15¢ SEPTEMBER

SUPER SCIENCE STORIES

INVISIBLE ONE

by L. R. JONES
JACK WILLIAMSON

An Amazing Offer to READERS OF T PUBLICATIO

The Works of 25 Great Authors In 25 Giant Volumes

YOURS-practically for The Asking!

11,815,000 Words
18,433 Pages
Size: Ea. Vol.
Height 8¼"
Width 5¾"
Thickness 2½"

The Collected Works of MAUPASSANT

Ready Now!
Your First Volume
The Complete Short Stories of
MAUPASSANT

EVERY short story the greatest short story writer in the world ever wrote! 222 immortal masterpieces—each complete, authentic, paganly frank, unexpurgated. Translated direct from original French . . The Diamond Necklace . . Mme. Fifi . . The Mad Woman . . Love's Awakening . . Bed No. 29 . . The Artist's Wife . . and 216 more! And this is just the first of 25 great volumes, now yours almost "for a song"! Start getting YOUR set Now.

Send No Money---We Pay Postage

Opportunity of a Lifetime to own Huge, Handsome Books You Will Treasure, Your Friends Will Envy!

MOST AMAZING offer ever made to magazine readers! Here in giant, beautiful volumes is a complete library of all the important works of the greatest authors. Smash hits of stage, radio, movies! ALL such exciting, thrilling reading that once you start them you can't put them down! Look at these partial contents—only a FRACTION of what these books hold—each book a library in itself.

Richly beautiful books; your choice of either Regular edition, in standard cloth—or DE LUXE Edition, gorgeously bound in Royal Florentine bindings—super calf-grain material, embossed in colors of red and gold! All 25 volumes are YOURS—to own, read, display proudly in your home—for little more than the asking!

1. MAUPASSANT. (See panel at left.)
2. HUGO. 39 complete works. Hunchback of Notre Dame, Woman of the Streets, etc.
3. STEVENSON. 144 adventurous novels, stories, poems, Treasure Island, Jekyll and Hyde, Kidnaped, Suicide Club.
4. TOLSTOI. 31 breathless novels, stories. Anna Karenina, Kreutzer Sonata, The Cossacks, Love, many more.
5. POE. ALL 128 tales, poems, essays, Annabel Lee, The Raven, The Gold Bug, etc.—**every one complete!**
6. IBSEN. All his daring plays, absolutely complete; Doll's House, Ghosts, Hedda Gabler, Peer Gynt, 7 others.
7. BALZAC. 25 frank novelettes: Girl With Golden Eyes. Imaginary Mistress, Passion in the Desert, Vendetta, etc.
8. KIPLING. Complete novel, Light That Failed. 76 exciting stories—75 great ballads, verses, including Gunga Din, Vampire.
9. DUMAS. 175 romantic adventures—The Wedding Night, Grecian Slave Girl, Death of the King's Mistress.
10. CONAN DOYLE. All the best **Sherlock Holmes**—Study in Scarlet, Sign of Four, Red Headed League, many more—**plus** Doyle's other greatest works.

One-volume editions now in preparation—11. Emerson; 12. Flaubert; 13. Oscar Wilde; 14. Voltaire; 15. Haggard; 16. Chekhov; 17. Dickens; 18. Hawthorne; 19. Cellini; 20. Rousseau; 21. Zola; 22. Daudet; 23. Boccaccio's Decameron; 24. Gautier; 25. Arabian Nights.

HOW TO GET YOUR BOOKS SEND NO MONEY

A BOOK COUPON appears below. This COUPON, plus purely nominal sum of 89c for Regular Edition (or $1.39 for luxurious DE LUXE EDITION) entitles you to own one Giant Volume in this famous series of Great Authors. To receive your first book, The Works of Maupassant, send no money now. Just mail BOOK COUPON and Reservation below and this marvelous volume will be shipped at once. With it will come special invoice for small sum indicated above and complete instructions on how to get your volumes in this amazing BOOK OFFER. Right now, send your RESERVATION CERTIFICATE at left, WITH BOOK COUPON printed here. No "Reservation Fee"—no "Deposit" to be paid in advance. Your first book will come to you at once. First come, first served! Act NOW, before you mislay this page!

READERS' RESERVATION CERTIFICATE

BOOK COUPON EXCHANGE,
330 West 42nd Street, New York, N. Y.

Reserve in my name the books listed in generous offer to readers of this publication. I prefer edition checked below:

☐ **Regular Cloth Edition** ☐ **DeLuxe Embossed Edition**

NO EXTRA CHARGE FOR POSTAGE

I enclose my first BOOK COUPON (printed at right) entitling me to receive first book. The Works of Maupassant, in edition checked above, with NO MONEY IN ADVANCE. Within one week I will send correct payment (89c for Regular Edition or $1.39 for DE LUXE), and will be entitled to receive each following volume, as it comes from press, on same generous no-money-in-advance plan.

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... State P.P.940

Convenient privilege form for future books will be sent with your copy of Maupassant.

Be sure to mail this Reservation Form IMMEDIATELY.

ACT

I will Train You at Home in Spare Time for a GOOD JOB IN RADIO

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

If you can't see a future in your present job, feel you'll never make much more money, if you're in a seasonal field, subject to lay offs, IT'S TIME NOW to investigate Radio. Trained Radio Technicians make good money, and you don't have to give up your present job or leave home to learn Radio. I train you at home nights in your spare time.

Why Many Radio Technicians Make $30, $40, $50 a Week

Radio broadcasting stations employ engineers, operators, technicians. Radio manufacturers employ testers, inspectors, foremen, servicemen in good-pay jobs. Radio jobbers, dealers, employ installation and servicemen. Many Radio Technicians open their own Radio sales and repair businesses and make $30, $40, $50 a week. Others hold their regular jobs and make $5 to $10 a week fixing Radios in spare time. Automobile, Police, Aviation, Commercial Radio, Loudspeaker Systems, Electronic Devices are other fields offering opportunities for which N. R. I. gives the required knowledge of Radio. Television promises to open many good jobs soon.

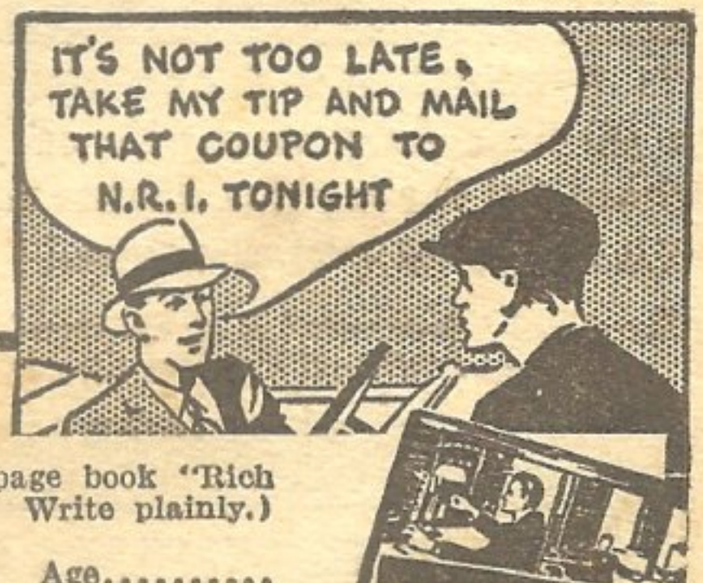
Many Make $5 to $10 a Week Extra in Spare Time While Learning

The day you enroll, I start sending you Extra Money Job Sheets which start showing you how to do Radio repair jobs. Throughout your Course I send plans and directions which have helped many make $5 to $10 a week in spare time while learning. I send special Radio equipment to conduct experiments and build circuits. This 50-50 training method makes learning at home interesting, fascinating, practical. I ALSO GIVE YOU A MODERN, PROFESSIONAL ALL-WAVE, ALL-PURPOSE SET SERVICING INSTRUMENT to help you make money fixing Radios while learning and equip you for full time work after you graduate.

Find Out What Radio and Television Offer You

Act Today! Mail the coupon for my 64-page book, "Rich Rewards in Radio." It points out Radio's spare time and full time opportunities and those coming in Television; tells about my Course in Radio and Television; shows more than 100 letters from men I have trained, telling what they are doing and earning. Read my money back agreement. MAIL COUPON in an envelope or paste on a penny postcard—NOW!

J. E. SMITH President
Dept. OJS9
National Radio Institute
Washington. D. C.



J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 0JS9
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

Mail me FREE, without obligation, your 64-page book "Rich Rewards in Radio." (No salesman will call. Write plainly.)

Age.....

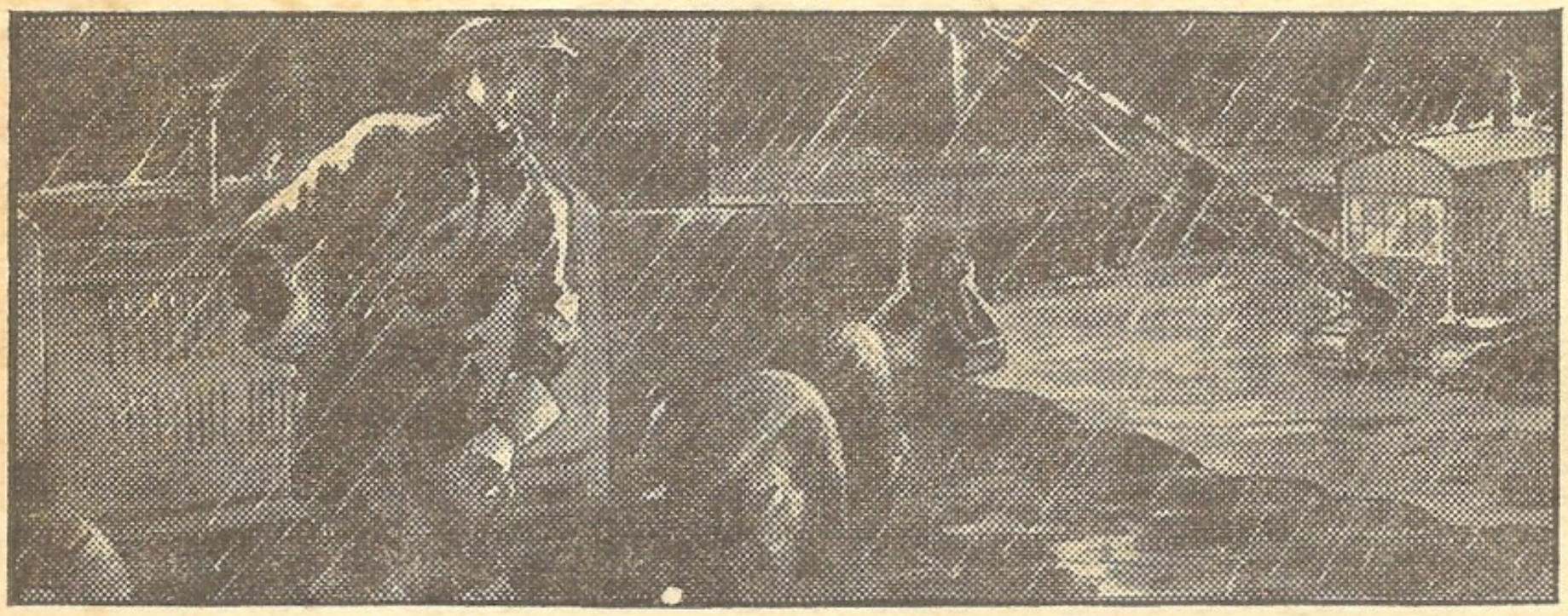
Name .....

Address .....

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

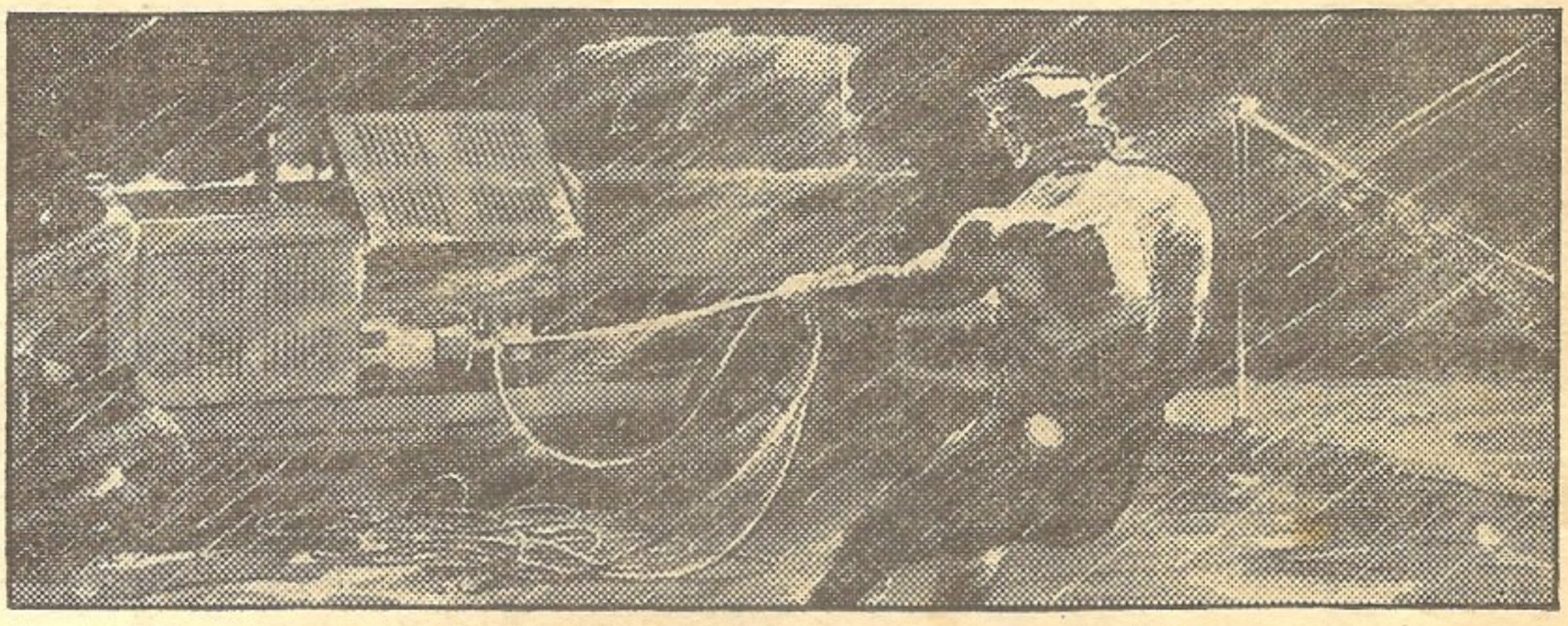
ONE MORE STEP— AND ETERNITY!

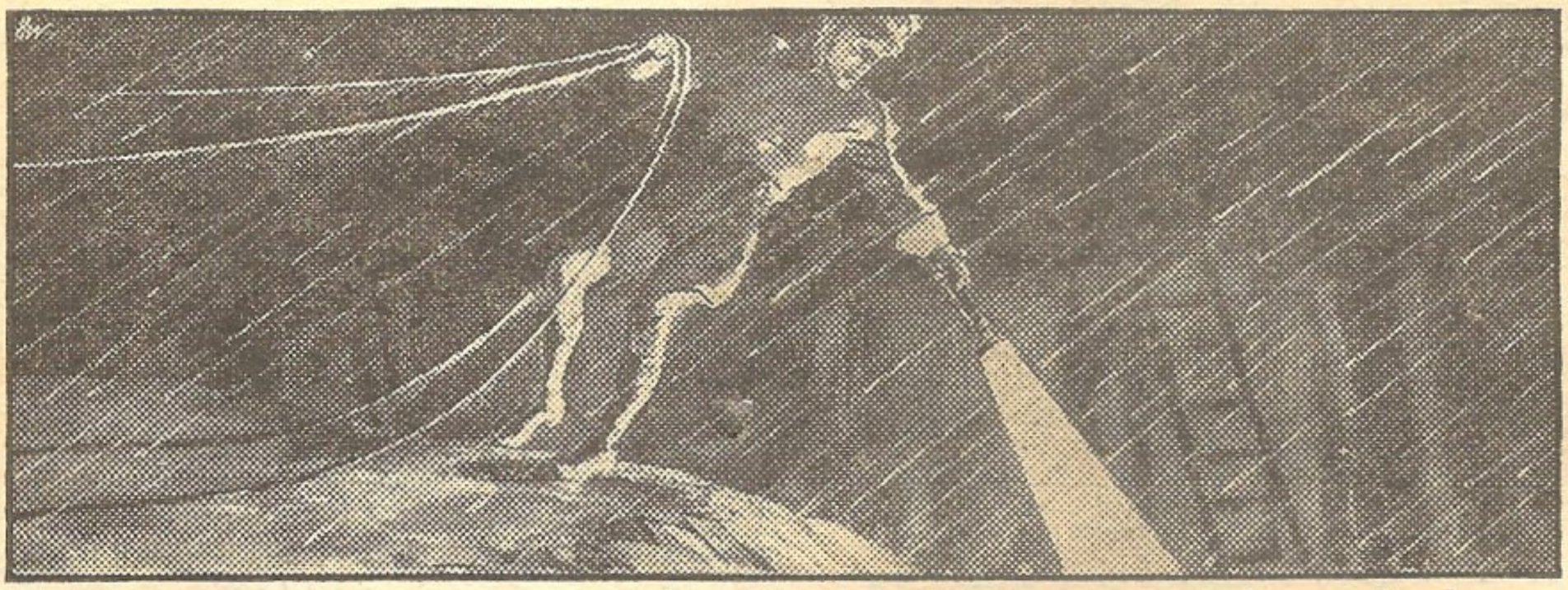
A true experience of LYLE EMMONS, *Kildare, New York*



"THE WIND HOWLED and the darkness seemed to increase as I arrived at the quarry, where I was to do a welding job on a big steam shovel," writes Mr. Emmons. "The rain streamed down in slanting torrents.

"IN THAT DRIVING STORM I had to move slowly about, walking with my back to the wind and tugging at my heavy gear. Then suddenly I had a horrible, sickening sensation of danger.

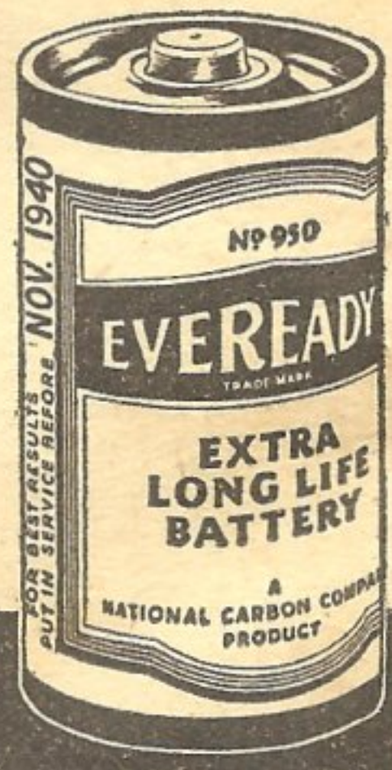




"I GRABBED MY FLASHLIGHT and swung it behind me. I peered straight down a 90 foot drop to a pile of jagged rocks! You can tell the world that I was thankful for my flashlight and its dependable 'Eveready' *fresh* DATED batteries. I'll never be without them!

(*Signed*) *Lyle Emmons*"

The word "Eveready" is a registered trade-mark of National Carbon Co., Inc.



FRESH BATTERIES LAST LONGER... *Look for the* DATE-LINE

NATIONAL CARBON COMPANY, INC., 30 EAST 42nd STREET, NEW YORK, N. Y.

Unit of Union Carbide UCC *and Carbon Corporation*

15¢

SUPER SCIENCE STORIES

VOL. 1 SEPTEMBER, 1940 NO. 4

NOVELETTES

INVISIBLE ONE.....By Neil R. Jones 6
Presby could rescue his wife—but then she could never see him again.

THE GIRL IN THE BOTTLE.....By Jack Williamson 36
The allies of the Nazi dictator were not of Earth. . . .

VENUSIAN TRAGEDY.....By Max C. Sheridan 78
He was willing to give up his natural body for Kaldee—but it did no good.

THE RADIUM-BUGS.....By Helen Weinbaum 102
They said he was unfit to live—but only he could protect their world.

SHORT STORIES

THE INVASION.....By Robert Willey 25
The strangers would not answer Man's signals—so they had to die.

MEN ON THE MORNING STAR.....By Charles Henry Mackintosh 57
"Uninhabited" Venus was too populous for Captain Terran's comfort!

STRANGE PLAYFELLOW.....By Isaac Asimov 67
Robbie was only a machine, but he was Gloria's only friend.

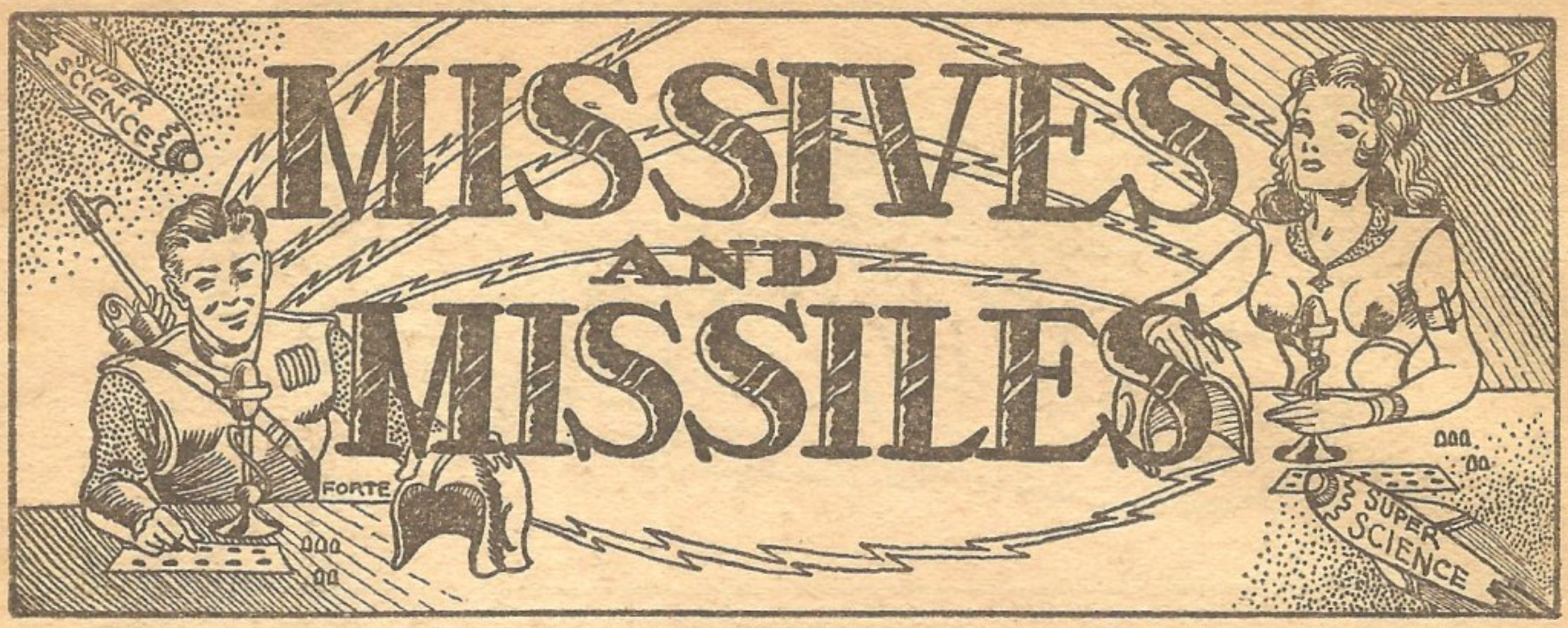
REBIRTH OF MAN.....By Basil E. Wells 94
The Great Ones doomed themselves by the success of their own experiment.

