought her under their influence. Is there any possibility — that she could break away?"

Dr. Fu Yin's black eyes were inscrutable.

"If she is one of them—I see no

hope. Unless—" he paused reflectively—"unless it should develop that the unfortunate one is an eighthling."

"That's it!" Drennan almost shouted. "He called her that—Druker did. What does it mean?"

"Ah, then, Mr. Drennan, I may give you hope. It is very slight—but if desperate chance should succeed—"

"Tell me. I'll do anything to save her. What does it mean?"

The old Chinaman stroked his chin.

"To make the meaning clear, Mr. Drennan, I must go into more explanations. Matters which will seem to you most fantastic."

"I can stand it. Especially if it leads up to some method of combating this horrible thing—of rescuing her."

CHAPTER VI

A WEIRD EXPERIMENT

THE aged Chinaman sank deeper into his chair. In the dim, flickering light, he seemed little more than a voice issuing from its shadows.

"I must require you, Mr. Drennan, to travel back with me more than nine hundred years, to quaint monastery located in northern India. For centuries the studies of this small order had been directed toward scientific investigation. Patient research of these monkish ones had resulted in accumulation of great wisdom; for the priests of this order had acquired ability to pass through the veil of matter and pursue investigations on the inner side of Nature.

"In their visits to the inner side they observed and held communion with group intelligences such as I have described. They learned the

processes of incarnation—how the group spirit of the animal directs its growth and its life, withdrawing again at the death of the animal body. They learned how the human ego, drawn to incarnation, hovers over the pregnant mother, and the process by which it enters the new young body, to be reborn for another cycle of experience in great school of life.

"All these things became known by these scholarly monks. And there were among them some whose initiative led them to undertake daring experiments.

"Three such daring ones—Yogarth, Shim, and Tawanda—evolved most unique conception. They asserted that, under special conditions, the spirit of a single individual might incarnate in two human bodies at the same time. Group spirit of the animal was pointed out as proof of such possibility.

"Two of the friends determined to experiment with such daring conception. Third member of the group, Tawanda, declined to take part, contending that it was unnatural tampering with Nature's laws.

"After many experiments, Yogarth offered himself as living subject for the experiment. Shim, brushing aside the wise counsel of Tawanda, gave himself with enthusiasm to the great undertaking.

"Accordingly, while Yogarth laid down his physical body, Shim remained in the flesh to give necessary assistance. As result of their combined efforts of will, the process of rebirth was greatly accelerated. Instead of waiting several hundred years, Yogarth was enabled to incarnate in very short time.

"To make story short, my friend, the two daring ones succeeded—though with great difficulty—in di-

viding Yogarth's spiritual essence and entering not one, but two unborn bodies.

"Shim lived long enough to see two human beings—one male and the other female—with but a single soul between them, grow to adult years. Although the two beings achieved birth many miles apart, yet through the mind-stuff of their common intelligence, they were constantly aware of each other, and as they grew to adult years, great yearnings drew them together in the body.

"Eventually they achieved the long-desired union. The two became lovers—and their love was perhaps most perfect the world has ever known. Conceive of man and woman between whom strife or difference of opinion is impossible. Neither could desire anything which was not equally desired by the other, and neither could think of anything which was not equally shared by the companion, wherever located.

"When it became evident that the two were to become parents of a child, Yogarth determined to carry the experiment further by incarnating a portion of his soul substance in the coming body.

"At this, Shim offered objection, for he was oppressed by Tawanda's warning that no good would come of such unnatural violation of the law. Yet he was at length prevailed upon. How could there be wrong, cunningly argued Yogarth, in an experiment which produced only happiness? Never had lovers existed who experienced such a paradise of delight in each other. And what more could be asked to complete their happiness than the fruition of their desires for a son like themselves—a being who thought in unison with his parents and lived for them and they for him?

"SO Shim assisted the entrance of Yogarth's soul substance into the womb of the mother, crowding out the spirit which would normally have thus found rebirth.

"And the child was born, and the happiness of the trio, who thought and lived as one, was as Yogarth had predicted.

"Shim was content that his part in accomplishing such an end had been productive of no wrong. Nevertheless, he announced determination to carry the experiment no further. The theory had been amply demonstrated. Multiple incarnations could be accomplished, and an illustrious chapter of wisdom had been written in man's knowledge of the law.

"When Yogarth next approached him, desiring his assistance in the incarnation of more of his being in a second offspring, he refused. But now occurred unforeseen development. By this time, Yogarth had multiplied himself three-fold. He made discovery that he could so direct the yearnings of the three who were in the body that power of their combined will drew more of his soul substance into the mother's womb and he incarnated himself through the coming child without Shim's assistance.

"By this time Shim had reached advanced age. Dimly foreseeing the shadow of disaster to follow, he laid down his worn-out physical husk and withdrew into the world of the disembodied.

"During period of many generations this weary one rested—for the time between incarnations is occupied by the spirit in assimilating the experiences gained in its brief physical life-span.

"When Shim next awoke in the physical world, he was again a member of the race in which his last life

had been spent. Once more he became a student of the mind. Since knowledge we have mastered in former lives is that which we recover most easily. Shim was enabled to acquire the power previously enjoyed of remembering his former lives.

"Recovery of this ancient knowledge brought with it a renewal of that dread which had so oppressed him when he quitted the body of the monkish scholar. In great apprehension, he investigated consequences of the strange experiment.

"To profound horror of this miserable one, he discovered that the experiment had failed to reach its conclusion with the generation born from Yogarth's first double incarnation. Many children had sprung from that unprecedented union — all of them expressing in physical form the one personality—Yogarth.

"These children had married, and some among them had intermarried. The children in turn were little Yogarths. Even those who found mates outside of immediate line of descent carried on the incarnation of Yogarth's soul substance. By this time it had been so frequently repeated that such inheritance was established as an innate principle. Wherever the Yogarth strain was present in one or both parents, its incarnation in the offspring was assured.

"The original parents had long since died, but instead of passing through normal processes of rest and preparation for new birth, they were merely absorbed back into the overshadowing group spirit. Thus Yogarth had become a vast, self-perpetuating intelligence, manifesting through a growing immensity of human outlets, living, propagating, planning, working intensely in the world of humanity. Beyond the early generations the number grew

beyond counting. The Yogarth clan is now a living single entity, with tentacles reaching into every enterprise, every government, every land. It controls the destiny of humanity. Our unfortunate world is at the mercy of the self-styled Great One!"

CHAPTER VII

OCTOPUS OF HUMANITY

DR. Fu Yin's voice died away on a somber note. With a start, Drennan awoke to awareness of his surroundings. His taut fingers were gripping the arms of his chair. A cold sweat of horror stood out on his brow. Under the spell of the droning voice he seemed to have been living through the whole experience. He looked around the small, dingy room like one in a daze.

"You—mean that we're faced with this bizarre calamity—and can do nothing about it?"

Dr. Fu Yin sighed.

"I do not assert we can do nothing, Mr. Drennan. When I spoke of ancient monkish order, you received no thoughts, no vague impressions?"

"I can only say that it seemed extremely vivid. I wonder—" Drennan started—for suddenly he knew. "You—are Shim!"

The aged Chinaman nodded. "Two lives has this miserable one spent, seeking to undo the harm which he unthinkingly brought into existence. The former life of which I spoke was far too short. A further life was needed to continue necessary research, and this time, as you perceive, the humble ego of being once known as Shim found suitable body for reincarnating in the Chinese race. But alas, again his miserable life-span draws to a close. Should this unworthy savant be compelled to await

a new incarnation, the octopus of Yogarth's multiplied self will engulf humanity. We must strike quickly or forever despair."

"You can count on me, of course. But how?"

"Problem is very difficult," Dr. Fu Yin admitted, starting to rise. "But remember, I have devoted researches throughout two lives to this one purpose. Tomorrow we will discuss procedure."

"Just one thing more," Drennan urged. "You mentioned that there might be some hope of wrenching Zella from their control."

The old man sank back, drawing a shawl over his shoulders. The fire had died down to a few embers.

"When Yogarth principle predominates, the entity which would normally have occupied the body is crowded out. In certain cases, there is but a distant Yogarth strain—as when a child is born of one untainted parent and one who is but partially tainted. In such case the child may be only one-eighth Yogarth and is designated as an eighthling. Unfortunate beings of this class are still within sphere of Yogarth influence, but the control is not sufficient to affect the life of person so afflicted, unless special effort of will is put forth by the group intelligence. Eighthlings, as a consequence, are allowed to lead normal lives, unless emergency arises."

"Then in Zella's case—the emergency arose when they needed her to smooth the way to a theft of my formula?"

Fu Yin nodded. "All evidence indicates that the little one was not under influence of collective mind until she acquired the misfortune of entering your laboratory. The Great One interests himself in work of all scientific persons. It is his design to make all discoveries subject to his pur-

poses. Thus, no doubt, the mind of your assistant was probed from time to time and, on completion of the formula, she was willed to act in disconcerting manner you describe."

Drennan drew a long breath. "Then she herself—the real Zella—is what I believed her to be. And if she can be set free—released from the tentacles of this monstrous creature—"

Dr. Fu Yin struggled to his feet. He placed a hand on the arm of the young scientist.

"Do not let hope soar too high," he advised, "lest a fall dash it on the rocks. Only one release is possible. It lies in desperate chance that the cunning of Fu Yin may prove equal to its task of destroying the well-nigh all-powerful one."

"Then if he *can* be destroyed, count me in. I'm with you even if it means going through hell."

"Figure of speech may prove most aptly chosen," chuckled the Chinaman, as he tottered toward his bedroom.

CHAPTER VIII

A HUMAN BOMB

THE Chinese servant, Ah Sin, opened the door in response to Drennan's sleepy "Come in."

"Doc' Fu Yin say bleakfas'—you come quick?"

Yawning vigorously, the scientist stretched his muscles into wakefulness. Five minutes later, he presented himself in the small living room.

The old Chinaman greeted him from the fireplace. "I trust you enjoyed pleasant sleep?"

"Like a top."

"Our conversation did not exhaust you?"

"On the contrary, it—well, I seem to have wakened with a feeling that the prospect didn't look so black. You've managed to sell me on that group spirit idea, incredible as it is; but after all, this fellow Yogarth is only one man. It may even turn out that the level of intelligence throughout that human beehive isn't very high. Being constantly incarnated in physical form must deprive Yogarth of these rest periods between lives, when you tell me that experiences are assimilated and digested. It must be to some extent like inbreeding—the mind would have a tendency to degenerate—to become sterile."

"This humble being is glad, Mr. Drennan, to hear such pearls of wisdom. Shall we collaborate upon breakfast, while considering course to pursue?" And as they sat down to appetizing bacon and eggs: "Your friend of the boat—would you appreciate privilege of joining him?"

Drennan looked startled. "But that would mean giving myself up! According to Zella—well, Ernest Drukker met his death when I shoved him from the dock. I'm afraid I wouldn't be much help to you in jail."

"Police would not be called," rejoined Fu Yin. "Death of an individual body is mere temporary inconvenience to the collective mind."

"Couldn't we work to better advantage from the outside?"

"When attacking an enemy fortress, would greater effectiveness be gained by planting a bomb within or without?"

"Oh, I see. Then I'm to be the bomb?"

Fu Yin smiled. "I see we understand each other, Mr. Drennan."

At the wharf, Drennan took his departure from the aged Chinaman with real regret.

"I don't know exactly why it is,"

he remarked in some embarrassment as the shriveled hand of the old man slipped from his grasp; "but I—like you, Dr. Fu Yin. It almost seems as if I knew you—from these few hours together—better than most people."

"And I you—friend of the ages—with more reason than you suspect. But we shall meet again."

Some two hours later, the speedboat, manned by the massive Chang and the skillful wheelsman, swung into the bay of Drukker's island. The boat paused only to allow Drennan to leap onto the wharf, then headed out to sea.

Drennan had no more than started up the path when Harry Flint came plunging toward him through the rock garden.

"So!" panted his friend, "they caught you!"

Drennan grinned. "Wrong! I just came back. Unfinished business. I'll try to explain later. Is Drukker here?"

"Adolphus? Yes, he got in last evening. The other one—Say! It was the truth, what Zella told us. The fall croaked him. Head must have struck something. But the funny part—"

He paused. "Go on," urged Drennan.

"Well—you'd think there'd be a big fuss, but actually, it's just as if nothing had happened. These people—they're inhuman—life doesn't seem to mean a thing to them."

"It doesn't," returned Drennan grimly.

Flint glanced at him curiously, but withheld his questions since they had reached the massive entrance doors.

"Take us to Mr. Drukker." Drennan addressed the servant who stood aside to admit them.

"Yes sir. He is expecting you."

They were ushered to a comfort-

able study on the second floor. Adolphus Drukker, suave and composed, stepped forward.

"Glad to have you with us again, Mr. Drennan," he declared with apparent sincerity. "Yet I confess that I am puzzled. Yesterday, you were somewhat—unappreciative of our hospitality. Today you return—of your own free will."

"Yes, of my own free will—" Drennan paused, then on impulse added—"Yogarth."

THERE was a full minute's stillness. Flint's bewildered glance roved from one face to the other. Drukker's countenance lost none of its urbanity, but in the depths of his eyes lurked a gleam of inscrutable emotion.

"I see, Mr. Drennan. You have come—to bargain."

A vague sense of mastery surged over Drennan. Somehow, Yogarth was vulnerable.

"No," he said slowly, "I have no thought of bargaining."

The man—or the brain behind the man—was studying him intently, as if seeking to probe his thoughts.

"That is a pity, Mr. Drennan, because I think we can offer much that would interest you. Now as to that formula—" he smiled deprecatingly.

"It's rather nervy, don't you think, to do your bargaining with stolen goods?"

Drukker shrugged. "Permit me to finish what I started to say. As to the formula—I freely admit that an error was made. The results of your research seemed destined to fall into hands not under our control, so a coup was enacted to forestall the mishap. But the Great One is beyond need of resorting to such measures. The formula will be returned."

"Why this change of attitude?"

Drukker leaned forward persuasively.

"What would you say, Mr. Drennan, at being placed at the head of the greatest research laboratory in the world—with resources beyond your wildest dreams; with unlimited co-workers under your direction? Think of the possibilities. Think of the gain to mankind, of the power and fame."

Drennan did not even feel tempted. "All I can see," he returned, "is a horde of researchers devoting their lives to problems of human advancement, while your octopus-like organism stands ready to gobble up whatever they produce."

"I have not finished," went on Drukker imperturbably. "In addition I offer wealth—wealth such as you never imagined."

"The only emotion aroused in me by such an offer," returned Drennan slowly, "is sadness, because I realize that in all probability you are in a position to make it good."

Drukker eyed him contemplatively.

"This girl—Zella—your assistant. Again a great wrong has been done you, Mr. Drennan. She is an eighthling—not actually one of us, save as we exert a special effort to bring her under the collective will. We can release her. She will return to you. This experience will seem to her but a nightmare, to be forgotten in the arms of the man she adores. You have turned down opportunity and wealth and power. You cannot turn down love—and the soul of the woman who loves you."

So this was the trump card of the Great One! For a moment, Drennan felt himself ablaze with eagerness. To have Zella restored to him—her mind free of this frightful influence—

"Sorry. I'm afraid it's no go."

What moved him to voice the re-

fusal, Drennan could scarcely have told. Yet now that he had spoken he felt no regret.

"I do not want—even this—as a gift from you. Not with the bitter thought ever present that you have your tentacles in her mind—could snatch her away from me at any moment."

Drukker shrugged. "I am afraid," he said, half pityingly, "that you underestimate the power of the Great One."

Drennan met his eyes with a challenging smile.

"That remains to be seen."

CHAPTER IX

DRUKKER SCENTS DANGER

THEY had strolled from the castle, and to a far corner of the rock garden, before Flint released his pent-up emotions.

"Whew!" he gasped. "You had him on the run! What in seven acres have you got on the old rascal?"

Gravely, Drennan shook his head. "Will you believe me, Harry? I haven't the slightest idea. I was as much astonished as you are, when he began to take that line."

Flint sank weakly to a stone coping.

"You called him something. Yogarth. That started it."

"It's true I've learned a few things. I know what we're facing, and it's appalling. But I gained reassurance somehow from Dr. Fu Yin."

"The codger who snatched you out of our speed-boat?"

"Yes—that is, the one who directed it." Drennan turned suddenly, a tremor of awe in his voice. "Harry, this thing started nearly a thousand years ago. By the second generation there were several Yogarths—the reincarnation of one individual in that

many bodies. By the next there were more. I started to figure out the possibilities for myself. When I got down to the fourteenth generation there were over two million; then I quit. At the most conservative estimate there must be millions. They're everywhere. They control governments, corporations, everything. The rest of humanity is doomed. And this communication of theirs—we thought of it as telepathy. It isn't. It's one mind—thinking for all of them."

He paused, noting Flint's befuddled expression.

"Hanged if I know what to say, Dave. The whole thing is beyond me. Anyway, what's the next move?"

"I don't know. I came back because Dr. Fu Yin suggested that it was well to plant your bomb in the enemy's fortress. I'm the bomb. How or when I'm expected to explode, I haven't the slightest idea. But Yogarth—Drukker—evidently senses danger."

As the day progressed, Drennan passed on to Flint as much as the latter was able to absorb of the information he had gained from Dr. Fu Yin in the long fireside conference. They had luncheon and, later, dinner in the spacious dining room, alone except for the servants who attended them. It was difficult to realize that these perfectly trained, obsequious attendants were expressions of the one overruling intelligence.

"As I get it, they think and act like other human beings, except where anything involving the group interest is concerned," Drennan explained, as they talked things over that night before dropping off to sleep. "They're like a hive of bees, actuated by a sort of instinct—each doing what he has been assigned to do. But all the impressions garnered by their senses are relayed back to

the group intelligence, which does their thinking for them. If any specific action is needed, the impulse is relayed on to the one who is to perform it."

"I get you," returned Flint, drowsily. "Same as when you touch a hot stove."

DAY broke on a gray and stormy setting. Angry chopping seas stretched away from the rocky island to a dim horizon. Fitful gusts of rain were borne on the stiff breeze.

When Drennan suggested a stroll down to the wharf, Flint looked dubiously at the prospect. "Pretty raw weather for a pleasure jaunt. Still, anything is better than stagnating inside."

The wind was cold, even through the heavy coats with which an obliging servant provided them. After a few minutes of it, Flint looked longingly at the castle and the shelter it represented.

"You run along," Drennan urged. "I'll wait here."

"Expecting something?" grinned Flint.

Drennan hesitated. "As a matter of fact I am." Then, as the other stared: "It isn't anything concrete—just an impression I had when I woke up this morning. I seemed to have been dreaming about Dr. Fu Yin, and he was saying good-bye."

"Nothing remarkable about that. We all have dreams."

"I know, but this one was extremely vivid and he said it this way: 'Farewell, Tawanda, companion of the ages.'"

A blank look from Flint greeted this.

"Don't you see?" exclaimed Drennan. "He called me Tawanda. I seemed to know that I was Tawanda—the third member of that ancient order.

Yogarth, Shim, and Tawanda—we were together back in that Hindu monastery where all this started. That's why we're up to our necks in it now. Shim—that is, Fu Yin—and I are the only living persons who can combat this human octopus. Now go ahead and say it!"

"I'm beyond saying!"

"Disbelieve all you want to—but Yogarth knows it too," persisted Drennan. "That's why he—his mouthpiece, Drukker—took such a peculiar attitude yesterday. Something about this has him scared."

"You said you were expecting something."

"That's true. This wasn't as clear as the farewell message; but I woke with the impression that I'd hear from him today. And if I'm not mistaken the next few minutes will prove whether or not my hunch is right."

His eyes were straining toward a speck in the distance, which rapidly took form as a speed-boat. In a few minutes it had plunged into the comparative quiet of the island harbor and nosed up to the wharf. The huge Chinaman of the previous encounter leaned far out, holding in his extended hand a dark object. As the boat glided past, Drennan caught it from him with a "Thanks, Chang." The next moment the craft was again heading out to sea.

Two pairs of eyes met.

"You win!" acknowledged Flint. He shivered slightly—and not merely from the cold. Then, after a half-fearful scrutiny of the narrow lacquered case, "What's in it?"

"I haven't the least idea. We'll open it inside."

In the privacy of their room Drennan pressed the catch in the side of the lacquered case. The cover flew back, disclosing a black lining, on

which rested an irregular, whitish object.

"Looks like a piece of bone—or shell," observed Flint, disappointedly. "Might be a dagger—sort of that shape."

Gingerly, Drennan picked it up. Pointed at one end and sharp along one jagged edge, it did suggest a crude dagger.

"Pull down the shades," he suggested.

In the darkness, the dagger-like fragment gleamed with a faint phosphorescence.

"How did you know it would do that?" demanded Flint.

"Hanged if I know. I just seemed to recognize the substance, some way." Drennan puzzled over the elusive memory.

"Anyway," he said thoughtfully, stowing the shell-like object away in his breast pocket, "I've a feeling that I'll know what to do with it when the time comes."

THE weather grew steadily more blustering, but within the castle there was comfort and warmth. At luncheon, they were joined by Zella—so like her usual self that at times Drennan could almost have sworn the real Zella was back in control of her body.

One of these moments came in the afternoon while she sat alone with him at the gold piano in the music room. She played beautifully, surprising him.

"That's an accomplishment I didn't know you had, Zella," he remarked. "Or do you have it—the real you?"

"Please, Dave—" she raised a timid hand to his shoulder—"let's forget all that. We can be happy together—so happy."

The pleading in her eyes was so expressive, her voice so thrilling, that

a wild surge of desire for her swept over Drennan. More than anything else he wanted her at that moment—wanted to crush her alluring body to him and smother her face with kisses.

"Dave, dear!" her arm crept up around his neck. The eyes that looked up at his were limpid with answering desire. She drew his head down until his burning lips were pressed against her own.

Drennan forgot the menace he had come to Drukker's castle to fight, forgot everything but the consuming joy of that lingering contact. Her lips moved against his. The murmur of her voice throbbed up through waves of pulsing emotion. "Free me, dear one—free me so that I can love you with my whole being. You can do it—you must, my dear!"

The significance of the words beat against his brain. His arms relaxed—suddenly he pushed her away.

"God!" he cried, leaping to his feet. "I almost forgot. You're Zella. You're—you're a creature of that—"

"Dave!" she cried, stretching her arms toward him imploringly. "I am! I'm Zella. They've let me go free for an instant. But they can call me back. You—only you—can save me!"

He studied her face with eyes that wanted to believe—wanted to believe more than they had ever wanted anything in life.

"Perhaps—" he said tensely—"perhaps you are Zella. But until I can be sure—until I know that the girl I hold in my arms is—" He broke off abruptly. "You say I can save you—how?"

"By taking me away—forgetting all this. Give up your futile struggles against the Great One—and neither of us will be troubled again. Your work will go on—with unlimited resources—"

"Enough!" Drennan snapped.

"You're clever, Yogarth; but the decadence of your mind is already apparent. You haven't the finesse to make your masquerade convincing."

The girl bowed her head as if hurt to the quick. "When you turn on me—like that—Dave, I can't—I can't—"

"Then don't try," he advised harshly.

But as he strode from the room he could not wholly repress a wild hope that something of the real Zella had been involved in that brief moment of bliss. Was it only his imagination, or had there been a surging response from the personality buried deep in the dark recesses of her subconsciousness?

CHAPTER X

A SHOWDOWN AND A CHALLENGE

THE storm grew in violence. A gale whipped the waves into a frenzy against the rock-bound island coast. Titanic forces battling without—did they presage a similar conflict within?

Drukker came to them after dinner. The familiar urbanity was present in his smile, but he spoke abruptly.

"Mr. Drennan, let us have an understanding. You have allied yourself with a fanatic—one who for centuries has been obsessed with the idea that he is a celestially appointed messenger sent into the world to destroy me. Is there any need for you to involve yourself in it—aside from purely personal reasons which can be brushed aside if you will say the word?"

"You ask me why I oppose the insane purpose of one creature to rule the world?"

"Yogarth is more than a 'creature'—more than a man."

"On the contrary, Yogarth is only a man," retorted Drennan. "He is not a god, and by presuming to usurp the powers of a god he has created for himself a horrible destiny."

Drukker was silent for a moment, as if weighing his words.

"After all, the test of one's right to exercise power is the use that is made of it. You do not object when a public official exercises the power placed in his hands, as long as he uses it for good purposes."

"What of it?" suspiciously.

"Only this: The purposes of the Great One are wholly beneficent. Thus far, he has scarcely intervened in human affairs. He has been content to establish himself in every corner of the world, so that when the time came to act he would be in complete control of the situation. That time is at hand. Under its own mad, conflicting influences, the world is about to destroy itself. The nations of Europe are at each other's throats. Millions are groaning under the sway of mad dictators. Whole races are subjected to persecution. Even the most peaceful countries, like your own, are torn with internal dissension, crises of unemployment, strife between capital and labor. Conflict, waste, destruction—on every side. If ever the world needed a savior, it is now."

"And so you have divinely appointed yourself to the task!"

"A better way to express it would be that destiny has appointed the Great One to the task," countered Drukker. "Tell me, Mr. Drennan, is the picture overdrawn? In the conflict which is in progress the world will be drenched with blood. The sufferings of men, women, and inno-

cent children will be such as to make the soul recoil in horror."

"It is not a pretty picture," acknowledged Drennan.

"And yet you would not stay your hand to prevent this stupendous disaster?"

"I'm not sure that I get you."

"Let us put it in clear words. I alone—for it is Yogarth, the Great One, who speaks—can prevent this holocaust. The world I envision is a world of peace—and my control is such that I can make the vision a reality. My myriad selves throughout the world hold key positions in government, industry, armies. Why should my very selves march to war against their brother selves? It is unthinkable. Can you imagine your right hand warring against your left—your teeth rending the flesh from your own limbs?"

"I'll admit, Yogarth, that it's absurd to think of your one overruling intelligence getting into broils with itself. But there are others to consider—the rest of the human race."

"You may be sure, Mr. Drennan, that they shall be nurtured most carefully. After all, as you have pointed out, I am, in essence, but one man. The limitations of Yogarth constitute the limitations of all his physical manifestations. Brilliant men like yourself create benefits to society that would be lost if I were selfishly to crowd them out.

"As for those less brilliantly endowed—if I were to enslave them or make their lot one of discontent, the very strife I wish to avoid would creep into the world." He suddenly turned to Flint. "If the responsibility were yours, would you stretch forth your hand to plunge the world into strife and bloodshed—perhaps so terrible as to doom its existence?"

"I—I—I wouldn't know what to do."

"Why are you pleading with me?" interposed Drennan. "Is this an acknowledgment that I have the power to end your domain?"

Drukker drew himself up proudly. "It is nothing of the sort! Yet it is true that I am pleading. As I should like to plead with the intellect I respect above all others—that which occupies the body of Dr. Fu Yin. I am pleading with you to join me in making this world a better place in which to live. I need you; freely I acknowledge this. The greatest responsibility since the world began rests upon my myriad shoulders. Think what we could do for mankind. Always we were together—Yogarth, Shim, and Tawanda. More than all else I need your friendship. For though I am many, I am lonely. Yes—infinately lonely."

He ended on a note of sadness which, in spite of himself, affected Drennan profoundly. The isolation of Yogarth was a thing terrible to contemplate. He found himself groping for words.

"I'd like to see—a world such as you describe. A world of peace and security. I've always believed that the suffering—the poverty—the maladjustments of society—could be avoided. They're insane. But in spite of all you have said—"

He paused, shrinking inwardly. The appalling responsibility *did* rest on him—for he knew, in some way which he could not define—that it lay in his power to destroy Yogarth.

"I wish—" the unspoken thought was like the reaching forth for a helping hand—"I wish Fu Yin were here."

And in that instant he felt a surge of returning confidence as if the call had been answered.

"YOUR decision?" prompted Drukker impatiently.

All hesitation gone, Drennan replied in deliberate words.

"Yogarth, toward you I feel no anger—only a great compassion. This one thing I know. It is not for you or me to decide the destiny of the human race. When man, through evolution, was raised above the brutes and achieved the priceless gift of individuality, it was for a purpose. Strife and struggle and suffering may be his lot; but through these things he will learn and, in some remote day, achieve a splendid destiny. For man to relinquish his inheritance of individuality and revert to the group-intelligence of the insect would be a worse calamity than all the wars of the world."

"That is your answer?" demanded Drukker harshly.

"It is the only possible answer."

A subtle change came over the other. In some indefinable manner Drukker seemed to expand—to become more than a man. His eyes glowed, his form towered—palpable force seemed to emanate from him. It was Yogarth—Yogarth, the ageless, the infinitely multiplied, the inconceivably powerful—who stood before the two men.

"You have answered!" his voice thundered. "You—in your puny conceit—have defied the Great One. I challenge you to do your worst. Fool! What do you think to gain?"

"Your downfall," replied Drennan boldly—and could not have said whether the words came from his own volition or not—"the end of your reign over the destinies of man." On impulse, he stepped to the wall and switched off the light.

Flint gave an involuntary cry. In the dark, they could still discern the outlines of Drukker's figure, en-

veloped in a faintly luminous, amorphous cloud.

"Are we descending to theatricals," came the voice of Yogarth, ironically.

"You have issued a challenge," returned Drennan calmly. "I wished you to see the weapon with which you are to be destroyed."

From his pocket, he drew the piece of shell-like substance. Flint clutched his arm. The pale glow which surrounded Yogarth and that which defined the dagger-like object were identical.

"What mummerly is this?" demanded Yogarth.

"Surely," returned Drennan, "you recognize this. It is a crystallized fragment of etheric substance—the medium by which the spirit maintains its contact with matter."

Doubtfully, Yogarth answered: "I have never known etheric substance to take material form."

"It required two lifetimes for Shim to learn the secret," returned Drennan. "Shall I prove to you that it is what I claim?"

"And if you do, what of it?"

Without replying, Drennan plunged the dagger-like luminous matter into the amorphous cloud surrounding Yogarth.

The Great One drew back involuntarily, even as the fragment seemed to dissolve in the luminosity surrounding him. It vanished as would an icicle plunged into a stream of warm water.

"You have issued a challenge," said Drennan, his voice unaccountably husky. "This is the answer—and may you somehow—somewhere—find peace."

Yogarth's reply was a harsh, taunting laugh.

"Childish!" he sneered. "Enough

of this! I was a fool to bother with such simpletons. Go!"

CHAPTER XI

A MESSAGE OF HOPE

IT WAS a frankly unnerved Harry Flint who, with Drennan, stumbled back to their apartment.

"How the Sam Hill did you know what to do with that piece of shell—and what's the answer, anyway? You don't really think you've harmed him?"

"I don't know," returned Drennan shortly. "I seemed to act under compulsion—as if—" He paused. "It may be that I actually talked with Fu Yin, last night—that he impressed on my mind what to do when the time came. And then—it seemed at times as if he was in the room with us tonight—prompting me."

Flint drew a long breath. "The whole thing is giving me a bad case of jitters," he admitted.

"After all," Drennan reasoned, "Fu Yin has devoted many lifetimes to the study of mental phenomena. And science has demonstrated—in a limited way—that telepathy is a possibility. The Duke University experiments, for example. As for the dissolving of the shell fragment—" Drennan hesitated, his eyes drawn by the lacquered case in which the object had come. "I wonder—"

He fumbled with the catch, opened it, and fingered the velvet lining. There was a faint crackling as of paper, underlying it. A moment later he drew forth several folded sheets covered with writing in a fine, meticulous hand.

Both men bent eagerly over the closely written message.

Friend of the Ages:—

Our anticipations have proved correct. Your return to the island troubles the Great One.

And now must I review for you more of those days when we three—Tawanda, Yogarth, and Shim—dwelt in that ancient monastery. Recall you then Mantrifus, the member of our order whose lingering end so baffled our physicians?

The disease was beyond our science, for his spirit was unaffected, and likewise his physical body. This much we knew—that the etheric body no longer carried orders from the ego to his physical brain. Similarity would exist if the fingers of performer on the lute had become stiffened and no longer responded to the will of the player.

For man, as you well know, Tawanda, is of three-fold nature: First, over-riding spirit or ego; second, etheric body; third, physical brain. Etheric body is that which furnishes medium of contact between the ego and physical brain.

It is most strange, Tawanda, that in our studies we had never suspected there could be a disease of the etheric vehicle. Preceding earth life of this unworthy person was almost spent before nature of the secret was revealed to him. For that, in truth, was the malady from which Mantrifus suffered. There came upon him a hardening of the etheric vehicle. The spirit was untouched, but it could not transmit its will to the brain.

And therein lies the vulnerability of the Great One. We cannot destroy his ego, for ego is indestructible. To destroy his physical manifestation is impossible, since he has not one body but millions. However, between all these bodies is a vast network of connection composed of etheric substance, with central nucleus on this island. Many times has this observer noted that the concentration of etheric substance in region of such island is so intense that it can be seen in the dark by ordinary physical eyesight, surrounding the manifestations of Yogarth. It is here that attack must be made.

Scarcely longer shall I tax your patience, beloved Tawanda. To relate how this humble instrument, after lifetime of research, obtained opportunity to secure specimen of hardened etheric substance from a victim of the malady, and to describe special method of preserving same for use, would require long technical dis-

course. To make matter short, it was necessary to dissolve the tainted etheric substance in ectoplasm obtained from body of medium belonging to the Yogarth clan, which must in turn pass through very difficult crystallizing process. The fragment of semi-physical matter thus produced is attuned to Yogarth's vibrations. While in such condition it can be safely handled by person of different vibration, but will be instantly absorbed when introduced into Yogarth's etheric vehicle.

By time of reading this, successful consummation of such object may be accomplished. If so, the virus of hardening should quickly attack etheric vehicle of the Great One, spreading out from central nucleus until whole organism is destroyed.

And now may the fates be compassionate toward that hapless being. His destiny lies heavily on the heart of this weak spirit, for we were always together—down from the dawn of time.

Peace attend you, friend of the ages.

SHIM.

AS THEY finished reading, Drennan slowly dropped his arm from the shoulder of his friend.

"Whew!" exclaimed Flint.

"It is rather—overwhelming." Drennan's voice shook.

"Then if the prediction of your Chinese friend should come to pass, Yogarth would become impotent. He'll lost control over his bodies—just as a musician with ossified fingers would be unable to play on the keys of a piano. But what's going to happen to them—these bodies, I mean?"

Drennan shivered. "I don't want to think about it. The world is probably in for the biggest scare in all history. It may be a few hours; it may be days. I wouldn't be surprised—"

The sound of hurrying footsteps in the hall brought Drennan to an abrupt pause. Their approach was climaxed by a frantic pounding on their door. He opened it cautiously.

"Zella!" he exclaimed.

She flung the door shut and stood with her back against it, panting and agitated. She had gathered a blue negligee around her night-dress; her hair was disheveled, her eyes distraught.

"Dave!" she gasped. "What's happened? Your formula!"

He stared. Then slowly hope—followed by exultant understanding—crept into his eyes.

"You shouldn't be here!" she exclaimed. "It's dangerous. These people—they're—horrible. You don't know—"

"It's all right, Zella," he returned soothingly. "I'm perfectly safe. And so are you—thank God!" He turned, with a significant gesture, to Flint.

"It's begun! Already he's had to let her go. She's an eighthling—he only held her, up to now, by an effort of the will. The stuff is working—terribly fast."

The girl stared up at him, uncomprehending. "What are you talking about?" she demanded dazedly. Then, as he looked at her compassionately, she began to tremble.

"I—I seem to remember—terrible things! But it can't be true! It's all a dreadful nightmare. I appeared to be—in so many places at once. And it was I who took the formula—only—it couldn't have been, Dave! Tell me, it couldn't have been!"

"You didn't do it," he reassured her. "But the memory of it is more or less tangled up with yours. I'll tell you about it later. One thing—" he paused, then: "I tried to reach you today—I told you I loved you. Do you remember that?"

"I seem to—remember!" she whispered. "I struggled up from—some horrible smothered place—and kissed you. But it's all mixed up with that awful—" She covered her eyes.

"This is enough for tonight," de-

clared Drennan firmly. "You're going back to your own room for a few hours' sleep. And don't worry, because nothing here can harm us now—nothing."

Still dazed, she allowed him to guide her to her doorway.

Though they had partly anticipated what to expect, the morning silence fell unnaturally on the ears of the two men. When Zella joined them it was the first thing she noticed.

"Where is everyone?" she demanded, clutching Drennan's arm. "It seems so—unnatural."

"It is unnatural," he admitted.

"You mean everyone is—dead?"

"No. They're alive—probably. But we're the only conscious human beings on the island. The rest—just didn't wake up."

After a breakfast hastily foraged in the kitchen, Zella beckoned mysteriously. She led them to a wall safe in a cubicle below the grand staircase.

"Now let's see if I can remember," she observed.

Breathlessly they watched, as she turned the knob of the combination. The door opened. She reached inside.

"There, Dave Drennan!" she announced triumphantly. "Don't say I didn't give back your formula."

Two hours later the launch they had preempted from Drukker's wharf drew up at the mainland. As their taxi reached the outskirts of Los Angeles, newsboys were already shouting their extras.

CHAPTER XII

THE GREAT EPIDEMIC

IT BECAME known as the Creeping Doom.

Successive editions of morning papers contained scattering re-

ports of the wave of illness. Seventy out of two hundred department-store employees failed to show up for work. A factory was forced to close for lack of executives. The street car system operated on a revised schedule, because there were not enough employees to man all its cars. Taxicab service was demoralized. Each newspaper played up the fact that it was issuing the extra with a greatly diminished staff.

By the time Zella, Flint, and Drennan reached the city, it had become evident that a real epidemic was in progress. New cases were being reported hourly—principally in districts which had not at first been affected. Many who had gone to work dropped over at their posts. The public was growing frantic. Men, women, and children alike were attacked—no class seemed immune.

Telegraphic reports indicated that only the region close about Los Angeles was affected. By noon, however, the wires began to hum from points as far away as Bakersfield, San Bernardino, and San Diego. The malady was spreading—apparently in a rapidly widening area radiating from Los Angeles.

The epidemic began to loom in the news as something of national importance. Health authorities wired for data. Learned opinions as to the nature of the disease were given out.

In a typical case, the victim simply was seized with unconsciousness. The coma was much like ordinary sleep.

Along with these cases, however, many appeared to have the disease in less severe form. The patient would act as if completely dazed. The stupid, blank look—approaching idiocy—in the eyes of such a victim was painful to behold.

Once attacked, no one had thus

far shown the slightest sign of recovery, except in three or four not clearly authenticated cases. These persons, apparently suffering from a mild attack of the dazed form of the disease, had seemed to recover their normal faculties, after the first shock, though retaining a confused memory of some dreadful experience. "Eighthlings!" murmured Zella, in sympathy.

The feature of the epidemic which physicians found most baffling was the fact that after its first violence was spent in a given community, there were no new cases. It was established that the disease struck San Pedro at about 6 in the morning, and had seized its entire quota of victims within half an hour. It reached the heart of Los Angeles about 7 o'clock, and there were no more attacks after 11. It reached Pasadena about 7:30, Santa Ana somewhat before 9, and San Diego about noon. It was unquestionably spreading in a widening circle at the rate of about 21 miles per hour.

Stories of calamity piled up hourly. The engineer of an express train was stricken as he entered the contagion zone and dropped unconscious at his throttle. No sooner had the public gasped at the horror of the terrible wreck that resulted than like stories came from several other directions. Train dispatchers and signal men fell asleep at their posts. Airplanes crashed; automobiles ran wild. No one knew who might be the next victim.

BY THE second morning the epidemic had spread well beyond San Francisco and down into old Mexico. By the third it had reached Spokane to the north, and crept into Denver. Its inexorable advance created a reign of terror.

Trains and roads were crowded with refugees. There was a rush to engage steamship passage, and an equally hasty enactment of emergency quarantine measures on the part of European countries, to prevent the approach of vessels from plague-ridden America.

Sadly, the three who alone knew what was transpiring followed reports through newspaper and over radio which revealed the slow death of Yogarth's hold over his innumerable bodies.

They could do nothing; they could not even announce what was occurring, or why. Fanatics and crackpots were already coming forward with ingenious assertions to account for the epidemic. The world, many declared, was being punished for its sins. A race of invisible super beings from another planet was annihilating mankind. The stratosphere had been disturbed, admitting deadly cosmic rays. Yet not one of these explanations sounded as fantastic as that which the trio knew to be the truth. The medical hypothesis, of a virus which attacked the brain cells—and to which certain persons—even families—were immune—was the most widely accepted.

On the fourth day, the epidemic suddenly assumed a new phase, piling horror upon horror and driving the population which stood in the path of the advancing wave frantic with terror.

The creeping doom had passed Sioux City, Omaha, and Kansas City. At the rate of its now determined travel, it was not due in St. Louis for four hours. And while that city crouched like a terrified bird with eyes fixed in fascination on the glittering pupils of an advancing snake—hypnotized, knowing its doom, and

yet unable to escape—the thing began to happen.

Suddenly, all over the city, men, women, and children went berserk. Mobs gathered. They swept through the streets, burning, pillaging, murdering, committing fiendish atrocities.

The police were powerless. Nearly half of them were seized by the contagion and turned ruthlessly on their fellows.

The mobs were insensible to fear and apparently had lashed themselves into a condition in which they could not feel pain. Shouting and bloody, they charged furiously into nests of machine guns, paying no heed as the deadly spray mowed them down.

Nor was this the worst, nor half of it. High officials — ministers, judges, clubwomen, leaders in civic life — those who held positions of highest respect—dominated the mobs or ran amuck by themselves. A judge opened court by producing a machine gun from under his robes and spraying deadly lead on jurors, court officers, and spectators. From the shambles of the courtroom, the respected jurist staggered forth with his weapon, looking for further victims.

The city itself was a worse shambles. Street cars ran wild and were deliberately wrecked. Fiends in automobiles and taxicabs careened wildly through the thoroughfares, running down men, women, children; smashing through store windows and dying gloriously in their own wreckage.

BODIES were hurled by maniacs from the tall buildings; fires were started and those fire fighters who attempted to respond to the innumerable calls were murdered by their fellows.

In four hours, the city was reduced to a horrified, bleeding pulp. Then, as suddenly as it began, the murderous orgy died down. Citizens who, through it all, had retained their sanity and had somehow escaped alive, looked around bewildered.

The sleeping sickness, dread scourge, which the city had awaited with such paralyzing apprehension, had descended upon it like an angel of mercy. The insane creatures of the mobs—these were its first victims. As the survivors slowly crept forth, the realization came that the insane ones were the *only* victims. The sleeping sickness touched only those who had first become mad.

The first telegraphed reports of the stupendous disaster were followed almost at once by others—from every point of the compass. Everywhere great sections of the population had gone mad, but only the districts reached by the sleeping sickness had experienced a surcease from the horror.

The cities were being reduced to masses of wreckage, the towns to blackened ruins. Millions were being slaughtered in a stupendous orgy of blood that staggered the imagination.

A fleet of coast-guard battleships opened fire on the lower section of New York. In the ensuing battle for control, which took place between the sane and insane members of the crews, nearly all of the vessels were sunk.

One mad creature leaped with a bomb in his arms from the top of the Empire State Building.

Airplanes appeared, dropping bombs, ramming each other gaily to destruction. Trains were turned loose to crash headlong into each other under the guidance of wild figures at the throttles. Bridges were blown up; arsenals were raided.

Nor was the fury of madness confined to America. From Europe and from the Orient disorganized wire and cable services brought unbelievable accounts of the same nature. The madness was making a complete shambles of civilization.

Huge armies were engaged in trying to annihilate themselves and the populations of their countries. Navies turned their fire on coasts which they had been guarding.

Of all the world, only one major section remained untouched — that part of the United States lying west of Kansas City, and extending to the Pacific Coast — the part that had been cleansed by the first onset of the sleeping sickness. In being the first attacked, the region had been fortunate, for it was spared the early phase of the disease — the preliminary madness.

CHAPTER XIII

WORLD CATASTROPHE

AT THE first reports of the disaster, Drennan sat clutching the extra in his hands like a person stunned.

They were in his laboratory. Zella and Flint regarded him compassionately. Shaken as they were, they knew that Drennan's suffering was infinitely more intense, because on his shoulders rested the frightful responsibility. The thing had come to pass because he, Drennan, had presumed to stretch forth his hand.

He sprang to his feet. "I'll go mad if we don't do something! We've got to locate a speed boat—find Dr. Fu Yin!"

Twilight was well advanced before they located the island. The huge boatman, Chang, hurried down to the

wharf as they drew alongside of the rickety structure.

"Doc Fu Yin—him expect you," he commented.

The old man, indeed, came down the path to meet them.

"You are welcome to humble abode of Dr. Fu Yin," he assured his visitors. "Let us please to retire inside."

His quiet assurance somehow calmed Drennan, though he still burned with a sense of his unbearable responsibility.

"You've seen the papers?" he demanded.

"I have not seen them," Fu Yin acknowledged. "The newspapers make belated arrival at our isolated retreat. But nature of reports may be surmised. Have you evolved explanation?"

"I can guess," responded Drennan grimly. "Yogarth realizes that his reign is over—and he's taking his revenge. He's determined that before the hardening of his etheric vehicle is completed, he'll wreck civilization." He buried his face in his hands. "To think that I'm responsible for this! Men have gone mad from having just one death on their consciences. I'm responsible for millions. I can't stop it—and I can't stand it!"

Fu Yin glanced at the pain-distorted face, then stepped to a cupboard. He poured some liquid from a bottle.

"Drink this," he said quietly. "It is harmless."

Mechanically, Drennan tossed off the potion.

"Remember," observed Dr. Fu Yin, "responsibility is chiefly mine. I have worked through many centuries for consummation now achieved."

"I don't see—how you can stand it!"

"When physician cuts malignant

growth from the system, he does not expect patient to forego suffering. Destructive orgy of the mad one is most harrowing; but humanity will rise again. The time of Yogarth's revenge is short."

"Not short enough!" Drennan interrupted harshly. "At the rate this paralysis is traveling, it will take twenty-five days for it to circle the globe. I've got to do something—or lose my mind!"

The old Chinaman regarded him calmly but with compassion — and with an emotion that seemed deeper — the look of a father who would gladly lay down his life for a beloved son.

He turned to Drennan's companions.

"Come to us in the morning," he said quietly. And as they hesitated, "I shall insure that no harm comes to him."

Zella bent over the man she loved and, drawing him close to her, pressed her lips against his agitated face.

"Come," she said, leading Flint to the door.

Already, under the guidance of Dr. Fu Yin, Drennan was stumbling toward the room he had occupied on his first visit.

THE gentle touch of a hand on his shoulder wakened Drennan. The kindly, wrinkled countenance of Dr. Fu Yin was bending over him. He struggled to his feet.

In the living room, barely illuminated by a few glowing embers, Drennan's eyes were drawn to an old Chinese woman huddled peculiarly in Fu Yin's own well-worn chair.

"She is in trance," explained the Chinaman. He seated himself before her and asked gently: "Are you ready, Ah Wong?"

A low moan came from the woman's lips.

"Entranced one does not speak English," the old man explained. "However, in such condition it is not the earthly mind that perceives question. She is very great medium."

"You're going to contact—him?"

"If the Great One is capable of being reached," nodded Fu Yin. Then, in a low voice he called: "Yogarth!"

The small figure stirred convulsively. After a moment, Fu Yin repeated the call, adding: "It is Shim—and Tawanda."

From the woman's lips issued a low, unintelligible murmur.

The murmur faded into silence. Then, so clearly that Drennan felt a prickling along his spine, the words emerged in a strange, high-pitched tone: "I am here!"

Fu Yin rubbed his hands slowly together. "It is most gracious of the Great One to heed the call of his friends."

"It pleases me to answer. Behold your work! Was your meddling worth the price?"

Drennan clutched the arms of his chair.

"In what respect is matter concerned with price?"

"All things have their price," came the arrogant retort. "You presumed to free mankind—and succeeded. But the price is mankind's destruction."

Fu Yin replied calmly: "All things, as most truly observed, have their price. The Great One, then, is willing to pay extreme price for his revenge?"

"It has already been paid—in the loss of that incalculable power built up through the centuries."

"This presumptuous individual cannot agree. Surely Yogarth is acquainted with the law which

exacts terrible recompense for interference with destiny of human race. It is truly said that only a fool adds oil to a flame which is consuming him. One glimpse of the karma that lies in wait and even the Great One would recoil. Fortunate, indeed, that he has not temerity to face it."

"Yogarth fears neither man nor devil nor evil karma."

"Respectfully beg to differ," returned the Chinaman. "Method of drawing aside the veil is doubtless still retained in memory from ancient days, but the Great One dares not look."

"You challenge me?"

"To make such challenge is beyond courage of this weak spirit. If the Great One received even glimpse of horrible fate hung around his neck, it would be more than he could endure."

AND sitting among the shadows of the gloom-shrouded room, with the chill wind penetrating the cabin and howling around its corners, Drennan knew somehow that the Chinaman spoke the truth. One glimpse of the doom portending would send its victim wailing down the halls of eternity, pleading for mercy.

But the arrogance of the power-maddened intelligence was past belief.

"I shall look. Behold!"

Drennan sensed the release of forces he could not define. His thoughts were drawn into a vortex of emotion. A part of him—something not confined in the physical body—was peering into that vortex with Shim and Yogarth. He had a confused impression that it represented despair — an infinity of despair. And down, down, through the unending vista—years upon years,

centuries upon centuries, eons upon eons—stumbled a shrinking entity—lonely with a loneliness past imagining, repentant with a repentance that cried out in vain for the boon of expiation, groaning with an agony which made human suffering seem joy unalloyed. And then, a nameless sense of horror which blotted out all consciousness.

He must have swooned at the terror of it. When awareness returned, Fu Yin was speaking.

"You have looked, mad one—and you know the vision is true, for it sprang from your own consciousness."

There was no reply. Perhaps Yogarth, overwhelmed by the appalling knowledge of his own karma, had lost contact with the medium. But after a moment the thin voice spoke.

"I have looked! I know my doom! But you gain nothing! My fate is sealed—I have only a few earthly days to revenge myself for all eternity."

"Most unfortunate that revenge will never be attained."

"What do you mean?"

"Revenge is empty — a childish gesture—if it does not 'ouch individuals responsible for injury."

The thought hung in the air like a palpable thing. Its logic must have penetrated even to the distorted intelligence of the maddened spirit.