PHANTOM FROM NEPTUNE.....By Henry Andrew Ackermann 121
A Super Science Brief

SPECIAL FEATURES

MISSIVES AND MISSILES..... 4
FANTASY REVIEWS..... 120
THE PREVIEW..... 124

Published bi-monthly by Fictioneers, Inc., 2256 Grove Street, Chicago, Illinois. Editorial and executive offices, 210 East 43rd Street, New York, N. Y. Entered as second class matter Jan. 8th, 1940, at the post office at Chicago, Illinois, under the Act of March 3, 1879. Copyright 1940 by Fictioneers, Inc. The publishers cannot accept responsibility for return of unsolicited manuscripts, although care will be exercised in handling them. All rights reserved under Pan American copyright convention. Single copy price 15c. Six issue subscription in the U.S.A. $.90. Printed in the U.S.A.



"Above the Average"

Dear Editor:

I have just now finished reading the third issue of *Super Science Stories* and want to take this opportunity of telling you how much I enjoyed it.

I have been looking for a long time for a science fiction magazine which is above the average in both plot and presentation. In this magazine I believe I have found what I want. Another issue like this and you may be sure of receiving my subscription.

However, there is one criticism which I feel I should voice at this time. Keep out of your magazine those so-called "Super Science Briefs" such as "Europa Enchantment" by Ackermann. Perhaps such a story is too "super" for me, but as far as I am concerned, it *stank*.

The rest of your magazine is excellent. Right down the list, from "Day of the Comet" to "The Thought-Woman," your science stories are the best on the market. Especially excellent is "Before the Universe" by Gottesman. How about another by him concerning what happened after Miss Earle, Clair and Gaynor landed (?) on the newly discovered planet? Such a story would be most interesting. And let's have more stories by Harl Vincent. His "Trouble Shooter" tops the whole issue.

Here's wishing the best of luck to *Super Science Stories*.—Robert E. Miller, Box 736, Bloomville, N. Y.

Suggestions

Friends:

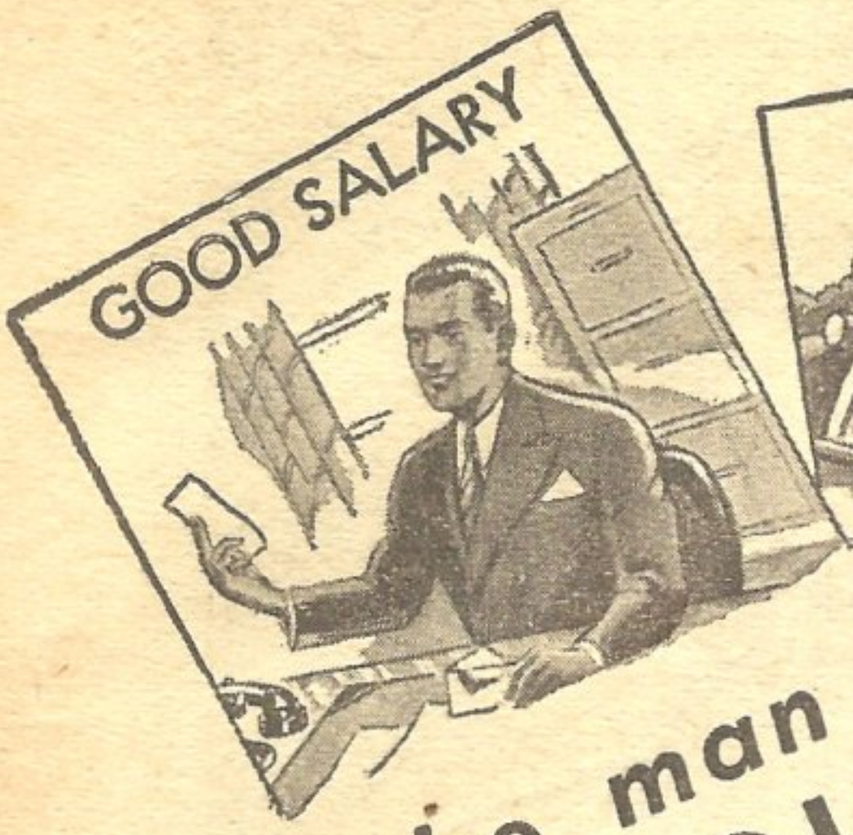
Well, it seems like old times once again, to scan the broad vista of science fiction dotting the newsstands nowadays. Some ten years ago I first became fascinated by stf., and up till the present time I have followed it rather haphazardly.

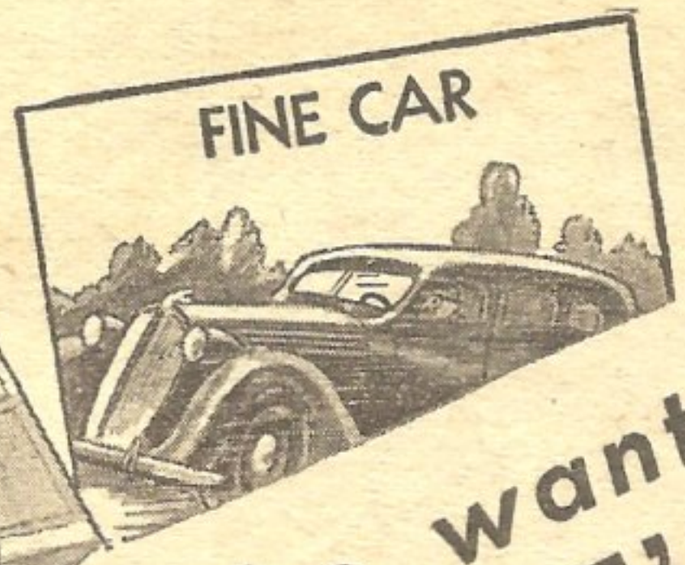
This club idea is grand, but there are many fellows like myself who have no fellow stf. readers in their locality. Much as I would like to form a chapter, I seem to be the only fan that I can find in El Paso. How about the formation of a mail-club to give us fellows a chance at discussion and argument? In fact, all you fellows in small towns, or towns where you can find no fellow-readers, might drop me a line for a good start.

And for the good of our *Science Fictioneers* department in *SSS*, I submit the following: (1) change the heading of the club from the plain printing now used to a small replica of the pin we are to have, (2) make a bi-monthly award of a *Science Fictioneers Master's Degree* to the author of the best-liked story in each issue, and (3) conduct an amateur's story contest, both stories to be printed in each issue of *SSS*. And confine the contest to *Science Fictioneers* only.

And that should make a full letter. I have only one more plea: The famous pro-and-con arguments on the old letter departments in other magazines should

(Continued on page 126)





To the man who wants to enjoy an ACCOUNTANT'S CAREER

IF you're that man, here's something that will interest you.

Not a magic formula—not a get-rich-quick scheme—but something more substantial, more practical.

Of course, you need something more than just the desire to be an accountant. You've got to pay the price—be willing to study earnestly, thoroughly.

Still, wouldn't it be worth your while to sacrifice some of your leisure in favor of interesting home study—over a comparatively brief period in your life? Always provided that the rewards were good—a salary of $2,000 to $10,000?

An accountant's duties are interesting, varied and of real worth to his employers. He has *standing!*

Do you feel that such things aren't for you? Well, don't be too sure. Very possibly they *can* be!

Why not, like so many before you, investigate LaSalle's modern Problem Method of training for an accountancy position?

Just suppose you were permitted to work in a large accounting house under the personal supervision of an expert accountant. Suppose, with his aid, you studied accounting principles and solved problems day by day—easy ones at first—then the more difficult ones. If you could do this—and if you could turn to him for advice as the problems became complex—soon you'd master them all.

That's the training you follow in principle under the LaSalle Problem Method.

You cover accountancy from the basic Principles right up through Accountancy Systems and Income Tax Procedure. Then you add C. P. A. Training and prepare for the C. P. A. examinations.

As you go along, you absorb the principles of Auditing, Cost Accounting, Business Law, Statistical Control, Organization, Management and Finance.

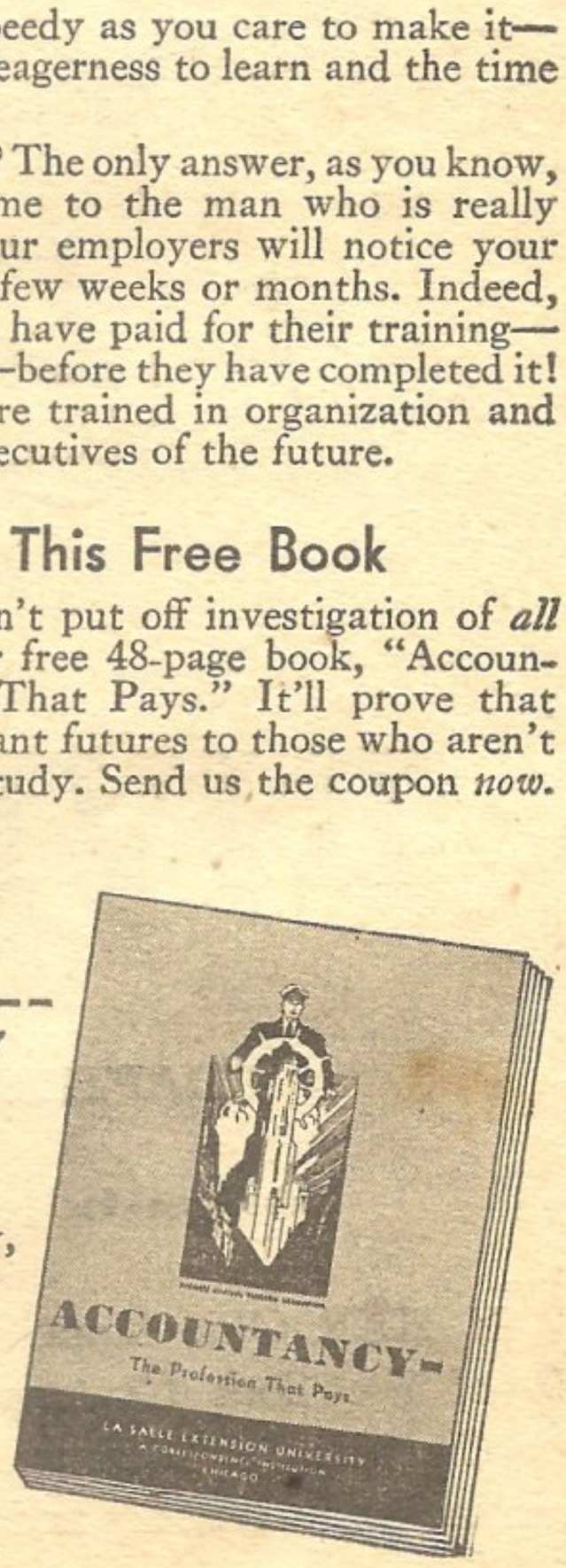
Your progress is as speedy as you care to make it—depending on your own eagerness to learn and the time you spend in study.

Will recognition come? The only answer, as you know, is that success *does* come to the man who is really *trained.* It's possible your employers will notice your improvement in a very few weeks or months. Indeed, many LaSalle graduates have paid for their training—with increased earnings—before they have completed it! For accountants, who are trained in organization and management, are the executives of the future.

Write For This Free Book

For your own good, don't put off investigation of *all* the facts. Write for our free 48-page book, "Accountancy, The Profession That Pays." It'll prove that accountancy offers brilliant futures to those who aren't afraid of serious home study. Send us the coupon *now.*

Over 1850 Certified Public Accountants among LaSalle alumni



LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY

A CORRESPONDENCE INSTITUTION

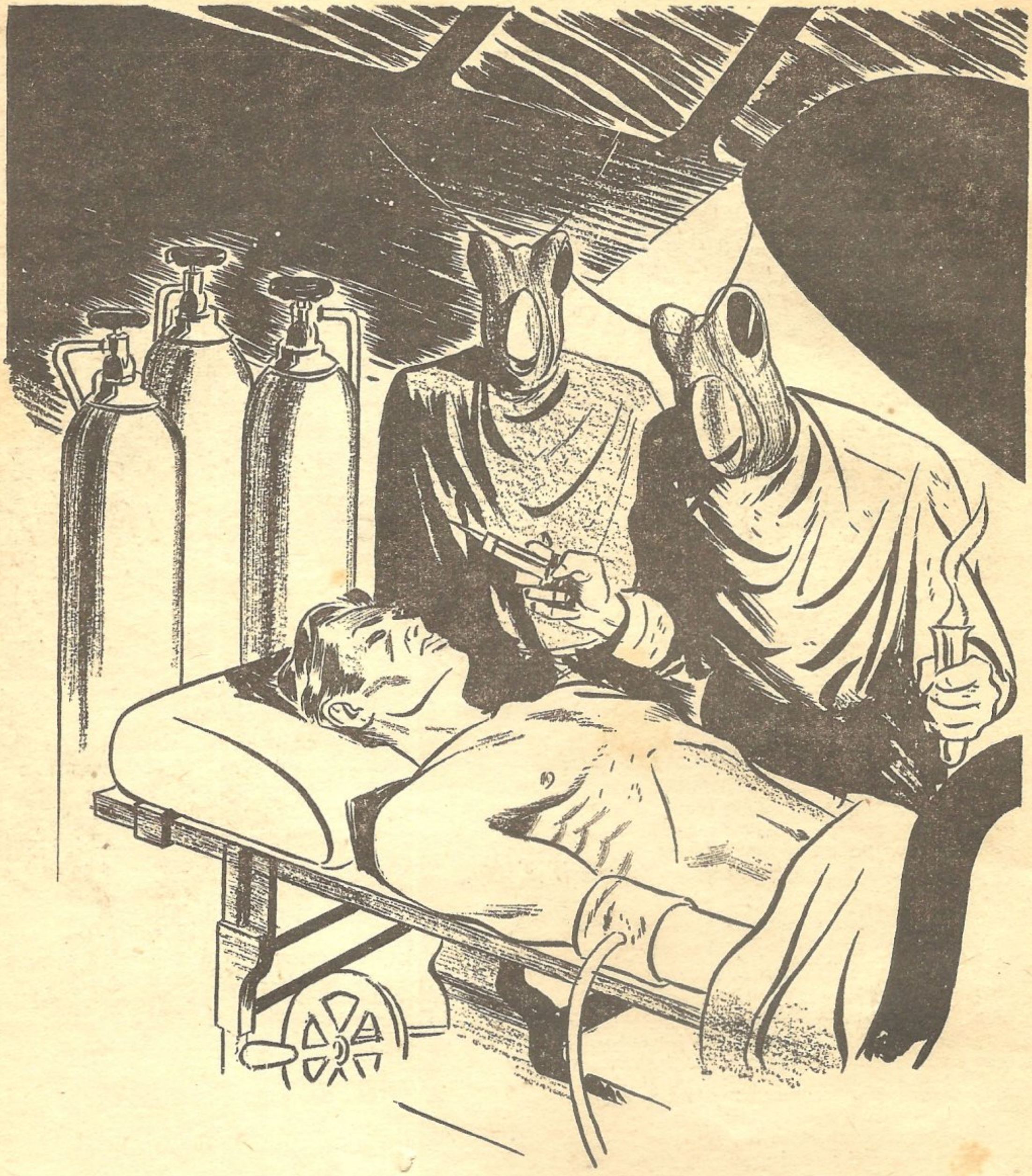
4101 S. Michigan Ave., Dept. 9334-HR, Chicago, Ill.

I want to be an accountant. Send me, without cost or obligation, the 48-page book, "Accountancy, The Profession That Pays," and full information about your accountancy training program.

Name .....

Address ..... *City* .....

Position ..... *Age* .....



INVISIBLE ONE

By NEIL R. JONES

CHAPTER I

Substitute for Murder

IN HER Ohio home on the outskirts of the 26th Century metropolis of Cincinnati, Moira Presby softly hummed a current air and eagerly awaited the return of her husband who had been called away suddenly that evening on promising business. She was as happy as people of the earth were expected to be happy under the joint rule of the Durna Rangue, a semi-scientific cult, and the space pirates.

The earth was under a state of siege

Ollon Presby, citizen of the outlaw Earth of the 26th Century, was willing to pay any price for revenge upon the pirate abductor of his wife, even to the loss of his life—or visibility.

by the Interplanetary Guard from the colonized sister worlds. For fully two centuries, since banishment from Mars for practices in condemned sciences, the Durna Rangue cult had lain hidden and growing in power in the depths of Oberon, a moon of Uranus. Then late in the twenty-sixth century, they had enlisted the aid of the numerous bands of space pirates and had descended upon an unsuspecting earth to score a rapid coup d'etat. Power generators were quickly erected all over the earth to supply a blanket of invisible rays which held off the ships of the Interplanetary Guard. The space pirates were given rule over partitioned territories. Most of them ruled as despots, a few wisely and indulgently, satisfied with

the luxuries afforded them and the ease and indolence which was theirs. In spite of the restraining hand of the cult, the pirates found a way to almost everything they wanted.

A knock came at the door. Moira's heart leaped joyously. That was Ollon returning. He had told her he would not be long. Quickly, she unlocked the door but stepped back involuntarily in surprise, a puzzled expression replacing the anticipation on her pretty face. It was not Ollon. A strange individual stood there. He wore a blue livery trimmed with gray.

"I am come to take you to your husband, Ollon Presby," he reported suavely and with a slight bow.

"Where is he?" she exclaimed in sudden apprehension. "He—he's not—"

The messenger shrugged expressively in a manner plainly suggesting doleful possibilities of which he apparently regretted to be the one to tell her.

"Come and see for yourself," he said.

Moira left the house and hurried along beside the man. Not until they were on the long, shaded drive beneath the low spreading trees was she aware of shadowy figures enclosing her. She exclaimed in alarm, and then a hand over her mouth checked the scream she would have given. But Moira was no weakling. She fought like a tigress, and her assailants were having their difficulties and grief. One of them, finding a finger jammed solidly against an eye socket, swore roundly and gave a vicious twist to the arm he held. There was a dull snap and an agonized moan from Moira as she slipped unconscious into the arms of one of her kidnappers. She was quickly carried to a concealed and waiting space ship which rose and headed east into the starlit darkness.

OLLON PRESBY returned more than an hour later to find the door open and his wife of only a year gone. He inquired nearby in growing anxiety, for he had been called away on a blind errand. He smelled something sinister beneath it all. It was an elderly woman next door who gave him his clue.

"A man in blue and gray livery called here and asked if you lived here. I directed him. I later saw him and Moira hurry down the drive."

"Pirates!" swore Ollon bitterly. "They've taken her! God, I should have known better to have left her alone! She is so beautiful! One of those devils wants her for his harem, and I was lured away while they tricked her!"

"But the cult has issued an edict stopping the pirates from taking women without their consent and agreement," argued the old woman.

"The cult is too busy with its own devilish affairs to bother about stolen women," Ollon replied in a dead voice. "Unless I can trace that livery, there is no telling where she has been taken."

GREN HABERLEY, pirate ruler of southern Illinois, sat in conference with one of the Asurians, a forbidding personality in a gray robe, his face only partly visible beneath the gray, obscuring cowl. Haberley's wrath had been felt by his subordinates more than a week before when they had blunderingly broken the arm of a woman Haberley had coveted, forcing her into the hospital at Benton. But Haberley had not lacked for feminine companionship, and he was now in a more expansive mood, willing to accept the dictates of fate and wait for Moira Presby to recover. Haberley's ruthless and dissipated countenance was now patronizing as he argued with the gray-robed Asurian.

"I will pay the cult well for this," Haberley was saying.

"We do not want money," the Asurian replied. "What can money get us that we do not have? We want only that

which we need in our laboratories, and the earth is a very well-equipped stock-room."

"We-l-l-l," drawled Haberley. "Couldn't my men help you get more victims—uh—I mean subjects—for experiment?"

"No, unless we wanted someone on another world—like you want this woman on Mars."

"And I'll have her!" Haberley swore fervently. "Even if I have to go there and fight to get her!"

"Like you pirates get most of the women you want. But what of the Interplanetary Guard?"

"That's just it," argued Haberley, suddenly losing his asperity. "If the cult will only lend me one of its invisible neophytes, this can be accomplished in stealth and without loss of men or ships. Think how easy it would be for him to be landed on Mars near the city of Fomar where he might proceed and do my business. He could enter where he would—go to her sleeping chamber—and while she slept, give her the drug which will suspend her life forces, and then carry her away to meet the ship where it had landed him before."

"Yes, I know," said the Asurian. "Our invisible neophytes served very efficiently in secret capacities before and during our conquest of the earth, but it is an immutable law of the cult that its creatures cannot be used by outside interests not directly involved with the cult."

"A foolish law!"

"Perhaps. Nevertheless, it is so."

"Is there no way around this?" Haberley implored.

"Yes," came the unexpected reply. "There is a way."

Haberley grasped eagerly at this straw. "What way?"

"You must furnish a man. We shall make him invisible."

"To serve my purpose? To bring me back the woman from Mars?"

The Asurian nodded. "But in the end, we must have the neophyte."