"It is true—" slowly the reply came through the lips of the medium. "My revenge is empty; though to some extent it appeases me. Willingly would I forego the destruction of mankind, if I could visit its sufferings upon you."

"If this unworthy creature chose to permit, your power to exact such revenge would be supreme."

Brooding silence. Then the answer, slow—incredulous.

"You would not dare! Wait! Can you guess the punishment I would inflict for your interference with my plans—for your destruction of my vast power?"

"I leave punishment to your ingenuity. Can suspect that you would not temper its severity."

Drennan felt an overwhelming urge to speak.

"Include me, too, Yogarth! Whatever the fate of Shim, I will gladly share it—for the sake of humanity."

Fu Yin raised a protesting hand, but Yogarth's triumphant response prevented him from speaking.

"Listen then, fools! You looked with me into the void. You sensed the sufferings I shall endure throughout eternity. Here, then, is the test of your vaunted love for humanity—the price I shall exact for staying my hand. Join your egos with mine; bind yourselves to go down through the ages sharing my fate. Now what do you say?"

For a terrified moment, Drennan recoiled. Then the thought of his awful responsibility — of civilization in its death throes—welled up within him.

"I will join you, Yogarth," he responded firmly. "I surrender my karma to share your fate."

For a space, Fu Yin remained silent. Was the horror of that incredibly magnified suffering more than he could face? His response came slowly.

"Only one — may do this thing. Only one may go down through the ages with you—a tortured soul. It is the right of this undeservedly blessed creature to claim such privilege. Recall, please, whose help enabled monkish person of ancient order to set foot upon path of multi-

ple incarnation. Recall who became implacable enemy of same widely dispersed individual. Recall who devoted tireless research to achieving destruction of the Great One. For these reasons this humble savant demands the right of expiation — for these and because of love he bears for his ancient companion—his friend of the ages."

"You demand—" even through the medium's cracked vocal chords, Yogarth's surprised incredulity was apparent—"because of the love you bear me?"

"Does the refiner love gold any less because he must burn away the dross to obtain it?"

"It is strange—to think—that any being loves Yogarth. I have been—very lonely."

"I have sensed your loneliness," returned Fu Yin, gently. "You shall have companion—in expiation."

"Expiation? You forget! When we looked into the vortex of the future I was denied even that relief."

"Most regrettably true. But intentions held by you when we looked into future were not as at present. Thus humble person would suggest possibility of accomplishing much before you leave material existence. Did not a wise saying of our ancient order proclaim that single good deed performed in remorse is equivalent to a lifetime of punishment?"

Tensely, expectantly, Drennan awaited the reply. It came almost as if wrenched by force from the poor lips of the medium.

"Is it true, Shim? Is there hope—that the wrong may be atoned for? Have I a chance — to recompense humanity?"

"Such privilege this unworthy one hopes to share with you," was the quiet response.

"No! No! Let me begin my ex-

piation at this moment. I do not exact the pledge from you, Shim. I will go my way—alone!”

The joy that surged through Drennan's being was overwhelming. Nor could he have said whether it was for Shim's release, or for the restoration of sanity to Yogarth—his transformation from a mad, lustful creature of evil destiny.

Fu Yin's tone indicated a joy that equalled his own.

“Not so, beloved friend of the ages—never again alone. For this humble spirit will go with you—will share burden with you, whether you demand it or not.”

Involuntarily Drennan cried out: “I must go too! You can't shut me out! We three were always together. I must share the expiation—the suffering!”

But his words fell upon a queer emptiness, as if he spoke to some one who had departed. The room was strangely chill and dark and devoid of life. Only the old Chinese woman stirred in her chair, as if suddenly awakened from a deep sleep.

CHAPTER XIV

WHAT THE WORLD NEVER KNEW

WHEN the launch came in the morning, Dave Drennan stood waiting at the wharf. His face was drawn and haggard, but there had descended upon him a great peace.

Flint leaped nimbly to the planks and raced toward him.

“Have you heard!” He waved an extra excitedly. “It's over. Some incredible, unheard-of-thing—”

He paused—checked by the strange solemnity of Drennan's expression. And Zella, as she ran up,

her eyes shining, suddenly stopped and stood looking at him with an odd diffidence.

“I thought—” Flint resumed stumbly—“you'd like to know. The madness—has stopped. They're even—”

“It's marvellous!” exclaimed Zella. “The mad creatures are doing everything they can to restore things. The world is stunned with relief. No one knows—”

“Come,” said Drennan, his throat contracting on the words. “I want to show you something.”

They followed him back toward the collection of humble shelters, silenced for a moment by his demeanor. But so full of the momentous news were they that soon they were discussing it again—pointing out startling cable and wire reports in the newspaper—recalling radio bulletins.

The shambles in Eastern America and the continents across the water had come to a sudden halt. The sleeping sickness continued its inexorable advance—it had passed Chicago. But everywhere ahead of its crest the mad creatures who had been running amuck suddenly regained their sanity—or the madness, if it was still upon them, had taken a different form. In place of stories of incredible atrocities, were now beginning to come stories of unbelievable self-sacrifice and heroism.

The incidents came from Europe, Asia, all the world. The mad ones, wherever located, now seemed seized with a frenzy to do good in the brief time that remained to them. Wherever there was no immediate saving of lives or property to be accomplished, they plunged madly into the work of repairing the damage they had wrought—working as if their very salvation depended upon doing

as much as they could before being snatched from their tasks.

"They're working against the coming of the sleeping doom," reasoned Flint, excitedly. "But what caused the change?"

Drennan listened, but said no word, until they came to the doorway of Fu Yin's dwelling. A group of silent Chinese—humble, shabbily dressed, toil-worn, sad—parted to let them enter.

"Come in," Drennan said, and led his two wondering companions to a small, bare room at the rear.

On the bed, lying as if asleep, was the frail body of an old Chinaman. The age-serried face seemed strangely pinched and small, but even in death there was a serenity in the expression of Dr. Fu Yin that humbled those who looked upon him.

After a long interval, Drennan spoke briefly.

"There is your answer. Only you two and I shall ever know—but humanity owes its survival to the one who inhabited the body that lies before us. He laid down his life for the world. And how much more than life, we shall never be able to fathom. Even if I tried, I could not tell you—how great a sacrifice he made. The magnificence of his soul is beyond comprehension. He was my friend—through the ages."

They stood in silence, awed, rather than sorrowing—for the first time conscious of the majesty as well as the solemnity of death. Drennan broke the spell.

"We had better go," he said, turning away abruptly. "His people—are waiting to care for him—in the way he would wish it to be done. We have our own work to do. There is a world waiting to be rebuilt."



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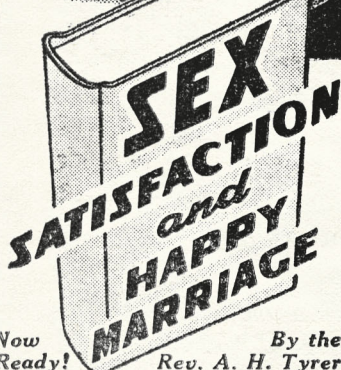
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AN OLD MARTIAN PROVERB

By JOHN M. TAYLOR

Clyde and Reid expected a weird time upon Mars—but little did they anticipate being captured by a mad would-be conqueror whose fascination was nursery rhymes and old proverbs!



His green hair flared up like dry tinder!

THE great, green-splotched red world expanded rapidly beneath the steel space-vessel dropping toward it. Vast patches of blue-green relieved the monotony of flat red desert, and straight, narrow lines of the same lush green criss-crossed the entire globe. The south-polar ice cap, now visibly breaking up, gave them their location.

"Mars!" Clyde Brown's black eyes flashed as he turned to his compan-

ion, hunched over the great control-panel. "Think of it, Reid; think of it! We'll be the first ever to set foot—"

"You think of it," Haley retorted; "I'm busy."

"Aw-w—" Clyde grunted in disgust. "You wouldn't get excited if an angel dropped from the pearly gates. You'd just say, 'I beg your pardon, but what was the velocity of your flight through space? Do you

have data on the atmospheric conditions in heaven? Do'—” He dodged a chart-book flung by the grinning Haley.

“Somebody has to remember that this is a scientific expedition, not a joy ride.” Reid turned back to his instruments. “Well, aren’t you going to prepare the atmosphere tests?”

“O. K., O. K.; you—say, look! That white patch shining down there—right there where those two canals cross—that’s a *city*! Then there *are* people on Mars!”

“Well, nobody’s denying it.” Haley did not quite succeed in keeping the excitement out of his sharp blue eyes. “Let’s head for it!”

The blue-steel globe settled slowly onto the close-clipped greensward just outside the walls of a gleaming, opalescent city. The two terrestrials stared eagerly from a view-port at the group of people who had poured out of the buildings to watch them land. At first sight very much like earthly inhabitants, they yet had a strangely alien look that marked them as products of a different environment, a different culture. They were tall and very thin, except for their broad shoulders and large chests. Their skins had a leathery, yellowish cast, and their bulbous heads were covered with frizzy hair of the most ghastly green the Earth-visitors had ever seen.

“Not very pretty,” Clyde muttered.

“And look at their clothes,” Reid added. Their thermometer told them the outside temperature was 45°; yet these people wore only full, kilt-like garments, cloth leggings, and soft slippers. From the waist up they were entirely naked.

“Anyway, they don’t look hostile; we’d better keep our guns handy, though.” Brown patted his holsters. “Man’s best friend—let’s go!”

He threw back the bolt of the port and prepared to make an impressive exit from the ship. It was all of that—instead of stepping down gracefully, he executed an ungainly leap and sprawled face downward a dozen feet from the ship. The startled spectators, already skittish over the alien vessel, leaped back in confusion, knocking one another down in their efforts to escape this strange creature with his bizarre methods of locomotion. Reid, still standing in the port opening, stared a moment in astonishment at the ludicrous figure. Then, as Clyde rolled over and sat up groggily, Haley doubled up in spasms of laughter. The Martians, edging a little closer, regarded the two visitors in alarm, apparently as much surprised by Reid’s laughter as by his companion’s unusual entrance into their lives.

“Well,” Brown snarled, “quit grinning like an ape and get on out here. I forgot about this blasted low-gravity business.”

Reid stepped down cautiously from the earth-gravitized ship to the thick, blue-green grass. He fastened the port carefully and eased over to his cursing comrade, who had managed to scramble upright. “I’m sorry, Clyde, but—” He stifled a chuckle and turned to the silently watching yellow men and women.

“We are visitors from the planet Earth,” he said, bowing politely.

“Of course they understand every word you are saying,” Brown growled sourly, surreptitiously digging a blade of grass out of his left ear.

“Well, we have to say *something*, don’t we?” Haley retorted defensively.

TWO men with gorgeously striped kilts stepped forward, their green hair stirring in the biting wind. Sud-

denly the foremost one turned a brick-red and made a frantic grab at his right legging, which had come unfastened. He hastily dodged back into the crowd of people, all of whom blushed furiously and screened him from the view of the visitors.

"Well, for the—" Clyde scratched his head in bewilderment. "What's eatin' our pal there?"

"Search me"; Reid was completely at a loss. "He seemed embarrassed, as if—"

"Say!" Clyde had an inspiration; "remember the time you ripped your swim suit at the public pool, Reid?"

"Aw—well, what of it?" It was Haley's turn to flush.

"Nothing, only—that's exactly the way our friend Greenie-Locks acted!"

He was interrupted by the reappearance of the unfortunate one, who came forward again with his friend, both looking a trifle silly. They pointed toward the crystalline gates of the towering city wall.

"Reception committee," Reid guessed; "Come on."

As they entered the wide-flung portal, they gasped at the sheer beauty of the glimmering, opalescent buildings. "It looks like milky glass," Haley breathed, "a whole city of translucent glass—"

They followed their guides through the low arched doorway of a nearby building, into a large room, soft with light diffused through the semi-transparent walls and ceiling. Their hosts motioned them to low chairs, also made of the same opaline substance, but cushioned with springy fabric. "Some layout!" Brown settled back comfortably. "Wonder what—"

One of the Martians, who had left the room, returned in a moment, his arms full of weird-looking metallic objects.

"What do you s'pose he's got there?" Brown exclaimed, startled.

"Don't know. They're some sort of metal network—look! Helmets!"

The two Martians were deftly slipping the metal nets on their own heads, fastening them under the chin with woven-metal straps. Then, holding out similar nets, they approached the Earthmen.

"Shall we let them put 'em on us?" Clyde was a little uneasy.

"Why not? If it doesn't bother them—!" Haley shrugged philosophically.

In a moment, the Martians had fitted the caps over the heads of the visitors.

"Welcome to Medi, strangers," came a quiet voice.

"Who was that?" Clyde and Reid both exclaimed in astonishment.

"We are communicating with you by means of our thought-transference caps, which we use with races who do not know our language. If you will speak as you do normally, or simply think what you wish to tell us, we can get along very well."

The two spacemen gaped at their hosts, who had seated themselves conveniently near.

"W—well," Clyde took a long breath and dived in; "we're from the planet Earth—"

"The Third Planet?" A wave of excitement mingled with incredulity flowed from the two helmeted Martians. "There, you see, Gospe?" emerged from one of them; "We were right—there is intelligent life on that planet!"

"Why?" Haley asked curiously. "Didn't you think there was?"

"Well, I did, and Gospe *almost* was convinced, but most other astronomers have always said that the Third Planet, being three-fourths covered by water, probably was dominated by

sea-creatures, or at the very least by amphibians. But we never thought you were far enough advanced to undertake space travel—we always thought that *we* were the center of intelligence in the solar system, and probably in the universe—” he trailed off wistfully.

“Where have I heard that before?” Clyde grunted.

“But you must be weary after your long journey,” the one called Gospe signaled briskly. “It is not fair for us to question you, especially when the others will want to know all about you, too. There’ll be a general assembly tonight, after you are fed and rested, and you can tell all of us about your trip, your world, your civilization; and we in turn shall be glad to acquaint you with ours.”

“But I want to—” the other one began plaintively.

“Now, now, Dofu! Let us not forget our duty as hosts.”

Dofu subsided, and the two led their visitors to a nearby apartment.

“Make yourselves comfortable, friends; food will be sent in immediately.”

THE next few days Reid and Clyde were feted and honored more than they had ever been before in their lives, except for the brief period after their pioneering trip to the moon and back. Then a motion-picture actress from Brooklyn, who had slipped over to Europe and laboriously acquired a Swedish accent, returned as a refugee duchess, and the two space-flight heroes slipped once more into the background.

There was no danger of any such interruption now, however. They had the limelight all to themselves. In response to messages sent out to various cities in the surrounding Solis Lacus region, rulers and scientists be-

gan pouring in for a general assembly.

“There’s only one drawback to all this,” Clyde remarked plaintively to his pal. “There’s not one blonde in the whole lot!”

Reid grinned. “Why, don’t you like the girls here, with their delicately tinted green hair and their lovely yellow-leather skins?”

Clyde gagged.

When the time for the council arrived, Reid and Clyde were bombarded with questions, via the helmets, until they were worn out. Completely unfamiliar with explosives, the Martians were astonished by the revolvers used by their visitors. One particularly unprepossessing fellow, who introduced himself as Thullav, a leading scientist of the neighboring city of Nefol, seemed especially interested in the weapons used on the Earth. Again and again he brought up the subject, until Clyde blurted out, “Say, why are you so curious about the weapons we use? You wanting to start a war or something?”

Whereupon Thullav fell silent. The two promptly forgot all about him—that is, until late that night. . . .

“Clyde!” Reid whispered. “Do you hear that? Someone’s trying to get in. I feel a draft—”

“Aw, s’just your imagination,” Brown mumbled, “no one’d—*gluk!*”

“What—” Reid began, just as someone thrust a wad of vile-tasting cloth in his mouth. In vain, he struggled against the shadowy figures vaguely outlined against the walls of the room. In a moment, he was securely bound and thrust into a heavy sack, with only a small opening to breathe through.

Blinded and half-smothered by the choking folds of cloth, completely unable to guess where he was going or

whether Clyde had been captured too, Haley felt himself carried along what seemed to be a passageway, to emerge at last into the bitter-cold night air.

HE WAS unceremoniously thrown over the back of an animal and tied on securely. Then someone, evidently afraid he might strangle, hauled the gag out of his mouth. He felt a jarring impact beside him.

"Reid!" came his companion's familiar voice; "is that you?"

"Clyde!" Reid was a little ashamed to discover that he was glad Brown was in this mess with him. "So they brought you along, too."

"Yeah! Ugh!" as the animal leaped ahead in a series of long, jolting jumps. "What in the leapin' jeepers are we on, anyway?"

"Well," Reid sniffed experimentally and gagged; "judging by the stench, it's a *juroo*.* Phew! Smells like a badly neglected reptile garden. Wonder where we're going."

"Dunno—looks bad."

"Yeah!"

Silence reigned for an endless period, while they were jolted and racked, and stiffened with cold. Haley caught occasional glimpses of star-lit green vegetation, interspersed with stretches of desert, whose up-swirled sands sent the two into spasms of sneezing and coughing. All they could see of their abductors were closely bundled figures riding other *juroos*.

Clyde was very quiet during the whole nightmarish ride, except once. Reid heard unmistakable sounds, then a resigned, weary sigh and "Oh, well, been eating too much lately, anyway."

*Powerfully muscled lizard used as a burden-bearer. It is especially adapted to the temperature changes of Mars.

Eons later, when the air was beginning to warm in the rays of the rising sun, they were lifted off the animal and carried into a building. Reid was only half-conscious when someone unbound him and laid him on a couch. In a few minutes, warmed and strengthened by a hot drink poured down his throat, he sat up groaning. Clyde, beside him, hauled himself up on one elbow. Before they could focus their wits, they found thought-helmets on their heads.

"Well, friends," a voice seemed to say mockingly, "welcome to the peerless city of Nefol."

Haley blinked and shifted to ease the agonizing pain in his back. "What's the idea of all this?"

"Thullav!" Clyde exclaimed. "That scientist at the convention who was so much interested in guns—remember, Reid?"

"The very same." Their abductor drew himself up to his full skinny height, his green hair fairly bristling through the net helmet.

"But why—"

"Why did I bring you here? I'll tell you, Earthmen! You are going to teach me how to construct and use those weapons you were explaining to us."

"But why did you have to kidnap us?" Reid was completely at sea. "I don't—"

"Your friend does," Thullav returned grimly. "He nearly gave me away at the council meeting, so I knew that the only way to get my information was to bring you here where those fools of Medins would suspect nothing."

"But they'll miss us!" Reid protested.

"Naturally—but how will they know what has happened? A dozen of us were supposed to have left yesterday. My men and I re-entered the

city through a passage opening into an unused canal—my spies discovered it long ago.”

“Spies! I thought all you people were friendly,” Brown exclaimed in bewilderment.

“The common run, yes.” He shrugged contemptuously. “But my associates and I have long planned a war of conquest—and you have made our success doubly sure! They’ll find out our power when we have built weapons like yours! We’ll conquer them—yes, and every other city on Mars; and then I’ll be the ruler of the whole world!”

His jade-green eyes flashed in his cruel yellow face, and his thought-waves pulsed with such fury that the hapless Earthmen yelled with pain and tore at the helmets.

“Ah, you are tired!” Thullav awoke abruptly from his insane dream of conquest. “Well, I’ll let you rest for a few hours, and then—”

SETTLED in the tiny room Thullav had given them, the two friends stared at each other in dismay. “Do you suppose he can do it, Reid?” Clyde gingerly stretched his cramped muscles on the bed.

“Probably not,” Reid said slowly, “but he could do lots of damage. It’s a shame—those Medins are such pleasant, peaceful folk. And what about us? Do you suppose he’d—torture us?”

“I wouldn’t put it past him, the lousy, leather-hided—. Come on, pal! You’re the brains of this combination; better think fast. We’re in a first-class spot.”

“Yeah.” Reid cautiously massaged his creaking neck.

“Oh, gosh!” Clyde suddenly thought of something. “If he keeps those blamed helmets on us, we can’t

help answering his questions, can we?”

“Afraid not. We’ll just have to— Hey! You’ve noticed how those helmets pick up just our surface thoughts—only what we are saying or consciously thinking at the moment?”

“So what, sweetheart?”

“Well, maybe we can stall him off awhile by concentrating on something else when he asks us questions.”

“What good’ll that do?” Clyde refused to be hauled out of his indigo depths.

“It’ll give us time to think of something better,” Reid snapped. He was getting a trifle worried himself.

THE next day, the two were marched out of their sleeping quarters by four silent Martians whom they had not seen before.

Clyde’s hands patted his belt futilely. “What I’d give for just one of my guns!” he sighed. “What do you s’pose they did with them?”

“Picked them up and brought them along, probably,” Haley suggested sensibly.

“Well,” as they were separated and herded through different doorways, “good luck, boy, and remember!”

“Don’t let your mind wander!” Reid tried hard to sound airy.

He was conducted into Thullav’s laboratory and pushed into a chair, just as Thullav himself walked in. One of the servants buckled a helmet on him.

“Greetings!” Thullav was in a high good humor. “Now we begin! And you,” motioning to his assistant, seated nearby, “you write down his every thought as I question him.”

“Yeah?” Reid set his jaw grimly. “Suppose I won’t tell you?”

“But you will! When I ask a ques-

tion, you can't help thinking of the answer! Later I shall inquire about the fuel for your space-vessels; but now—tell me the principle of your guns!"

"People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones!" Reid shouted desperately.

"Eh?" Thullav was startled.

"The early bird catches the worm! Birds of a feather flock together! A rolling stone—" Reid's fists were clenched in his effort to steer his mind away from the subject of artillery.

"Oh, I see!" Thullav fairly crackled. "You are deliberately couching your thoughts in mysterious terms! But I'll get at the meaning. Tora!" turning to the assistant, "be sure you record everything! Everything, understand? Now!" whirling once more on the perspiring Haley, "the formula! the principle!"

"The pot can't call the kettle black! You can't touch pitch—"

And so it went, for grueling hours, until Reid was weak and trembling from the strain. About the time he was beginning to repeat himself, Thullav rose wearily.

"You have made my task doubly hard!" His eyes gleamed with hate. "But my associates and I will ferret out your secret! In this building are congregated some of the finest minds on Mars! You can hide nothing from us!"

When Reid was led back to his room, Clyde was already there, slumped in a chair.

"Well, how was it?"

Clyde looked up; then, tired as he was, burst out laughing. "Boy, was I good! I recited every Mother Goose rhyme I could think of! I had just started on Kipling's 'Barrack-Room Ballads' when Cruth, the old boy conducting the quiz program, got tired

of playing and ran me out. The old fool took down every word I said."

"So did Thullav. My specialty was proverbs."

"Proverbs! Wonder what they'll do with them."

"I don't know!" Haley dropped wearily on the bed. "What I'm interested in is what they'll do with us."

THE day after, Thullav sent a messenger telling them they might have the freedom of the place so long as they did not try to get away. From what they had seen of the guards posted in every hallway, they knew he was not particularly afraid of their escaping.

"Well," Clyde yawned and stretched, "we might as well take advantage of our vacation to prowl around and see what this guy's got. Let's take our helmets along—wouldn't do to miss anything."

They wandered into the great laboratory where Thullav was conducting his experiments on acid-throwing devices and other pleasant little items of warfare. In spite of their knowledge of the deadly seriousness with which Thullav and his confederates had recorded their nonsense, they were totally unprepared for what they saw.

In one corner a large cage had been set up, with a bush-like growth set at one end. Inside, Thullav was making frantic dashes at three terrified *modahs*,** which were flapping wildly around and around their prison. When the would-be dictator saw the two visitors, he crawled out of the cage, dripping with sweat. He slammed on his helmet.

**Flying lizards resembling small birds. Their iridescent scales, somewhat like feathers, protect them from the bitter cold of the Martian nights.

"You!" his furious thought fairly shrieked at Reid. "The trouble you have caused me!"

"But what are you doing?" Clyde Brown stared uncomprehendingly.

"I am testing our your statement, 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush,' that's what!"

Clyde almost collapsed with a shout of laughter. Thullav whirled on him.

"What is that insane cackling noise? What do you mean by it?"

"Can't a fellow laugh?" Clyde gasped, wiping his streaming eyes.

"Laugh? What is that? I do not grasp that thought! If you are hiding something from me—" He started forward threateningly, but was interrupted by a crash of glass and a yelp of pain from a nearby experiment-table.

One of his helpers limped forward, holding a large stone in his hand. "The statement is correct, Thullav! I rolled this stone down a runway; it bounced off and smashed some of our most valuable equipment, and then," pointing plaintively at his slippered foot, "dropped on my toe. But, look!" triumphantly shoving the rock at Thullav, "no moss!"

Reid strangled on a laugh. Thullav glared suspiciously at him, completely uncomprehending of his mirth. Then he turned savagely on his assistant. "Well, don't stand there gloating because your experiment succeeded first! Now you have proved its truth, take the results in to the philosophers and mathematicians. They have already got a good start—they have decided that the statements dealing with stones refer to weapons and that those mentioning birds deal with space-flight. And we'll win!" he shook his fists wildly; his eyes glared with egomaniacal madness.

"We'll win, I tell you! Maybe we'll even attack your Earth some day! Death! Destruction! Conquest! Power!" He was fairly screaming as he paced back and forth before the incredulous spacemen.

"Great Scott!" Clyde finally belled in sheer disgust. "All you need is to slick your hair down over one eye and grow a little mustache under that nose of yours!"

Thullav abruptly halted his demonstration. "What good would that do?" he inquired suspiciously.

"Oh, shut up, Clyde," Reid remonstrated; "you'll only make things worse."

"So, trying to hide something from me again!" Thullav planted himself squarely in front of the two. "Now, tell me! Why would that help?"

"Clyde simply meant that you would then resemble Earth's last great dictator, who died fifty years ago."

"Died, did he?" Thullav looked a little taken aback. "How?"

Clyde interrupted. "He died in a hail-storm."

"Hail-storm?"

"Yes, someone mixed bullets with the hail."

"Bullets again! Oh, get out of here; you're wasting my time!"

He climbed back into the cage, muttering, "I'll get hold of one *modah* while two are in the bush, if I have to work all day!"

BROWN and Haley escaped, and put distance between them and the distraught Thullav before collapsing against a wall, gasping with laughter.

"Shades of Ben Franklin!" Clyde moaned. "What'll they do next? Hope old Sourpuss tries out the one about cutting off your nose to spite your face!"

"Well, come on," Reid urged his comrade to his feet; "let's see what's doing in this room."

They stepped into a large lecture room, from which emanated a drone of voices. A group of solemn-looking Martians were gathered, deep in discussion. Occupied with their weighty arguments, they did not notice the two visitors, who slipped unobtrusively into chairs.

"Reid," Clyde whispered; "did you notice that we can understand them, even though they're not wearing these head-contraptions?"

"Yes, I discovered that in Medi—our helmets pick up their thoughts at this close range, but they're not even conscious of us."

"Boy, this must be an important gathering. Look at that old fellow just getting up to speak—judging by those purple kilts, he's a philosopher."

"Sh—h!"

"Gentlemen!" the speaker cleared his throat, ruffled his green hair, and proceeded; "we philosophers, after long and careful cogitation, have discovered the underlying truth of the subject under discussion, the Earthman's account of 'Little Jack Horn-er.' It undoubtedly deals with the secrets of travel from planet to planet. Jack is the soul of man, straining beyond his limitations (the corner) to penetrate the mysteries of the solar system, subtly represented here by the pie. The thumb he thrusts into the pie is, of course, the space-flight vehicle; the plum is the knowledge for which we are now striving. We—"

"No!" a frazzle-headed Martian, resplendent in blue kilts embroidered with gold circles, compasses, and triangles, leaped excitedly to his feet. "You are wrong, absolutely wrong! We mathematicians have determined the true nature of this question. It

is an involved, very complex mathematical problem, developed in the cunning minds of the Earthmen, which when solved will yield the answer to the mystery of space-travel. Now, it is plain to a really *trained* mind—" he leered at his purple-kilted adversary—"that the corner is a right triangle; the pie is a circle; the thumb is, of course, a line perpendicular to the circle." He sat down, amid the cheers of his colleagues.

Brown and Haley, fists stuffed in their mouths to hold back the shouts of laughter that were tearing them apart, rocked in agonized mirth. They were completely ignored, for another Martian, dressed in the black and silver of astronomers, had the floor.

"You are both wrong!" he shouted contemptuously. "You philosophers! What right have *you* to be expounding about space-flight and the solar system? Haven't we astronomers been telling you for years that our world is not the center of the universe? Up until these—these—Earth-creatures arrived, you laughed us to scorn, and said the sun was hung in the sky especially to light and heat our world. And you mathematicians—"

But Clyde and Reid could hold in no longer. Leaping up from their places, they fled, bellowing with laughter. As they shot out the door, they were deluged by waves of baffled outrage.

DAYS later, during which time they often forgot their plight in their amusement over the literal-minded Thullav and his men, they were strolling down the corridor leading to the Martian's laboratory. Through the half-open door at the end of the hall, Reid caught a glimpse of Thullav.

"Look, Clyde!" he whispered. "He's

got our guns piled up on that table. Maybe we can sneak down there and see where he hides them."

As they crept quietly down the hall, they could see the scientist carefully removing the bullet from a cartridge. He poured the charge of powder into a crucible.

"Great guns!" Clyde exploded. "He's going to *heat it*!"

They started at a run down the hall, shouting. Thullav, disturbed by the unexpected noise, turned his head just as the gunpowder exploded. His green hair flared up like dry tinder, and was gone in a flash. Fortunately, though horribly startled, Thullav retained presence of mind enough to thrust his head into a bucket of water.

He came out dripping, glaring at the intruders, who could not forbear bursting into gales of laughter.

"My hair! My beautiful hair!" he moaned, clutching his singed, bald scalp. "It's all your fault! You—you—freaks! I'll—"

What horrible fate was in store for them he never revealed, for just then a servant dashed shouting into the room.

"The Medins! The Medins!" he screamed. "They are at the city gates, demanding the return of the Earthmen. There's a whole army of them! Our governor is coming here—he's terribly angry!"

Thullav wheeled in panic. "Bar the doors! Tell the guard to hold the building!" Forgetting his prisoners and his recent mishap, he leaped through the door, the servant two jumps ahead of him.

"Quick, Reid!" Clyde caught up his guns; "grab yours and let's get out of here!"

Shouts and the crashing of heavy stones against Thullav's fortress could be heard at the front of the

vast building. The two friends slipped silently to a back exit, where a lone guard was crouching. He whirled just as they reached them, and let fly a knife. Clyde dropped him and, opening the forgotten door, they stepped outside to join their Medin friends.

Thullav's ill-fated defiance was soon ended. His war plans had been far too nebulous for success; and with the Nefolites themselves against him, he was soon forced to surrender. He came out sullenly, his men lagging behind.

When he saw his former prisoners lined up with the Medins, he gave a screech of thwarted fury and twitched a knife from his kilts.

Clyde, unprepared for such a suicidal movement, hastily took a shot at his legs, to drop him. He missed, but the bullet neatly sheared off the fastening of one legging, which promptly began to unwrap itself. With a shout of dismay, Thullav, turning the color of an overripe tomato, dropped the knife and grabbed at the legging. Instantly the surrounding soldiers, also blushing in embarrassment, closed in on him.

"Well, for the luvva—" Clyde's mouth dropped open; "worrying about his modesty at a time like this!"

He and Reid went off into a fit of laughter which, as usual, caused the Martians to cast vaguely alarmed glances at them.

BACK at Medi, Haley and Brown prepared for the Earthward trip.

"Perhaps it is best, as you suggest," Dofu agreed, "to carry your dread secrets back with you and let us develop in our own way. If the wrong persons should get hold of them—" He shuddered.

They walked together out to the waiting space-globe, still wearing their helmets. Thullav, whom the Medins were holding prisoner, was among the crowd of people waiting to see them off.

"We'll be back to visit you one of these days," Reid promised, and climbed into the little vessel.

"You will always be welcome," Gospe assured him gravely.

Clyde clambered in after him. Then, catching sight of Thullav and

seeing that he was wearing a helmet, he could not resist one last gibe. He pointed straight at the would-be dictator and shouted, "Just remember, fellow, the burnt Martian shuns the fire!"

Thullav, throwing his arms over his blistered head, turned green with terror, and shrank back into the crowd. At last he understood the terrible meaning of the Earthman's proverb!

THE END

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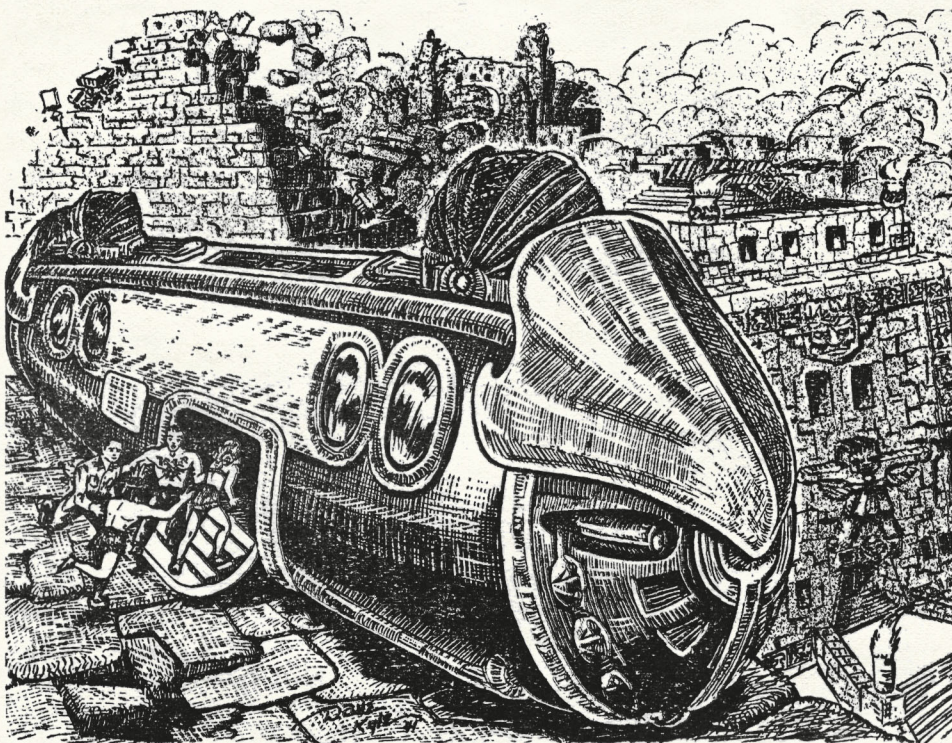
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LORD OF THE EARTHQUAKE

By LEIGH BRACKETT

One moment their submarine was plunging through the murky waters of the Pacific—the next moment, Krim and Langham found themselves on dry land, cast through a warp in the time-stream, back to ancient Mu when the Earth rocked and a continent was about to disappear!



They leaped to the nearest ship!

CHAPTER I

THE COSMIC HOLE

IT WAS stiflingly hot in the submarine's tiny cabin. The steady pound of the screws was a throbbing ache. Coh Langham, his scarred hawk face set in lines of restless boredom, stared out the port at the featureless muck that rolled endlessly away under the searchlight.

"Krim," he said abruptly, "you're crazy."

Simon Krim, hunched like a shaggy black bull over the tiny control panel, spoke without taking his eyes from the sea-floor. "What's the matter, Langham? Has the thrill petered out?"

"Thrill!" Langham's strong brown body, stripped to dungarees, hitched angrily lower in the seat. Yes, he had expected a thrill. He had hated

seeing Krim again; it took him back to a time he wanted to forget. But Krim had asked him, and he, at a loose end and restless as always, had accepted. Hunting a sunken continent with a submarine was something he hadn't done before. It looked exciting.

The excitement had resolved itself into three weeks of hellish monotony, heat, and inactivity, and utter boredom.

Simon Krim grunted. "That's all you think about, isn't it? Thrills. Your father was a hard-working archeologist, my best friend. And you spend your life crashing planes and climbing mountains, 'having fun'."

There was an edge to his voice; his hairy body gleamed with sweat, and there were tight lines around his mouth.

Coh Langham's blue eyes went hard under the scarlet cloth that held back his damp fair hair. "My life's my own, Krim. My father certainly never got much out of his!"

He locked his hands suddenly behind his head. The motion, in the dim greenish light that seeped through the ports, made a ripple of color up his arms and across his muscular chest. Kukulcan, the Feathered Serpent, writhed in blue-and-crimson splendor upward from each hand, to meet crest to crest on his breast.

"I still say you're crazy, Krim," Langham said. "You spend your life mucking, like my father did, in God-forsaken holes, tracking down the Murian legend — that damned Murian legend, that I had rammed down my throat daily until I was twenty-three! Now you put every cent you own into this submarine, and go poking along the bottom of the Pacific trying to find proof that

Mu really existed. What does it get you?"

Simon Krim turned to look at him, stubby fingers raking at his tangled black hair. "I don't know," he said slowly. "I don't think I ever stopped to figure it out — except that I'm happy; and I wouldn't be happy doing anything else."

Coh Langham laughed. It was an ugly little laugh, and it turned Krim's stubbled face into a thundercloud.

"That's the trouble with you, Langham," he blurted. "You don't know what happiness is. You're too damned selfish. You say your father never got anything out of life. Well, he died happy, and several people regretted his death — which is more than they'd do if you broke your fool neck!"

Krim's words waked something in Coh Langham; a loneliness, a dissatisfaction, a sense of lack. Then, as always, a blind anger surged up and drowned the fleeting vision. He came erect, his hands resting lightly on his belt — a heavy belt with a massive silver buckle, curiously scarred and dented.

"I saw my father die," he said with dangerous softness. "Fever, in a swamp in Yucatan. All his precious archeology never brought him anything. He died poor, a young man. He was cheated, Krim! Well, you can plod and plug and dig in kitchen-middens, and 'die happy'. And you can shut up!"

Still Krim stared at him, forehead wrinkled in groping thought. "It looks to me," he said slowly, "as though you're running away from something. I don't know. But I wish to God I had the brain you're wasting!"

Again that truth nagged at Coh Langham's soul. He beat it back, and his hands tightened on his belt.

Krim's face enraged him. What right did the plodding fool have to question him?

Then, over Krim's shoulder, rising out of the murky water, he saw something that sent a great wild emotion surging through him, a feeling unbidden and strange.

"Simon!" he cried. "A pyramid!"

Krim stared. His stubbled jaw worked, but no words came. Then he sent the submarine shooting toward the majestic, water-worn pile that reared from the muck, split here by a great fissure running down from low, flat hills.

Langham, stirred in spite of himself, watched out the port. Suddenly he gripped the fixtures, so that the twin serpents writhed convulsively. "Turn!" he shouted. "Turn!"

Krim stared, uncomprehending. Langham threw himself bodily at the controls. Then he was drowned, blinded, deafened, in roaring darkness that was like no darkness he had ever known.

He felt the submarine shudder, a strange, silent quiver as though its very atoms were shifting; felt his own body twisted by great impalpable forces, heard himself cry out in wild terror. Then there was only darkness and a horrible rushing as though the little ship was hurtling to the outer ends of space.

CHAPTER II

TO ANCIENT MU!

COH LANGHAM woke to coppery light streaming through canted ports. Climbing across the tilted deck, he looked out onto low hills alternately tilled and forested, sloping to a green plain. The roofs of what seemed to be farm buildings were visible across the first

ridge, and just within the range of Langham's vision to the right was a bulking outline that made him stare with a queer sense of vertigo:

A pyramid, flat topped and terraced, worn by centuries but still clear and sharp of outline, the carvings plain—a lot plainer, Coh Langham thought, than when he had seen it a few minutes ago, at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean.

Whirling, he shook Simon Krim to his feet, silently because all he might have said was too wild for utterance. Then he wrenched the hatch open and climbed out, his keen, scarred face alert.

For the first time, he regretted that they carried no weapons on the submarine, and his hands hovered near the massive buckle on his belt.

Nothing stirred. There was stifling heat and a faint hint of sulphur on the air, and an ugly yellow tinge to the murky sun. Here and there were cracks in the plain's turf and falls of loose rock that Coh Langham knew meant recent earthquakes. The low hills and the plain looked familiar; here was where the fissure had run, and there was the pyramid.

The pyramid, now untouched by twelve thousand years of ocean burial. A thought spoke in Langham's mind—a thought so fantastic, so incredible that he shook it angrily away.

Krim was staring about with blank amazement. He saw the pyramid. A look almost of reverent worship came over him, and he whispered:

"Older than the Temple of Sacred Mysteries at Uxmal! But . . . my God, Coh, what happened?"

Langham's scarlet headcloth shook. "I saw something queer about the water near the pyramid; a sort of hole that seemed to be sucking the water in. I tried to turn. . . ."

"And we got caught." Krim scratched his unkempt head in something like panic. "Where in hell are we?"

"I don't know," said Langham, admitting to himself that he was almost afraid to think. "We'll find somebody and ask."

The submarine was jammed fast in the narrow channel of a stream that flowed deep and swift away from the low side of the canting deck. Langham looked over the other side, and clutched dizzily at Krim.

He was looking down into illimitable emptiness—a hole, like the hole that had been beside the sunken pyramid, with a rim that wasn't a normal, solid rim, but one that wavered and shifted. Up to ground level there was nothing. Then, exactly parallel with the earth, there was water, flowing in a steady stream, salt water, bearing an occasional deep-sea creature that promptly exploded with the release of pressure.

Coh Langham rubbed his scarred chin, and his first mad thought came back with battering-ram force. Turning, he leaped the short distance to the stream's bank, and started toward the buildings that showed over the first little hill.

And then he stopped, because there was a shadow across the sun, and he saw that the roofs were burning.

Simon Krim, lumbering up beside him like a shaggy black bull, cocked his head. "Sounds like a fight. I'll bet no accident started that fire!"

Kukulcan writhed as Coh Langham shrugged his shoulders. "We've got to find out where we are, and that's the only place I see. Anyway, the fight's none of ours. They'll let us alone." He strode off through the hot, dingy sunshine. Krim swore under his breath and followed.

THE picture was clear when they topped the hill. Low rambling buildings built of stone were being gutted by the fire, buildings much finer than a common farm. Loot was piled in jumbled heaps on the trampled grass, and a mob of yelling men had four people cornered under the sod roof of a cow-byre.

Four people; a man like an oak tree, grey and stalwart, two fair-haired striplings whom Langham guessed to be twins, and a thin, dark young man whose free hand pressed a bleeding wound. They fought desperately, but the end was clear. And Coh Langham's gorge rose as he saw how the leader of the mob, a paunchy, great-shouldered man covered all over his swarthy body with ornaments, held his men off so that the sport should be prolonged.

One of the fair-haired lads fell with an axe-blade through his brain. The other cried out "Helvi!", and Langham knew that it was no boy, but a woman.

Coh Langham had little use for women, but he couldn't help admiring that splendid girl. She was something new to him. Excitement poured along his veins; in a second his belt was off, wrapped around his tattooed right hand, the great buckle swinging free, and he was striding down the slope.

Krim caught him. "You damned fool, you'll only get us killed!"

Langham shook him off. "Start running, if you think you can beat them. They've seen us already."

There was nothing for it but to fight. They stood back to back, seeing in the mad-dog faces of the running men the hopelessness of peaceful advances, even if they could make themselves understood.

Over the attacker's heads, Langham saw that the three still standing under the sod roof were taken and

being bound. Then men were rushing at him with drawn swords and heavy scythes, and he knew he was going to die without even knowing where he was.

A squat yellow man cried out, and then a negro, passing it on to others, white and brown and indiscriminate. The ranks split, flowing by the two at bay. Brutish faces stared, filthy paws pointed, weapons fell away into a wary but not deadly circle.

Coh Langham realized abruptly that they were looking at Kukulcan, blue and crimson on his arms and breast.

He realized something else, feeling Krim start as he, too, understood. Both men spoke Quichua and Polynesian and several other dialects, with a smattering of Quanlan. These men spoke a sort of mongrel combination, which Langham found later was a *lingua franca* spoken everywhere, and which was nearly as clear to the strangers as English.

A man came shouldering through the press; the paunchy, ornamented man who led them. Coh Langham had seen his type before, in a hundred native quarters where crime slinks down the black alleys and carouses in the wine-shops of nights. Very quickly he replaced his belt, and prayed that his weapon had not been noticed.

"Look, Itzan," whispered a one-eyed cutthroat. "He bears the sign of the Creator two-fold on his breast!"

Itzan studied the two, his vast shoulders bowed over his bloody sword, his coarse, cross-breed's face shining with sweat. Little bloodshot eyes traced the twin serpents up Langham's arms, and just for an instant Langham fancied he saw a flicker of fear. Then Itzan shrugged and straightened.

"We take the two of them to

Xacul," he said. "Then if they be demons from Naga the Creator, why, the blame will be on Xacul's head, not mine." And he laughed, his belly shaking with the press of mirth that was silent save for a wheezing in his throat.

They were herded to where the three captives stood, the young man white and swaying, the girl like a leashed tigress, the old man with a bitter calm. Itzan laughed again, his ornaments clanking as he walked, and said softly:

"Xacul's commands have been carried out, except for one thing. The old wolf was to die before his cubs were taken to the Master."

He placed the point of his sword at the base of the old man's throat and pressed. Itzan gave a sudden practised twist; the old man fell and was still, and Itzan's laughter wheezed and whistled in his throat.

Coh Langham saw the girl's face. It was like white marble, still and set and terrible.

Past the gutted buildings they were led, Krim and Langham shackled now like the others, and to a meadow where long gleaming metal cars rested on the grass. The cars had no wheels, and there were curving shells at the forward end. Langham, looking, saw Simon Krim's unshaven face as amazed as he knew his own must be.

He had read, in ancient Naga temples in India, of just such ships that flew thirty thousand years before the flood. But he had not quite believed.

THE loot-laden mob split, most of them going off across the meadows to, Langham supposed, other homes waiting to be gutted. Some forty were left, and these were divided between the two cars—Simon Krim and the wounded man in one,

Langham and the girl with Itzan in the other. As they were parted, the girl cried "Sigri!" and struggled to break free. Itzan's hand caught her, held her as though she were chained to a post, although Langham was astonished at her strength.

Sigri, swaying against the wide-eyed, unbelieving Krim, stained with blood from his wounded side, turned a thin face set with wildly burning eyes, and cried:

"Don't be afraid, Helva. We've already escaped them, and what's happened, has happened!"

"Crazy," thought Langham. And Sigri looked it, his scarlet kilt in ribbons, dark hair streaming from a fillet of gold wire, his thin body quivering like a nervous horse. But suddenly, looking fair into those feverish dark eyes, Langham knew that he was seeing a sane and brilliant man driven by an awful fear, and that his cry to Helva was more a cry of hope than a statement of fact.

Sigri's hand, held tight over the bleeding wound, dropped quickly to his girdle, felt something hidden there, and returned. Only Langham, looking intently, saw the slight movement.

They went into the cars. Globes of clear quartz enclosing intricate prisms were raised just aft of the curving windcreens, covered with shields of what looked like lead, but appeared to be heavier and different in texture. These shields were cranked aside. Slowly a swirling, coruscating brilliance was born in the globes, flashing from facet to facet of the prism, boiling in a splendor of living light. Langham felt a thrumming of power through the body of the ship, and saw the ground dropping away beneath it.

Silently they rose, until the keel

made safe clearance of the low hills. Then a second, smaller globe was raised at the stern, so that the ship maintained a steady level, and the cover of the small globe removed. Again Langham saw the birth of light in the prism, felt a surge of power, and the ground was streaming away beneath them.

The two ships fled together under the ugly, shrouded sun. A sulphurous wind snarled around the shield, whipping the girl Helva's long fair hair into Langham's face, catching at the scarlet cloth that bound his own. Coh Langham's square, scarred jaw was set, his eyes eagle-bright above his Roman nose.

"If I'm going to die," he said aloud, "I'm damned if I won't find out where and why first! You, girl, tell me, while that ape-faced butcher is busy up in front."

The girl Helva looked at him, and for the first time, she really saw him. Her sea-colored eyes took him in, the dungarees and rubber-soled shoes, strong brown body and scarred brown face, coming at last to rest on Kukulcan. Her hand went to a silver amulet at her throat, and she whispered:

"Who are you, in such strange clothing, with the Creator's symbol on your body?"

"Coh Langham," he said, "from. . ."

"From Mayax?" interrupted the girl, and something of the awe left her. "A prince of the house of Coh?"

Well, Langham thought, that's who I was named for, and he said, "Yes." Mayax meant Central America, and the Feathered Serpent was the Mayan version of Naga the Creator. Langham wondered whether that whim of decoration was going to do him good or evil. It had saved his

life once, but might it yet kill him through giving religious offence?

Then, as the full meaning of Helva's words percolated through his head, the knowledge that he had been fighting off since he first landed struck him squarely between the eyes. Gripping the girl's shoulders in crushing fingers, he demanded:

"What land is this, and what year?"

There was fear in the girl's eyes, fear that he was mad, but she didn't flinch. "This is the Northern Kingdom of Mu, and the year of the Sun is two hundred thousand and six."

Langham's hands fell away. "According to ancient reckoning," he said in a flat voice, "Mu was that old when she sank. Mu sank. . . . my God! I've traveled twelve thousand years in time!"

CHAPTER III

THE NEW GOD

HELVA caught him fiercely. "What do you know of the sinking of Mu? Are you as mad as Sigri? Or are you a demon, or a godling come to doom Xacul and his butchers?"

Langham shook his head dazedly. "I hardly know myself, Helva." Her face was clear and lovely, her body strong and full and gracious in its wind-pressed white tunic. Her loss was in her eyes; the sorrow of them hurt him. Caught in a quite unfamiliar emotional surge, he took her hands in his, the chains of both of them clashing, and said:

"But I want to be your friend. Perhaps we can help each other."

Helva shook her head. "Only God can help us now. We are being taken to Manoa for judgment, and with Xacul, that means death."

"You'll have to tell me what's going on. So much has happened since we came through the hole, and I don't. . . ."

"The Hole!" Helva's fingers sank into his arm. "What do you know about the Hole?"

"Nothing. Only Krim and I were dragged through it somehow in our submarine. That's how we got here."

"Then . . . then Sigri is right!" whispered Helva, and Langham was startled at the look that came over her face. Not even when she was captured had she shown fear, but it was there now, stark and icy. "Sigri is right. But it's mad! Mad!"

There was silence there in the hot wind, with Coh Langham staring into Helva's eyes, that looked beyond at something terrible.