"That is very well, but where can I find a man who will agree to such a bargain, one whom I can trust? Once on Mars, he can be free if he wishes."

"That is not your only problem. More than this, he is also to be sent on business of the cult."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that none of our creatures are to be used for interests which do not involve the cult," the Asurian replied enigmatically. "I told you as much."

"But how will this be a mission of the cult?"

"He must go to the headquarters of the Interplanetary Guard at Fomar and learn all he can before he steals the woman for you."

"But why make someone new invisible when you have so many already," argued Haberley. "It may be difficult for me to find such a one as will be trustworthy and return once he has tasted the freedom of Mars. Do you fear to trust your invisible neophytes?"

"We have many whom we trust implicitly, yet we shall not risk them. This is your venture, and you will furnish everything, including the ship and men to run the risks of the Interplanetary Guard. We shall make the man you choose invisible, but remember that after he returns, if he does, he belongs to us and will return to one of our sanctuaries."

"All right," Haberly agreed. "It suits me except for the fact that it may be difficult inducing a man to willingly place himself in your hands. In a case like this, no one can be forced to go and still be trusted. The men who work for me do not like your cult and your sanctuaries and monsters. They would as soon give themselves to the devil without due."

"It is for you to find such a man, if you would succeed in your venture," grimly smiled the Asurian.

AN unsuspected listener, a man recently hired about Haberley's estate, stood in the next room behind slightly parted curtains, an atom pistol in his hand and cold, purposeful murder in his heart. He was not a working slave, impressed because of a crime either trivial or serious. He was a free worker.

Ollon Presby had traced his wife, and he had come to kill Haberley, knowing his chances of escape to be less than one in a hundred. But life held little for him, at least while Haberley lived. Even that one slim chance would make him a hunted fugitive over the face of the earth. There was no chance of escaping to the colonized sister worlds of Mars and Venus. Ollon had listened as if in a trance, the birth of a new idea rising to supplant his grim errand of murder. As silently as he had come, so he departed from the mansion.

That very evening, notice went around by word of mouth that Haberley wanted every worker who was not a free man to appear at the assembly hall. Ollon recognized the first step of the space pirate in procuring a man fit for the job to be done. He was present. There were slaves and criminals of all colors and types. Troglodytes from Venus mingled with the white, black and yellow races of the earth, and there were also a few red or brown swordsmen from Saturn's moon of Dione, one arm terminating in a bony blade. All listened as a burly, red-faced foreman addressed them from a balcony.

"You're all either slaves for life or else criminals with years of hard work ahead of you," he commenced bluntly. "There's a job to be done which will make one of you a free man."

A clamor of approval arose. The foreman continued.

"Whoever accepts this offer must first be made invisible by the cult."

Murmurs of dissent and muttering uneasiness circulated among the listeners. The troglodytes of Venus moved slowly together near the end of the room. The look of hope on the faces of those who had clamored so loudly when their freedom was suggested had vanished. Business with the cult in the gloomy catacombs of its sanctuaries did not appeal to them, for strange and fantastic stories were widespread of its activities.

Mention of the cult aroused immediate distrust and fear among the workers who were not the imaginative type to which this form of ghastly adventure appealed. And so the foreman had but few ready listeners after stating his case. A small, middle-aged man with quick, darting eyes posed a question.

"And when the cult makes us invisible, and we've done this thing, do we go free?"

"You do. You shall be both free and invisible."

Ollon recognized Kegh, a criminal with many long years yet to serve. The man's eyes were placed a little too close to each other, and they glinted, strangely alight from the thoughts which sprang into life behind them. Kegh's mouth took on a queer, twisting smile as he turned the idea over in his head. Ollon wondered if the lie about eventual freedom was shared by the foreman.

"What's to be done?" he shrilled.

"Go to Mars and get something Haberley wants."

"You mean steal something and be took back in a space ship?"

"That's it. Those who want to apply stay. The rest get out."

Nearly everyone left. Remaining were Ollon, Kegh and two others. The foreman looked sharply at Ollon.

"What you doin' here? You're a free man. Get out. Haberley don't want no free man for this job."

"He'd trust a free man quicker than he would one with a record of crime, wouldn't he?"

"Get out!"

CHAPTER II

In the Sanctuary of the Cult

OLLON left, dispirited, his impetuous plan crumbling about him. But he still had the atom pistol hidden away in a secure place, and once more he plotted to take the life of Haberley.

The next morning, he was told to report to the veranda of the mansion. A queer shock awaited him. There sat Haberley. The pirate overlord wasted no time in preliminary.

"Why did you apply for the job I offered? It is a hazardous one, and you have nothing to gain."

Slightly unnerved and taken off guard, Ollon nevertheless put forth his evasive reasons he had made for himself even before the foreman had spoken at the assembly hall.

"I have reasons for wanting to become invisible. The idea appeals to me."

"So that is it. You are not by any chance an escaped criminal who seeks this method of hiding?"

"I have never committed a crime."

"We-l-l-l, it makes no great deal of difference in this case, just so long as you can be trusted to come back."

"I shall come back," promised Ollon truthfully. "Earth has always been my home, and my interests are here."

"You realize that this matter of becoming invisible will enable you to move secretly anywhere you wish?"

Ollon nodded. Haberley continued.

"This is your mission. You are going to Mars to steal a very lovely young woman for me."

Ollon simulated surprise and sudden, new interest.

"And before you do this, you must go to the Interplanetary Guard's headquarters and find information which the Asurians desire. That is their interest in making you invisible. You and I, too, have our interests. We are all in this thing together."

Haberley very cleverly avoided telling of the fact that Ollon must become the property of the cult once he was returned from Mars. Ollon, however, avoided any question or reference to the matter, knowing full well that Haberley would lie and that it was intended he should be betrayed. The Asurians, too, would either be evasive or false, he knew. He cared little, however, for his plans were made.

"An air carrier will take you to the Covington Sanctuary where you will be made invisible. You will receive instructions there, and then you will be returned here for further instructions before you leave for Mars with a ship and crew."

Ollon was as eager to start for the sanctuary as Haberley was to have him go. As Haberley had ordered, one of his airships sped through the stratosphere to Covington and settled by the long, sloping building which was the sanctuary.

DEEP, embrasured windows stared from the gray dome which sloped into the ground on all sides. The sanctuaries were built more below ground than on the surface. The aspect of the sanctuary was chilling and forbidding, and Ollon shuddered at the thoughts of spending the rest of his life there, as Haberley and the Asurian had bargained, upon his return from Mars.

Inside the sanctuary, Ollon found a perpetual twilight which emanated from the walls. There was a strange lack of shadows except in the laboratories where powerful, glaring lights were employed. In the little time given him before his treatment for invisibility, Ollon missed nothing which occurred within range of his vision. He saw hideous insect-men who were human all the way up to their shoulders which were surmounted with an enormous insect head, and dwarfs who had once been full grown men but were

now reduced to half their stature by atom compression. That they were still as heavy as they had ever been and were several times as strong by virtue of ingrafted glands from the giant Martian ants, Ollon had occasion to witness.

Although he marvelled at these things, none of them startled him quite so much as a terseg bird who flew down a corridor and carried on a conversation with one of the priests of the cult. He had heard of them. Originally a native bird of Mars, the tersegs had been employed by the Durna Rangue even as long as two centuries before, during the cult's existence in the cliffs by the Silmono desert. Besides operating on them for speech, the Asurians had given the birds a limited intelligence by transposition of parts from human brains.

"A dreamer walks in his synthetic lifetime," the bird croaked.

"Notify Orom, and have the walker put back into the receptacle," ordered the priest. "Send a group of the little men."

"Which chamber?"

"D-14."

The bird winged away on its errand, leaving Ollon gaping in surprise.

That was all Ollon Presby ever learned of the cult and its creatures before he was taken to one of the laboratories and made a creature of the cult himself. The hypnotic eyes of an Asurian locked his own in a numbing, all powerful embrace, and he sank into a swelling ocean of unconsciousness. He never recalled any of the operation which made him invisible. From what little the Asurians had told him, he realized that as long as he lived he would stay invisible, the treatment coördinating with and depending upon his life forces and circulatory system. To the eight principal functions of the human body was added a ninth closely linked with absorption and assimilation. Ollon realized that certain glands had been altered in his body and that his blood had all been removed and had been subjected to a process before it was replaced. Strange forces, coupled with penetrating rays, had coursed through his bloodless body, and again they were used after his life fluid had been replaced, and Ollon came to his senses to find himself invisible.

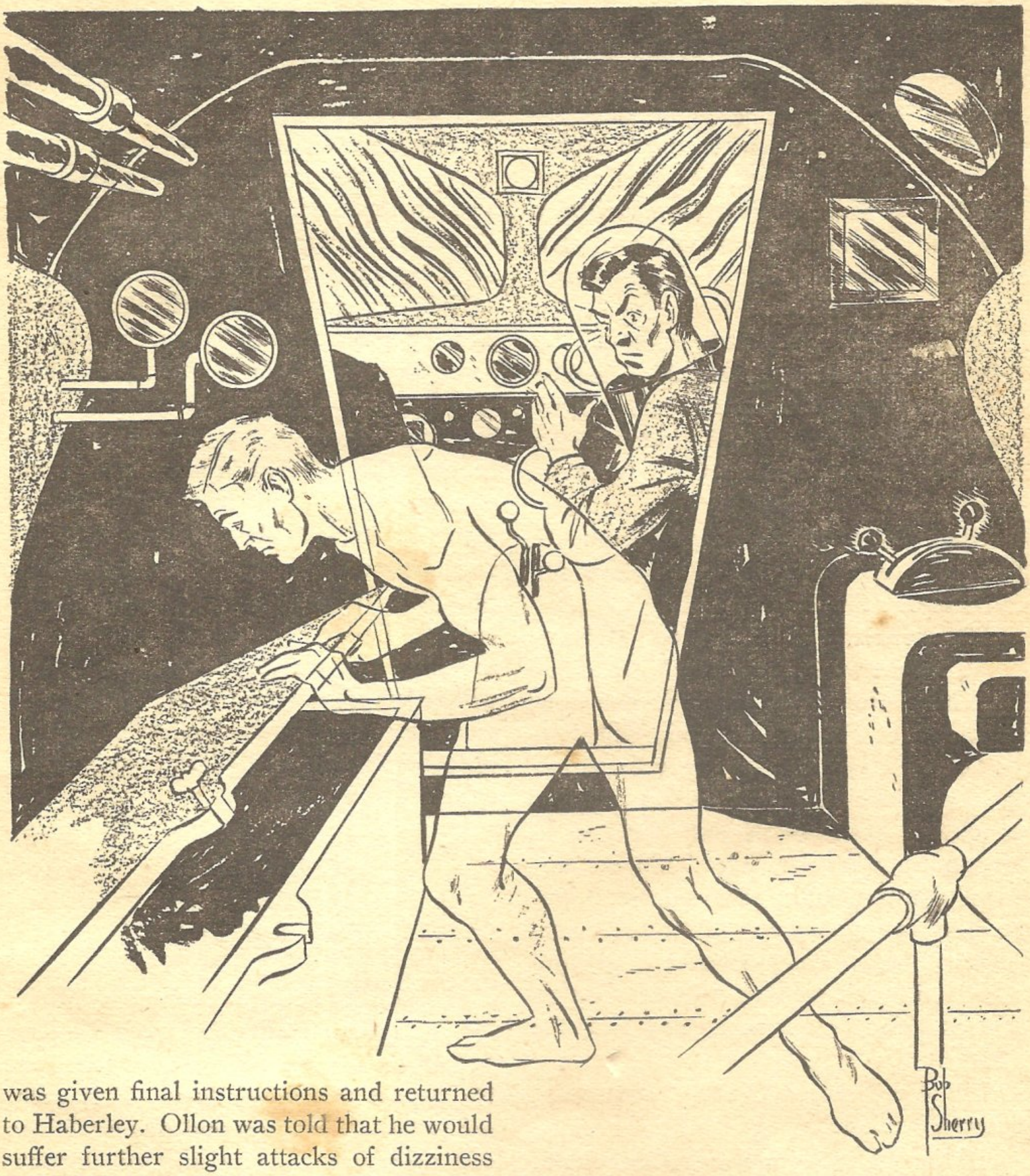
IT was a weird sensation. He could no longer see his hands, his arms, legs or body. Yet he could feel his hands against his face and could feel other parts of his body.

Anxious to return to Haberley and forestall his acquisition of Moira, Ollon was all for leaving the sanctuary and starting on his return trip to southern Illinois, but the Asurians bade him wait a while.

"The after-effects of the treatments are not always pleasant, and they vary according to the physical peculiarities of the individual. We must keep you under observation for at least a day or two before we instruct you on your mission to Mars and return you to Haberley. Remember, even now, that your mission for us comes in order of importance before that which you are to do for Haberley. You are to do our work first, and if you should come into difficulty with those from whom you are to obtain secret information do not imperil your chances of escape by dallying on the business Haberley requires of you. That can be accomplished on another trip."

The wisdom of the Asurians, born of innumerable experiences, proved itself. Several hours after his return to consciousness, a blinding dizziness overcame Ollon, and his body throbbed like a generator. He found himself helpless, and then after the better half of an hour this unnatural physical discomfort wore off, and he was himself once more. During the next day and a half, he had two more of these attacks, but they lacked the severity of the first.

At the end of two days observation, he



was given final instructions and returned to Haberley. Ollon was told that he would suffer further slight attacks of dizziness and bodily discomfort from time to time but not to fear them for he would recover and eventually be free entirely of them. Once again, the cult impressed him with the importance of his errand for them over the passing frivolity of the pirate chief. He was also told that never again would it be necessary to protect his body against cold by wearing clothing.

"A new element runs through your blood which inures you to biting cold even below the freezing point. Your invisibility is complete, and clothing would destroy the effect."

A plane of the Durna Rangue bore him back to Haberley, and one of the priests escorted him into the surprised and wondering presence of the space pirate. Haberley groped a reaching hand and felt of Ollon's body.

"You are really there! This is wonderful!"

Haberley and the Asurian departed to another chamber behind locked doors for

reasons best known to themselves and more accurately imagined by Ollon than they would have guessed. Once more, the Asurian was impressing upon Haberley the fact that when Ollon returned he must be reclaimed by the cult. As long as his own desires were forthcoming, Haberley was ready to agree to almost any plan regarding Ollon's eventual disposition.

HABERLEY returned without the Asurian. The pirate chief looked about the luxurious room, momentarily bewildered, until he noticed the depression of the chair seat on which Ollon sat waiting.

"Uh—oh—there you are! Now to business! Are you ready to leave for Mars at any time?"

"Tomorrow," Ollon replied. "Meanwhile, tell me what I am to do."

"You are to abduct Alicia Fayden from her home at Fomar. The ship will drop you off at a safe place as near Fomar as it is advisable to go. In your invisible condition, it should be easy for you to accomplish what we have dared not undertake in the matter of a raid, but it will be risky getting her away from her home. You will have a communicator to get into touch with the waiting ship as soon as you are ready to come aboard with the girl."

"Fayden," mused Ollon. "That name sounds familiar."

"It should. They are one of the oldest, richest and most aristocratic families of Fomar since Mars was first colonized two hundred years ago."

"So—that is why you need an invisible man!" exclaimed Ollon. "If what I have heard is true, the place is a veritable fortress!"

"It is," Haberley agreed, "but you should be able to not only enter but find some way of getting the girl out of there without being caught. That is your problem to be worked out very carefully once you are inside. I shall give you a drug to administer to her while she sleeps."

"The Faydens are immensely rich. Is this for ransom?"

"Perhaps, eventually, if I grow tired of her. By the way, any riches you should pick up there will be entirely yours."

Ollon did not comment.

"How am I to administer the drug?"

Haberley aroused himself from some pleasing spectacle in his mind's eye before he replied. "It is in a little, black box. You press a spring and several small openings appear in one end. Hold these beneath the fair lady's nose, and I can promise you'll have no further trouble with her. In fact, she will stop breathing and become as rigid as if she were dead. She will remain this way until she is brought here to me and I give her the necessary restorative. A long, padded box will be left off with you. Keep it concealed after you land. Before you call the ship, place her in this, and guard it well across space."

CHAPTER III

The Unseen Presence

OLLON was shown to his quarters. Immediately after, he found the door locked on himself. He was a prisoner. He moved to the windows. They were not locked, but the ground was far below, and there was no safe way of climbing down. A ledge, however, connected all the windows on his level, and he climbed out upon it and made his way to the windows of the next room. He must get out of the mansion. He had business which would take him far that night. He looked into the next room. A woman, lightly clad, stood before a mirror brushing her hair. Quietly, Ollon raised the window. As he stepped inside the room, he knocked something over with his leg. The woman turned startled eyes, saw nothing and

then appeared perplexed at sight of the open window. She moved to close it, and Ollon had difficulty in avoiding her as he stepped to the door, opened it and found himself in a corridor.

In his exit from the mansion, he walked boldly past many of Haberley's servants and retainers. It was a strange sensation to be there and not to be seen. He passed the barracks with its pirate soldiery in the uniform of Haberley. He continued to the highway and placed an obstruction across the road. The rocketcyclist who stopped and removed it was unaware of an added passenger when he proceeded once more. At the next village, a small plane was stolen and piloted by unseen hands to Benton where it was abandoned on the outskirts of town.

In the hospital at Benton lay Moira, nearly recovered from the effects of her resistance to the pirates of Haberley when she was stolen. Her broken arm was mending fast, and she had long since recovered from the shock of her capture. Yet tragedy lurked in the depths of her soft, dark eyes, and gloom pervaded her soul. She knew what lay in store for her, and dreaded the day of her discharge.

The hushed voice which suddenly startled her seemed to rise clearly out of her imagination. The nurse had not spoken so closely, for Moira saw her at the far end of the room.

"Moira!"

She heard her name, and something in the subdued tones thrilled her.

"Moira—dear!"

Her heart gladdened, and she sat upright and stared wildly about her. No longer was there any doubt as to the identity of the speaker.

"Ollon! Ollon! Where are you?"

The nurse looked over her way and saw her sitting up.

"Here I am right here, dearest," said the voice near her ear, "right by your side."

And lips whose touch she had come to know so well were pressed against her own. She stared and saw nothing except the usual bleak and desolate appearance of the room.

"Moira—don't move or be startled. Lay quiet. I really am here, but you cannot see me."

The touch of Ollon's invisible hand caressing her hair and forehead gave Moira a strange thrill of joy, apprehension and bewilderment.

"What—how—why can't I see you?" she stammered, the flood of question struggling for precedence.

"Because I have been made invisible by the Asurians," he told her, and then he unfolded the tale of his quest for her, and he told her of his newly made plans. "And stay here as long as you can contrive. Haberley shall never claim you. I shall see that he is dead before I let him have you."

OLLON returned that night to Haberley's headquarters and the mansion much the same way he had come. He found the stolen plane where he had left it and brought it back almost to the spot where he had found it. He even returned to his locked room through the chamber next to his, climbing back to his own window along the ledge.

In the morning, Haberley came, sullen wrath in his face. "Where did you go last night?" the pirate snapped, looking about the room for some evidence of Ollon's presence.

"I went on my own business. I came back, didn't I? If you cannot trust me here on the earth, how do you expect I can be trusted when I reach Mars?"

"Then why didn't you tell me you wanted to go some place," argued Haberley, the edge taken from his temper by Ollon's logic. "You could have gone, then. I figured out how you left, all right. I quizzed Reta, and she told me about the

window. I suppose you came back that way, too. The seal on the window was broken this morning. That's how I knew you'd returned."

"I found the door locked when I decided to go out last evening. I didn't arouse anyone when I found how simple it was going to be."

"Uh!" grunted Haberley, satisfied. "Maybe it was good practice. You're going to find lots of other things simple, too. Today you start for Mars. Last night, I got the stuff you need to put this Fayden girl in dreamland. Steal anything, did you?"

"No—I stole nothing," Ollon replied. "I merely had some affairs to put in order before I left."

"I see," was Haberley's amiable reply. "Now remember—don't go sticking your head into trouble you can't get out of on account of that information the Durna Rangue wants. If it is easy and safe, get the information, but don't take too many chances. Getting Alicia Fayden is the big issue, and don't let anything make you slip up."

"I understand," said Ollon, reminiscent of the Asurian's parting instructions. "I shall handle matters as I best see fit."

"Good!" exclaimed Haberley, missing the irony of the other's remark. "I knew I could depend on a free man better than one of those criminal slaves."

Shortly before evening, Ollon Presby embarked on his trip across space with Haberley's pirates, seven in number. Arnge, captain of the ship, arranged his plans with his invisible passenger as the space ship cleared the safety lane through the veil of destructive rays surrounding the earth.

"Here is a communicator," said Captain Arnge, handing Ollon a heavy, round, flat object. "You won't carry it around on Mars. People would see it. Hide it somewhere, see? When you want to tell us to come back, go get it. It reaches out in space more'n three hundred thousand miles. The cult made this, so there's no danger of anyone picking up our talk. Visit the I. G. first. Then get that woman Haberley wants. We may have to dodge about if I. G. ships come around, so if you don't reach us immediately with the communicator, wait and keep calling us."

ALTHOUGH at first the crew of the space ship acted a bit nervous and awkward over Ollon's walking about among them unseen, they soon became accustomed to his invisible presence.

Mars' red orb grew large. The trip required something over two days with the two planets nearly midway between opposition and conjunction. Not until the great Martian metropolis of Fomar had rolled into the shadowed hemisphere away from the sun did the pirates land Ollon in the vicinity and leave him there. Before they left, they helped him conceal the long, padded box in the bright red foliage of nearby bushes. The lighter gravity of Mars gave Ollon a higher, springier step, but he soon adapted himself to the change.

During the trip across space, he had suffered one of his dizzy spells with its attendant bodily discomfort. Now, he felt another one coming. The attacks were becoming less frequent and less severe, for which he was thankful. He laid among some bushes in the cool Martian night until the attack passed. This was his first encounter with anything approximating cold weather, and he was gratified to find that the assertions of the Asurians that he would never suffer from cold in the absence of clothing were true.

In the morning he found a hiding place for the communicator. A brief conversation with Arnge assured nim that the pirate ship was cruising within a talking radius, waiting for the fulfillment of his mission. Then he made his way into Fomar.

His experiences of invisibility on the

earth had been fairly limited. In Fomar, he ran into many bewildering complications before he became able to adjust himself to his changed condition. He was nearly run down by vehicular traffic, and he was soon so lame and sore from people running into him that he carefully avoided all lanes of crowded pedestrians. He had left many surprised and puzzled people behind him. In the heart of the great Martian metropolis, he became bewildered. He had eaten whatever and whenever he wished. Viands seemingly raised themselves from lunch counters or sideboards and drifted off, disappearing by small portions in midair. Night came, and he wanted to sleep. In a huge store, he found the mattress department and climbed to the top of a square stack.

The next morning, Ollon found himself rested, relaxed and more certain of himself. He was going to the Martian headquarters of the Interplanetary Guard as he had been instructed to do. The Asurians had stressed the importance of the visit. Haberley had told him to go there but to consider it as less important and to accept less hazards than he might encounter in the abduction of Alicia Fayden. In both cases, Ollon had plans of his own. Had they guessed his intent, both Asurians and pirates would have become his immediate executioners.

Past uniformed guards he made his way into the headquarters of the Interplanetary Guard. Behind an important official he made his way to the chambers where he had been carefully instructed by the Asurians to go. He knew where to look and what to look for, and there were certain things he must memorize. When the official left, he took large tomes down from the shelf and examined their contents. It was all there, all the information which the Asurians desired in their future, far-reaching plans of conquest.

He placed the large volumes back upon the shelves and sat down to a table where there were writing implements and paper. For a long time, he sat writing, nearly two hours in fact, filling many squares of paper. When he was through, he selected a certain page under a future date and placed the papers on which he had written between the leaves, replacing the book on its shelf. For more than an hour, he was a prisoner in the chamber of archives and records before an official again visited the place. Ollon left with him, the official, as before, unaware of his invisible presence.

CHAPTER IV

Andrea Prison

THAT afternoon found him walking around the grim, black walls of Andrea, the great Martian prison in the heart of Fomar. He stood by the front gate for a long time, and he saw it open only twice. Both times, he made quick, accurate observations.

The afternoon was more than half gone when he approached the Fayden estate. He saw the closely guarded grounds and mansion, and he realized more than ever why none of the pirates had ever conducted raids into the center of Fomar for either women or loot. He had no trouble avoiding the guards and attendants on entering the grounds, but he found it necessary to widely avoid several huge dogs who growled and became suspicious when the wind carried his scent to them. He circled down wind.

He entered the mansion from the rear. With noiseless tread, he went from room to room, keeping from the path of the servants. By listening to conversations and by careful walking around, he finally found the chamber of Alicia Fayden.

There was no question of it. She herself was sitting before a great mirror while a maid arranged her hair. Ollon came in and rested silently upon a small

settee across the room, sitting down carefully. Alicia Fayden was beautiful. She was beautiful like his Moira was beautiful, yet in a different way. He knew that he would never abduct her into the avid possession of Haberley, not even to save Moira. He had not come to the Fayden mansion for that purpose. He had other ways of keeping Haberley from possessing Moira.

He sat and waited until the coiffure was completed and both women had left the room. Then he arose and searched hurriedly for writing implements. He found them and sat down at a small table and wrote.

This time, his work was considerably more brief.

He placed the paper on which he had written in the top draw of a handsomely carved chest of drawers, slipping it between the pages of a diary. He then carefully examined a dazzling array of jewelry and ornaments scattered carelessly atop articles of furniture about the room. He finally selected a long barrett on which the girl's name was inscribed in precious stones. He left the mansion unseen, more cautious than when he had entered, for the barrett was not invisible. No one saw it apparently floating and bobbing away on thin air by itself. Once free of the mansion, Ollon hid the barrett under leaves in shrubbery near the edge of the grounds where he might quickly and easily reclaim it as soon as he wished.

He once more made his way to the gate of Andrea. He had a long wait beside the sombre walls before the gate opened up. Quickly he slid inside, narrowly avoiding a rumbling vehicle which charged sluggishly down upon him. He was inside, and the gates closed behind him. Andrea had another inmate, one whom they did not know about, nor could they have seen him had they known he was there.

OLLON was inside the prison two days during which time he sought out information before he acted. He wandered as he pleased around the great bastile, sometimes a prisoner in various sections but always patient until the way was opened before him. He ate surreptitiously in the kitchens and slept in odd places where he knew he would not be found. He examined the prison files and records carefully, and all these investigations centered around the women inmates who were in Andrea at that time.

Through the bars of her cell, a voice drifted to Vereta Kraft one day.

"How would you like to escape from here?"

Her attractive face took on a grim, startled expression as her keen eyes darted in quest of the speaker. No one stood outside her cell. She rushed to the grating and looked both ways of the corridor. Again came the voice, close and surprising, a male voice speaking in guarded tones.

"You can escape from here—if you do as you are told."

"Who are you—where are you?" she queried in disbelief.

"I am right here, but you cannot see me, for I am invisible. Do not be alarmed and make any outcry or else your chances of escape are lost."

"What trickery is this?" hissed the girl, her eyes glaring dangerously. "Another way of getting me to talk? Yes, I killed Farron Wilkes! I said so before! But that is all I will tell!"

"Quiet!" urged the voice placatingly. "This is no trickery. You must trust me. I am invisible. It was the only way I could enter the prison."

A warm hand touched the girl's clenched fist where it encircled a bar of steel. She recoiled nervously from the contact.

"Who are you? Why should you want me to escape?"

"I am from the earth, the outlawed world, and I am here to help you escape because you can help me. The Asurians have made me invisible. Would you like to escape to the earth?"

"Would I! It's the one safe place I would like to be! But wait—what did you say about the cult? If it is the Durna Rangue that wants me—no—I would rather spend the rest of my days here in Andrea."

"I want you to help me personally," Ollon entreated, "and I have come to you because I knew you would be in no position to betray me and because I knew you would be glad to get to the earth."

"I see—the cult made you invisible just so that you might come and get me out to serve your own ends."

"No—they made me like I am in order that I might steal information from the headquarters of the Interplanetary Guard, and I agreed to do this because I, too, have an axe to grind."

"Oh, I see, and you want me to hold the axe for you," said the girl, her suspicions of the cult allayed. "Well, if you can get me out of here, I'll do anything you want me to do."

"Good. Listen to me."

Ollon slowly and carefully detailed his plans to the girl. She listened intently and at the close of them made one single query.

"And when am I aroused from this trance you say the drug will put me under while I am carried across space to the earth?"

"I do not exactly know. Haberley may, and probably will, do this. What is more important to you, however, is the fact that you will be where you want to be—on the outlawed world. The worst that can happen to you is to become a bride in a space pirate's harem."

"That would be thrilling!" exclaimed Vereta with a careless laugh. "The worst that could really happen to me would be to fall into the clutches of the cult."

"They don't want you," promised Ollon.

SEVERAL hours later, when most of the prison slept, Vereta Kraft made her escape from Andrea in clothing which identified her as a prison matron. This clothing was stolen and brought to her by Ollon who also very easily stole a key which opened her cell door. Unseen, he escorted her through the prison. There were a few dangerous moments, especially when a too inquisitive guard looked the girl square in the face and made an exclamation. Something hit him over the head from behind, and Ollon dragged him unconscious to an empty cell and locked him in with the same master key he had used to release the girl.

Once free of Andrea, they stole a conveyance in another nearby quarter of Fomar. They drove near the Fayden mansion, and once more Ollon entered,

this time with more difficulty and caution. This time, he stole several articles of feminine apparel belonging to the girl Haberley had sent him to kidnap. Once he was certain no one was looking, he dropped the bundle from a window and left the house. Picking up the bundle of clothing, he hurried across the grounds. He found it necessary to stop twice and quickly toss the clothing into shrubbery while someone passed by him. At the edge of the estate, he reclaimed the barret he had hidden on a previous visit.

With the fugitive from Andrea, Ollon drove to the spot where the space ship had left him. From its place of concealment, he brought out the coffin-like box. In the meantime, Vereta Kraft changed into the clothing he had stolen. He also reclaimed the communicator and the drug.

"All ready, now," he told her. "A sniff of this stuff and you go out like a light."

"And I am to be carried to earth in that—that box?" she asked, shuddering slightly.

"That's it—with the cover close down. Your life forces will be suspended, and until you are delivered to Haberley and revived, you will appear as if you were dead."

"Let me inhale the drug," said the girl resolutely, sitting down on the edge of the padded box. "I am putting all of my trust in you."

"You know why I am doing this," he told her, holding the essence beneath her nose. "You can trust me. Now, take a long, deep breath."

Slowly, she inhaled to her fullest lung capacity and saw the stars above her dancing in a strange pattern of antics just before oblivion swept over her. Carefully and gently, Ollon lowered her body into the long box and fastened down the cover. Then he used the communicator and was soon in conversation with the lurking space ship.

"All is ready. I have the girl. Come and get us."

LESS than an hour later, the space ship of Captain Arnge drifted down like a dark ghost from the night sky, taking Ollon and the long box on board. Then the ship rose and as silently sped away in the direction of a large, green star.

All during the trip back to earth, Ollon reviewed his next moves dependent on Haberley's actions when the space pirate found he had stolen the wrong girl. He knew what his course would be if Haberley's anger should consume him. He would act swiftly and deadly, becoming an invisible fugitive whom the cult alone would be able to trace. Earth grew larger, and they finally reached the outer veil of destruction and were carefully examined before admittance down a heavily-guarded safety lane. Into the domain of Haberley they sped and landed. Once inside the curtain of barrier rays, Captain Arnge had communicated success in their venture, and Haberley was there to meet them.

"Did you have much trouble getting her?" Haberley enthused.

"It was easy," Ollon answered. "She is in the box on the space ship."

Haberley showed surprise as well as elation as Ollon's voice issued from the empty air so close to him.

"Good! Let's go in and take a look at her!" He hurried into the ship and the others followed.

Invisible hands unfastened the top of the box and lifted it slowly back as Haberley leaned eagerly forward for his first glimpse of Alicia Fayden. He stared down at the still figure with the pale features, his expression of anticipation changing to one of surprise. Momentarily, he could not find his voice. He only stared at the face of the girl. Meanwhile, Ollon had noiselessly shifted to a position which brought his hand close above the

butt of Captain Arnge's atom pistol.

"This—this is not the girl!" stammered Haberley. "This is not Alicia Fayden!"

"But it is!" insisted Ollon. "I abducted her from her bedroom while she slept! See what I took from her dressing table!"

He reached into the padded box and drew forth the jewelled barrett. 'Alicia Fayden' done in jewelled script stared Haberley in the face. The space pirate seemed too stunned to be angry. Too often had he seen Alicia Fayden's photograph to be in doubt. Here was some strange mistake which wanted explaining.

"I'll bring her to her senses right now," said Haberley. "We'll get to the bottom of this and find out who she is."

CHAPTER V

"There'll Be No Mistake This Time"

THE tension had eased up. Ollon did not doubt but what the glib tongue of the daring Vereta Kraft would be equal to Haberley's pressing queries. If she only came out of the sleep with her full senses. That caused him an uneasy thought. He still remained near Captain Arnge and the latter's atom pistol. Haberley quickly administered the neecssary stimulus to arouse the girl, and they waited several minutes as the color flowed back into the girl's features and she stirred slightly. While all eyes were on the girl, the restorative which Haberley had absently laid on a table behind him apparently floated off to a concealed position. Ollon wanted it. He returned noiselessly to his former stand beside Captain Arnge.

Vereta Kraft opened her eyes and looked up at the unfamiliar faces is perplexity. She seemed to grasp the situation suddenly, but this was understood only by Ollon. Surprise and apprehension were writ clearly upon her face as she struggled into a sitting position. She was in command of herself, the actress Ollon expected her to be.

"Oh—I didn't mean it!" she cried out. "I—I just laid down here and fell asleep!"

"What do you mean?" growled Haberley impatiently. "Who are you, anyhow?"

She looked at the box in which she was sitting, then looked back at Haberley in bewilderment.

"Where am I?" she asked. "I thought that—"

"You've been stolen from Mars and brought here to the earth," Haberley told her in rising exasperation. "Who are you?"

"I am Anna Douglas, Alicia Fayden's personal maid."

"Her maid!" barked Haberley in sour tones. "You've gone and got me her maid!"

His eyes roved questingly for some sign of Ollon. The latter's voice came from over near Captain Arnge. His face was free. Only his voice simulated the surprise he did not feel.

"How was I to know? It was the Fayden mansion. It was the girl's room—and she lay asleep on the bed. I never saw Alicia Fayden before."

"Yes, I guess it was no fault of yours. I should have shown you photographs."

"What about this one?" Captain Arnge jerked a thumb at Vereta Kraft who had risen and stepped out of the coffin-like receptacle.

It was the cue which Ollon impatiently awaited.

"Let me have her for my woman, and I shall go back and get you Alicia Fayden. There shall be no mistake again."

"But you cannot go there again and expect to be successful since this maid of hers has been kidnapped right out of the house," Captain Arnge argued.

"Why not?" Ollon demanded. "No one there knows that she was stolen. She is gone, and the barrett disappeared at the

same time. What does that look like?"

"Why, of course!" Haberley warmed to the idea. "Robbery!"

"I have reports for the cult," Ollon volunteered. "Shall I deliver them, or shall I wait until after I return again?"

"Wait until you come back, by all means," Haberley insisted. "This is no pressing matter but what the Asurians may wait."

"And the woman is mine?"

Haberley regarded the wide-eyed girl and appeared thoughtful.

"Why, of course you may have her, and she shall be well earned if you can bring me Alicia Fayden as easily as you brought her."

VERETA KRAFT gave a startled cry as Ollon's invisible hand closed on her arm. He led her out of the space ship and to the mansion. That night, Ollon and the girl left Haberley's headquarters, the girl wearing a dark cloak with a hood. Ollon had been granted freedom to come and go while the ship was being prepared for another trip into space at daybreak.

It was at an hour well into the night when Ollon and the black-cloaked girl returned to Haberley's mansion. They did not enter the house, however. The girl was sharply challenged by a guard at the space ship hangar until Ollon spoke and gripped the arm of the surprised guard. They were then allowed entrance to the space ship which was ready for another start at daybreak.

They did not come back out right away, and a few hours later the guard was changed.

Next morning, Haberley was down to see them off, giving last minute orders to Captain Arnge and to Ollon.

"Where is she who you so promptly took for your own?" he asked of Ollon with a laugh.

"Asleep, I guess." Ollon nodded carelessly in the direction of the mansion. "Keep her for my return."

"Good luck to you. This time you should return more quickly, for there is no business of the cult's to be done."

The space ship rose and sped through the atmosphere, heading for the nearest space lock a full three hundred miles away. Reaching this, they rose into space and headed for the dull red point of Mars. Like the other crossings, they found the trip uneventful.

Meanwhile, during the days of their crossing from world to world, strange happenings were taking place which would have interested Ollon could he have been in several places at once in order to watch them.

"Father—look!"

Alicia Fayden waved a piece of paper at her father in breathless excitement.

"What is it, my dear?"

"Read it!"

Engerhardt Fayden examined the writing. It was brief and to the point.

'Be on your guard. Space pirates from the earth are trying to kidnap you. They have even sent an invisible man created so by the Durna Rangue. I am that man, but I am your friend and have plans of my own. I am sorry I must take your barrett to further these plans.

Invisible One'

"Where did you find this?"

"Between the leaves of my diary under today's date."

In Fomar at the headquarters of the Interplanetary Guard, a sheaf of paper was thrust before the attention of Commander Jan Prentice.

"What are these?" he asked.

"Read and see. There is a wealth of information regarding the cult and the earth. Most of the safety lanes, which are heavily guarded, are located and described—and it is the same in regards to the generator towers which supply power

for the barrier rays blanketing the earth. There is also much other nondescript information in haphazard order, some of it of little value, things we already know, and there's information we have wanted to know for a long time."

"Where did this come from?"

"From our own archives."

"Our own archives? What do you mean?"

"I mean that these papers were placed among our records so that they would be found today."

"But no one except our own trusted men are allowed there. They would not go to all this mysterious means. Besides, how could they possibly know about all this?"

"It was someone invisible—an invisible neophyte of the cult, I would say, a neophyte who came here to spy on us but for some reason or other elected to betray the cult instead. The information is signed 'Invisible One.'"

AT THE hospital in Benton, a nurse faced her superior matron.

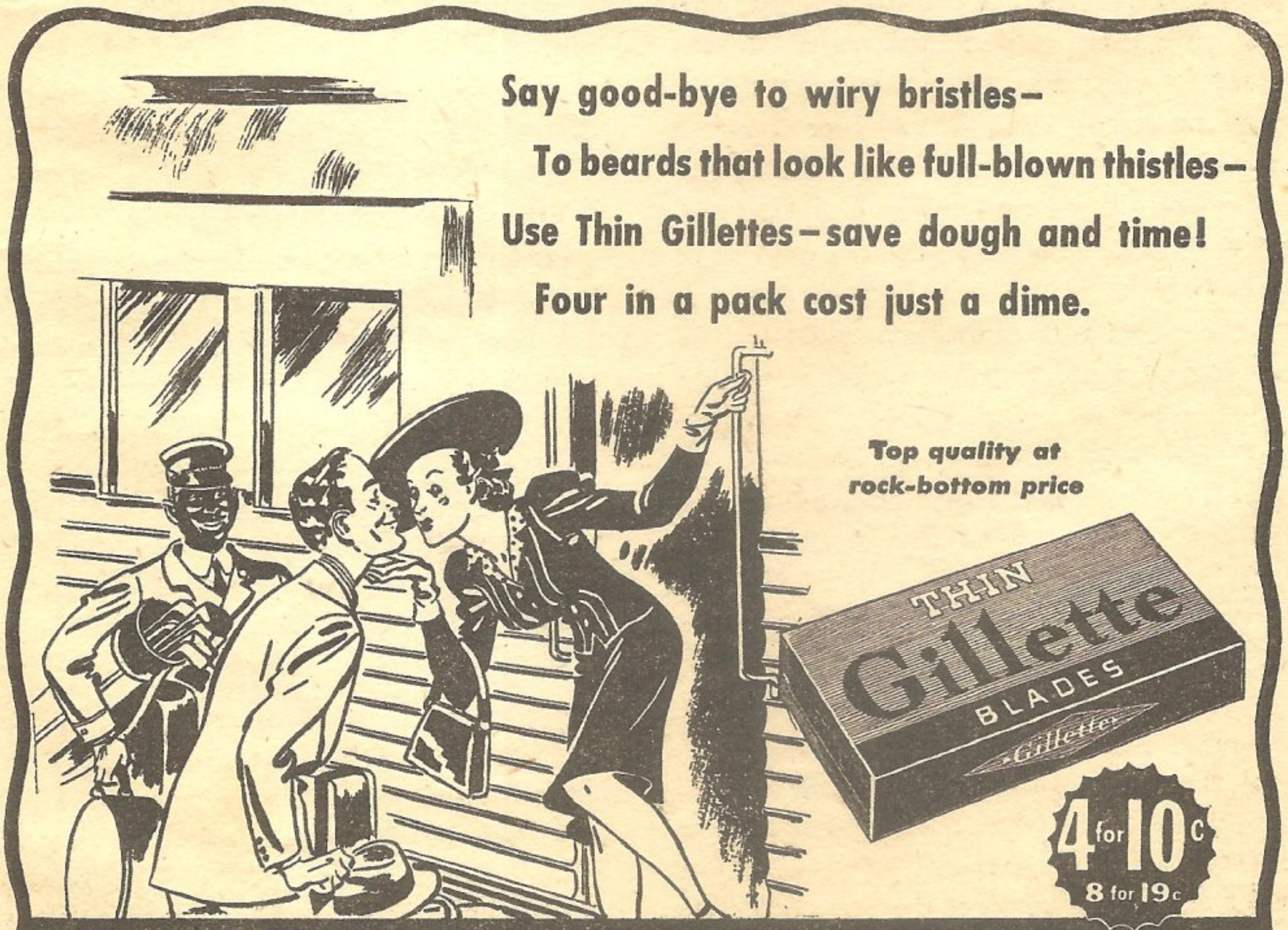
"But I tell you it is so. Come and see for yourself. The girl has changed during the past two days. She looks different. She did not seem to be the same yesterday, but I am new in this part of the hospital, and at first her changed appearance only puzzled me. She is healthy and shows no trace of her former injury. She insists to me, however, that she is Moira Presby."

"I shall investigate at once. She may be a case of multiple personality, or split personality. Such cases are exceedingly rare."

Both nurses entered the chamber where Moira Presby had spent several weeks. At once, the matron realized that the girl sitting up in bed was a stranger. There was a quiet, determined air about her, as if she had been expecting them.

"Who are you?" demanded the matron.

"Where is Moira?"



"I do not know where she is," was the calm reply. "As for me, I am Vereta Kraft, sentenced to life imprisonment for murder. I have merely changed my cell in Andrea for a hospital berth, temporarily. Now, call Haberley, if you will!"

Beyond the outskirts of Fomar, a space ship drifted down through the night, settling silently to the ground. From it emerged several men. One of them carried a long box in a strange manner. It seemed as though one end of the box hung miraculously suspended against gravity. Captain Arnge turned to where he thought Ollon Presby was standing and issued final instructions.

"Hide the box. When you get the girl Haberley wants back here, send for us over the communicator. Be patient and wait if we do not answer at once. This time, make no mistake!"

"There'll be no mistake this time."

Ollon's voice was quite positive on the matter. He watched the pirates file into their ship, saw it rise and waited impatiently for it to disappear among the stars. Then he dragged the long box beneath the protection of several trees. Feverishly, he unfastened and threw back the lid. A woman lay inside, quiet and pale as if she were dead. Beside her in the box lay the stimulant Haberley had used in reviving Vereta Kraft. Quickly, Ollon administered it. Minutes seemed an endless age.

A flush of life appeared in the white cheeks. Not until evidences of returning consciousness reassured Ollon did he lift the black-cloaked figure to a sitting posture. He pushed away the dark hood, releasing shimmering tresses of dark hair. Puzzled eyes opened and stared blankly a moment.

"Ollon! Ollon! Where are you?"

"Here, Moira! We are free, dearest! We have escaped to Mars! My plan—my desperate plan—worked! It all seems like a dream!"

He kissed her warm lips, and she clung to him although she was able to see the dazzling stars in the heavens where his head should have blotted them out. Slowly, he drew her from the long box until she stood against him within his encircling arms.

"It does seem like a dream, Ollon, and yet I know you are here. How happy I am."

"We are free—on a free world," said Ollon. "I have only one regret, Moira."

"What is it?"