A voice asked, "How goes it, demon?" Coh Langham glared up into Itzan's coarse dark face. He came to his feet, fingers instinctively at his belt, but the girl forestalled him. She sprang like a tigress, silent and blazing eyed, swinging clenched hands weighted with metal cuffs and chain.

Itzan twisted, taking the blow on one great shoulder. His left hand caught Helva's wrists, his right swung open-palmed to her head. Langham caught her as she sagged back, and Itzan, looking down at her, laughed wheezingly until his paunch shook with it.

"Spitfire!" he said. "Xacul will give us rare sport with her!"

There was a red, animal rage surging in Langham, but he fought it down, realizing the futility of violence.

"Who is Xacul?" he demanded. "And why are butchers like you turned loose on the people?"

Itzan's ornaments clashed as he sat down, well out of reach and ready

with his sword. He opened his mouth, then grinned and pointed over the side.

"There's the reason, demon. If you are a demon, you should know. If you're not, well, there it is."

"Don't you care?" asked Langham, and Itzan shrugged.

"That's for Xacul to worry about."

Langham looked over the side. For a second he thought the motion of the ship had made him dizzy; the ground was wavering like a badly focussed film. Then he realized that he was watching an earthquake. More as concussion than sound he heard its roar, and saw green meadows slashed as though by a great sword with smoking fingers.

Itzan chuckled. "There won't be any more of those when Xacul and I have killed all you Naga-worshippers."

"Why?" asked Langham incredulously.

"You're stupid for a demon," said Itzan. "Xacul tells us that the Creator either never was, or has deserted us, and that those who worship him bring evil on us instead of good. It's very simple. All we have to do is kill everybody, mostly people like the little spitcat with much land and loot, who refuses to deny Naga, or Kulkulcan, or the Almighty, or whatever name you choose to call Him. Then with no one to call down evil, the quakes and the fire-spoutings stop."

"Who is this Xacul?"

"He says he's God." Itzan rose, yawning, stretching his wide, squat body. "I don't care. As long as he gives me sport and loot and the wine-shops afterward, he can call himself what he likes."

Laughing, he added, "Take care of the pretty hell-cat. She mustn't die yet!"

He lumbered away, up forward. Coh Langham's scarred face was murderous. Then Langham said, "Helva! Helva!" and lifted the dazed girl.

THERE was much he wanted to ask her; about Xacul, about the Hole and Sigri, and about this crazy revolution. But Itzan's blow had done something. Langham was glad it had, knowing that emotion too long dammed has ugly ways of breaking out. Helva cried, sitting hunched with her hair over her like a veil; sobbed over her father and her brother and her home until she was cried out. Then she swayed against him like a tired child, and Langham cradled her in his shackled arms.

Looking down at her, feeling the young vitality of her so close, Coh Langham felt again that stirring of unhappiness in him, far stronger than when Krim's words had waked it. He had lost something, what he didn't know. The search had prodded him on during the ten years since his father's fruitless death, and left him as empty handed as when he started.

As always, an impatient anger rose in him, shaking off the mood. But his eyes, as the ship raced through the sulphurous sky, were drawn often to Helva's face.

The low sun was tingeing the coppery murk with red when Coh Langham began to see farms and roads below, with smoke from burning homesteads and groups of men fighting and running. The revolution, he thought, must be very new. Presently he saw the walls and terraced buildings of a city rising ahead, and knew that it was Manoa.

He came near to forgetting his own danger. In spite of himself, he was living the dream that archeologists have and never realize; the chance

to go back and see how the ruins looked when they were whole and peopled, how men lived and loved and died in the buried cities before they were buried. In this field the fountainhead was lost, and only cryptic hints were scattered throughout the world; hints that were laughed to scorn by most scientists. Now, through some miracle he couldn't understand, he was in Mu, the land whence, if you believed what the ruins and the carvings told you, the ten tribes descended from Adam and Eve had gone out to colonize the world, black, white, brown, and yellow.

The girl asleep in his arms was pure Norse, speaking the Quanlan of ancient Norway. King Quetzal had led his fair-haired people from Mayax to Cimmeria, leaving legends of blond Indians all through Central America. Itzan was mixed swarthy white, the Latin forerunners, and Negro, with a streak of brown thrown in. Brown that had gone from Hiranypura in Mu to India, taking the Naga symbol with them.

Now, just ahead, rose the towering majesty of a pyramid, which had gone with the Murians to Central America, on to lost Atlantis, and from there with a priest's son named Thoht to Sais in Egypt.

The other ship, bearing Krim and Sigri, drew in closer. Langham saw his partner's shaggy head thrust over the side, avidly examining everything, and grinned. Apparently nothing worried him but seeing as much of Mu as he could. Irrationally, Langham was suddenly envious.

Looking at the glowing balls of crystal, he wondered for the hundredth time what raised the ships and made them go. It was not until much later that he learned that the Murians had for centuries had the

secret of the cosmic ray, catching the boundless power in the prisms and using it to change the molecular vibration patterns of metals so that a repulsion field was created. Here in Mu, thousands of years before the Tertiary Era, when the world was flat because the mountains had not yet been born, the secret of anti-gravity was in everyday use.

In that way the great slabs of Baalbek, the images of Easter Island had been lifted and set in place. Just a network of metal set around the vast dressed blocks, the cosmic-ray globes unshielded, and the stones floated weightless as toy balloons.

The ships passed the city walls; there were fine stone buildings and paved streets black with people, and here and there fighting and looting still going on. The vast pyramid loomed above everything. Built around its base was the carved magnificence of a palace. The ships headed straight for the broad flat top of the pyramid, settled down.

Helva woke, sliding out of his arms with a look of silent gratitude. Pushing back her golden mane of hair, she said quietly, "Because of this day, we might have been comrades. I'm sorry, Coh, that we must die—and without vengeance!"

Her sea-eyes were on Itzan's bejeweled ungainliness, and Langham remembered seeing the same look in the eyes of a wounded she-leopard. Then the cross-breed's great shoulders were bent above them, and he said:

"Come and meet God, and celebrate the end of earthquakes! At least, we'll celebrate. Xacul is inclined to be too quick and unimaginative; he spoils our sport if we don't take care."

As they were herded out of the car to be joined with Krim and Sigri,

Langham asked for the third time, "Who is Xacul?"

Helva shook her head. "He came out of the southern forests; men say he was a hunter. My father said he was mad, but the people are driven mad too, with fear of the quakes, and they follow him. He has been preaching to them for a long time. Two days ago there was a quake that destroyed many towns and many people, and he said it was a sign for them to rise and destroy us. You have seen."

Coh Langham nodded. He had seen. And he hated Xacul as he hated the devil, before he ever saw him.

Simon Krim was as eagerly watchful as a child at a circus. He had bound Sigri's wound with strips from his undershirt, and the slender, feverish man seemed to have caught a little strength. Langham ached to question him, but Itzan forbade further speech.

The four and their guards, headed by Itzan, marched down a ramp that spiraled toward the ground, passing level after level of rooms in which Langham glimpsed parchments and maps and instruments, priceless records of a lost world. Simon Krim saw them too; Langham heard him swear as though the heart was being ripped out of him, and smiled. It would be nice to care as much as that about anything.

The ramp widened to a vast hall covered with magnificent murals and roofed with beams of gilded cedar. Ahead there were bronze doors twenty feet high, with the symbols of the Sacred Four and the flat Uighur *Lahun* set in jewels upon them. Itzan stopped to speak with the gilt-armored guards before the doors, and Langham felt a body sag close against him.

It was Sigri. At first he thought

the man had fainted. Then he heard his urgent whisper, and knew that he was shamming.

"Prophecy to Xacul!" Sigri's nervous vitality was like electricity to Langham. "Prophecy the destruction of Mu! It may win us time."

Langham had a sudden horrible premonition. "Destruction?"

"At dawn. *I know!*"

Sigri staggered away as the guards moved in. The great bronze doors swung open to a wild thrumming of harps, and they marched into Xacul's judgment chamber.

CHAPTER IV

THE EARTH ROCKS!

COH LANGHAM'S gaze swept across the floor inlaid with the lotus symbol of Mu, past two harpers alone in silent splendor, up seven steps of black basalt to the throne, which was a lotus flower cut from a single block of chrysoprase. There it stopped, seeing the hunter from the southern forests who called himself God.

Dull-gleaming ebony against the pale green lotus, with no stitch nor ornament on him but a leather clout, his body a towering symmetry of muscle and sinew striped across the breast with the five great scars of a leopard's claws; straight black hair unbound, framing a face of Grecian purity, the face of a Tamil prince; sombre dark eyes that held still, far flames in their depths, and a little marmoset nestled against the curve of his columned neck; this was Xacul, who would stop the earthquake.

He looked at them like a man surfeited with wine.

"Today," he murmured, "I have killed a king. No lesser blood shall

wash away the taste of that killing, until I have savored it."

Itzan swore under his breath. "But, Lord, these two are demons," he said hopefully. "The tall one bears the Snake on his breast. He says they have come from the Eternal to punish you."

Xacul, sunk and dazed in his vaulting dream, stroked the tiny marmoset and said softly:

"There is no Eternal, and I am Lord. My word goes through the land, even to the place of the Sun himself. In five moons I will rule all Mu, having the Colonies at my feet. Take these traitors below to the dungeons; tomorrow I will kill them. But today, I have spilled the blood of a king!"

Itzan's vast shoulders shrugged resignedly. Coh Langham, looking back as they were led out, saw those dark eyes still fixed on some mad and splendid distance, the marmoset like a grey puff-ball on an ebon shoulder.

"Get torches," said Itzan, and turned to his prisoners. "The regular prison is full, so you must go into the old pits. And you may stay there a week, Xacul has so many piled up ahead of you. There's a fine crop; it'll take me some time to get through them."

"You?" asked Langham. "Do you execute them all?"

"Only the strongest men. The rest the common butcher handles. The thing is, Xacul wants them killed quickly. I like a little sport. I let them fight me, man to man. Of course, I can't take too many chances, so their arms aren't as good as mine, but at least, they have a sporting chance."

Langham grunted. The torches were brought, and the guards turned off down a side corridor that presently went down and down without

a break. Langham saw Sigri's face in the torchlight, thin and wild-eyed, and frightened. And once more there was that furtive movement to something hidden in his girdle.

"It was no use to prophesy," whispered Langham. "Xacul is quite mad. It either would have made no impression on him, or would have angered him to killing us out of hand."

Sigri nodded. "But it's true. We must escape before dawn!"

They came into a stone corridor that reeked of moldy dampness, where phosphorescent fungi held the torchlight after it was past. And twice on that descent Langham felt the earth heave and groan under him. The quakes hadn't yet obeyed Xacul.

Itzan stopped at last before the first of a row of rusty metal doors. "I'll put you together, because I don't want you going mad or committing suicide before your turn comes. The two demons should fight well; and I may even give the pretty spitzcat a chance, by way of variety!"

Langham would have beaten Itzan's head in if he could have reached him. But the spears prodded them into the cell and the door clanged shut. Langham heard Itzan's wheezing laughter mingling with the retreating sandal-scuffs. Then there were darkness and silence.

The earth rolled and shivered and was still. Langham heard Helva's quick-drawn breath, and then her voice, saying:

"Sigri! These men came through the Hole!"

"I know; the one called Krim told me." Again Langham sensed the driving nerve force in Sigri. He was like a taut wire, pulled almost to the breaking point. "Listen to me. You too, Helva, for I've never told you everything. I've hoped I was wrong,

but the quakes and the fire-spoutings leave no doubt.

"You know the pyramid beside the Hole. When I was a small boy, it fascinated me so that I spent all my time there, while the others were playing. Krim will understand; it was the ancient things that drew me, the carvings on the walls. Seven thousand years old, and the secret has been lost. It's taken me all my life to decipher those carvings, but I've done it. And I wish I had never seen them!"

SIGRI'S voice shook. Then it went on again, calm over a depth of near hysteria. "No, I don't mean that. I was happy, working over those carvings, making them give up their secret. It's the secret that terrifies me!

"Tomorrow at dawn, the carvings say, this land, this beautiful land of mine will be destroyed. All the palaces, the temples, the farmlands, the great cities and the quiet places, all destroyed! Krim says it is true, that Mu will sink. That alone would be enough. But . . ."

His voice broke off weakly. Langham heard a rustle, a groan, a soft thud. Sigri had sat down, and his voice came again, stronger.

"The carvings say something else, something so strange that I thought for a long time I must be wrong in my translation. But the Hole has always been there. You know that now! The carvings explain it. There is much I don't understand; I'm no scientist, only a lover of the past. But I'll try and tell you. You must understand! It means your lives."

There was a pause. Langham waited, feeling Helva taut beside him, sensing Simon Krim's methodical intentness. Sigri began again, slowly, choosing his words with care.

"The universe, according to the carvings, is something like a spool, winding the ribbon of time around it. The axis of the spool is the fourth dimension. By tapping it, you can go to any spot in happened time. So much I can grasp. But the rest is incredible!

"The man who built the pyramid and made the carvings must have been myself! Because he, who found the way to tap the fourth dimension by twisting the warp of time and space as an augur bores wood, did so in order to escape the destruction of Mu! On the very dawn of Mu's sinking, he escaped to the past, seven thousand years.

"Now the cycle has been relived. I am again at the starting point. If Helva and I don't repeat the first action—the man took his sister with him—we'll not only be destroyed with Mu, but we'll cause some horrible disruption in the time-stream. Happened time cannot be altered!"

There was silence for some time. Then Krim said, "But the Hole only sucks one way. How can you go back through it?"

"You don't understand." Sigri's voice was ragged with urgency. "The Hole was first made when Mu was as she is now. You came upon it as Mu is in your time, which hadn't happened when—when I went through first. Dawn tomorrow ends the cycle. The revolving time-factors will close the Hole as the time of its first boring approaches. I'll have to bore it again, using the time machine that is also in the pyramid.

"There will be a moment, before the closing, when the field will be neutralized, so that you can escape back to your own time. You can't come with us, because you didn't come the first time, and we can't

alter what's happened. If you stay, it means destruction."

Langham was silent, thinking hard. Once he would have said Sigri was mad. But there was no doubt that the Hole existed.

"I don't understand," he said at length. "You say that happened time may not be altered. Yet this time you copy the secret from a carven wall, not discover it yourself. We weren't here the first time. Xacul must have been, but were you captured?"

Sigri said slowly, "I don't know. Some of the carvings have been destroyed by quakes. That has puzzled me too, but the best I can figure is that some things may be fitted into the time-stream without disturbing it, if the place is wisely chosen, so that men can travel in time if they know how. Other things would conflict with happened things that were important, or leave a gap in time. In other words, although the method of approach may differ, the things that have happened must happen again."

Langham grunted. "Perhaps. But escape isn't going to be easy. It's a long flight back, and it was sundown when we came into Manoa."

There was a far-off roaring, coming closer. The stones leaped under them, rocked for two solid minutes, and were still. From the sound and feel, Coh Langham, who knew earthquakes, decided that the palace was built directly over a fault. If Sigri was right, if the convulsion that had plunged the continent to her death was starting, the palace would be first to go down.

He thought of the immeasurable tons of stone above them and shuddered. Yes, they must get out. Even if Sigri was crazy as a loon, there

were Xacul and his butcher Itzan, waiting.

CHAPTER V

STRUGGLE FOR LIFE

"THERE'S one thing more," said Sigri. It was almost a groan. "I don't know how the time-machine works. Alone, I haven't been able to decipher the carvings." There was a rustle as he drew something from his girdle; the thing, Langham knew, that he had been terrified of losing. "I was afraid another quake might destroy them, so I copied them on a strip of linen. You, Krim; you love the old things, like I do. Can you help me?"

Memories rose in Langham; things taught him in boyhood by his father, things learned from crumbling walls and cracked clay tablets. He stepped forward. "I'll help."

There was a sudden burst of light in the blackness as Simon Krim's cigarette lighter crackled. The tiny flame showed his face, heavy and dark-stubbed under his tangled hair, his eyes very steady.

"You had the makings of an archeologist when you were a boy, Coh," he said slowly. "You wasted them. If Sigri, with his years of work, couldn't crack those carvings, you wouldn't be any more help than—than Itzan." He stopped, studying Coh Langham in the feeble glimmer of the flame.

"You're like Itzan, Coh," he said abruptly. "Sensation is all you live for. I imagine you're getting a great kick out of this. No, you can't help us, unless you can figure out some way to get us out of here. Which I doubt."

He squatted down beside Sigri,

bending over the strip of cloth, and in a second he and the Murian were off in a world of their own. Langham glared at them a moment, stung, furious. Then he turned to pacing restlessly up and down the cell, purposely keeping his eyes from the dull glint of gold that was Helva's hair. He knew that she was studying him from where she sat against the wall, and wished suddenly that she wouldn't.

Escape. He had to think out some way to escape. Somehow the thoughts wouldn't come, and his gaze kept going unbidden to the corner where the two men labored in the feeble light.

Up and down, up and down, with Kukulcan rippling to his impatient movements, his scarred hawk face catching bronze glints from the lighter-flame. Krim's words rang in his mind, pricking him to a blind anger. Like Itzan, was he, living only for sensation? Far better than living like a grub, sweating his life away like his father had, for nothing.

And yet, was it?

He stopped, standing tigerishly over the two men, lean hands at his belt. The old anger was hot in him, and suddenly he recognized it for what it was; a defense, a wall he had built against truth. It cooled away, leaving an ash of bitter loneliness. For ten years he had chased excitement, trying to drown the longing in him that he hadn't admitted even to himself. Now he was facing the ultimate thrill, death, and he had nothing to show for the days he had lived.

Krim and Sigri would have their monuments; small and unimportant, perhaps, but the fruits of work they had done because they loved it. His father had had that, too. He himself would have nothing.

Looking at those two, lost even to fear, Coh Langham realized the bitterest thing of all. He didn't belong. There was no one he could call friend, no group to which he was drawn. It wasn't just archeology. It would have been the same in any line of work. He was nothing, like Itzan, a creature living solely for its own pleasure.

He wanted to help, and he was barred. His strength, his courage, were useless here. And he had nothing else to offer. He was merely a body, following a lone and aimless track, wasting soul and brain—and life.

He turned suddenly and went down beside the girl; he couldn't have said why. He took her hands in his and bent his head over them, and whispered:

"I've been a fool, Helva. A fool, a fool!"

How long he stayed that way he never knew. Quakes slid down the fault, shook them, roared on. Krim and Sigri labored on. Helva never spoke, but her hands were strong and comradely in his. They calmed him, brought back his confidence, so that hope began to rise again. And they brought something else, a dim something he didn't understand.

Krim stirred, stretching cramped muscles. "We've cracked it! Now all we need is time."

Helva's fingers tightened suddenly. Langham listened, then sprang up. "Hide the linen!" he whispered. "Someone's coming!"

Footsteps and torchlight; many men, armed. The door grated open, and Itzan stood grinning at them, jeweled arms folded above his paunch.

"God wants to see you," he said. "These quakes you're making upset his dinner, demon, and I'm to punish

you by death, right in the Lotus Hall. Yes, all of you; but the tall demon first!"

THE Lotus Hall was crowded with men, sitting at long trestle tables down both sides of the vast room. The air was heavy with wine and the rich odors of food, and the harpers, over against the dais, played wild, throbbing music. In the cleared space between the tables a man danced near-naked with shining swords.

There were no women. And above the feasting and the dancer, a tower of ebony rising from a pale green base, Xacul sat and brooded, fondling the marmoset.

The music broke, the dancer stopped, the feasters were silent. Xacul's eyes, dark-veiled flames set in a Grecian mask of jet, dwelt on Coh Langham and the writhing splendor of Kukulcan.

"Demon," he said softly, "you dare too much. You mock me with these quakes. It is only because they fear me more than the earth-shock that my people stay at this feast; and I must show them that no demon is mightier than I.

"Slay him, Itzan!"

Coh Langham leaped forward. "Why, Itzan?" he cried. "Why not you, Xacul?"

A gasp ran around the room. Xacul smiled and held out his right arm. Langham saw that it was splashed to the elbow with dried blood.

"This was the blood of a king," murmured Xacul. "Three are left; the Southern and the Middle Kings, and the King of Kings, the Sun of Mu himself. To these three only will I bend my hand."

"Then I will prophesy!" cried Langham. A chance, perhaps; any-

thing to gain time. "These little quakes are only the forerunners. Mu dies with the morning sun, and you with it, Xacul. The Eternal has sent me to warn you. Let us go, and perhaps He will have mercy."

Xacul's eyes were veiled. He stroked the marmoset, and whispered, "Slay him, Itzan!"

Coh Langham saw Helva's face, saw reflected in it what was in his own heart. He knew then that he loved her. Now that he knew his mistake, now that he could live, he couldn't die! Xacul was mad, and the only way to break him was to break his godship, to show his crazed mind a greater power. And Langham groaned. Even if Itzan didn't kill him, he couldn't see a way to win freedom from Xacul.

The harps struck a wild chord as Itzan strode forward, and in the same instant the ground roared and shook beneath them. The harps were abruptly silent, though the player's hands still plucked the strings, save for a weird, scattered disharmony.

Langham felt a shivering inside his ears and staggered dizzily. All over the room men swayed for a split second. Then the earth was silent and the dizziness was gone.

"The earthquake," Langham thought. Then he looked at the harps and a fierce light burst in his scarred hawk face.

He smiled as he whipped off his belt and stood to meet Itzan, the thong around his tattooed hand, the great buckle swinging free. If he could win this fight, there was a way, perhaps.

Itzan came, vast shoulders hunched, sword swinging. Langham took a deep breath. Everything he had learned of fighting out there on the edges of the world he was going to need now.

They were alone between the tables, ringed with staring, nervous faces, the floor jarring under them and a rolling of thunder in the distance—thunder that Langham recognized as a volcano in eruption. The time was growing desperately short.

Itzan's sword swung high, to end the fight with a single stroke. Langham crouched under it like a cat, sprang aside and leaped past, aiming a slashing blow that took Itzan under the ear. The cross-breed staggered and swore. He hadn't realized the portent of that heavy buckle. He came in again more warily, but Langham, vastly quicker of foot, cut him twice about the face before his next blow was aimed.

Itzan grinned suddenly. His head sank like a boxer's between his shoulders. His left arm, shielded with broad bracelets, came up to protect his face, and his long blade whistled as it swung. Langham's only target now was the thick ridge of muscle that ran across his shoulders. His only choice was to fall back before that murderous sword.

Back and back, leaping and dodging, seeking desperately for an opening, while the palace-pyramid groaned and shuddered almost with the regularity of a man's heartbeats and the tense-faced watchers drew closer to panic. Xacul, on his lotus throne, neither moved nor spoke.

Langham tripped suddenly, went to one knee and crouched there, panting as though spent, and Itzan, sure now of victory, paused for one instant with his sword upraised for the death-stroke, while his laughter wheezed and bubbled in his throat. And Langham's right arm swung like a striking snake.

The heavy buckle caught Itzan's heaving belly fair, stopping his laughter in a grunt of pain. His sword

rang on the rock, but Langham was not beneath it. His lithe body shot in against Itzan's knees, crashing him backward to the floor, and in the instant that he lay half-stunned, Langham's belt was around his throat, Langham's knees were crushing his chest, and the iron muscles were straining across Langham's back.

FOR the space of three long breaths, the Lotus Hall was silent. Then there sounded a snap like a twig breaking, and Coh Langham rose laughing from the body of Itzan, with Kukulcan sweat-shining on his heaving chest.

"I've killed your butcher, Xacul," he cried. "Naga protects me. Now is my blood worth your spilling?"

Xacul's answer whispered across the nervous quiet. "I was a hunter, and in the hot green forests I learned my strength. I am master of the trees, for I cut down the mightiest to build my shelter. I am master of men, for I have broken the strongest in my hands. I am master even of the beasts, for—" and he touched the five great scars on his breast—"I have killed the black leopard alone and weaponless. And one day I stood on a spur of rock while a mountain burst and fires flowed around me and the ground was shaken and split, and I was not harmed. And I knew then that I was master of all things. I am God!"

"Yet," said Langham, "I will show you a greater power. And any man who touches me to prevent me, shall die as Itzan died!" He swung about, crying, "Helva!"

She came, straight and unafraid across the shuddering stone, her hair a golden banner in the torch-flames. Coh Langham gripped her shoulders,

and she paled before the urgency in his face.

"I don't know whether you play the harp," he said. "But go and play it, girl! Wait for the earthquakes and strike only the low notes. Strike them hard!" Taking his handkerchief, he ripped it apart and thrust half of it into her hand. "Stuff your ears with this. If you feel dizzy, hang onto something or lie on the floor. But don't stop hitting those strings!"

She went, and the harpers fled before Langham's imperious gesture. Langham yelled in English, "Krim! Stuff your ears with cloth, and make Sigri do it too. Watch yourselves!"

There was a sudden roaring shock that nearly threw Langham flat. Great cracks opened in the walls and floor, and there was sound outside as of heavy things bounding and falling. Panic, hovering over the men at the tables, caught them now by the throat. God or no God, Xacul's authority, already weakened by Langham's unpunished challenge, lost its grip on them. They surged out like maddened cattle for the streets, leaving only trampled wreckage.

For an instant Langham thought he saw the way clear to escape; probably the soldiers that filled the halls had already run away. Then Xacul strode by him like a black colossus, and before Langham could gather his party and break for the door, it was barred and Xacul stood before it, arms folded across his scarred chest, the marmoset hugging his shoulder.