"You shall never see me again."

She clung tighter as she answered.

"It does not matter, for I shall always know you as I remember seeing you, and you shall never grow old in my memory."

THE END

THE SCIENCE FICTIONEER

—was crowded out of this issue by the unusually long stories. It will be back in the next issue, bigger than ever.

Some of the material scheduled to appear in it, however, simply can't wait. One such item is a notice of the coming Chicago Science Fiction Convention, 1940, a condensation of which follows:

As most fans know, a science fiction convention is held once every year. This year the sponsoring city is Chicago, and the date set is September 1st.

At the convention will be many prominent science fiction personages. Topics of interest to all science fiction readers will be discussed, auctions of specially prepared or otherwise rare books, magazines, illustrations, etc., will be held to give each person attending a chance to make valuable additions to his collection, and, as a fitting climax to the convention, an official science fiction banquet will be held.

All fans are invited to attend. Those who live outside of Chicago are suggested to communicate with Richard I. Meyer, 3156 Cambridge Avenue, Chicago, Illinoise, or with their local science fiction club, for details of possible group trips.

THE INVASION

By ROBERT WILLEY

Man tried with all his ingenuity, but the strange ships would not answer his signals. So they had to be destroyed. . . .

WALTER HARLING watched the soldiers as they fed a clip of long and dangerous looking cartridges into the magazine of the anti-aircraft gun. The thin, multiple barrels pointed almost vertically into the air and toward the foliage of large and beautiful trees that hid them from sight of enemy aircraft. At their muzzles these long barrels carried drum-like clumsy looking contraptions, Schneider recoil brakes that diverted the flow of the gases resulting from the explosion of the cartridges in such a way that counter recoil balanced original recoil and held the guns steady.

Tightly fitting rubber lined metal lids covered the outer muzzles of the recoil brakes. Rain water must not flow into the barrel else nobody could guarantee what

would happen if the guns were to be used suddenly. It was raining hard, as it had rained for many hours. And although it was not even late in the afternoon it was almost completely dark. One could just distinguish the nearest trees and the guns in the damp dark air.

The battery was in position not far from the road. On the other side of it, on a clearing that had been a famous camping ground in this forest—one of the nation's most beautiful National Forests—stood a battery of eight inch howitzers. They were firing rhythmically. Walter Harling had watched them for quite some time only an hour ago. Every fourteen minutes the heavy barrel of one of the guns would jerk back under the vicious recoil of the exploding charge. The other three guns would follow suit, each one firing exactly twelve seconds after the preceding shot had been fired. Then there would be quiet again for fourteen minutes. The elevation of the thick barrels showed that the howitzers were shooting at extreme range.

Walter Harling would not have noticed it without being told that all this looked like real war only to civilian eyes; indeed he did not believe it at first when he was told. But then he began to see it, too. The howitzers fired without flash destroyer . . . and the soldiers did not behave as they would have done if counter shelling would have been expected. The soldiers were sweating, working hard, pounding away at a distant target with the greatest fire rapidity of which their guns were capable. But they did not have to listen for the sound of approaching enemy shells. They never got a "strafing" without due warning.

THERE was incessant rumble of artillery fire through the famous forest that was now dripping with rain. Many other batteries of heavy howitzers were shooting too, all firing beautifully synchronized so that there was never a longer interval than fifteen seconds without at least one shell in the air. It sounded almost like the thundering noise of some gigantic machinery, running noisily but steadily.

Suddenly shouts came through the rain, cutting through the artillery noise that almost seemed part of the rainy forest in its monotony.

"Anti-aircraft units, attention! Enemy ship approaching!"

The crews of the anti-aircraft at once wakened to more intensive life. They grouped around their guns, ready for immediate action, tense with expectation of orders and, possibly, of death.

There were no orders for many minutes. But through the sudden silence that seemingly followed the commotion—the howitzers kept shooting clockwork fashion—Harling heard the deep thunder of much heavier guns. He knew there were several twenty-four-inch railroad guns stationed on the only railroad track that passed near the edge of the National Forest.

The heavy, long-range pieces were joining the fire of the howitzers.

The battery commander of the anti-aircraft guns, sitting with the earphones of a special detector on his head amidst piles of cartridges, suddenly yelled a series of numbers. Harling understood the meaning of none of them.

"Utmost fire rapidity. Fire!"

The next few minutes were filled by a holocaust of sound. Four anti-aircraft guns began pumping their shells into the air, forty rounds per minute each. Other batteries did the same. . . . The forest seemed to be full of hidden anti-aircraft units. Harling looked upwards against the rain but it was impossible to see anything except occasional flashes of exploding shells. If the enemy ship passed overhead —as the colonel's detector indicated—it was not visible in the rain clouds.

Suddenly the scene was illuminated by a bright flash, as if at least ten tons of magnesium powder had exploded. Immediately afterward a ruddy glow began to show to the left. Trees were burning. But the glow soon died down. The rain was more effective than the chemical extinguishers that were probably used by the soldiers close to the spot where the bolt had struck. The "enemy" had answered the fire.

An orderly approached Harling.

He saluted, rain dripping from every seam of his uniform.

"The tanks will be on the road in half an hour, sir," he reported. "No car can get through," he added when Harling looked surprised. "After they have finished unloading ammunition you will kindly go back with them. The general is expecting you."

"I'll come," said Harling. He said it rather absent mindedly because his brain was busy with very important thoughts. And soon after the orderly had left he began walking over the rain soaked ground of the forest toward the rutted dirt road.

THE strange war had started only a few months ago, when Earth had been peaceful and humanity too proud of its achievements for a while to think of destruction. And humanity had even believed at the very beginning of this war that it would be the beginning of a new period, more important than the discovery of the Americas a few centuries back.

But it had really started still further back, although not much more than about a decade. There had been a mighty river winding its way through a long chain of valleys, surrounded by gently sloped mountains. Cedars and pines and a dozen other varieties of trees grew there in abundance. It was a large beautiful forest, so beautiful in fact that the government had deemed it wise to make a National Forest out of its most impressive part.

Visitors from all over the country and from quite a number of foreign countries had come to see it. And geologists in summer vacation had worked out its geology, the formations of the valleys and of the river being so interesting to them that the work was really a pleasant hobby. One of the largest valleys had once been an immense lake. Thousands of years ago the river that fed the lake had managed to gnaw a way through a weak spot somewhere in the surrounding mountains and the lake had emptied first into the next valley and finally across a stretch of desert land into the ocean.

At the spot where the original lake had broken through there was still a large waterfall, not very high but carrying a tremendous volume of water. Engineers had looked at this waterfall occasionally, trying to see whether it might be utilized as a source of electric energy. They had always decided to leave it undisturbed. The difference in level was not very impressive and there was as yet not much need for electric power in that part of the country.

Then large quantities of bauxite were found only two dozen miles from the waterfall. Thus there arose a need for electric power and finally the government had decided to harness the water power of the river. The reports of the geologists had enabled the technicians to figure out what should be done. The ancient pass, once destroyed by the flow of water from the original lake should be restored, the lake re-created. Then there would be enough electric power for the aluminum industry and still enough water left to irrigate the rather dry areas near the bauxite mines by means of a canal that could at the same time be used to ship ore and aluminum to more densely populated areas of the country.

It was not even very difficult to do all

this with the new methods of building developed in similar tasks. While investigations were made the project grew. And when the dam was finally built it was the last word in dam engineering, revolutionary in construction. As the water in the valley rose sections could be added to the dam, held in place by the pressure of the water they confined. Walter Harling, in whose energy and inventive talent the government had trusted when he had competed with many others for the construction of the dam was the soul and the brain of the work. And together with the dam rose his fame. In the end the Bureau of Reclamation could proudly state through its public relations office that there was no bigger artificial lake on Earth, and none that was as beautiful and as beneficial as this one. Needless to say that there was also no more modern power plant on Earth and none that had its capacity.

Nothing ever went wrong with this power plant. No matter how the demands of the aluminum works grew, it quietly and efficiently supplied the millions of kilowatt hours needed. In the office of the Treasury nothing but unspoiled pleasure prevailed whenever Harling Dam was mentioned. It was one of the rare things that were perfect even in the eyes of the accounting department. The worst that happened in three and a half years of successful operation was that somebody managed to steal ninety thousand kilowatt hours before he was caught.

TROUBLE came suddenly and completely one night in spring when the engineers that were sitting quietly and contentedly watching rows of gauges had the feeling of satisfaction that results from an ideal job in ideal surroundings. They felt—and would have said so if they had been asked—that they were living on a perfect planet just at the right time.

Suddenly the needles of the gauges behaved insanely. Those that ought remain at zero showed unbelievable overloads. Others dropped to zero and behaved as if they were desperately trying to indicate negative values. Dozens of warning lights blinked crazily. Almost every warning bell began to ring . . . but not even the noise they made was quite normal, they were ringing sputteringly, in an odd staccato rhythm electric bells are normally not able to produce. The radio that had given forth soft music began to emit sounds that might be a bad imitation of the noise of an artillery barrage.

Telephones were ringing—the same staccato peals, as those of the warning bells—and when the men took the receivers and listened they heard the same thundering noise that came out of the radio's loudspeaker.

As suddenly as it had come it all stopped. The needles of the gauges returned to their normal positions—still quivering a little as if with excitement—the warning bells and the telephones were silent, the warning lights disappeared and the radio resumed the first movement of the Moonlight Sonata. The engineers looked at each other, nobody said a word because everybody wanted to offer a theory in explanation and nobody could think of one.

Before they had even found time to utter preliminary remarks the disturbance repeated itself in every detail. But this time the men saw something that they believed to be the cause of these strange happenings. Three dirigibles were cruising at low speed over the forests, headed for the dam and the power house. Then the men saw that they were not dirigibles, but not airplanes either. It was easy to see in the bright light of the full moon that they were entirely different. They looked somewhat like the fuselage of a large airplane.

Their general shape was that of elongated teardrops with circular cross sec-

tion throughout, tapering to a needle sharp point. But although the men could see the metal plates that formed the hulls of the ships—they were somewhat scarred and damaged, and although they could count the rows of elliptical portholes, they saw nothing that might support or propel the three ships of the sky. There were no motors, no propellors, not even wings or tail surfaces. Just unsupported beautiful looking hulls, as large as small ocean liners. Occasionally something that looked like luminous spirals appeared near the tail, but it came and went so quickly that the men could not be certain about their observations.

The three ships settled to the ground only about a thousand feet from the power house, coming down as slowly and as gently as airships although they certainly had no gas bags to make them buoyant in air. Most of the men were at the windows now, watching them. They could not see any national insignia, but they assumed these ships to belong to the army of their own nation since there was no reason for an invasion by an enemy. Besides such invasion would certainly have looked different. Those of the men that had stayed at the gauge panels saw to their utmost surprise that the power output of their power plant began to drop steadily. In less than 30 seconds it had reached zero. A few fuses blew out, for no apparent reason. But the gauges also showed that the turbines and dynamos were still running full speed! It was as if somebody stole all this power before it reached the transmission cables.

PHILLIPS, the chief engineer of the power house, who happened to be on night shift decided to have a closer look at the three ships. He and a number of the others went to the flat roof. The ships were still on the ground when the men arrived on the roof but it seemed that they had drawn closer in the meantime. They were now hardly more than 500 feet from the power house. And then another incredible thing happened, the three ships began to disappear in the ground. It was not a very soft ground, it could even bear the weight of a car, but it was by no means rocks. And the three ships began to sink down in it as if they were solid and made of lead. When the upper part of their hulls was about even with the surrounding surface they stopped sinking.

Then one of the men made a mistake. There were clouds coming up, obscuring the bright disk of the moon. It became hard to see the incredible ships that had many portholes, not one of them illuminated.

"The searchlights," the man said.

Phillips, the chief engineer, trained the searchlight upon the ships himself. Then somebody closed a switch and the beam of the searchlight illuminated one of the ships brightly. Something like a bright flash answered. It struck first one of the steel masts supporting the heavy high tension cables. The mast broke into splinters like a scratched Prince Ruperts Drop. Then the beam struck the power house. And a tenth of a second later every bug and moth sitting on the stones of the walls, every bird and lizard living in the vines that clung to the walls and, of course, every human being inside the house and on the roof were dead.

THE next day airplanes came to investigate. The failing of the power had made itself noticeable for hundreds of miles. The fact that no telephone call came from the power plant and that no call could get through was noticed much farther. Therefore airplanes had been dispatched as swiftest means of investigation. People imagined Harling Dam broken and every soul in the valley drowned. But the pilots of the airplanes that circled over the valleys saw the dam intact and

in place. However, they saw a few other things that were unusual. One of the masts was missing, the power cables it had supported were cut and led to three strange things like metal dirigibles, each three quarters buried in the ground.

These planes did not come back and when they failed to answer radio calls other planes were dispatched. One of them returned, reporting that the other had suddenly broken to pieces in midair when bright flashes from the ground caught them both.

This report stopped further private flying to Harling Dam. The Army took charge of the situation. And three days later quite a bit of information had been gathered . . . while a number of batteries of heavy artillery had arrived in the forest without anybody knowing it.

There were heated discussions at the high commands office.

The facts were clear. But they could not be explained.

Three airships of unknown construction had occupied the nation's largest power plant. They left it running, using the current generated for their own unknown purposes. Airplanes that tried to attack them were doomed, the invaders had an unknown but deadly accurate weapon. But it did not affect all types of planes alike, some had escaped. They were not undamaged but had managed to glide away from the danger zone.

It was found that their motors and some other implements had disappeared, save for a few handfuls of bits of metal found in the casing. Somebody discovered accidentally that these bits were highly magnetized. Somebody else realized that the planes that escaped were those built of other metals than steel. The conclusion was obvious, that the white beam from the three ships destroyed iron and steel. Possibly by setting up such magnetic strains and stresses that the material broke to pieces—although the theory of ferromagnetism could not explain such a procedure —possibly by entirely unknown means that brought magnetization only as a by-product.

The ground investigation units dispatched by the army reported other strange facts. There seemed to be a zone where life could not exist. This zone was roughly circular—as far as could be found—with the ships as the center of the circle. The zone extended just beyond Harling Dam. Whoever crossed the invisible border line of the zone just dropped dead, nobody could tell why. The soldiers had marked the danger line as well as they could.

Another crew had tried to establish communication by heliograph with the three ships, because they did not answer radio calls. They had answered the call with a bright flash that wiped out crew, heliograph and car alike. Obviously bright light was disliked by the occupants of the three ships, or else they confused it with their own destructive beam.

Occasionally one of the three ships rose from its pit and cruised to some other part of the world. They were seen—and if not seen detected by the very typical "staccato static" radios emitted when one of the ships was near—almost everywhere. One day Hongkong reported them, the next day London and Berlin almost simultaneously. Then Buenos Aires and New York with only two and a half hours difference. Nothing ever happened, when airplanes went up to approach them they withdrew to high altitudes where the planes could not follow. Occasionally they flashed what was taken as a mysterious signal, a bright ball of light, that was at first deep violet, changed slowly to blue and more rapidly through all the other colors of the rainbow to red.

IT WAS the astronomer Professor Hasgrave who was the first to say publicly what many had been suspecting for

many days that these three ships were arrivals from another planet, possibly even another solar system.

The military authorities that were in charge of the case laughed about Hasgrave at first. But they had to admit that none of their scientists could really explain the feats accomplished by the strangers, to say nothing of duplicating them. They also had to admit that their secret service had not been able to find even the slightest clue that ships of this type had been built in any other country. They began to admit the possibility of extraterrestrial origin of the strange ships when Hasgrave suddenly found a convincing explanation for the bright ball of light released over several cities.

It was not a weapon, he explained, but a warning. It was the adaptation of an astronomical principle for communication. The ball displayed the Doppler effect, it shifted from blue through all colors to red. In astronomy this indicated the recession of a body. Since the sphere of light had remained motionless it obviously meant that the airplanes should go. The speed with which the colors changed increased during the display, meaning that they should go with increasing speed.

A few days of mental effort made the authorities realize that the three ships were actually visitors from the void. To be exact, they were not really visitors. They had just come and established themselves. They were uncommunicative, in fact warning humans to stay away. They did no harm, if not approached. And they did not take anything away except the current produced in the power plants of Harling Dam. They behaved actually as a human being might behave at a bee hive. Doing no intentional harm, just taking honey away and crushing those bees that disturbed them. But the bees had stings to defend themselves and to avenge the loss of those killed. Humanity had stings too, airplanes and tanks and guns.

Soon men craved for war with the aliens. They had not come as friends, therefore they must be enemies. That they were simply indifferent hurt mankind's pride, they should at least make an attempt to apologize for the loss of life they had caused. Intelligent beings that were able to do all this what they actually did would certainly also be able to communicate if they wanted to. At any event they had opened hostilities and had to be shown that humanity was not afraid to fight.

The general in command of the armed forces finally felt convinced that he should order an artillery attack. There were many heavy batteries massed now in the forest.

The general gave the order.

Six eight-inch shells dropped in a steep trajectory on the three ships.

The battery commanders had had weeks of time to work out all the factors determining the trajectories. Five of the six shells made clean hits . . . but they exploded fifty meters above the targets. The sixth shell strayed a bit from its trajectory, it landed a few meters from the power house, digging a large crater and damaging the building slightly.

Twenty-four hours later the general received a report that a dome of silvery metal had been erected overnight. It covered the power house and a trial shot with a single heavy shell proved that this dome was as impervious to shell fire as the ships themselves. Then the strange war had begun in earnest. But it was one sided for most of the time and absolutely ineffective. The gunners, although they kept up continuous bombardment did not succeed in catching a ship off guard. The strange power that made shells explode at a safe distance did not fail for a moment. The men grew desperate, especially since the ships occasionally retaliated, always taking a heavy toll of lives and of equipment.

Finally Professor Hasgrave conceived a plan. It was his firm conviction that all these strange manifestations of power were basically electric phenomena. There should be a way of dealing with them. The first man Hasgrave informed was Walter Harling, the man who had created Harling Dam that had become the center of all these strange happenings. They then talked to the general, finally to the president. In the end they agreed to try Hasgrave's plan. And Walter Harling at last won the bitter argument that arose . . . he carried it out himself.

THE tank, splashing through rain and mud brought Harling to a simple but fairly large building, the home of the rangers of the forest, now serving as headquarters for the military command. The general was waiting for them.

They were standing in the doorway, looking out on the dark and rainy landscape. None of them spoke, each knew what the other was thinking.

"The equipment is ready," said the general finally.

"So am I," answered Harling.

They shook hands.

"Red rockets," said Harling.

"Red rockets," repeated the general. "Good luck, Harling!"

Officers led Harling along a wet concrete road which ended at the shore of Harling Lake. There was a boat waiting on the water. And a squadron of hydroplanes. Harling heard them take off ten minutes after the motor launch had pulled his rowboat from the shore. When the planes were in the air the rumble of artillery fire died gradually down.

Harling knew what was going on in the forest.

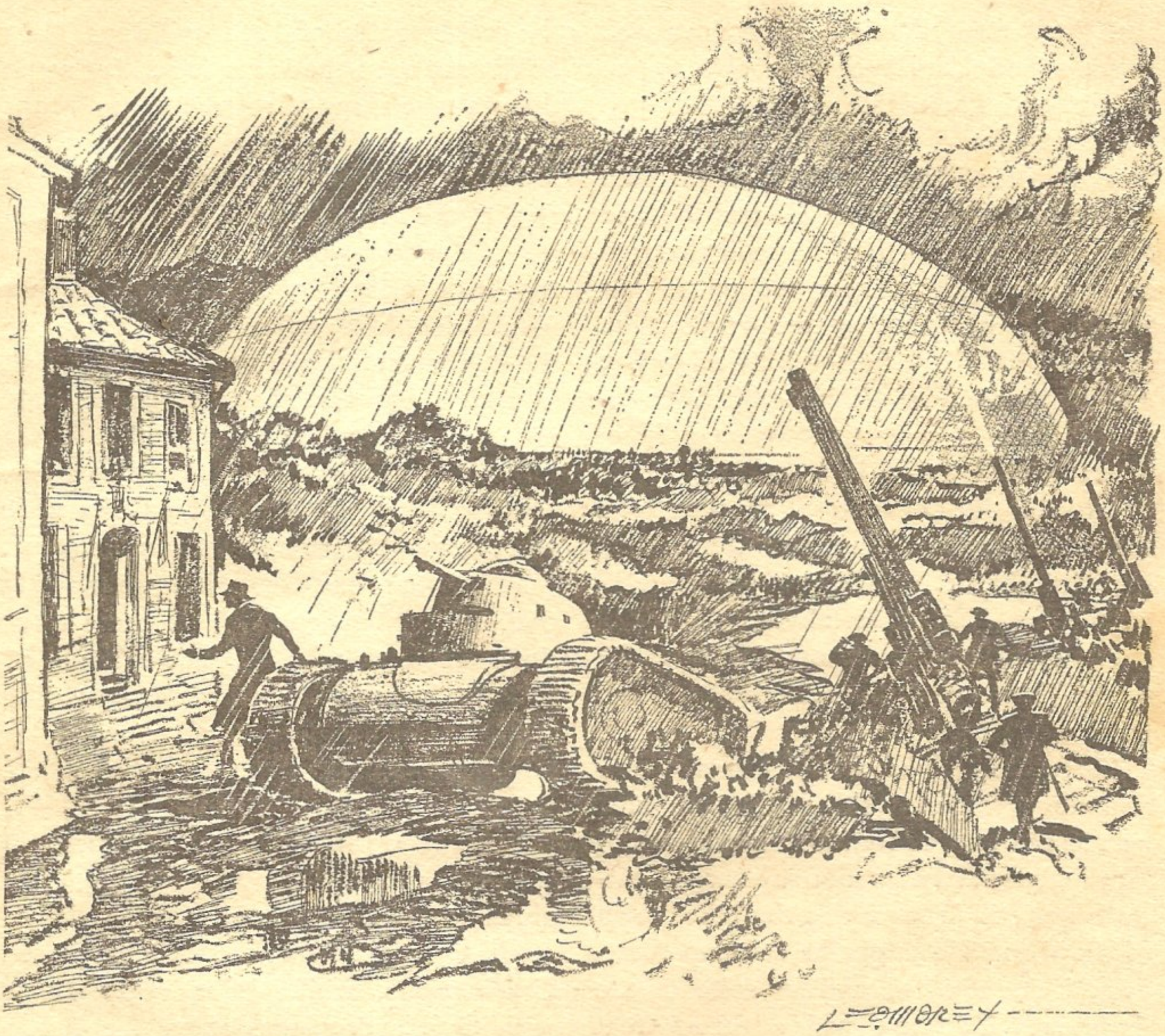
Guns were inspected and made ready to fire at a given signal. Ammunition was piled up close to the guns, ready for immediate use. Automatic gyro-controlled devices aligned the barrels of whole batteries on the targets. The gigantic railroad guns, not able to fire quickly, pointed their barrels in such a way that their super heavy shells would land exactly in the right spot at the right moment. Expertly trained officers worked with slide rules to find the right amount of powder needed for a given trajectory at a certain air pressure, density and temperature.

"Half a mile from the danger zone," said the officer in the motor launch.

"Cut cables!"

"Good luck!"

Harling waited till the motor vessel had disappeared in the rain. Then he inspected his boat. It was built without the tiniest bit of iron. From the sides of the wooden vessel aluminum struts projected upwards, supporting a net of gleaming copper wire. It covered the boat entirely, just high enough for Harling to stand up-



right in it. On all sides the copper net trailed in the water, leaving enough room to handle the oars.

Something like a wide cape of copper wire mesh was ready for Harling. It was supported over his head by struts fastened to a wide aluminum collar. The "cape" was long enough to touch the ground all around his feet in any position Harling might assume—like the net protecting the boat it should be heavy enough to ground even powerful electric bolts. Harling donned the strange garment and rowed toward the valve controls of his dam. Meanwhile the airplanes—all aluminum construction, even the motors that naturally did not last very long—danced like fireflies over the three ships and the metal dome that covered the power house. The planes tried to center the enemy's attention upon themselves.

If he was attentive to their puny actions at all. . . .

WHEN Harling passed the invisible barrier he felt a prickling sensation on his skin. It actually was an electric field of great power, generated and kept up in a manner unknown to terrestrial science. Suddenly the dam appeared out of the darkness, looking like a massive seven foot wall from the lake. Harling followed its curve with his boat. He knew every inch of this dam—but he had no time for sentimental recollections. He prayed that the valve controls were in working order. They were hydraulic and would not be impaired by the electric field.

But the "enemy" might have destroyed them, nobody had ever been able to approach and investigate.

Harling found one of the metal stairways that led from the crown of the dam to the bottom of the lake. He tied the boat to it, made certain that the several dozen of red starlight rockets set up in the copper net were still in proper position. He took the main fuse—electric ignition was, of course, impossible—which was inserted into a watertight rubber hose. There were matches in a watertight case tied to the end of the hose. Harling took the end of the main fuse with him. Then he lifted the net of the boat and stepped on the metal staircase, always careful to have his wire mesh armor trailing in the water. He waited for electrical effects, there were none.

Fortunately there was a catwalk running along the inner side of the dam, now submerged under about four feet of water. Harling decided that the submerged catwalk was still better a way than the crown of the dam. He might be seen up there, even if he crawled and in spite of the darkness. Hasgrave had a theory that "those others" might be able to "see" the heat his body radiated.

He held match case and rubber hose in his left hand, heavy service pistol in the other, nobody could know what he might encounter in the valve house. The door was not closed when he arrived there at last. The body of a dead man blocked his way, the guard that had been on duty when the invaders came. There was no living being in the four rooms. He looked over the controls, nobody had touched them for weeks and they seemed to be in working order. He tried one of the smallest valves experimentally . . . it did work. He could go through with the original plan.

He opened the match case. The matches were dry.

Then he turned the wheels that opened the upper gates of both spillways. But he did not open the lower locks that made the water coming through the spillways pour into the canal. The water would fill both of the gigantic spillways and would stop at the lower lock. If this lock would give the water would not enter the canal that was closer by a second lock but would flood the valley itself. Therefore the mechanisms were set once and for all in such a way that the lower locks could not be operated independently. They could only be opened and closed together. Harling left them all closed as they were according to the instruments on the panel.

He waited for three minutes, knowing that everything depended on these three times sixty seconds. A hundred times he thought during the next hundred and fifty seconds that his watch had stopped. A hundred times he made sure that it had not.

Everywhere in the forest the officers of the gun crews were waiting too, eyes glued to the dials of the watches, hands ready to pull the lanyards of their pieces. Crack pilots, while doing crazy stunts with their hydroplanes above the quietly resting three alien ships glanced at the crown of the dam.

Two minutes and forty seconds.

Countless tons of water were falling down the steep grading of the tubular spillways.

Two minutes and forty-five seconds.

More and more water going into the spillways. The level of the lake actually receding by inches, unobservable due to the beating rain.

Two minutes and fifty seconds.

The water must reach the lower locks in twenty seconds. Three seconds . . . one had to allow for the fuse to burn, one or two for the rockets, four more for. . . .

Two minutes and fifty-five seconds.

Harling lighted six or seven matches in a bundle, held the rubber hose clenched.

Three minutes!

NOW two more seconds to wait. Harling counted them with a strained voice counting not "one, two" but higher figures that would take a second to pronounce.

"A hundred and one". . ."A hundred and two". . .

He lighted the fuse, let it fall to the floor and threw himself down.

Three seconds later five dozens of army rockets rose into the sky, though wet most of them worked. They fought their way through the rain. . . . Harling thought that the resistance of the rain was very fortunate, else they might explode in the deep hanging clouds and go unnoticed.

The sky suddenly shone red with Very Lights.

Like a mighty thunderclap four score guns answered, barrels jerking back under the recoil, reports deafening crews, shells screaming through the rain.

The shells of the howitzers arrived first, exploding over their usual targets, ships and dome. A second later the twenty-four inch projectiles of the railroad guns came. They were aimed with deadly accuracy. Two on each side of the valley arrived side by side. . . .

And broke the lower locks!

A flood of water spouted out of the spillways, spread over the valley because the seconds locks, those closing the canal, still blocked the way. The same instant the shells of two combined batteries of seventeen inch mobile mortars crashed into the dam—where sections joined that were not so stable now under lessening water pressure. Harling Dam broke, thundered down into the valley.

It poured over the dome and the ships. And together with the water came all the shells the already steaming barrels of dozens of batteries of heavy howitzers had held in reserve.

And Professor Hasgrave proved to be right again. The repellent shield on which shells and bombs had exploded was gone, somehow the water made its power fail. The avalanche of heavy shells exploded on the hulls and inside of their targets. The targets ceased to exist. . . .

The general himself was present in the rescue party that climbed up to the valve tower in search for Harling. They did not have a very clear conception what they had expected to see . . . at any event it was not what they really saw.

Harling was sitting with only very little clothing—the other hung over the rail to dry—in the rays of the early morning sun at the only table in the control room. He was furiously writing equations on the back of beer advertising posters. And instead of listening to congratulations he informed the rescue party that Harling Dam could be ready to resume work before Spring.

THE END

What Was Hitler's Real Secret Weapon?

If you read it in fiction, you would not believe it to be within the realms of possibility. Educators throughout the world laughed when they heard it—but they laugh no more! Here is the fabulous truth: Adolf Hitler discovered his secret weapon —in the ancient science of Astrology! . . .

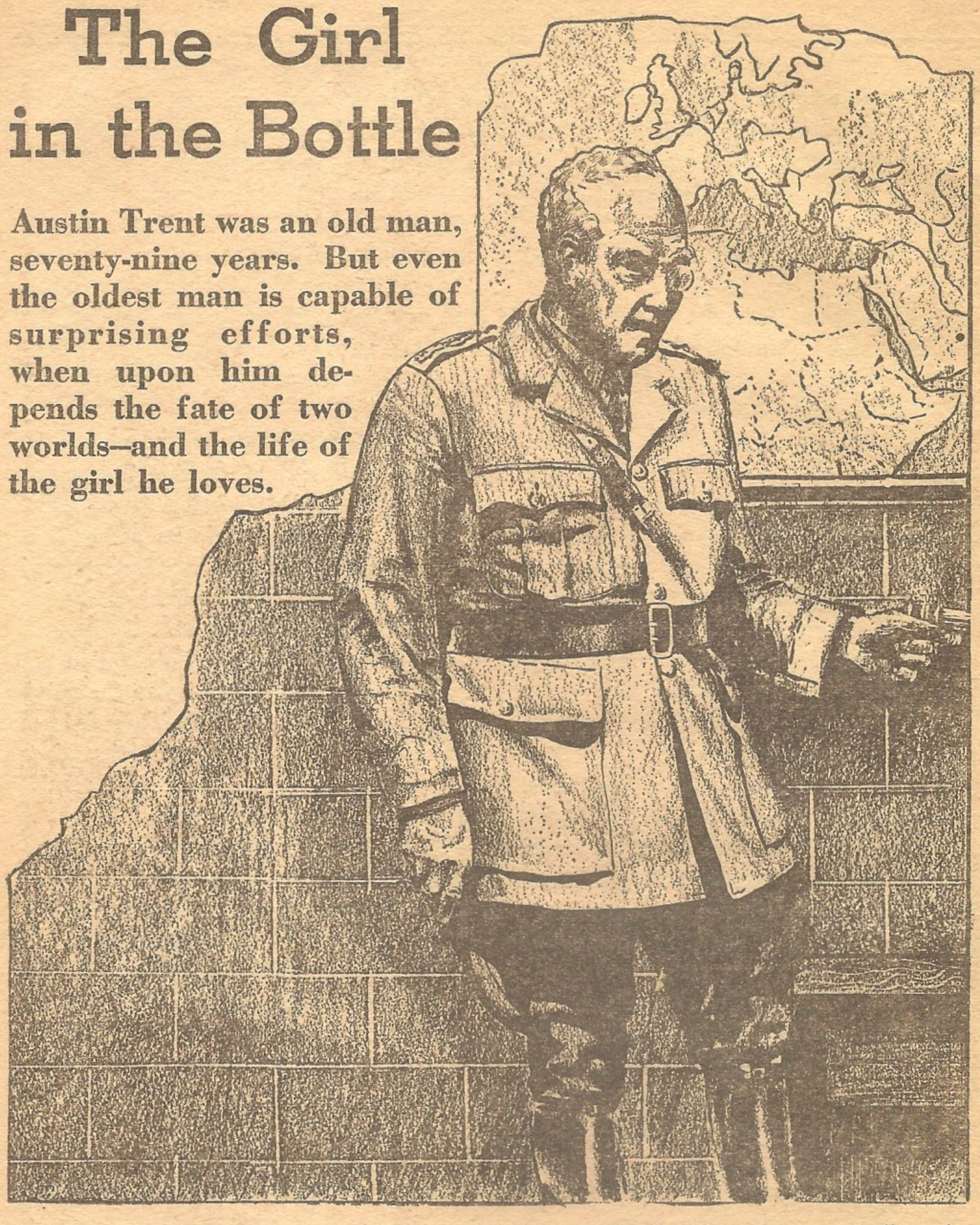
How did astrology help Hitler? How can astrology help *you?* Read HITLER'S ASTROLOGICAL TRICKS in the SEPTEMBER issue of

10¢ NEW *Your Personal Forecast*
ASTROLOGY

On All Newsstands August 10th

The Girl in the Bottle

Austin Trent was an old man, seventy-nine years. But even the oldest man is capable of surprising efforts, when upon him depends the fate of two worlds—and the life of the girl he loves.



CHAPTER I

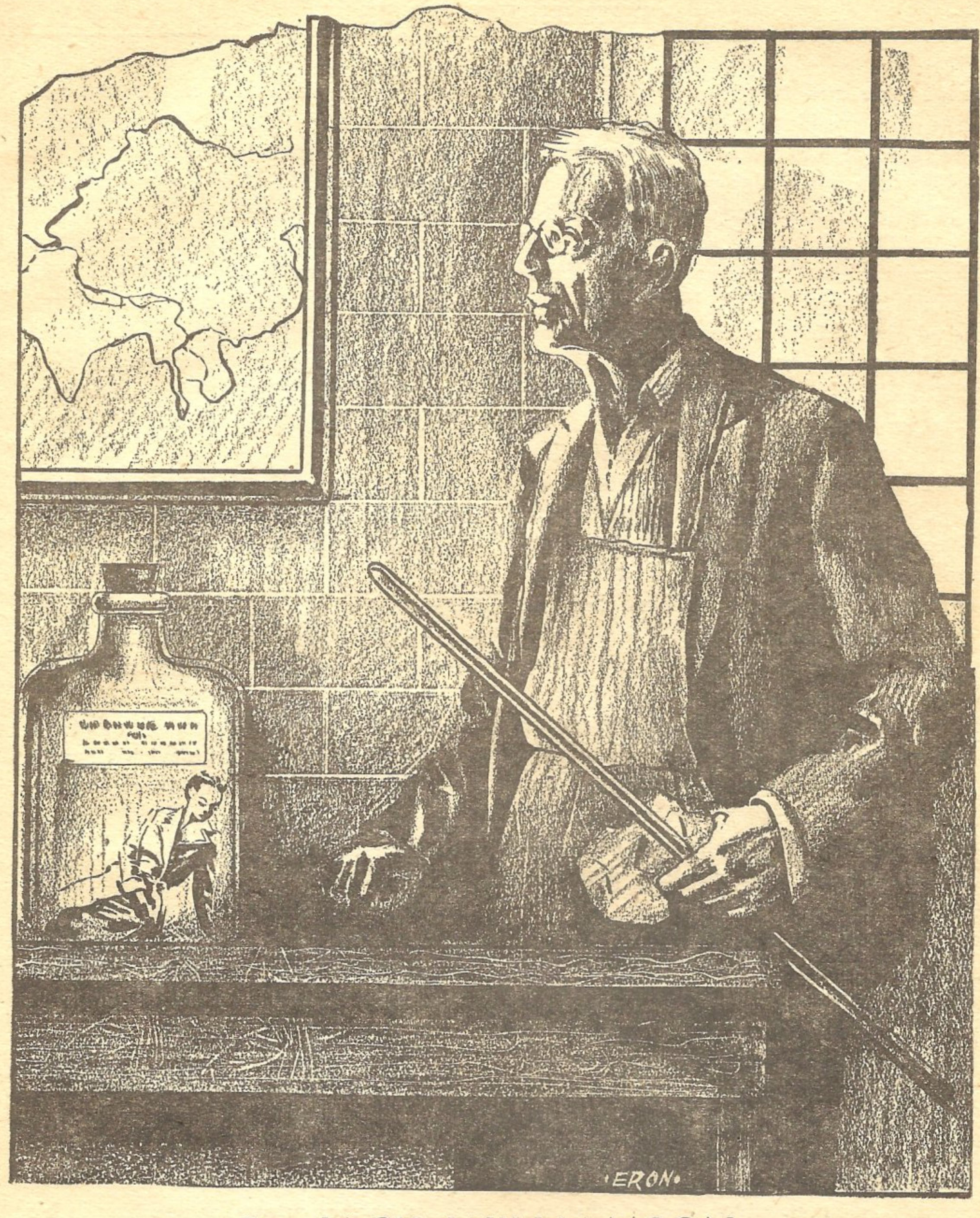
The Copper Box

THE freight car was cold. The dank mists of the winter-bound lowlands seeped through every crack. Dressed in the shoddy rags of a German laborer, Trent shivered on his hard bed of copper bars.

At the border there was an endless delay. Frontier guards opened the car. Biting his tongue to silence his teeth, Trent crouched behind the stacked ingots. A flashlight flickered, and his heart stopped.

"Ja, ja, das kupfer."

The door slammed again. At last the train lurched ahead. Through a knothole that he had carefully enlarged, Trent



By JACK WILLIAMSON

tried to follow the route of the car. The black-out, however, left him few hints.

After midnight, the car was slammed and bunted about some vast dim-lit railroad yard—probably, he supposed, at Cologne. Before dawn it was coupled into another train.

Listening to the click of wheels on steel, to the labored chuffing of the engine and the shriek of the whistle, Trent began to wonder if he would ever hear anything else. For the cold was a deadly drug.

He was bruised in the lurching car, but the cold numbed his pain. He forgot

his hunger and thirst and fatigue. Perhaps the President was right. Perhaps seventy-nine was the time to give up.

But not until his job was done.

The icy dawn came, and he was still alive. The winter sky was lowering, and the train climbed through woods of bare-limbed oak and beech into white-powdered fir. Above a river's broad bend, he glimpsed red sandstone bluffs.

The Rhine, he knew; this must be the Schwarzwald.

The car was set out on a snowy siding. Another locomotive slammed into it, reversed, and pulled it up a spur track. Trent glimpsed barbed wire fences, a concealed machine gun pillbox, a brush-camouflaged anti-aircraft gun. Then darkness covered his peephole.

The track had run underground.

But into no common tunnel. There was light again—the gleam of electrics on a forest of steel pillars that supported a vast roof, on dark looming masses of machinery. Amazement stiffened Trent's shivering body. Here, beneath the Black Forest, was a huge modern industrial plant!

What could be its purpose?

His cold-drugged brain groped in vain for the answer.

The engine puffed away. A squad of workmen approached, pushing barrows. The door rattled open. Grimy half-naked men began passing out the heavy bars. Trent stripped to the waist in the darkness. Already he was hungry and grimy enough. He stumbled out of the car, straining to the weight of a long ingot.

Yes, the President had been right—seventy-nine was old. Blind and reeling, Trent leaned against the end of the car. Sharp pain stabbed his chest. Slowly, his breath came back.

Beyond, against the gray concrete wall, he saw a wooden tool locker. The door was swinging open. He walked to it briskly, as if on some errand. Gasping again, in the darkness, he peered out.

One false step—a single curious glance—might betray him to the bullets of the *Gestapo*. But he had to learn what was becoming of the copper.

The wire bars were being re-melted, he saw, and cast into larger ingots. These, apparently, were being worked in a huge rolling mill beyond. But still he could not see the destination of the copper. Perhaps the answer awaited him somewhere at the other end of this vast underground plant.

Trent held his breath when a little limping man with broom and dust pan approached the locker. His tense body trembled. One shout of alarm would destroy him. He groped for the tiny weapon that was one of the useful implements he wore in the belt under his rags.

But the little janitor seemed too tired to be observant. He dropped his equipment in the corner of the dark locker, hung up his soiled apron, and limped wearily away, sighing:

"*Ach,* Hitler!"

Trent put on the apron, took up broom and dust pan. He waited five minutes, and limped out of the locker in the other direction—toward the rolling mill and whatever mystery lay beyond.

SOMETIMES Trent thought of himself as an actor. Certainly he had played many roles, as exacting as any of the stage. Now, he knew, death hung waiting as the penalty for one flaw in his unrehearsed performance.

But he had not expected a safe job when he'd volunteered to find out what became of the American electrolytic copper so mysteriously purchased and smuggled through the British blockade into Germany. The Reich would be sure to resent intrusion upon such a closely-guarded secret as this—perhaps the secret of another of their surprise weapons, up-

on which the entire fate of a campaign of the war might depend. It would be worth it, though, to come once more to grips with his old adversary, von Schlegel. Nor did he regret the cramps remaining in his seventy-nine year old bones from the long journey, when he dared not venture for a single second from his hiding place in the copper car.

He limped down through the forest of pillars. It wouldn't do for the little janitor to appear too interested in his surroundings—that was one false note which could mean death. But he managed to see the electric trucks that carried the massive copper plates from the mill. He heard the ring of pneumatic hammers beyond. And at last he saw—

The copper box!

On a massive concrete foundation, it loomed before him. He stared, gasping with puzzled astonishment. It was simply a cube-shaped copper box, made of great, riveted copper plates. But it rose forty feet high, almost to the smoke-darkened concrete roof.

Workmen with the ringing hammers were still driving rivets into the lid. His role forgotten, Trent gazed up at the immense copper hinges, the mighty lock. What could be the possible use of a copper box large enough to hold a four-story house?

He recovered himself, and resumed the janitor's limp. His eyes flashed about, seeking some explanation of the box. And he saw something else that was equally startling.

Beyond the immense box, a painted wooden partition enclosed an office space against the concrete wall. Window-openings and roof were covered with steel grilles. Painted on the door was the legend that stopped Trent's heart:

Herr Doktor von Schlegel—Privat

It was a little time before Trent could breathe. His thin brown hands were trembling. He felt a numb prickling over all his tired grimy body. And the pain reminded him that an old man must be careful of his heart.

But he got his breath again, and remembered that the little janitor must limp on. An eager elation rose in him. The President's assignment had led him straight to the Prussian agent, after all.

Trent tried to keep the joyous grin off his tired wrinkled face. But he was going to have his chance—the last chance he ever wanted at anything in all his life—to stop whatever new plot von Schlegel's twisted scientific brain now directed at peace and democracy.

Instantly, he made up his mind to enter the office. It was dark, probably empty. He knew the risk attached. But no risk was too great now.

The door was locked. But Trent had learned long ago how to deal with locks. In the leather belt he wore against his skin were half a dozen gleaming steel instruments, several of his own invention.

By the time his weary limp had brought him to the door, a bright implement was in his trembling fingers. It shot back the bolt as readily as any key, and the tired little janitor shuffled inside, to clean von Schlegel's office.

THE office didn't really need cleaning. It was in strict Prussian order. There was not a fleck of dust anywhere. Sharpened pencils were like ranks of bayonets on the great desk. Green filing cabinets stood like a file of soldiers against the wall, beyond a huge, odd-looking television set.

Trent reached for another tool from his belt, to open the locked drawers of the desk. Perhaps there would be some letter or blue print or report that would clear up the riddle of the colossal copper box—and tell him what strange new hell von Schlegel had brewing for the world outside the Reich.

Trent stopped, however, with the im-

plement in the lock. Gray daylight had fallen suddenly upon him. He looked up through the metal bars that made a net above the office, and saw that an opening was widening in the concrete roof.

He glimpsed the branches of a fir, black against low gray clouds. Snow powdered down. Then the opening was darkened again—by the silhouette of a strange machine!

The amazing vehicle dropped through the opening. It sank lightly toward the floor, near the immense copper box. Trent hastened to one of the barred windows, and stared in wonderment.

The flying thing was a globe, a dozen feet in diameter. It was blue and glistening. There were disk-shaped caps above and below it, and the disks glowed with a faint greenish radiance. Something made a soft monotonous musical note.

A novel aircraft! There were no such familiar items as wings or propellers. Had von Schlegel found some new principle of flight?

A thick oval door opened in the sphere's gleaming side, and two men emerged. And still Trent stared, more bewildered than ever.