Langham gasped. He had not realized Xacul's size. Now, standing straight and on a level with him, he saw that Xacul's height was close to seven feet and that his shoulders were broader by four hands' breadth than burly Simon Krim's. To this giant, who had killed a black leopard unarmed, physical assault such as he

and Krim could offer would be merely the slappings of children.

"Play, Helva!" he shouted. "Play!"

Low thunder drummed in the distance where volcanoes burst. The earthquakes boomed along the fault beneath them. And Helva's fingers swept the harp-strings into thrumming life.

The low notes met and mingled. And Xacul said softly:

"You are strong, demon. You are worthy of death at my hands."

Langham said, "The Snake protects me! Without arms I'll overthrow you, make you helpless as a babe to stand erect! You are no god, Xacul, and I'll prove it!"

IN HIS heart Coh Langham prayed —prayed desperately that what had happened once might happen again.

Back and back he went before Xacul's slow advance, across the cracked and rocking lotus floor. Krim stood white-faced in the shadows with Sigri leaning against him. Helva bent across the harp-strings. And the muted thunder, the earth-deep drum-roll surged and echoed against the music.

Back and back, praying that the harp would not be drowned, praying that the palace would not be thrown down, praying that Helva should strike the right chord before Xacul's hand took his throat and crushed it.

"Louder, Helva! Louder and deeper!" He didn't know whether she could hear him; the sounds were dim in his muffled ears.

Back and back he went across the shuddering stones, until the steps of the dais caught his heels and tripped him, so that he lay against them, watching Xacul's black face bend over him. And suddenly Helva's hands found a chord, a chord that met and

silenced the low, dull thunder and was itself silenced. From the harp-strings broke a wild disharmony, so close to the two men that even through the cloth in his ears Langham heard it, and felt the vast shuddering of silent noise in the air.

Again and again, under Helva's strong brown hands that voiceless chord surged out. Great eddies of tortured air whirled about them, silent echoes were flung thundering from the walls and ceiling. Langham's head was filled with a rushing dizziness, a sense of sound beating its wings to be heard. He saw Helva's body sag against the harp, but her hands never faltered on the strings.

Xacul stopped, his eyes wide and burning, and the marmoset shrieked on his shoulder. His hands went to his head, and he swayed.

"You're beaten, Xacul!" shouted Langham. "I have overthrown you. You are no God, only a man. A man, Xacul, a man!"

Xacul fell, sprawling on the riven stones. He tried to rise, and fell again, helpless as a baby. Langham saw his face. There was terror in it, but most of all a great crushing despair.

Coh Langham rose and stood over him, fighting for balance, and somehow there was no joy in his triumph. He looked at Xacul's mighty body thrown in useless beauty on the stones, at his eyes that were blank and cold and fixed on a black and hideous distance.

"I am no god," Xacul whispered. "I am no god. I am no god!"

Helva fell beside the harp. The horrible compression, the shuddering of leashed sound was gone, leaving only the muttering of the earth and the far volcanoes. Langham picked her up, carried her toward the door.

A shock stronger than any before struck as the four went out, and Langham, looking back through the veil of dust that fell from cracking walls, saw Xacul still lying on the broken lotus paving, with the little marmoset huddled at his throat.

CHAPTER VI

BACK THROUGH TIME

THE pyramid was rocking dangerously as they fled up the ramp to where the flying ships were kept. The end was near. Langham held Helva until she found her feet. She whispered, "What did we do?"

Langham told her, jerkily and without pride, as they struggled upward through a hell of cracking walls and falling rock and dust.

"You remember how the harps sounded when Itzan came out to fight me, and how the low notes were blanked out when the quake struck? Everyone in the hall was dizzy for a minute. I thought it was the quake. Then I realized that the noise of the earth, which wasn't very strong, had neutralized . . . look out!"

He held her as a mass of rock fell from the ceiling, almost blocking the passageway. They climbed over, Krim helping the feverish Sigri, and Langham went on.

"It neutralized the sound of the harp-strings, as any two notes in the same phase will neutralize each other. The vibrations didn't quite match; the disharmony we heard was the sum of the difference between the notes. But between the 'different notes' and the tremendous silent vibrations, the air in the hall was set in motion in a freakish way. The vibrations in the air apparently trans-

mitted themselves to the lymph in the utricle of the ear. That's the fluid that presses on the balance hairs and tells us which way is up. The balance centers were so confused that we nearly fell.

"I thought that what happened—God! Feel that jar! We've got to hurry!—might happen again, so I sent you to the harp and prayed. You finally hit it right. Xacul's balance centers were completely deranged. Of course, when he fell as I told him he would, and he saw me standing, his faith in himself was broken." Langham's mouth made a grim line above his scarred chin. "He was mad, and deadly. I had to do it. But I can't help feeling . . ."

They came out onto the flat top, under a moon as veiled and turgid as the sun had been, and stopped involuntarily. From west to east the northern sky was filled with flame where volcanoes burst, a vast leaping glare that flooded the whole country. In its light the land shook like a troubled sea, filled with the crash of falling buildings and the shrieks of little beings that ran and were swallowed up. Deep in the earth there were great drums booming, answered with thunder and dry lightning from low-scudding clouds, and from somewhere, far off, came a great rushing of water as the sea engulfed the lowlands.

Coh Langham thought of the age-old symbol of the lotus drowned, and was filled with a longing and a tight-throated pity.

The parapet broke away with part of the roof. Langham leaped for the nearest ship, giving Krim a hand with Sigri while Helva cranked furiously at the anti-gravity globe. The car shot upward, and Langham, looking back, saw the pyramid collapse onto the ruins of the palace like a

child's castle of pebbles undermined by the sea.

Hot, sulphurous wind tore at him as he raised the directional globe. Krim and Sigri were lost again in their private world, huddled over the linen in the light of the larger globe. Langham smiled, but he was no longer bitter. He knew now what he wanted.

He took Helva in his arms, down on the floor of the pitching ship; his scarred hawk face was gentle, and the restlessness was gone from his eyes. "Helva," he said, "I can't leave you."

Her wind-whipped hair caressed him. "You must. There is no other way." Her hands tightened suddenly on his wrists, and her face was hidden.

"There may be a way," he whispered. "Kiss me, and let me think."

On westward, they went, above the deathbed of a continent, over toppling hills and riven fields and lakes of sudden fire. Dawn was pale through the sprouting flames when they sighted the pyramid, miles away but still standing.

Krim raised his shaggy head, and said wearily, "We've done it. We can run the time machine."

"Will it hold four, Sigri?" asked Langham.

Sigri's dark eyes went wide in his white face. "Easily. Why?"

"Well," said Coh Langham slowly, "it seems I've made a mess of my life in one time. I'd like to try righting it in another. You see, I've just discovered I was born to be an archeologist, and it's seldom one can go back to his ruins when they were new! I think I know Krim well enough to know he won't pass up the chance either. I hope not, because I'm going to need him, to teach me the things I need to know. Later, perhaps, when we've written a book

about Mu that'll knock the grey-beards out of their complacency, we'll go back to our own time. I'd like Helva to see London and the Rhine and Switzerland . . ."

He stopped at the sight of Krim's face, and laughed. Then he held out his hand. Krim took it and crushed it without speaking.

Helva's hands were tight on Langham's shoulders. "What are you saying? You can't come with us. Sigri says it would mean destruction, for us and everyone!"

"Sigri's theory has too many holes in it. He says that the large, the important things must not be altered. Who can judge what an 'important' thing is? Sometimes the smallest things change continents. And surely if the big things happened, the little things did too, and can't be changed by so much as the cutting of a fingernail.

"He says that he and Helva must go through the Hole again, because it was done before, or suffer dire consequences. I don't think so, except that they'd surely be killed with the rest of the Murians if they stayed. I don't think so because no other part of their lives has exactly coincided with the lives of the first two who made the Hole. Therefore, if some things could be altered on the 'ribbon of time,' so could others."

DAWN brightened where the land burned itself out. The pyramid loomed closer. Langham went on.

"I think this is nearer right, Sigri. I think that instead of one ribbon wound on the spool of the universe, there are many, existing in different space-time continuums as people exist in different rooms, without conflict. I think that each given time has a problematical future, a 'might-

have-happened,' and that if one goes back in time, one simply starts another ribbon winding on the cosmic spool toward another future, without disturbing the one, or the many, that already exist.

"In other words, Sigri, instead of reliving happened time, you have simply come to a similar point on the new ribbon that the first Sigri started. Your future hasn't already been lived; it's as problematical as mine or Krim's.

"How about it, Sigri? Does it appeal to your sense of logic?"

"Yes," answered the Murian thoughtfully. "Yes, it does. As I say, I'm no scientist. But I'm willing to take the chance." His brilliant dark eyes went to Helva. The girl's smile was glorious. Sigri held out a hesitant hand.

"This means friendship, doesn't it? After what you saved us from, Coh, I could be nothing but your friend. You, Krim; we are friends already!"

Langham felt, for the first time in his life, almost insanely happy as he sent the ship plunging down.

The ground groaned and split about them as they dashed for the doorway. White, staggering, Sigri led them to a strange machine in the dark interior; a circular platform surmounted by a vast corkscrew spiral of metal.

"On the platform!" he shouted, and threw a switch on a complex control-board. A prism began to whirl within the coil.

Helva's upturned face smiled at him in the coruscating brilliance. Langham had a fleeting glimpse of stone walls split and falling beyond a swirl of alien light. Then he was flying through blind, whirling space to start another ribbon winding on the cosmic spool.

The Fantasy Fan



THE FANTASY FAN

THIS is a department of the fans, for the fans, and largely by the fans. By fans we mean that odd race known as "science-fiction enthusiasts." If you're one of the gang, this is your department. If not, read it anyway—and we'll bet you'll be one of us by the time you finish it!

SOMETHING REALLY NEW!

ANOTHER definite conquest has been made in the field of science-fiction. Something new under the science-fiction sun has just come to our attention. When Hugo Gernsback brought out his first science-fiction magazine in 1926, that was something new. When the Science Fiction League was founded in 1934—that was also something new; likewise when the first fan magazine was issued in 1931. Here's the latest: an all-girl science-fiction fan magazine, written, edited, published, and distributed by the fair sex!

The little miss behind all this is none other than Pogo (the Esperanto moniker of Mary Corrine Gray, known to her intimate friends as Patti)—a resident of that section of Southern California that is always turning out something different. Pogo, although only nineteen, has long been an active and avid fan. Long a correspondent of many top-notch enthusiasts in the field, she made their personal acquaintance at the Chicago World Science Fiction Convention last summer. Of course, your editor, who gets around quite a bit (geographically) knew her personally several years ago, but that's another story.

To get back to her fan magazine, the all-feminine "Steffette," we understand that she has been working on the project for a couple of years, has collected a really fine bunch of items from the girls in the crowd and has turned out a really remarkable first issue. So we'll give you fair warning: if you don't get your dime for a sample copy to Pogo, P. O. Box 6475 Metropolitan Station, Los Angeles, Calif., right away, this, the most unique item in all science-fiction fandom might be entirely exhausted!

THE DENVENTION!

THE coined word used immediately above is the cryptic science-fiction sign for 1941! It has been evolved by the active fans of the U. S. to indicate the fact that science-fiction is going sky-high this year—at least a mile high for the big far-west Denver Convention over the July Fourth holidays! Fans, authors, editors, readers, artists, and futurians will be coming to Denver via train, bus, auto, horse-and-buggy, rocket-ship, pick-a-back, and on their hands and knees, if necessary, to be at this big get-together of the science-fiction realm!

Here is your chance to meet some of the

most well-known personages of fandom—and at the same time, see some of the country. So, if you can possibly manage it, we urge you to be present in Denver during the Denvention (Denver Convention, get it?). While you're in Denver, don't forget to go up into the Capitol dome for a good look at a couple-hundred mile stretch of Rockies, and a sky-eye view of the city.

Whether or not you can be sure, at the moment, of getting to Denver this summer for the Third World Science Fiction Convention, we suggest that you write immediately to the Convention Committee Chairman, Lew Martin, 1258 Race St., Denver, Colo.

MARIO RACIC—FAN

By James V. Taurasi

MARIO RACIC is the young chap from Astoria, New York that made a hobby out of collecting science-fiction stills from the movies. Because of this hobby, he was made scientifilm editor of "Fantasy News" back in 1938, a job which he still holds, and he is known today as the scientifilm expert of the east. Scientifilms (science-fiction movies) is Mario's pride and joy, and his collection of movie stills is the best and biggest in this part of the country.

He has been quite active in fandom, being the Secretary of the Queens Science Fiction League since it was reorganized in October 1938. He has helped silkscreen the covers of "New Fandom," but his greatest work was in preparation for the World Science Fiction Convention of 1939, in New York. It was Mario who located the Hall. It was Mario who did the impossible and found the only print of the movie "Metropolis" outside of Germany, plus running around on hundreds of jobs necessary to make the Convention a success.

Mario Racic himself is a slim five-foot six-incher who just loves science-fiction. You've seen some of his work in the June 1940 issue of "Fantasy Times" and you'll see more of him in the future.

WHAT, TWO MISTAKES?

DANIEL E. WADE, stationed in the Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, reports as follows: "The Fantasy Fan" had a couple of mistakes. 'Bizarre' has not just issued their second publication, a yarn by Keller. In fact, for some time, four have been issued! 'The Titan' is not a brand new story by P. S. Miller. It appeared back in 1934 in the old 'Marvel Tales'."

ESPERANTO BY MAIL

ESPERANTO, the international auxiliary language that has virtually been adopted by a large part of science-fiction fandom, is

taught in many day and evening schools throughout the country—but for the benefit of those who do not have such courses in their neighborhoods, there is an excellent correspondence course offered that will enable any person of ordinary intelligence to master this simple and fascinating tongue in a very few weeks—allow him to speak and correspond fluently with other Esperantists throughout the world, and participate in the Esperanto movement for world brotherhood through universal understanding.

We refer to Esperanto-By-Mail, St. Albans, New York. Why not write to them for details? As they say over the radio, all it will cost you to learn the facts is a penny postcard. For complete details regarding the Esperanto movement, we suggest that you address the General Secretary, Esperanto Association of North America, 1410 H Street, N. W., Washington, D. C.

For the benefit of budding Esperantists, we'd like to state here, if you haven't heard, that the latest film to use Esperanto is "Victory" with Fredric March. The studios have used Esperanto many times in the past and are fast adopting it as their "neutral" tongue.

SHANGRI-LA

THOSE of you who saw that excellent science-fiction movie, "Lost Horizon," know Shangri-La to be a hidden valley in the far north. But the science-fiction fans know Shangri-La to be Los Angeles, mecca of fandom, out of which comes the top-cream of science-fiction publications.

Such a publication is "Shangri-La," published by Walter J. Daugherty at 1039 West 39th St., Los Angeles, the director of the local science-fiction club—and we mean the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, the only science-fiction organization holding weekly meetings and boasting large attendance of famous people every week.

The magazine "Shangri-La" is beautifully and neatly mimeographed in green ink, contains thirty pages or more, and is replete with clever illustrations and cartoons. The articles contained in the mag are of general science-fiction interest, and of a high calibre, by the leading fan writers of the day. You can't go wrong by sending Walt a dime for a sample copy.

FANTASY NEWS

YES, the old stand-by is still going strong. Four pages of mimeographed science-fiction news every week, for about three years now—that's "Fantasy News." If you want to know what's going on in the fan and professional fields and get a glimpse behind the scenes—and into the future of the pro mags, all you have to do is send a dime for a sample subscription—three issues—to William S. Sykora, P. O. Box 84, Elmont, New York. This publication also acts as the organ of the Queens Science Fiction League.

SCIENCE FICTION FAN

"SCIENCE Fiction Fan" is the miracle magazine of the hectograph—legibly done in several colors, this pocket-sized pub presents monthly a unique array of really literary items. Published at a dollar a year by subscription only, it can be secured from Olon F. Wiggins, 3214 Champa St., Denver, Colo. The illustrations in this mag are of professional quality.

THE DAMN THING

THIS ungrammatical phrase consists of the name of another Los Angeles fan mag—published by T. Bruce Yerke at 1223 Gordon St., Hollywood, Calif. The magazine is as unique as its title and specializes in articles of a bantering nature, showing an appalling lack of respect for the high-and-mighties of science-fiction. Cynical is the word for Yerke. But if you've got a sense of humor, your dime can't go wrong if it finds itself in Box 6475 Metropolitan Station, Los Angeles, Calif.

POLARIS

"POLARIS" is the unchallenged leader of the all-around literary fantasy fan magazines now published, featuring stories, poetry, and articles of a science-fictional and fantastic nature to delight the most hard-to-satisfy fan. The cover and illustrations by Tom Wright are alone worth the dime asked for this mimeographed magazine. Editor: Paul Freehafer, 404 S. Lake St., Pasadena, Calif. Amateurs and professionals alike contribute to "Polaris."

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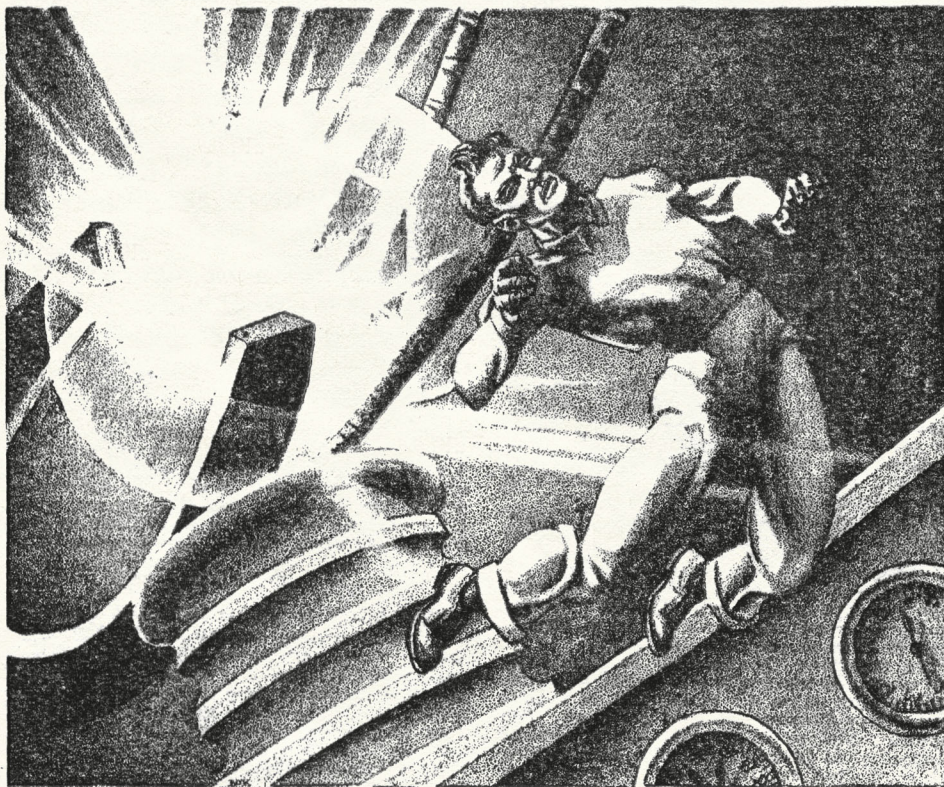
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THE WORLD IN WILDERNESS

By THORNTON AYRE



An explosion dinned his ears—he went reeling!

Nick and Blake faced the grimmest mystery that had ever confronted Man—for they had returned from space to find the Earth deserted of every living soul! How could billions vanish in a few days, without a thing being disturbed?

CHAPTER I

THE CELESTIAL SHOW

THAT extraordinarily rare event, the impending collision of two stars, was quite sufficient to stir the scientifically minded of the world's peoples to considerable interest in the late Septem-

ber of 1987, when the possibility was announced by the leading astronomers.

Unfortunately, the occurrence would be so distant as to be hardly visible to the unaided eye—a momentary flash of light, perhaps, if one knew exactly where to look for it. In actual fact, paradoxically enough, the event had already hap-

pened, but so vast was the distance, the light waves from the occurrence were only just appearing—past images of an event long gone.

The main thing was that here was a chance, by the purchase of a small telescope or good field glasses—manufactured by the millions by enterprising firms—to see Nature in a mood never before known, or at least never seen, since the Earth itself had been created and even at Earth's creation there had not been an actual collision, only a passing of two stars—the sun and a runaway.

Obviously, the only accurate recording of such an event would have to be made in space itself, where, unhindered by atmosphere and equipped with the finest telephoto plates, full still recordings of the event could be made, together with a complete motion film.

Automatically the assignment fell to Space Enterprises, Incorporated, the only space-traveling company in the world, in which were merged countless other businesses and a multitude of famous names. The Company's ships plied regularly from Earth to all the worlds of the system in search of valuable minerals, ores, materials that would give one man power over another. Every planet was devoid of life, that fact was proven. Of them all, only Venus, with its atmosphere almost identical to Earth, showed any possibilities as a world for future migration. Therefore, the Company's sole work was commercial. . .

Blake Venner, ace pilot of the void, was more than satisfied with the assignment. In fact, he spent the whole evening before his departure raving about it to Sheila Berick, daughter of the Company's President. Because she loved Blake well enough to be engaged to him, she

listened dutifully, calmed him down gently whenever his excitable nature got the better of him.

Even so, he paced the warm luxury of the girl's fashionable New York apartment and persistently refused her offers to sit down beside her on the divan.

"Think of it!" he cried, his bright blue eyes gleaming and his wiry fair hair standing up in an obstinate tuft. "A terrific contribution to science! A movie film of something that's never happened in history before—to our knowledge, that is. What a gift to hand to posterity! Celestial collision! Say, did you ever read up on Jeans?" he asked quickly, turning.

Sheila nodded her dark head slowly. "Of course. . ." Her brown eyes were faintly amused. "Why?"

"Remember The Mysterious Universe?" Blake finally accepted the offer to sit beside her. "If I remember rightly, Jeans said it is an 'unimaginable rarity' for one star to come anywhere near another star. Then he gives that excellent analogy of his. He pictures a scale model in which the stars are ships, and by this means each ship is found to be at least a million miles from its nearest neighbor, showing thereby the rarity of even close approach, let alone a collision. Yet, two thousand million years ago this occurrence took place, and the solar system was born. From then until now, there have been no such coincidences. . . . But now, judging purely, of course, from the light waves hurtling across space, a runaway star out beyond Alpha Centauri will collide with Egusus 612, a small dwarf type star not unlike our own sun."

"You're making me envious," the girl smiled. "It should be a sight for the gods right out in space."

"Your father won't let you come then?" Blake asked.

"No — against regulations; and you know what Dad is for upholding regulations. I tried all my wiles on him, but it just wouldn't work. . . so you see, even the President's daughter gets no favors. Maybe I'll think of something else," she finished, smiling again.

BLAKE shrugged. "It's tough, but I suppose it's only right. Space is no picnic, even for a man. . ." He relapsed into thought for a moment, then his face brightened again. "Well anyway, once this assignment's over, I'm due for two month's vacation. . . Are you still enough in love with a lunatic to marry me?"

"Nothing can change that!" There was no hesitation in the girl's answer. For all his impulsiveness, she knew Blake's sterling qualities, his reckless courage. For a moment her dark eyes studied his somewhat pugnacious features, then she said quietly, "I'll be waiting here for you when you get back, and I'll bet there'll be plenty of lionizing and feting for you and Nick. It isn't every day that two pilots secure such a scoop as has fallen to you two. In the interval, I'll record everything in my diary; it will help me to keep in touch with you even though you're millions of miles away in space."

Blake shook his head in mystification. "That diary of yours should make good reading one day—or rather diaries. You've been at it for years now, haven't you? . . ."

He broke off as his gaze caught the clock. Vigorously, he got to his feet, buttoned up his uniform collar.

"I guess time always goes by too fast when I'm with you. Got to turn in early tonight. We leave at eight

in the morning and will be away about two weeks or so. The collision takes place a week from today at 8.13 in the evening. You'll be watching it?"

Sheila rose to her feet, her satin gown clinging to her slender form. She did not answer the question.

"I suppose," she said slowly, "that I'll have to buy a telescope and watch, if all else fails. I did so want to see the collision from space."

"Forget it," Blake smiled. "Your dad's right. You'd feel cockeyed for weeks after the journey." He stooped, kissed her gently. "Take care of yourself," he murmured, then suddenly releasing her, he strode lithely to the door. . .

BY 8.15 the following morning, the Space Enterprises' finest equipped and fastest machine was clear of the stratosphere, plunging at ever increasing speed through the clear reaches of infinity, driven onwards against Earth's gravitational field by the powerful Bennett-Jones dilinite rocket fuel. Ahead loomed the always incomprehensible vastness of space, studded with the nearer view of the inner planets and moon, the distant dimensionless glitterings of the stars.

Blake sat squarely in his leather padded chair, hands on the controls, eyes on his instruments. Behind him, checking over the apparatus, his feet braced wide apart against the dragging pull of acceleration, stood Nick Vane, by far the smartest scientist the Company possessed.

Tall, sallow skinned and dark, he took life with a certain immovable gravity; he was the kind of man who would remain undisturbed through an earthquake and would record the effects in copper plate handwriting. He and Blake made an excellent

team; they were the firmest of friends, the one courageous and impulsive and the other calculating and impassive. Their joint efforts had never yet failed to produce perfect results.