The man in the lead looked as strange as the ship. Tall and thin, he had a bearing of arrogant pride. His yellow hair was curled, his full red mouth red-painted. He wore a curiously cut green tunic, and tight-fitting yellow trousers.

Close behind him strode—

Ernst von Schlegel!

Staring at the Prussian, Trent was conscious of a numbing chill. Twenty years had hardly changed the spy. He was tall and powerful, with a deceptive look of awkwardness. His head was round and hairless. White and mask-like, his face framed small, deep-set gray eyes that were cold as his glittering monocle.

They approached the office. Von Schlegel stepped ahead, reaching for his key. The unlocked door swung open to his touch. His cold gray eyes glared into the room.

With wax and cloth from the pockets of the grimy apron, Trent was busily polishing the brass handles of the filing-cabinet drawers. He paused as von Schlegel entered, tensed either to make a salute, or to snatch for the hidden weapon in his belt.

BUT THE sweeping eyes of the Prussian did not pause. A janitor was beneath his regard. Stalking to the desk, he continued to talk in deep gutturals to the man with yellow hair.

"The key is cast, Your Highness." Oddly, von Schlegel spoke English. "The box is ready to be contracted. In an hour the trap will be set—and baited."

His glassy eyes looked triumphantly down at something in his hand.

"Ach!" he muttered thickly. "What a bait—to trap a world!"

The tall man called Your Highness paused in the doorway.

"Careful, Herr Doktor!" His English had an odd, musical accent—definitely not German. His tone was brittle, with the sharpness of one used to obedience. Yet, Trent sensed, he was afraid. "Don't hurt Rori Ron!"

Von Schlegel set the little object on his desk.

"Your Princess will be safe," he said.

His Highness twisted his long white fingers, nervously.

"The people of our world love her, don't forget," he said huskily. "If she is killed or injured, not all the soldiers of your swastika could make Oru yield to my rule. I'm clever enough to realize that."

The Prussian peered down at the tiny object.

"She'll be safe," he insisted. "See, I have given her food and water and a tube of oxygen." The monocle glittered sardonically. "I know you are extremely

clever, Your Highness. Together, we cannot fail! Now, I am going to contract our trap."

Furiously rubbing brass, Trent shuddered again. But the swift cold eyes did not see him. The door slammed, and he was alone. He limped over to the desk, to look at the little object that von Schlegel had left there—and gasped.

It was a glass bottle, three inches tall, stoppered and sealed with black wax. *Inside the bottle stood a tiny living woman!*

CHAPTER II

The Prisoner in the Vial

ALIVE?

Trent blinked incredulously. The figure in the bottle was scarcely two inches tall. It must be just a remarkable toy, or some optical illusion. He forgot his polishing, forgot that von Schlegel was apt to return.

Reaching under his rags, he slipped a tiny powerful lens from its pocket in his belt. Holding it like a jeweler's glass with the muscles about his eye, he bent to study the woman in the vial.

She *was* alive—and beautiful!

Trent felt an ache of pity in his throat. He saw the oxygen cylinder at her feet, the brown vacuum jug, the torn paper bag of sandwiches wrapped in incredibly minute pages of *Das Schwarze Korps*. Those were links with the real world.

Had some trick of von Schlegel's made her tiny?

Lips close to the vial, Trent whispered.

"Rori Ron—Princess of Oru—can you hear me?"

No sign that she did.

"Please, Rori Ron—"

Pain closed Trent's throat. She was so small, so utterly helpless—yet so brave and proud and angry. He choked with pity for her.

Under the lens, she was large as life.

He wanted to touch her flame-yellow hair, to soothe her bitter hurt. A tender longing rose in him. For a moment he had completely forgotten the barriers between them.

He had forgotten size, and years, and desperate peril. But, to her, he must be a monstrous giant. He was an old man—too old to be dreaming the fantastic dreams of youth. And his life hung on the slender thread of chance.

He sighed, whispered again:

"Rori, please let me know if you can hear. Believe me, these men are no friends of mine. Speak—and it may be that I can help you."

Slowly, with a queen's grace, she turned in the bottle.

Bright with tears, her dark eyes studied him.

"Can you speak to me?" Trent breathed urgently. "I'm alone here. Enemies surround me. But tell me what you need, and I'll do anything I can."

At last she cupped tiny hands against her lips. Trent bent near. Thin and tiny, yet clearly audible, her voice came through the glass:

"My own world is beautiful, far-off Oru. I was stolen from it by the Herr Doktor and the Ghendhu Ghan. They plan to use me to lure Oru into their trap, because the people love me."

"You are the ruler of Oru?" whispered Trent.

Her bright head nodded.

"But not such a ruler as you know on Earth—not such as this queer god called Hitler," her tiny voice said. "For Oru is a world of science, advanced beyond the need of law and punishment.

"We approached your planet, and learned your language, so that we could bring you our science as a gift—if we found that you were ready."

"And we weren't," Trent said.

The tiny girl shook her flame-head, solemnly.

"BUT the fault is not all Earth's," she told him. "We should have guarded the Gendhu Ghan more securely. Once his ancestors ruled all Oru. But the Ghans have long been exiled to the lonely rock of Krandevar, and almost forgotten.

"It happened that the Ghan picked up the Herr Doktor's television ray. The Herr Doktor fanned the ancestral resentment and ambition in him. Together, they have made this plot to trap Oru."

"To trap a world?" Trent's whisper was faint with amazement. "How can that be?"

"Oru is not large," shouted Rori Ron. "You could toss the planet on your palm."

Trent was silent. Staring at the tiny proud girl in the bottle, he was almost overwhelmed with incredulity. A far cry from the old war of espionage, and millions of men shivering in muddy trenches!

He caught his breath; he was used to the unexpected.

"Where is Oru?" he whispered. "Can I take you back, or carry warning?"

Slowly, Rori Ron shook her head.

"No machine of Earth can reach it," she told him. "We were secure, until the Ghan betrayed our science to the Herr Doktor."

Trent tried to smooth the distress from her face.

"Perhaps things aren't so bad," he said. "Hitler is already fighting for his life, against two great nations."

"I know." The girl in the bottle shook her tiny head. "The people of England and France are brave—but there is no hope for them."

Trent started. "What?"

"Already," Rori Ron shouted through the glass, "the Ghan has given the Herr Doktor a weapon that will destroy them. That is the secret of contracting matter. It can make metal harder than anything you know. Armored with contracted

metal, and armed with guns made of it, the hordes of the swastika can sweep over Earth."

Trent shook himself, bewildered.

"Contracted matter—" He was voiceless. "Do you mean that anything can be made small, as you are?" Sudden desperate hope shook him. "Anybody?"

Abruptly, in the vial, Rori Ron was pointing.

"The Herr Doktor!" Her tiny voice was tense and high. "Now he is using the force, to contract the trap!"

Carefully, Trent picked up the bottle. He hurried to one of the barred windows. Outside, in the dusk of the underground plant, he saw the huge copper box. Now two huge circular plates had been fastened to opposite sides of it, and thick black cables coiled from them to immense transformers.

He saw von Schlegel and the Gendhu Ghan, dwarfed beneath the equipment. The Prussian threw a switch. The transformers whined, and an odd green light shone from the disks.

And the copper box shrank!

TRENT stared, speechless. The box contracted steadily, until it was thirty feet on a side. Twenty. And still it dwindled. He heard the tiny, frightened voice of Rori Ron:

"That is the trap they have made for Oru—and I am the bait!"

Still Trent gazed, trembling and breathless.

As if from far away, he heard Rori's thin small voice:

"That same force was used to make Oru small. For once it was a world as large as Earth, until a giant comet swept in from the gulf of space. Collision seemed certain. Desperately, the people fought for life. It was then that the regents of science overthrew the old dictatorship of the Ghans. They made heroic plans, to save Oru.

"But every effort failed until one scientist—and his name was Ron—discovered the secret of contraction. Then Oru was saved. No collision with uncontracted matter could harm it. And the regents soon learned to steer it like a ship out of the path of the comet—whose fragments you know as the asteroids.

"With a world for a ship, the people of Oru became explorers of space. And the contraction had other fruits. The higher energy-level of the contracted atoms proved amazingly beneficial to all the processes of life. Illness and age and death seemed conquered—"

The tiny girl shuddered abruptly in the vial.

"But now that same secret is going to destroy us!"

Trent lifted her close in front of his lens. "Just how is your planet in danger?" he whispered urgently. "And what—"

Silent in the vial, she made a warning gesture. Trent saw that the copper box had become a tiny bright cube, no more than six inches on a side, half hidden between the thick cables.

Von Schlegel had stopped the whining transformers. Trent gasped, when he strode to the box—and picked it up! He lifted metal that had required scores of freight cars for transportation from Rotterdam!

"Mass is changed into energy," Rori Ron reminded him. "It is the higher energy level that causes the biological effects—" Her voice went keener, with alarm. "Here they come!"

Carrying the box in his arms, followed by the yellow-haired Gendhu Ghan, von Schlegel came back toward his office. Hastily, Trent set the vial back on the desk.

"Remember my name—Austin Trent," he whispered against the glass. "I'll do anything I can." Looking down at the tiny, frightened, bright-haired girl, he

breathlessly added her name. "Rori—Rori Ron!"

Her brief smile seemed brave—even gay.

Trent limped quickly back to the filing cabinets. He became the meek tired old janitor again, busily polishing brass. Von Schlegel came into the room, walking noisily on hard-heeled military boots. Grunting with effort, he set the copper box on the big desk.

"The trap!" his gutturals rasped at the Gendhu Ghan, behind him. "*Ja*—and the bait!"

He picked up the vial. The tiny girl was on her knees, with white arms lifted.

"Wait patiently, Your Highness," the Prussian said thickly. "Your people will come to aid you—and perish with you, if they refuse to kiss the swastika!"

He set the bottle in the copper box, closed the lid, and locked it. His hand carried the key to his pocket—and came out with a heavy, ugly-nosed Luger, pointing straight at Trent.

"*Aufgestanden!*—Stand up, and make no move!" The monocle was a disk of ice. "I don't forget an enemy—not even in twenty years. And the real janitor is wise enough to do his work when I am gone."

A cold smile twisted his pale, putty-like face.

"You beat me once, Herr Trent," he said softly.

His hand tensed on the Luger. . . .

CHAPTER III

The Shrunken World

TRENT'S head was splitting. He felt the sticky pull of dried blood on his scalp, and felt the pressure of a bandage. Groping in a red mist of pain, he remembered von Schlegel's bullet.

It had just grazed his skull. Deliberately, the Prussian agent had spared his life—why? Trent couldn't understand it. Von Schlegel wasn't famous for mercy.

Trent retched to a giddy sickness. He felt as if the floor were rocking beneath him. It *was* rocking. His head was flung against a hard curving wall. Faint with new pain, he opened his eyes.

Amazement steadied his reeling senses.

He was in a glass cell, whose walls curved strangely. High above was a round black trap door. Sliding about with him, across the slippery glass floor, were a steel cylinder marked "Oxygen," a bottle of water, and a hard dry loaf of black bread.

He reached out, in an effort to help himself rise, and something jerked at his wrists. Steel jaws snapped cruelly tighter. Trent looked down at the bright links, and reached automatically for the belt that held his ingenious equipment.

But the belt was gone.

The cell tipped again. Sliding to the opposite wall, fending off the heavy steel cylinder with his fettered hands, Trent looked up—and blinked his eyes. Outside the curving walls, he saw the thumb and fingers of a hand.

Each finger was larger than all his body.

Staring up, he glimpsed a Titan head. Far-off as a skyscraper's spire, the features were incredibly vast, and yet familiar. For a moment his pain-clouded brain was puzzled. Then he recognized von Schlegel.

Comprehension burst upon him. He had been shrunk to the dimensions of tiny Rori Ron. Like the unfortunate girl, he was imprisoned in a bottle.

The pale bald head of the spy bent down. The monocle glittered, vast as a telescope's mirror. The glass walls shivered to a thunder of sound, and the thunder formed itself into words:

"So we part, Herr Trent—through no means so crude as a bullet. His Highness the Gendhu Ghan has accepted the task of disposing of you—in a manner that

will completely baffle your blundering Secret Service corps."

Von Schlegel's chuckle was a vast hollow booming.

WHEN he could see again, his prison had been set upon a table that seemed vast as a roof-top. It was covered with tremendous dials and levers. Far below the edges of it, he could see a vast round floor, and curved walls of crystal rising. Above him loomed the tremendous head and shoulders of the swastika's new ally, the Gendhu Ghan.

He knew that he had been carried aboard the flying globe. Blue and opaque from without, its walls were perfectly transparent from inside. The bottle was resting upon a control post, that stood in the center of the circular deck.

The Ghan's colossal hand moved a green lever that rose twice Trent's height. The glass prison shuddered to a reverberation as powerful as an organ's deepest note. And the globe lifted, in the dim cavernous vastness of von Schlegel's secret citadel.

A square of blue daylight appeared above, and the globe mounted toward it. It rose between mighty snow-dusted firs, about the winter-clad flanks of the Schwarzwald. The sky was leaden, and presently the machine lifted into low-lying clouds.

Trent studied the gigantic figure over the controls. Gradually he became used to the change of size and perspective. The Gendhu Ghan ceased to be an incredible giant, and was a man again. The narrow, painted face beneath his yellow hair looked pale and worried. Once his hollow eyes flicked down at the bottle, uneasily.

Trent put his hands to his mouth, drew a full breath, and shouted:

"Your Highness—where are you taking me?"

His voice rang with an almost deafening loudness against the glass wall. If the Ghan heard, however, he made no sign. Trent battered his handcuffs against the glass until the worried eyes looked down, and tried again:

"What are you going to do with me?"

An unpleasant contemptuous twist of the full red lips told him that the giant had heard him. But the hollow eyes moved to the dials again. The Ghan made no reply. His head ringing, Trent gave up his shouting.

Presently, above the clouds, the globe came into sunlight.

A dazzling fleecy blanket covered the Earth so far as Trent could see. Slowly, as the globe rose, it became visibly convex. The white, mighty shoulders of the Alps lifted through it in the south.

Crystal blue at first, the sky turned slowly darker. At last, when the globe must have been a dozen miles high, it had faded to a dull, dusky gray. And still the gray faded, into a rich midnight purple.

This was a greater altitude, Trent knew, than any scientific expedition had ever reached. Some men would have gladly paid with their lives for the adventure—as it seemed that he must do.

He watched the giant leaning over him. He studied each movement of the controls. He was straining every sense, for every possible crumb of information. Perhaps he could yet defeat the Ghan's sullen reticence.

The bulk of Earth's atmosphere was now beneath. The sun burned with savage force out of a flaming halo in the west. But stars were breaking out of the darkly purple east. Trent had expected the globe to increase its speed, perhaps for some astounding interplanetary voyage.

But it slowed down, instead.

THE MIGHTY reverberation ebbed. The Ghan's giant hands made delicate adjustments of the controls—as if he were carefully piloting the globe into some port. But what port could there be, here perhaps thirty miles above the Earth?

The Ghan saw his anxious attention. The painted face twisted briefly, with a leering amusement. The bottle vibrated to a mighty voice, as the giant spoke at last:

"Well, little one. Our voyage will soon be ended. Soon I shall be at home on Oru." The leer of the Ghan was palely sinister. "And you will be on your way back to Earth."

Trent shuddered to an infinite apprehension. The voice and the look of the giant held a ruthless enigmatic threat. He caught his breath, shouted against the glass:

"You are letting me go back?"

The Ghan's laughter was wild thunder.

"Yes, little one—as the Herr Doktor planned!"

His eyes returned to the dials. Great fingers moved the colossal controls. He peered out, hopefully, through the crystal walls. At last the tense effort on his pale face was replaced with a smile.

"Oru!" His murmur was a far-off roaring. "Soon, under the swastika, it will be mine."

Against the dark east, Trent saw a new atom of purple light. The Ghan steered toward it. It became a sphere, no larger than the ball of the giant's thumb. The machine drifted past it, and its phases changed, from disk to tiny crescent.

Oru!

A planet the size of a golf ball! Hard to believe that it once had been as huge as Earth. But so Rori Ron had told him.

The Ghan looked at the dials again, and pulled an immense red lever toward him. The mechanism sang another mighty song, and the crystal wall glowed faintly green.

Trent felt a curious lurching sensation. He looked out at tiny Oru, to tell if the globe was moving again. The tiny planet seemed larger. It had grown large as an orange. Still it grew.

Suddenly it was no longer small and near at all. It was vast and remote. It was a mighty world, spinning in blue and infinite space. It was hundreds of thousands of miles away.

The Ghan's giant hand picked up the bottle. Unable to stand on the slippery glass, Trent fell painfully. Picking himself up, he heard the giant's voice:

"Now, little one, I call to tell you the fate that the Herr Doktor planned for you. Now we have reached the size-scale of Oru. I am going to dispose of you, in your bottle, through the refuse-valve.

"You will fall back to Earth. But now you are smaller than the molecules of your planet's crust. You will drop through it, battered by the heat-driven molecules, until some impact breaks the glass. And the Herr Doktor promises that you will make us no more trouble."

The great pale face leered down at Trent.

"He is a clever man—almost as clever as I am. We are both too clever for you, little one."

Holding the bottle in his hand, he knelt at the edge of the circular deck, and began to spin an immense gleaming wheel. A dark chute yawned.

CHAPTER IV

Coffin for a Planet

THE BOTTLE shook, as the Ghan's monster hand thrust it toward the chute. Trent fell again on the slippery glass. His wounded head came with splitting force against the steel oxygen cylinder. Pain made him ill. But he caught his breath, shouted desperately:

"I have seen that you are a clever man, Your Highness. I think you are too clever to destroy me—yet."

The Ghan poised the bottle above the chute.

"Of course I am clever," the mighty

voice rumbled. "And I am clever to destroy you. For the Herr Doktor told me that you are the one Earthman who could threaten our plan."

Trent braced himself against the glass, shook his throbbing head.

"That is true, Your Highness," he shouted. "I am the only Earthman who has ever beaten the Herr Doktor. When I am gone, you will be the only man in two words clever enough to stand against him."

The great painted face abruptly smiled.

"So I am, little one," boomed the Ghan. "And I *am* too clever to destroy you—yet! Because I don't trust the Herr Doktor completely—I am too clever for that. If he attempts to betray me, you might be useful. If he doesn't—there is still time to drop you to die in the heart of your planet."

The great yellow head nodded.

"Yes, that is the clever stroke. I shall take you with me to the rock of Krandevar, and leave you there until Oru is safe in the Herr Doktor's trap."

The Ghan smiled with sinister elation.

"But you have won no victory, little one. I shall not remove you from the bottle. And, as soon as Oru is safely mine, you shall be destroyed. I am too clever to trust Earthmen."

"Thank you," gasped Trent. "You are clever, indeed." He braced himself, as the Ghan closed the great chute and carried the bottle back to its place on the control pillar.

Trembling, Trent sat down on the oxygen cylinder. His bandaged head was throbbing, and he felt weak with exhaustion. In spite of the tiny stream of oxygen hissing from the cylinder, the air in the bottle was growing bad. Things still looked black. He had won a stay of execution. But his life was still at stake. And Rori Ron's. And the future of two planets.

The Ghan moved the huge green lever again. The bottle quivered to a deep reverberation. And presently Trent saw that the Planet Oru was swelling larger again, as the globe dropped toward it.

Time dragged away. In spite of himself, Trent dozed wearily. He woke ravenous, and ate half the black loaf, chewing the hard bread until it turned sweet in his mouth.

"Eat slowly, little one," warned the Ghan's great voice. "You shall have no more when that is gone. I am too clever to open the bottle."

Oru became a mighty sphere, suspended in a blue infinity. Still it swelled. The globe dropped into a sea of purple mist. Sank through, into air that was crystal clear. Trent stared at an astounding landscape.

THE SKY was a luminous purple dome. Vast brown continents were splashed with yellow and crimson vegetation. The oceans that ran between them were emerald green. The Ghan leered triumphantly at the shining dome.

"Little one," he boomed, "I'll give you a key to our trap. The layer of purple gas above the atmosphere absorbs a certain cosmic radiation, and emits the light and heat and power waves that mean life to all Oru. All the planet's deposits of oil and coal and radium were long ago exhausted. If anything cut off that cosmic radiation—anything such as a wall of contracted copper—Oru must soon surrender."

His hungry burning eyes looked down at the strange landscape sliding beneath. Trent saw orange squares of fields, masses of crimson forest, silver nets of roads, cities that were clusters of jewels.

"Surrender—" rumbled the Ghan. "Or die!"

Beyond the continent, he dropped the globe toward a wide green sea. Its waters turned dark and uneasy. Out of them towered an immense black rock, with

restless waves breaking into emerald and lapis foam at its foot. On the rock stood a huge grim castle, its walls and towers dark and crumbling with time.

"That is Krandevar," roared the Ghan. "It will be your prison, little one, as it was mine—until the time has come for you to die."

He dropped the globe to a high terrace, picked up Trent's bottle, and left the machine. A dozen men and women had gathered in a court below, and he paused to speak to them. Clad in gay fabrics, they all looked amazingly young and vigorous. Trent remembered something Rori Ron had said about the biological effects of the contraction process.

He slipped and fell, as the Ghan moved the bottle. Pain blinded him. When he could see again, the Ghan had set the bottle on a broad stone ledge. Trent peered anxiously across it.

The thick glass distorted vision. He had to put his face close against it to see anything very clearly, and eyestrain made a new ache in his throbbing head.

But the stone ledge seemed to be a mantle. A floor made a checkered plain below. Windows in the mountainous walls looked out upon infinity. He could see the vast blue curve of the ship on the terrace. Beyond, the green sea surged darkly away to the purple sky.

The Ghan leered at Trent in the bottle. He left the vast room, locking the door behind him. Presently Trent saw the blue globe rise from the terrace.

Trent was left in solitary imprisonment.

For a time he lay sick with despair. What chance had he now, against von Schlegel? An old man, injured, exhausted. Shrunken to something smaller than an atom. Imprisoned without sufficient food or water, or even air to breathe. Handcuffed.

He fought that despair. Dry-mouthed, no longer hungry, he ate another black crust. He opened the oxygen valve a little. Wearily, he began filing the handcuffs against the steel rim of the oxygen cylinder.

If he could escape, in time to give warning of the trap—

But the steel wore slowly. Beneath the purple sky, Oru had no nights or days; but leaden eternities passed. Trent's wrists swelled and turned black. Blood stained the links. The bread was gone, and the last drop of water. The air was foul, and the oxygen pressure low.