"I wonder," Nick said presently, "if we're driving right into a death trap. . .?"

"Huh!" Blake looked up startled. "You're a nice cheerful sort of guy to go around with. What do you mean, anyhow?"

"I'm considering the possibilities . . ." Nick gravely plugged his pipe, lighted it with a noise like static. "And the more I consider, the more I wonder. Maybe there are things we didn't have the time to check up on. For instance, the collision of two stars will produce radiations of various sorts, and plenty of them may never have happened before. Because they travel at the speed of light, they'll reach us identically at the same moment we see the collision . . . I wonder what will happen then?"

"What the hell can happen?" Blake snorted. "Throwing scares into me like that! You know as well as I do that this ship's proofed against all radiations in three separate sections. Even cosmic rays can't get through, and they're about the most powerful thing of all to contend with."

Nick shrugged. "Well, it was only a consideration, anyway. I like to weigh the possibilities of everything from the very start. If I am to die, I prefer to know in what fashion—"

"Yeah, including the color of your coffin and the date of burial?" Blake finished drily. "If you'd forget your passion for organization for a moment, the trip would be a lot happier for me! You're putting me right off my stroke."

"Sorry!" Nick grinned a little. "Maybe I am wrong at that."

Whether he considered the matter further or not, he did not mention it again. For a week of earth-time, the vessel flew onwards under Blake's skillful guidance, traveled well out beyond Pluto into the real abysmal depths of space by the time the pre-calculated moment for the collision arrived.

With the automatic pilot in operation, both men gave their full attention to the void and the drama being enacted there. It was quite enough to make Nick miss a draw on his pipe in admiring wonder. To the split second, Egusus 612 and the runaway unknown, both of them stars of the sun's diameter, united in a common blast of unbearable brilliance.

The movie telephoto cameras ground out steadily, recording every detail. Nick busied himself with the still-plate apparatus. Blake glanced at the self-registering meters recording all that was necessary in the scientific line—brilliance of light emitted, displacement of mean position, gravitational changes.

At last the two stars had coalesced into a common oneness. The brilliance of the impact was dying. The two would probably condense into one white dwarf of incredible heaviness. The show was over.

"Hmm . . ." Nick commented. "Seems an awful distance to come for such a short display, especially when everybody else will see it in comfort at the television theaters. Ah, well, I s'pose that's what mugs like us are for! Turn her round, skipper, and let's get home!"

He unfastened the film cans with a practiced hand, moved into the adjoining dark room, and closed the door.

CHAPTER II

DESERTED WORLD

EIGHT days later the return journey was almost complete. Earth loomed green and resplendent from the depths of the void—first a cloud-wreathed globe, then becoming flat as the space-ship dropped through the clouds with fast-diminishing speed.

As usual, Nick was complacently smoking his pipe and staring below. Blake watched his meters carefully, studied the ground-reflecting plates.

Presently the faintest hint of a frown crossed his face.

"Say!" he exclaimed, looking up, "I'd rather expected some sort of demonstration on our return, hadn't you? Not that I want it, of course, only it seemed inevitable. Queer, don't you think, that there's nobody around?"

"Huh?"

Nick's brows came down. The ship was well below the clouds now, dropping directly over New York, heading west of the city for the open landing grounds encompassed in the horse-shoe-shaped Enterprise Building.

But certainly there was nobody in sight in all that great expanse—no waiting crowds—not even the usual army of mechanics waiting to receive the flyer.

Blake's frown deepened. He snapped on the radio sharply.

"Blake Venner calling Enterprise!" he intoned. "Prepare to receive ship. All O. K. down there?"

There was no response—in fact no sound whatever save the throb of the powerful underjets braking the ship's fall.

Nick took his pipe out of his mouth and stared at the radio fixedly.

"Hallo there!" Blake barked. "What's wrong down there? Answer my signal, can't you?"

The radio remained mute. Blake glanced up in genuine concern.

"Something decidedly wrong here, Nick," he breathed. "I don't like it! Where the devil is everybody?"

Nick remained silent, knocked the ashes from his pipe in slow bewilderment. By the time he had finished, the ship had gently settled. Blake switched off the engines and regarded Nick for a moment in the heavy silence that ensued.

"Well, might as well see what it's all about," Nick remarked at length, and going over to the air-lock, he unfastened the clamps.

Thoughtfully, he stepped out onto the tarmac and stood gazing around. The cool autumnal wind blew around him, gloriously fresh after the stifling artificiality of the space-ship.

His dark, perplexed eyes gradually moved the length of the semicircular Enterprise Building, along its myriad windows and doorways. Suddenly he came to a decision, began to walk across the space towards the massive main entrance.

Blake caught him up in a moment.

"I don't like this silence," he muttered, and he found himself involuntarily walking on tip-toe. "You've noticed it? No birds singing, no rumble of traffic—no anything, in fact. It's just like a cemetery!"

"Uh-huh," Nick acknowledged, pondering—and they went up the broad granite steps together.

Their footsteps echoed oddly in the immense space with its lofty domed roof of glass. Normally this entrance hall should have been seething with activity—braided commissionaires, booking clerks, weather men, pageboys.

But now—nobody!

Everything was still, in a state of curious disorder as though everybody had left in a hurry. The clerks' desks were in their places as usual, books still open upon them. The main staff elevator was level with the floor, with its gates flung wide open.

"Look!" Blake whispered, and pointed behind him. His and Nick's feet had left distinct marks in a gathered film of dust.

For many days not a soul had passed in or out of this normal hive of industry.

Nick pursed his lips, traced his finger across the nearest desk. Behind his finger streaked a long bright line of polished mahogany. He looked at Blake in bafflement, then with one accord they moved to the elevator and pressed the button. Nothing happened: the power was off. Still in silence, they mounted the stairs, walked along the endless corridors and stared into the rooms wherein lay the space pilots' quarters. Nobody was in sight. In the pilots' mess, a gigantic room for general assemblage, there was the usual appearance of disorder and not a soul around.

And the silence! It began to get on Blake's nerves when they had finished the touring and came back again to the front steps. They gazed over the deserted tarmac towards their spaceship, across at the locked hangars where the rest of the space-machines were housed.

Nick moved away suddenly, went across to the hangar doors and slid aside the watchman's inspection plate. After a moment or two, he rejoined Blake.

"Hangars are full," he commented briefly. "Thought perhaps a sudden space-expedition might account for this."

Again they went quiet—gazing at

the empty sky, oppressed by the pall of noiselessness.

Nick took out his pipe, chewed the end pensively.

"Queer!" he commented at last.

Blake swung to him. "Queer!" he echoed. "Good God, man, is that the best you can say about it? It's downright uncanny, never mind queer! Where in hell is everybody? It's—it's inconceivable that every person can have disappeared," he went on, mystified. "We've got to look around, Nick. There's Sheila, too! Good Lord, if she's gone—"

"We'll look around," Nick interrupted briefly, and strode off towards the space-ship.

IN five minutes they were in the air again, flying slowly at about five hundred feet over New York, passing between the towers of Manhattan, staring down on the streets below. What they saw only served to stagger their minds still further.

Automobiles were piled up in wild and smashed array, buses stood up like islands in the shambles. Traffic in its entirety had gone mad, run into itself and jammed the main streets in the most unholy chaos. Yet nowhere was there a person, nowhere a sign of life. No human walked, no animal slunk along, no bird flew in the heavens.

Westwards to the harbor regions, it was the same. Ships lay either at anchor, rising gently with the tide, else they were piled up in slowly sinking ruin against the jetties. Some were even smashed and interlocked with each other, half settled in shallow waters and black mud.

Blake could not help shivering a little as he stared across the gentle sea towards the horizon. It was utterly empty — no friendly curl of smoke. . . . He looked back over New

York. There was not a single wisp of smoke there, either. No chimneys were at work, no factories in action. The calm was harrowing in its peacefulness. Only the green things lived, as of yore. The trees, the soft grass of the parks, stirring in the cool wind.

"Nick, I can't stand this!" Blake gasped out at last. "It's driving me nuts! I'm only just beginning to realize the horrible fact that there's—there's nobody around anymore! We're alone, man—alone! Do you begin to realize it?"

"Yeah—sure." Nick spoke laconically, but he was manifestly deeply moved. "Just the same there's no reason for going off half-cocked. All things have an explanation—even this."

"Everybody's dead. . ." Blake muttered.

"Anything but! If that were so, there'd be corpses around. Corpses don't vanish in two weeks, though they smell plenty. No; I don't believe anybody died, though they certainly vanished."

"Surely not everybody in the world . . .?"

"I dunno. . . ." Nick relapsed into thought for a moment and then shrugged. "I guess it's not worth circumnavigating the globe to try and find out. The radio will do just as well. Keep on driving around while I see what I can pick up."

He settled himself before the apparatus, switched it on. With deliberate persistency, he tried all the leading radio stations of the United States, without a single response. Then, his face becoming graver, he tried London, Paris, Berlin, Moscow, even Sydney and remote other-hemisphere stations . . . Silence!

Quietly he switched off, stroked his chin moodily.

"Well?" Blake demanded impatiently. "What the devil are you going broody about? What do we do?"

"I've no idea—yet. The situation is a most amazing one, Blake. We've got to get used to the incredible fact that we're probably the only two people in the whole world! There may be others, but I'm beginning to doubt it."

"Before I do anything, I'm going to try and find Sheila," Blake said resolutely. "She's got to be around somewhere," he went on desperately. "If she's gone too, I—I don't know what I'll do!"

Nick shrugged. "We can go and see anyway," he commented, in a voice that was anything but optimistic.

BLAKE'S jaw squared purposefully. He drove the ship down towards the main street wherein the girl's apartment block was situated. Gently, he settled near the smashed remains of two interlocked automobiles. With scarce a moment's delay, he had the airlock open and was racing up the steps of the building. The place was quite deserted.

After a brief glance around, he pelted up the stairs to the third floor, savagely rapped on the panels of No. 16—but there was no response. He tried the door: it was securely locked. Nick appeared on the corridor, smoking pensively.

"No answer, I suppose?" he inquired quietly.

Blake nodded bitterly, applied his massive shoulder to the door.

"Give me a hand here, will you?"

Under their joint efforts, the lock screws began to give way. They plunged into the apartment at last, cannoned into the table in the center of the room, and went sprawling.

Blake scrambled to his feet and

gazed anxiously around him. The room, save for the overturned table, was just as it had always been, dainty and feminine — but it was dusty everywhere, and the flowers in the window had fallen limply into decaying petals.

With hungry eyes, he strode into the other rooms, calling the girl's name as he went. No response. Nothing appeared to be disturbed. The bed had not been slept in. Scowling, he returned to the lounge and found Nick thoughtfully reading a black leather-bound book.

"This is a swell time to read!" Blake snapped. "Why can't you give me a hand to locate Sheila?"

Nick shrugged. "I picked this up as I straightened the table; must have fallen off when we knocked it over. It's Sheila's diary."

"And what right have you to read it?" Blake glowered at him.

"Oh, have some sense!" Nick retorted impatiently. "I'm not reading the darned thing for the love of it. I thought I might find some sort of a clue, and I'm not so sure that I haven't. . . ." He stopped and grinned faintly. "There are one or two juicy references to you, all the same. You're mentioned as the only guy that matters; rugged, blond manhood and—"

Blake snatched the book in annoyance, gazed at the entries. In silence, he studied the final entry for September 26, the day of the collision. The writing ceased in mid-sentence with a long, whirling stroke of the pen.

"Interesting, eh?" Nick murmured, drawing at his pipe.

Blake grunted, read the entry again thoughtfully.

"I can hardly believe that Blake is so many millions of miles away in space. What a wonderful thing he and Nick are

going to see—something I too could have seen if only dad had given me permission. Still, maybe after all I will be able—"

Then the streak of ink and significant emptiness to the bottom of the page. Blake closed the book slowly, puzzling. At last he glanced at Nick.

"Any ideas?"

"Not very clear ones. It's pretty obvious that Sheila was suddenly and unexpectedly interrupted. She left her sentence unfinished—had a shock of some kind too, which accounts for the nervous jolt of the pen. The pen itself isn't around anywhere, which seems rather odd. . . . We don't know when she wrote this. September 26, yes, but at what time? The star collision was not until 8:13 in the evening. Was this written before or after that happening? What happened? Where did everybody go?"

"Fourth dimension!" Blake said abruptly; but Nick shook his head.

"I guess not. A fourth dimension can't be added to, or angled into, the normal three dimensions without some very good reason. Besides, if it were four dimensional, it would incorporate everything — buildings, trees, humans, and probably whole continents. We find everything just as it has always been, with the one exception that all humans, animals, fish and so forth have vanished like mist."

"It's Sheila I'm worrying about," Blake muttered. "She may be in some horrible place, possibly even dead. Good Heavens, suppose there was an invasion from another planet while we were away?" he finished in alarm. "Suppose everybody was carried away?"

Nick signed. "You're the only one that's getting carried away. Talk

sense! What possible invasion could there be that takes every living thing, animals and the rest of 'em included, and yet does not even scar a single brick on any building? Besides, all the planets are lifeless, and those in the remoter deeps of space are too far away to bother about. . . . No, it wasn't an invasion. It was some complex slip-up of Nature that we've got to solve. We have all the world's resources at our disposal, the rest of our lives to do it in. Best thing we can do is get back to headquarters and start in to do a little puzzling. Let's go!"

Blake nodded slowly, picked up Sheila's diary reverently, then followed his friend out of the room. . . .

WHILE Nick went into a huddle with himself in the pilots' mess at headquarters, Blake wandered about the deserted metropolis and loaded himself up with tinned foodstuffs from the empty stores. Ordinary food was turning bad, a fact which brought to his mind the possibility of disease.

"We can haul all the fresh food we can find into the open and pour kerosene over it," was Nick's observation, as he sat eating corned beef and drinking coffee in the mess room. "I don't think there's a great deal of danger, anyway. That comes from dead bodies, not putrefied meat. Nevertheless, we'll take precautions."

He turned back to the notes he had made and pondered for a while, chewing rhythmically. Presently he spoke again.

"I think the only way to get to the bottom of this mystery is to make a scientific reconstruction, just as one would a crime. We have one good basis to work from—namely, two stars have never collided in astro-

nomical history within our knowledge, and therefore the effects of such a collision have never been recorded. When it happened before—a near-collision—Earth and the planets were born and later came life. Now here is the question: Is it possible that upon the near or actual collision of two suns, certain radiations are emitted which alter the nature of space itself? Life, as we know it, is still a mystery. Maybe it was an accident, or maybe it was produced by definite radiations which occurred at the crossing of our sun and the runaway. Life did not immediately appear, of course, but the elements of life were present right from the beginning. When the Earth cooled, the chemical reaction of life took place. For millions of years life has gone on. . . ."

"So?" Blake questioned, moodily stirring his coffee.

"Far away in space a similar accident happens again—and life just disappears," Nick said slowly. "The perfect balance, so long undisturbed, was upset."

Blake stared at him. "Are you trying to say that life just—just dissolved, or something?" he demanded.

"Well, life did vanish, didn't it?"

"But where to?" Blake yelled, leaping to his feet. "It's all very well standing around theorizing, but can't we get some action on the matter?"

Nick's dark eyes were gleaming strangely. "Maybe we will," he breathed. "I've got several ideas, and one or another of 'em ought to be right. Something happened when those stars collided; a radiation of some kind infused space and we of all other fleshly things survived because of the proofed walls of our ship. Judging from the hangars, all the spaceships were grounded when

the disturbance hit Earth, which explains why only we survived. . . Yes, I believe I've got something to work on."

He turned suddenly. "I'm going over to the lab to make some experiments," he said briefly. "You do what you like, only don't bother me. I've got to nail this idea while it's hot."

Blake nodded slowly and lighted a cigarette. He was haunted by the growing conviction that humanity had gone for all time—that Sheila Berick was only a glorious memory.

CHAPTER III

"THE DISKS!"

DAYS passed into weeks and the fall changed to early winter conditions as Nick still struggled day by day to produce some practical line of explanation for the mystery. Several times he read Sheila's diary, but made no comments, always returning it to Blake's sheltering hands. That diary was the only real memory of Sheila he had left.

The rest of the time, Nick spent either in the libraries in the city, or else bringing home electrical machinery on an old truck. The machinery, he proceeded to mount in the laboratory, though time and again he pulled it down, sat for days in scowling thought surrounded by books, then started to rebuild again. What he was getting at remained a complete mystery to Blake.

For his part, the inactivity palled on his nerves. He played the role of housekeeper and spent much of his time collecting tinned food from the city stores. The rest of the time he just wandered around, usually took the space-machine and toured the

empty country, trying vainly to accustom himself to the vision of a world depopulated, flogging his brain to explain it all.

Then there was always that eternal silence, maddening and complete. When time allowed, he traveled with bullet-like velocity to other countries, gazed somberly down on empty England with its rusting cities, the grass springing up in the streets, the moss sprouting over the corroding hulks of buses and cars. Everywhere there was litter and brown leaves whirling in the winter wind.

The world over it was the same. Rust—decay—death!

Blake found it singularly ironical to tour the world's armament dumps—infinite square miles of war material, added to year by year. Shells were covered now in rust, manufacturing falling into disrepair. Airplanes by the thousand, were dusty and neglected. All those mighty preparations for defense, or offense—no man had ever really known which—were lying now dead and useless, unwanted, turning back slowly to their primal state. Vast, wasted effort!

Indeed, he found only one thing of interest in all his travels. On one tour he visited Mount Wilson Observatory, spent the greater part of the evening scanning the heavens through one of the smaller telescopes. The larger ones, motivated by machinery, were out of the question, owing to the world-wide failure of power. He started out with the object of discovering if by any chance space itself could explain the departure of humanity—and ended up with a discovery he had never intended making. Mars had changed!

Without question, the red planet was different. The vast ochre deserts were smothered with curious

black marks, extending from pole to pole. What it implied was beyond guessing, but it certainly suggested some kind of life. But why should there be life on a world that had been so long dead? Blake himself knew that the red planet was empty; he had explored it from end to end. Certainly the conceptions on its atmosphere were not entirely true; it could support life, even of earthly origin, though there was always an intense constriction around the lungs.

Baffled, Blake finally departed, put his discovery to Nick's analytical brain. Nick was not over-impressed.

"If life can vanish from Earth as it has, it is quite possible that the wave produced effects on Mars, since it would also be included," he said thoughtfully. "Maybe Mars is starting on a new life cycle just as ours faded out."

"Is it worth going to look?" Blake asked keenly.

"Maybe it is, but I've more important things to do. If you'd like to wait until I've finished my experiments, we can go together. It needs two of us in space, you know. . . ."

And at that the matter lay in abeyance for a time.

IN mid-November, the first snowfall of the winter arrived, whirling through feral New York with biting savagery, whisked along by an eighty-mile-an-hour gale. Its roaring moan was the only sound outside the Enterprise Building.

Blake, held up by the weather from further touring, mooched around the mess, smoking endlessly from his supplies, sitting before the electric stove, in action again, now that Nick had fixed the Company's self-generated plant, driven from a specially constructed bore from the Hudson.

Nick himself was over at the laboratory, as usual, across the tarmac square formed by the half-circle of buildings. What he was doing, Blake could only guess at.

Moodily, he got up and went to the window, stared out over the white carpet of the square, the whirling flakes. Then he became alert again as Nick suddenly appeared in the laboratory doorway, hatless, his coat-tails flying. Nothing but the greatest urgency could have caused Nick to behave so hurriedly. He started to run, his mouth open as though he were shouting.

Blake swung around and ripped open the mess door. In a moment, he had raced along the corridor and down to the lower ground floor. Then, on the steps of the building, he stopped in stunned amazement. Nick was fading oddly as he approached! His breathless, ebbing words were snatched away by the wind.

"I was . . . The disks . . ."

Then he vanished! Blake started in stunned horror at a vision of footprints in the snow leading half across the huge square, then abruptly ceasing.

"Nick!" he screamed suddenly. "Nick! Where are you?"

Only the savage wind answered, and the snow, piling thick and gentle against the walls, melting in the warmer air of the big doorway. Heedless — Blake dashed outside and plunged around like a madman, staring at the baffling footprints, gazing dazedly into emptiness.

Hardly aware of what he was doing, he finally blundered into the laboratory, closed the door, and stood breathing heavily with his back against it. With a vast effort, he fought for control over himself, tried to still his hammering heart.

At last he sank down weakly on a

solitary chair amidst a mass of strange, puzzling machinery, looked dully around him on generators, tubes and coils, insulator banks and switchboards. Predominant among the whole gamut of stuff was a horse-shoe-shaped magnet. None of the machinery was at work now, though there was a certain heated air about the place, a smell of hot oil that seemed to indicate it had not long been idle.

Blake was calmer now. He tried to face with courage the staggering realization that he was one man alone in all the world, surrounded by scientific mysteries. What were the fading words Nick had uttered? Something about "Disks . . ."

He turned and began to look about him, but all his searching failed to reveal anything that might pass as a disk. At last, he gave it up and went over the rest of the machinery instead. He began to see why Nick had gone to such effort in the past weeks to collect all this stuff, though its purpose was still as obscure as ever.

Blake cursed his lack of engineering knowledge, his sparse conceptions of science. Space-piloting was his racket, and because he had made it his specialty, other pursuits had gone to the wall. Now he regretted the fact.

Gingerly, he tried the switches on the board, and after a while succeeded in getting the generators going—driven of course by the sunken Hudson bore turbine plant—then just as quickly switched them off for fear of trouble. He would have to make a complete study of the whole business before he dared to do anything rash. Otherwise he might blow himself sky high.

Not that it mattered, he reflected bitterly. He was alone now and—

Of course, there was that mysterious life on Mars. Life of another planet? Not his own kind? Blake shook his head moodily; there was little advantage in exploring its possibilities.

HE SPENT another hour studying Nick's notes, but they were in the advanced jargon of the professional scientist and made little sense to him. He could hardly understand the symbols, much less piece together their meaning. In the end, he returned wearily across the square to the mess room, sat down and relapsed into thought. Time and again that last incredible vision of Nick disappearing into thin air kept returning to him.

What had the laboratory machines had to do with it? Why had he so suddenly disappeared? Blake rubbed his unshaven chin in perplexity, drummed on his outthrust legs in bafflement. Back of his mind was dim hope that Nick would return. But the hours passed by and nothing happened.

The ghastly, maddening silence continued, rendered doubly intense by the softly falling, blanketing snow. At last the night closed down, wild and bitter, with the wind howling with increased fury around the great building, snow piling thick on the window ledges, whirling across the darkened square.

Blake still sat on before the electric stove, food and drink forgotten.

"Only man in the world . . ." he kept muttering to himself. "Only man in the world . . ."

He thought of the immensities of space as he knew them—the eternal reaches of the infinite, the coldly winking stars, always friendless, always cruel. He thought of the great barren world around him, the endless miles of decaying ruin, the ship—

less seas. Only the plants still lived, and they too were asleep now that winter had come. No living thing to talk to—all of the joys of human companionship, the eternal struggle for existence, the hopes, the fears, the achievements—wiped out!

"It's more than any man can stand!" he shouted hoarsely, at last, leaping to his feet—and with sudden fury, he kicked his stool across the room. It struck his own particular metal locker with considerable violence, clicked the door open. With savage strides, he went across to close it, then stopped as his eyes fell to the little black book on the top shelf.

Sheila's diary. His passion drained from him. Gently, he took the book out, fingered it, gazed at it with hungry eyes. Slowly he turned the gold-edged pages, read words he had never intended to read, the bare revelations of Sheila's heart. He realized for the first time how deeply she had really loved him.

He forgot his loneliness for a while in reading the clear words, but it all filled him with a brooding sense of helplessness as he realized they were but the shadow memories of a girl he would never meet again, the recordings of one woman in millions who had gone into an Unknown. Then as he neared the end of the notes, he paused, frowned at a scorch mark on the delicate paper. Clearly some lighted tobacco had fallen there. Sheila? No, she had never smoked, and it was out of the question that she had ever allowed anybody else to read her notes.

"Nick!" Blake breathed suddenly. "That damned pipe of his! So he read all through this diary when he kept borrowing it—" He broke off, frowning at the page. It was dirty and thumb-marked, had plainly been

read many times. He studied it closely, trying to find meaning in the words that had obviously interested Nick so deeply. The entry was for September 24, two days before the final entry . . .

"To kill time tonight I went to hear Professor Cardell's lecture on the limitations of life. But either it was not very interesting, or else I'm very dull. He tried to prove by mathematics how thin is the hair-line between creation and extinction of fleshly life, so thin indeed that the merest variation of cosmic forces might pitch the balance in the wrong direction. I think I'm fairly intelligent, but I couldn't follow him. . . . I wonder how far away dear Blake is now?"

"Variation of cosmic forces?" Blake muttered, frowning. "I wonder if—No, it's impossible."

But even as he repudiated his notions, something knocked hard in his reasoning. Nick had been no fool, and he'd seen something in that observation to demand a considerable study of it. Professor Cardell? Blake remembered the name vaguely . . .

He examined the diary again, but no page had received such attention as that particular one. He read the final tragic entry again, then he put the book carefully in his pocket and ate a belated meal. But his thoughts were busy again now, dashing the deep melancholia from his mind.

At last, he reached a decision.

He went over to the laboratory again and, carrying a portable lamp around with him, finally unearthed a pile of books he had noticed on earlier visits. They were what he had hoped for—a whole series of books by Cardell brought by Nick from the public libraries.

Triumphantly he put them down

on the bench and began to study them, aided in places by the blue penciled portions Nick had evidently considered of particular value. He read on and on—far into the night.

CHAPTER IV

RECIPE FOR SUICIDE!

BLAKE found it hard going! His none-too-scientific mind grappled with high-flown phrasing and technique. He had no early work up, but plunged straight away into the advanced enigmas of science.

He made his quarters in the laboratory and sat there hour after hour, day after day, except for the intervals for meals. He pored over Cardell's books, but the theories of life expounded therein were so complex, he made but little progress. . . .

After a week of pondering, he was but little nearer the truth than he had been at first. In that week, he had been subconsciously aware of almost continuous snowstorms, aided no doubt by the absolute lack of warmth from buildings and chimneys ascending into the air. He found he was pretty well snowbound in the laboratory.

He slept there, had his meals there, gazed out on the carpet of white, pondered whether he should make an effort to reach Mars; then thinking better of it, he looked around at the machines.

"Somehow, these have got to be solved," he muttered. "There may even be the chance that Nick was swiveled into another section of space. If he went, others might have gone before him. Sheila might even be there. . . Wonder what he meant by disks?"

He rubbed his head in bewilderment, stared absently at the abandoned radio, then suddenly he noticed something he had never seen before. The radio was switched over to the gramophone control. . . Instantly his eye followed the length of cabling from the radio apparatus to a self-recording machine in the corner.

"Gosh!" he yelped. "Am I an idiot! Disks! Records! Self-made records. . . . Of course. . . !"

He dived for the big cabinet under the record machine and flung the doors wide. His eyes gleamed at the sight of a dozen metal disks neatly numbered in order and fully indented with sound track.

"So that was what he meant," Blake breathed. "He recorded his impressions. Just like Nick: methodical to the last. Why didn't he say records in the first place?"

He put on the first disk, started up the motor, and stood waiting eagerly. After a preliminary crackle, Nick's voice spoke.

"This is the voice of Nick Vane. Probably it will be you, Blake, who'll hear me. In any case, anybody understanding English will know what I'm talking about. I've recorded matters like this because it is so much easier to give my findings by talking than by writing them down—much faster, too. Another reason is, I'm not at all sure how my experiments are going to work out, and on the off-chance that something may happen to me suddenly, I'm leaving a sure-fire explanation behind me. If I should happen to suddenly vanish, you will know that the theory I'm going to outline is the true one.

"Some time ago I mooted over the idea that the collision of those two stars in space had done something queer to earthly life. At that time it was a shot in the dark: since then I

have backed the theory up with postulations from the works of Cardell, who knew more about earthly life than any man alive. Earthly life exists only in very rigid limits. It came into being in the first place by a radiation from space—induced when our sun and a runaway crossed each other — and happened to be of just the right combination of wavelengths to produce life.

“Cardell has only enlarged a trifle on the original theories of Sir James Jeans when he wrote his ‘Mysterious Universe.’ Jeans said—and quite truly as I have since proven—‘It becomes increasingly likely that what specially distinguishes the matter of living bodies is the quite commonplace element carbon, always in conjunction with other atoms with which it forms exceptionally large molecules. If that be so, life only exists in the universe because the carbon atom possesses such exceptional properties. Again, the carbon atom consists of six electrons revolving around the central nucleus, thereby differing from its two nearest neighbors in the table of chemical elements—boron and nitrogen—in having one electron more than the former and one electron fewer than the latter. Yet this slight difference must account in the last analysis for all the difference between life and the absence of life. . .’ That ends Jeans’ observations. . .

“And it’s quite true; I’ve worked it out for myself. Life came into being because the original radiations at the birth of the Earth did things to carbon. Since that time, life has steadily progressed with not a thing in the world to disturb it, always hanging on the vague edge of disaster if the balance of the cosmos ever shifted in the least.

“That shift came! When those two

stars collided way out in space, they created a radiation identical with the one that started life on Earth, but this time—because this radiation tried to create life again—it only succeeded in over-stimulating a life already well progressed. Over-stimulation killed it off entirely, just the same as in some experiments, a plant will grow rapidly under a fixed flow of radiation, but will die if it gets an excess. That’s what happened. The carbon atom structure just fell to pieces: all fleshly life ceased to be, vanished like mist and the earth was empty, leaving only the non-carbon forms of life, or at least those which do not entirely rely on it for their basis. . .”

THE disk scraped to a finish. Blake put on the next one and listened again with a certain growing horror at the cold inevitability of Nick’s conclusions.

“I was more than ever sure of the truth of this theory when you, Blake, reported life on Mars. Mars has always been sterile, but it has the same basic possibilities of life as Earth. Its atmosphere, though thin, is suitable. It has a great amount of chemical resources, as we well know. Life could just as easily come to Mars at the moment Earth’s finished. On earth only the carbon-assimilating forms of life survived—such as trees and vegetation, but the direct carbon creations vanished.

“I have to admit one thing: I owe a lot to Sheila Berick’s diary. If it hadn’t been for her going to Cardell’s lecture that night, I’d have wandered around plenty before finding the right clue.

“There was only one way to prove the possibility of my theory to the uttermost, and that was by trying it out! Hence this recording, in case

The World In Wilderness

I'm successful. You'll appreciate that it is a better way to give it than by odd snatches and drifts of personal conversation. In this way, you have all the facts before you. Funny thing, but I notice in my recording I speak as though events have already happened. Wonder if it's premonition?

"When I wanted to try out the theory for myself, I realized that I was faced with certain difficulties. The etheric wave generated by the celestial collision could not happen again in history without the almost impossible occurrence of another collision. No use waiting for that. I considered the exact happenings at a celestial collision—the tremendous gravitational and stress fields set up, the spreading of the radiation's influence. Most of the clues I got from our recording apparatus aboard the ship, which definitely gave all details and showed conclusively how we had been saved by our ship's repulsion shield. How could I reproduce the collision of two suns in a laboratory?"

Again Blake changed the records.

"That had me floored for the time being, then I arrived at so simple a solution, I was quite amazed at myself. The collision of two suns is fundamentally the same thing as collision of electron and proton. One belongs to the macrocosm and the other to the microcosm, but the effects are identical in that they produce the self-same radiations in the ether, the only difference being the enormously lesser scale of distance in the case of the microcosm.

"I suppose that I produced atomic force when I annihilated the protons and electrons of a piece of potassium, forcing the released energy through special transformers. The influence radiated by the horseshoe magnet was very brief and limited. It satis-

(Continued On Page 98)



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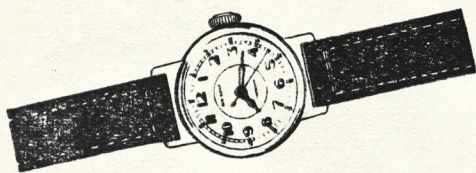
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Science Fiction

(Continued From Page 97)

fied me though, so much so I set to work to make these recordings because I'm going to try the thing again.

"If anything should happen to me, you'll find instructions in disks eight and nine about how to control the thing. I'm going to set about that recording now—"

Blake took off the finished disk thoughtfully and stroked his chin.

"So he was right in his ideas," he muttered. "Only thing I can think of is that when he made the final test, he got scared and made a dash for it. The influence of the magnet caught up with him and disintegrated him utterly. I was just out of reach and escaped. . . . Hell! What a ghastly thought to chew over!"

He looked moodily around at the apparatus, at the snow-covered windows.

"Now that I know the truth, I'm so much better off," he grunted. "Everybody's dead, Sheila included. I'm just the last man on the Earth with one card left up my sleeve. . . . I can commit suicide more elaborately than most guys. . . ."

He swung around with sudden savage determination, snatched out disks eight and nine, put number eight on the machine, and listened carefully, scribbling down the detailed instructions Nick gave on the working of the machinery and switch manipulation.

It took him an hour to get it all down, then he switched the radio-gram off and pondered his notes. His whole being now was mastered by an intense anxiety to get the thing done—get away from this eternal silence and drifting snow. At last he got to his feet, walked slowly around the machinery as he studied the directions, identified each separate piece of mechanism and attendant switch-

The World In Wilderness

es, opened the floortrap and listened critically to the thunderous roaring of the deeply-sunken Hudson bore, the waters swollen by melting snow.

So far as he could tell, everything was in order. He searched for the necessary piece of potassium on the chemical side of the laboratory, placed it in the disintegrating chamber. Then, very cautiously, he closed the required switches one by one and listened to the dynamos taking up the whine of power.

His further movements were less confident. He had the vague feeling at the back of his mind that he ought to give the directions closer study—but against that he had weighed the necessity for immediate action and the desire to get out of this deserted world as quickly as possible.

CHAPTER V.

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HE worked on doggedly until well into the winter afternoon, setting this set of wires, arranging that, the directions firmly held in his hand—and the more he progressed, the more his admiration for Nick's genius increased. He had devised an apparatus of amazing ingenuity and automatic surety to produce the desired effects. Even to him, it must have been difficult. To Blake it was meaningless. His actions were simply directed towards a given end. Of the intricacies, he knew less than nothing.

He stopped only once for a meal, then resumed as the winter darkness closed down. At last he had come to the final switch, the throwing of which would set the automatic apparatus into action by bringing in the dynamos. Within fifteen seconds, according to Nick, the atoms of the potassium in the disintegrating

(Continued On Page 100)

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Science Fiction

(Continued From Page 99)

chamber would be crushed by nameless forces, their energy driven through specially constructed machinery and transformers to the outer magnet.

Blake looked around pensively and stroked his bristly chin.

"Hope it works," he muttered. "Not that it matters much anyway."

For a fraction of a second he hesitated, then closed the master switch. At the sudden roar of power from the released machines, he backed to the door, opened it wide and stood with his back to the piled-up snow outside. The icy wind whistled around him, ruffling his unkempt hair, chilling him after the warmth of the laboratory.

He felt very much like a man with a lighted bomb in his hands. Before him was the savagely working mechanism—behind him, the night and the snow. The electric light reflected back from the polished machines in their brazen, invincible array. For some reason, in those moments, he wondered if he wanted to die after all. Odd! He could think of hundreds of things he could do if he went on living. Suppose he didn't die, was horribly mangled instead!

His eyes fixed on the great magnet . . . Then something happened! One of the machines near the wall started to glow red hot, sent little whirls of blue smoke into the air from burning armatures. The stench of burning rubber arose instantly.

In an instant, Blake realized what had happened. Somewhere he had made a wrong connection, perhaps positive to negative leads, and the thing was short-circuiting. He looked desperately around, and at that identical instant, the red hot machine came to an abrupt standstill, automatically cut out the other machines. The wall behind the faulty machine began to scorch dangerously—a sheet

The World In Wilderness

of flame leaped suddenly from smoldering rubber and shot towards the chemicals on the shelf above.

Blake staggered back before a rush of superheated air. An explosion dinned in his ears. He went reeling into soft snow and lay half-buried in it as splintering glass and pieces of metal flew over his head with devastating force. Then, at last, he dared to raise himself gently out of the white wetness, turned slowly and gazed helplessly at leaping, soaring flames from the laboratory. Within seconds, the whole place had become an inferno, well prepared by the inflammable chemicals and materials within it. Before his every eyes, everything was being destroyed—even the disks containing the instructions, and the radiogram—

That brought him to his feet and he plowed through the snow towards the open doorway, only to stagger back helplessly before the terrific heat. No use trying to save anything. March into the flames? He shook his head. . . Not that way!

He stood with bitter eyes, his fists clenched, watching the flames crackling to the snow-ridden sky. The fire would no doubt confine itself to the laboratory and not affect the rest of the great building. Did that matter?

"What does anything matter any more?" Blake asked himself slowly. "I didn't commit suicide that way, but there are other ways."

Inwardly, he knew he had only himself to blame for the failure of the machinery. He had hurried over the matter—should have read the notes more carefully.

Furiously he swung around, hands deep in trouser pockets, and regardless of the bitter wind and whirling flakes, he plunged through the knee-high snow away from the blaze—to anywhere, so long as he could try to collect his thoughts and stop himself

(Continued On Page 102)

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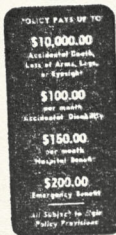
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Science Fiction

(Continued From Page 101)

from going mad. He realized that he was dangerously close to it, and to brood indoors, in the pilots' mess perhaps, was no way to cure himself. Better be lost in this mad, white world. . . Much better. The idea grew to an obsession.

HE HAD no idea which way he went, whither he intended going.

It was the same in all directions, anyhow. Pitch darkness, whirling snow, icy wind. His hands were already numb from exposure, his legs soaked to the knees.

Now and again he raised his face to the screaming dark, realized subconsciously that he was following one of the former suburban roads to the center of New York. . .

Might be a good idea to keep on walking until he dropped. Death from cold. He had heard it wasn't so bad, at that. Sleepiness . . . extinction. Why not?

"Go on, blow!" he snarled to the wind. "Who the hell cares, anyway?"

He went on stubbornly, determined to walk until he could walk no longer. Time and again he fell into deep drifts, stumbled over objects covered in snow, found rusting automobiles buried nearly to their tops.

In the midst of the whirling darkness of New York, the snow was waist deep, reflecting back to him in the odd way snow has in the midst of the darkest night.

The metropolis was a city of ghostliness, its tall spires still rearing invincibly to the heavens. The snowflakes seemed wetter here; somewhere behind the ragged clouds a moon was trying to struggle through.

"Why should all this have to happen to one man?" Blake demanded, stumbling along. "Why should I, of all the people that were once on the

The World In Wilderness

Earth, be doomed to die alone?—more alone than any man has ever been since the world began?"

The moan of the wind was the only answer.

He went on more slowly, stared at the long white-ridden vista ahead of him, with the buildings rising darkly on either side of it. How different it all was, how different from the New York of old times!

He smiled twistedly. He was beginning to feel sleepy at last. He hardly knew he had a body; it was frozen through and through. The moon came briefly from between flying clouds, turned the world around him to sepulchral, gleaming white.

His smile broadened to a laugh—then the laugh faded from his lips as that transient moonlight revealed something to him—marks through the snow!—marks such as a body might make—such as his own body had made behind him.

The trail stretched right ahead of him.

"No!" he whispered, shaking his snow-covered head. "No, I'm dreaming it! I'm falling asleep!"

But he knew that was not true.

He forced himself onwards again by main strength. The moon vanished once more, but he could see enough by reflection. There was the trail of somebody or something, quite recently made, and it came from somewhere on the right, had now joined his own trail. If it had been a human, the person had been waist deep in snow; if an animal, it could only have been a giant dog or a horse, a possibility which seemed highly unlikely.

Mad pulsating joy suddenly raced through Blake. Something else was alive in this sepulcher of a world!

"Ahoy!" he yelled desperately. "Ahoy! Where are you?"

(Continued On Page 104)

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Science Fiction

(Continued From Page 103)

There was no sign of a response, and his wild hopes sank a little. Probably there'd be a very ordinary explanation at the end of the trail. His numbness was a nuisance now, and so was this frantic desire to go to sleep. The very thing he'd set out to do looked likely to prove his undoing.

"Why should it be?" he roared out furiously, thrashing himself into activity. "Why should everything sour on me? This is one rap I'm not taking—"

The activity he suddenly conjured up was terrific—and it did him good. It helped to restore his sluggish circulation, rid him of his numbness. The going was easier now, too; the unknown one had ploughed a trail for him and the moon was coming out in increasingly long spells.

HE found at last that he had reached the center of the street. What street it was, he had not troubled to notice. His whole attention was concentrated on the fact that the trail had suddenly turned off to a large open doorway. He followed it avidly and the snow thinned off, was ankle deep—then only sole-thick. With blank amazement, he looked down at the granite step of the building. There was the distinct imprint of shoes, hardly even blurred by more recent snow—

A woman's shoes!

"Now I know I'm crazy!" Blake looked around him with burning eyes. Then he abruptly realized where he was — Sheila Berick's apartment building!

Instantly he took a step back into the snow and stared up at the rearing facade to where he knew her window was situated. At the higher levels, the snow had not encased the

The World In Wilderness

windows so thickly, blown away by the wind. Blake wondered if his heart stopped beating when in the window on the third floor he detected a faint evidence of light, such as a candle might make.

"Sheila?" he breathed through dry lips. "Can it . . .?" His heart started to pound again. He swung around, plunged through the open doorway like a lunatic and charged for the stairs.

"Sheila!" he screamed frantically. "Sheila! Sheila!" and the great building rang with the echoes of his cry.

Up he went, slipping in the darkness, slamming into the walls and hardly feeling it. He arrived at last on the third floor corridor, stopped dead. There was yellow light shining from the open doorway of the girl's room. He remembered he and Nick had smashed the lock.

"Sheila!" he called gently.

Still no answer. Hardly daring to imagine what he might find, he tiptoed forward, peered around the door jamb. The room was pretty much as he and Nick had left it, save that a candle, burned low, stood on the table now. Its pale, flickering glow cast upon a motionless, heavily coated figure sprawled face down on the carpet.

Instantly Blake reached down, turned the figure over and gazed stupidly into the white face and closed eyes, the dark hair peeping under the fur hat. . . It was Sheila!

He muttered things he hardly understood—then with a sudden effort he raised her, carried her into the next room and laid her on the bed. He returned for the candle, then forcing himself to calmness, he set to work. The first horrible thought that the girl was dead was banished as he detected the slow beat of her pulse.

(Continued On Page 106)

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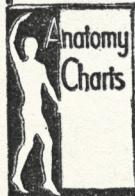
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Science Fiction

(Continued From Page 105)

Immediately, he searched around and found brandy, soaked his handkerchief in water, and bathed her forehead.

It seemed hours to him before she finally stirred, opened her eyes wearily. Gradually they became puzzled, regarded his face in bafflement.

"Blake!" she whispered. "How—how did you—?"

"Sheila," he murmured gently, seizing her in his arms. "How did you ever come to escape the dissolution of life? How?"

"Dissolution of life?" she repeated, surprise dashing all the haziness out of her mind. "What dissolution?"

Blake stared at her. "But—but like everybody else, you were surely caught up in the radiation that destroyed all life?" he cried. "I'd given you up for dead!"

The girl rose to a sitting position, her eyes amazed in the light of the candle.

"Just what are you talking about?" she demanded.

Solemnly he told her the details. When he finished, she shuddered.

"So that is why the whole world seemed so empty and deserted when I landed late this afternoon!" she murmured. "I saw out in space how deserted it all looked. I was frightened—Oh, of course, you don't understand even now. It really isn't so mysterious. You know I wanted to go with you on that trip into space?"

"Uh-huh," Blake acknowledged.

"Well, father was against that, of course—but I decided I might try and join you on your return trip. I wanted to see that collision from space where I could have an uninterrupted view. I bribed one of the pilots to take me. He said it would be difficult, but if he could work it,

The World In Wilderness

he'd telephone me. He managed it all right, but we were desperately short of time. I had to dash away on the instant. . . ."

"Then that's why you left your diary on the table?"

Sheila nodded rather shyly. "Yes; I was writing it when Hawkins—the pilot—rang up. I was so pent up with excitement, the sudden ring of the bell made me jump like a fool. That explains the streak at the end of my writing."

"Then what happened?" Blake persisted.

"Well, we were well out in the inner circle of space—that is, on this side of the outer planets—when the collision of the stars happened. We saw it beautifully, but a moment afterwards the ship rocked violently. Hawkins and I were thrown over. I was stunned by banging my head on a fixed chair, and poor Hawkins, I found later, had broken his neck. I found we were drifting in space, our nearest field of attraction being Mars. I don't know much about space-ships, but I did manage to discover enough to brake the ship's fall and make a landing on the red planet.

"To my amazement, I found the planet teeming with rudimentary, fast evolving life, passing through all the stages that Earth-life has had since the earliest times. Vegetation too is springing up. It can only mean that life has come to Mars in just the same way that it was banished from Earth, but for some reason—maybe because of the lesser gravity and lighter air—it is evolving at terrific speed. In five years, I imagine, Mars will have life of a class and intellect close to our own!

"I stayed there until I had recovered my strength, then I started back for Earth. This evening I touched Earth, had seen be-



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Science Fiction

(Continued From Page 107)

forehand the deserted state of everything. The snow was tremendously thick when I left the ship. I got to my room here, was baffled to find the door lock smashed. I was afraid—of the silence. I found a candle and lighted it, then I think that the cold air after the long confinement in the space-ship, my weariness and fright, suddenly reacted on me. I remember nothing more until I found you bending over me."

BLAKE smiled, "So simple! I know there is a new life on Mars; I saw it myself through the telescope. If only I had counted the number of ships in the space-hangar I'd have found one short, but the idea never occurred to me. Hawkins took a risk, I guess. But that's beside the point. Thank God you decided to do what you did—otherwise we would have been separated forever! So these Martians are evolving fast, are they?"

Sheila nodded slowly. "Very fast."

Blake smiled a little. "We have an entire world here, only waiting to be tenanted. We have the knowledge, and the science—"

He broke off and gripped the girl's arm. "Why not?" he breathed. "If we can scrape along somehow for the next few years, we can then start putting ideas forward to the Martians. We're going to destroy all the great armament dumps located in various parts of the world. We'll start out fair and square."

"I'm with you," Sheila smiled.

"It won't be so long," Blake murmured.

They sat looking eagerly at each other in the sputtering light of the candle. The kiss they finally gave each other sounded amazingly noisy in the vast, aching silence of a world waiting to be born anew.

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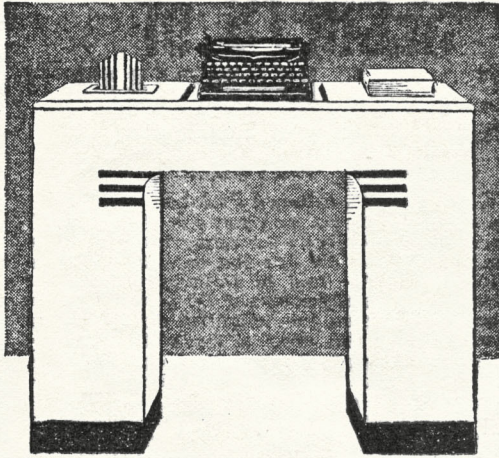
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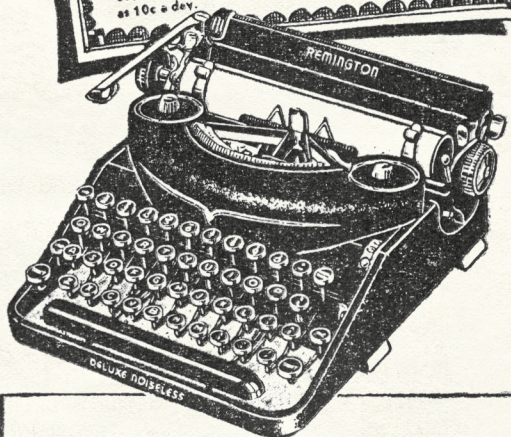
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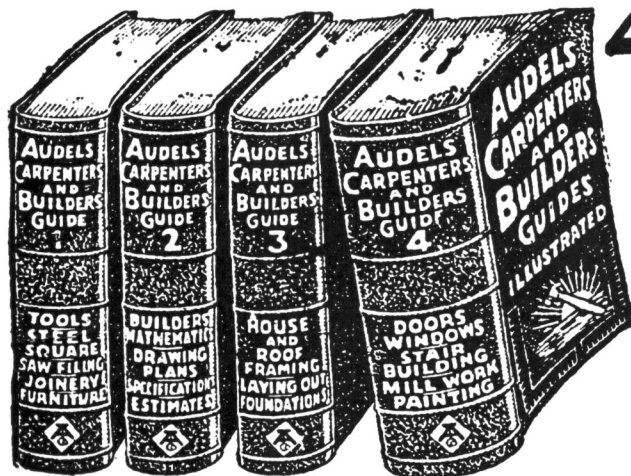
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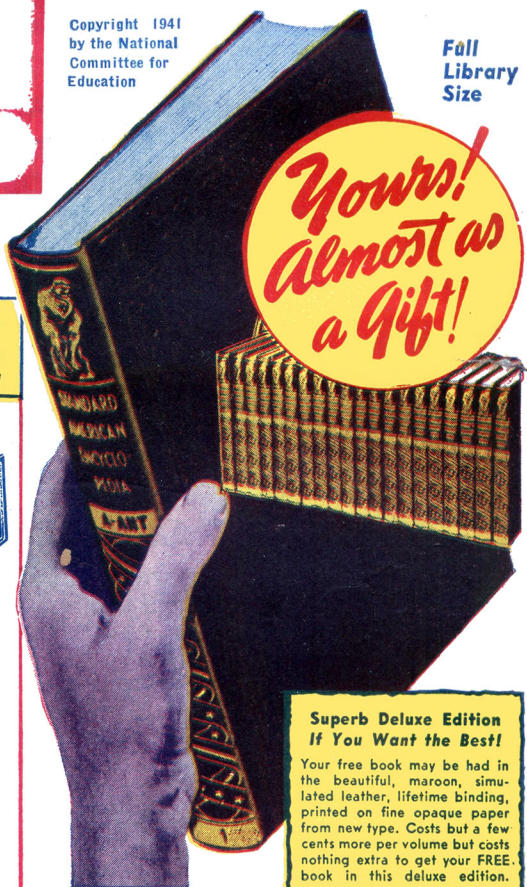
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