And the thing happened.

NIGHT came to Oru!

Dim remote walls, incredibly vast, rose beyond the purple sky. Abruptly, then, its radiance was blotted out, as if a lid had closed down upon it.

It was a lid, Trent realized—the lid of the copper box!

The planet was in von Schlegel's trap.

Only a chill violet dusk remained, terrible and foreboding. Snow began to fall out of it. Cold seized the planet. The ancient castle shuddered to the screaming of a frightful blizzard.

Cold crept into the bottle. Trent was numb and shivering with it. Yet he worked on—grinding his bleeding wrists and the stubborn links against the worn edge of steel.

He wondered a little at his own endurance. He was old, tortured with thirst, drugged with foul air, starving. Yet he managed to keep going. Somehow the pain in his heart had stopped. The contraction must have stimulated him. A youthful hope kept surging up in him.

He wasn't beaten—not yet!

But the savage cold grew more intense. White floes of ice formed on the wild green sea. Its dark anger was stilled. At last, to the dusky violet horizon, it became a desert of white. Blizzards screamed over it, building long white drifts and carving them away.

The last of the oxygen was gone from

the cylinder. Tortured with slow asphyxiation, half-dead with cold, Trent worked on. The bloody links were half worn through, when the blue globe landed again on the terrace. The gigantic Ghan came back into the room.

"Cold, little one?" He paused to leer down at Trent, who lay in a shivering heap, hiding his wrists. "Well, so is all Oru!"

He tuned the television communicator. Von Schlegel's pale, putty-like face appeared upon the screen, and his hard voice drummed:

"Well, Your Highness?"

"The thing is done, Herr Doktor," the Ghan reported. "The contracted metal has cut off the vital radiations almost completely. The regents made a desperate effort to escape from the trap. But my agents had been able to destroy the emergency batteries at both main power plants. Escape is quite impossible."

The Prussian's monocle glittered icily. "Good," boomed von Schlegel.

"Good," echoed the Ghan. "My cleverness won an easy victory, Herr Doktor. The regents accepted the story that I had been your dupe—"

"Ja!" rapped the Prussian. "So you have been!"

The Ghan swallowed hard and looked uneasy.

"What—Herr Doktor—what do you mean?"

"Precisely that." The monocle flashed triumphantly. "You have served your purpose. I have no more need of you—unless you wish to tell the regents that my terms are unconditional surrender, and full aid in the conquest of the Earth." And von Schlegel cut the communicator off.

The Ghan staggered back, trembling.

He stared at Trent. "Little one, you were right." His voice was stricken. "I see it now—too late. My mistake cannot be undone. I can only leave a warning for the regents. Death is better than the rule of Hitler."

He shouted. The door burst open, and a dozen of his gigantic bright-clad retainers came thundering into the vast room. He roared something at them, in the language of Oru. Pale with a stunned consternation, they turned angry eyes on Trent, fingered odd-looking silvered guns.

The Ghan's bleak eyes looked back at the bottle.

"Farewell, little one," he gasped. "I have warned them never to trust an Earthman."

He snatched a bright-looking gun from the man next him, whipped it to his temple. There was a saffron flare, a dull tremendous concussion. The Ghan crashed down like a toppling mountain, dead.

Half his stunned retainers bent over him. The rest surged angrily toward Trent. He was flung from his feet as a gigantic hand lifted the bottle, swept it back to crash it against the wall.

CHAPTER V

On the Ladder of Size

TRENT scrambled desperately to his feet on the slippery glass. Cupping hands to his lips, he shouted frantically at the angry giant who held him:

"Wait! I'm the Herr Doktor's enemy. Perhaps, even yet, I can help save Oru—"

The only answer was an angry toss of the giant's bare head. His appeal was sheer folly, Trent realized. These men didn't even understand English. They were desperate with hatred of Earth—naturally enough. He happened to be the object of their vengeance.

The giant swung the bottle in a wider arc. His fellows gathered behind him, fingering bright weapons. Their faces were masks of frightened, baffled, savage hate. Instinctively, Trent lifted his hands in a defensive gesture—

And discovered that they were free!

The giant threw—and broke the bottle. Amid a shower of fragments, Trent fell.

He struck the floor with dazing force. Guns were crashing deafeningly. Saffron vapor spurted. Bullets—huge by comparison as artillery shells—screamed and ricocheted about him.

Trent kept his feet, and ran. Between the legs of a plunging giant. Under the television cabinet. He paused there to catch a breath of good air, then scurried through the open door.

For the moment unseen, he came out upon the terrace. It was a plain of ice, swept with a bitter blizzard. The flying globe loomed far-off, so vast it seemed unreal. He started running toward it, slipping and stumbling on the ice.

Behind him were thundering voices and terrific explosions. He knew that the hunt would soon reach the terrace. At last, breasting the bitter wind, he came around the globe, and found that the door was open—but the bottom of it was ten times his own height above the snow.

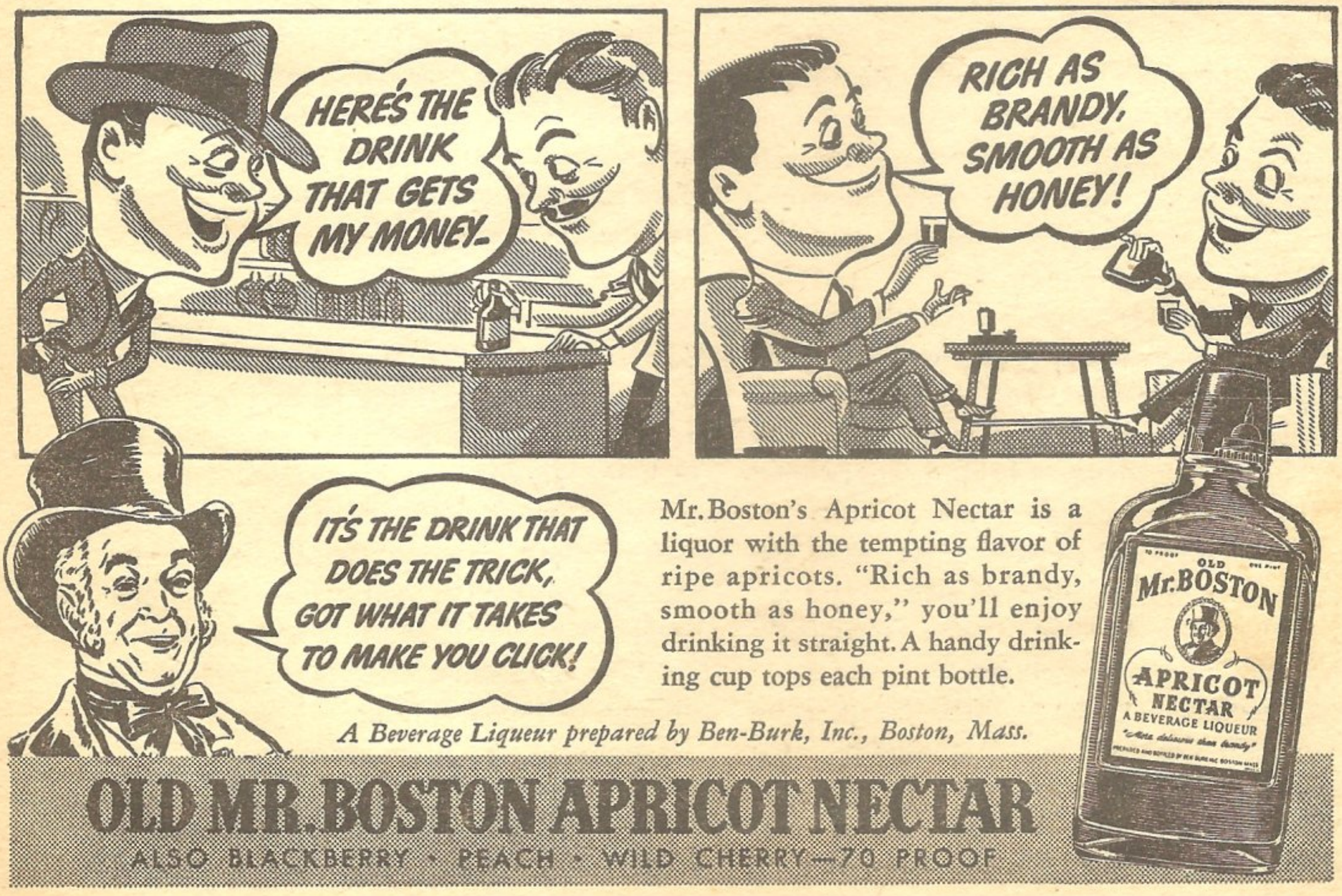
Sheer desperation spurred him to the mad effort. He caught his breath, leapt. And his muscles responded with an oiled efficiency that amazed him. The contraction must have given his body a higher ratio of strength to weight, like an insect's.

His fingers caught the ledge. Tendons snapped. The broken manacles tinkled. His hands were dead, but he hung on grimly, inched his way upward, dragged his body over the edge. He ran into the cavernous interior of the ship.

The control pillar was a lofty pier. But a strange new confidence was working in Trent. The contraction had wrought a queer magic. Actually, he felt almost young again. One desperate leap—and he fell sprawling amid the great dials and levers that he had watched, on the voyage from Earth.

He scrambled up, flung his strength against the green lever. A huge metal bar,

OLD MR. BOSTON SAYS: "MY APRICOT NECTAR IS A TREAT YOU'LL CHEER!"



Mr. Boston's Apricot Nectar is a liquor with the tempting flavor of ripe apricots. "Rich as brandy, smooth as honey," you'll enjoy drinking it straight. A handy drinking cup tops each pint bottle.

A Beverage Liqueur prepared by Ben-Burk, Inc., Boston, Mass.

OLD MR. BOSTON APRICOT NECTAR

ALSO BLACKBERRY · PEACH · WILD CHERRY—70 PROOF

it resisted stubbornly. Desperately, he tried the red one. It gave. The crystal walls were dimly lit with green, as the globe contracted.

Trent leapt from the pillar, ran to the door, leapt again to the snow outside. For he must wait for the ship to reach his own size-scale.

AGAINST the cold violet dusk, the globe slowly dwindled. Trent heard the humming of its mechanism—and listened with quaking heart to the thunder of the hunt for him in the great room behind.

An icy hurricane whipped him. Snowflakes were hurtling fragments of ice, that stung like hail. He slapped numb swollen hands against his body, stamped on the ice. The globe was nearing his size.

Brrrang!

A gun roared behind him. The bullet tore a yawning crater in the ice. Stinging fragments sent him sprawling. He saw a giant running, to snatch away the globe. Time, now, was vital. A few moment's delay, and the ship would be lost in smallness.

He stumbled toward the dwindling globe. Another projectile showered him with snow. He ducked, flung himself through the doorway. Breathless, he stumbled to the control pillar, touched the button that closed the door.

Outside, huge fingers were closing!

Trent touched the green lever, and the ship darted upward, into the violet dust. The ice-armored castle and the lonely rock of Krandevar dropped behind, angry men firing vainly from the terrace.

Trent reversed the red lever, sent the globe back up the ladder of size. The rock dwindled to a dark fleck upon the ghostly ice-plain of the frozen sea.

Desperate urgency haunted Trent, as he rose into the chill purple twilight. Two worlds depended on him. With the secret of contraction, von Schlegel could conquer Earth for the swastika—unless Oru could be liberated, to stop him with its greater secrets.

Two worlds—

And a slim brave girl with flame-colored hair.

The white frozen sea fell away, and became convex, and was veiled with the purple gas. The planet was a shining sphere once more—but dim and cold and near extinction.

Faintly at last, in the feeble glow of Oru, Trent could see the walls of the copper box. Massive, riveted, they shrank about him.

Staring hopelessly through the cracked crystal, he saw a thing that set his hard to thudding. Far below, beyond the dim sphere of dying Oru, he saw a ghostly gleam of glass.

Rori Ron was still in the box!

Trembling with the conflict of hope and dread, Trent dropped the crippled machine past the tiny doomed planet. Was he in time to help the girl? Or had she already perished in her prison, of cold or asphyxiation?

The bottle stood in a dark corner of the imprisoning box. Peering into it, Trent could see only a motionless huddle of shadow. He made the globe as large as space allowed, opened the door, and leapt breathlessly out.

Oru floated above him, not much larger than his head. The dying light gleamed feebly on the bottle. It was no longer the tiny, thin-walled vial that he had first seen on von Schlegel's desk. It was a huge, thick jar, three times his height.

Trent pressed his face against the heavy glass. Faintly, beyond, he saw Rori Ron. She lay motionless, sprawled across the oxygen cylinder. Her still fingers clutched the valve. Her quiet face was terrible with the blue of asphyxiation.

Trent's heart choked him.

Was Rori dead?

A desperate leap carried him to the top of the bottle. But the black wax that held

the stopper was hard as iron. Lifeless beyond the broken fetters, his empty bleeding hands dug and tore at it in vain. Frantically, he kicked and battered at the unyielding glass.

Despair was a sickness in him. It was no use. He had no tool that would increase his strength. There was no space to make himself larger. Once more he was beaten. Rori was dying, and there was nothing he could do.

Himself breathless and giddy, numb with cold, Trent stumbled back into the cracked globe. Rori Ron was dying.

CHAPTER VI

The Planetary Bullet

SOBBING, Trent shook his fist at the massive walls of the copper prison. Despite the thin hiss of air from the globe's ventilator, he was still dizzy and reeling for want of oxygen. He swayed. He was falling.

He had failed two worlds, depending on him.

He had failed Rori Ron, dying in the bottle.

And he was falling endlessly. Falling down through the molecules of uncontracted matter, toward the center of the Earth. Von Schlegel had beaten him—

Trent caught himself. He fought for breath and consciousness. He dragged himself to the ventilator, sucked in a refreshing breath. Shaking his throbbing head, he stumbled back to the control pillar.

An idea—

If the injured mechanism of the globe did not fail completely. If the power supply would last for one more daring voyage through size and distance. If he could keep on the way, with unfamiliar instruments. If the cracked crystal could endure the battering of heat-driven molecules.

Trent tried to forget the *ifs*.

He flung the red lever toward him, to send the globe back down the ladder of size. The bottle that held Rori's still body swelled until it was lost in darkness. Oru became a huge pale disk, that dissolved at last in a strange smothering midnight.

Still he forged into smallness —

And drove toward the copper wall.

Dark, dimly seen, the barrier became incredibly massive. The crystals of the metal made mountainous ridges. The rivet heads were huge as planets. And still Trent plunged into the infinitely small.

For the wall was not solid, really. Any matter — even contracted matter — was mostly empty space. Atoms and electrons, he knew, were comparatively as far apart as stars and planets in space. If his contracted body could fall through the space-lattice of the Earth's crust, then the contracted ship could penetrate the space-lattice of the box.

If—

And if—

And if—

He strove to thrust the *ifs* from his mind.

The dark outlines of the incredible wall began to soften. The metal seemed to dissolve, into a thick black mist. Into a strange cloud of atoms, furiously alive with the energy of heat. Still he dropped into smallness, and the haze seemed to thin.

He flung the globe into it—

Into crashing, deafening chaos!

All light was blotted out. Only the strange dim-glowing dials were left to guide him. The ship rocked and spun. The crystal hull throbbed and rang to the ruthless hail of atomic collisions.

In the faint radiance of the instruments, Trent saw the swift branching spread of the cracks in the crystal hull. The drive-mechanism snarled and faltered. The ventilator stopped, and he was gasping for breath.

The globe was swiftly failing. Desperately, he drove it on through that black, smothering chaos. Instants of desperate anxiety and frantic effort stretched into weary eternities. The instrument lights went out, and he drove on blindly.

The globe became an oven. Deck and instruments were blistering. Sweat drenched his trembling body. The foul air seared his face and lungs. The smothering blackness crept into his mind.

And still he drove on—

Until blue light broke through the mist of atoms!

THE globe burst out of the incredible cloud of metal, into a shimmering blue infinity. Weak and gasping, Trent reversed the red lever. Grimly, he clung to consciousness. And the globe once more climbed the ladder of size.

The copper box became visible once more—and he was outside of it. It continued to shrink, beside him. He recognized the desk in von Schlegel's underground office, the television set, the cabinets whose brass handles he had once so industriously polished.

He dropped the globe upon the floor, waited for it to reach normal size, stopped it, and staggered out. For a moment he stood leaning against the shattered blue crystal, content merely to gulp the fresh air.

But grim urgency still spurred him.

Now he must open the box.

If he failed in that, nothing else mattered. Rori Ron would perish in the bottle. Oru would yield to the swastika, or perish also.

And all Earth would fall beneath ruthless conquest.

He stumbled to the desk. The copper box rested beside rows of colored pencils, laid in strict Prussian order. His first thought was to carry it away in the globe, open it elsewhere. He grasped it with numb weary hands. But he couldn't lift it. New sweat drenched him, and he went blind with the strain of effort. Weak from hunger and exhaustion, he could barely slide it on the polished wood.

But one way remained—to open the box where it was.

Anxiously, he peered through the windows. He could see busy workmen moving about the vast underground plant. One of them might look in at any moment, glimpse him or the globe. With so much depending on the fate of Oru, von Schlegel himself would not be far away, nor absent long.

Trent fingered the heavy lock. He knew that the contracted copper was harder than diamond, tougher than any steel. No tool ever made on Earth would cut it. But he had opened locks before. If only von Schlegel had overlooked his belt, with its implements—

Trent tried to shrug off his despair. He must do something—and quickly. For two worlds, and Rori Ron. But what was possible? He stared blankly at the neat rows of pencils. And abruptly he caught his breath.

Von Schlegel was a methodical man.

Trent found a paper clip in the waste basket. He ran along the orderly rank of cabinets, reading the index letters. The paper clip opened the drawer marked "Tr." He found his own thick dossier—boldly marked, across the first page:

"Liquidated!"

Beside the papers, along with his passports and watch, lay the neatly folded belt. He slipped a bright little tool from it, and stumbled back to the copper box. For two worlds, and a girl—

Von Schlegel had been clever, with the lock. It refused to yield. The little implement trembled in Trent's weakened fingers. His hands were stiff dead tools. The old sensitive skill was gone from them. And leaden fatigue dulled his mind.

Absorbed in the task, drunk with weariness, Trent heard no warning sound. But

the bright metal of the box was a mirror. Bending to listen at the lock, he saw a putty-white face in that mirror, and a monocle's glitter.

Von Schlegel stood behind him, Luger leveled!

AN ILLNESS of utter despair drained all Trent's strength. He had failed. He could see that the Prussian was ready to shoot him in the back of the head. The bullet would destroy two planets, and a bright-haired girl.

Then the lock clicked, softly.

Swiftly—in spite of the very feel of that bullet plowing into his brain—Trent flung back the lid of the copper box. The tiny sphere of Oru flashed upward, into view. At first almost black, it glowed swiftly purple—as the gas layer responded to the rays that were the planet's life.

Trent dropped flat, waiting for von Schlegel's bullet.

Behind him, the Luger crashed. Hot metal stung Trent's shoulder. For an instant he thought that the Prussian had incredibly missed. Then he realized that the bullet had struck the tiny planet—and spattered harmlessly, against the contracted matter.

Then Oru moved, in a flashing purple arc.

"Ach, Gott—"

Von Schlegel's harsh cry became a bubbling expiration. The Luger thumped on the floor. The monocle shattered. Rising shakily, Trent turned. The little purple sphere was still floating above the spy's lax body.

Trent saw the little round hole in the middle of the Prussian's forehead—and knew what had made it. The regents of Oru must have been watching, and ready. The tiny planet, alive with new energy, had been the self-driven bullet.

As Trent stared, the little world swam back past him. No larger than a child's marble—yet he knew it as a planet vast as Earth! The polar crowns shone green; he could see the faint outlines of seas and planets, beneath the purple. It hung above the open box.

Trent knew what to do.

It was simple, now. He reached into the box, and took out the bottle that contained Rori Ron. Now it was a tiny vial, not three inches tall. His numb fingers broke the wax that had defeated him before.

He drew the stopper. Very gently, he slid the girl's tiny body out, and laid it on the desk.

She was white and still, a flame-haired doll.

The tiny glowing planet swam to her, hung low over her.

Still Trent knew what to do. He knew that the regents trusted him. He had proved himself. He dragged his eyes away from that strange picture—the tiny world, above the girl. He took the little steel implement out of the lock, and removed his

broken manacles. Gingerly rubbing his swollen wrists, he climbed back aboard the shattered globe.

It must serve, for one more voyage. He threw the red lever, and the room grew vast again.

He lifted the contracting globe, landed it upon the broad polished plain of the desk, beside Rori Ron.

Did her white body seem to move, as it grew?

Or—cold apprehension shook him—was she dead?

At last he reached her plane of size. He stumbled out of the globe, dropped on his knees beside her. Under the purple glow of Oru, her face looked cold and still. But she breathed, and he felt the slow throb of her heart.

Trent swallowed hard, and blinked ecstatically.

Rori was alive!

HE CARRIED her aboard the globe, and sent it into smallness again, soaring up toward the purple sphere, that grew vast ahead as the room faded into a misty blue infinity.

Lying on a curving bench against the shattered crystal wall, the girl stirred sleepily and began to sob.

Trent left the globe to steer itself, and took her slight quivering body in his arms. Her flesh was warm again, and the scent of her bright hair rocked his brain. Emotion blinded tears.

Angry with himself, he bit his lip. He was an old man. His last task was done—and well done. He had asked no more of life.

He found that he was ready, now, to die.

Only—

He didn't want to die.

He had no right to feel the way he did.

"You're going to be all right." He held the trembling girl close to him. "Don't cry, dear. You've had a cruel time, I know. But the Herr Doktor is dead, now Oru is safe. And I'm going to take you home."

Her violet eyes stared up at him, bright with tears. For a moment they were completely bewildered, as if she didn't know him.

"I'm Austin Trent." His voice was tired and hopeless. "I'm just an Earthman, and very old. My work is done. I can't mean anything to you. But I want to take you home to Oru before I die."

He tried to smile, but his vision swam with tears.

"Oh, Rori—" He choked. "If I had been younger—"

"Younger?" Suddenly her violet eyes were laughing at him. "But you are. You must have been to Oru. I hardly knew you, for the change. Don't you really know?"

Trent looked into the tiny mirror she handed him, and blinked. His face was tanned and firm. The net of wrinkles was gone from about his eyes. His hair was dark again.

He looked somewhat fatigued and battered and grimy—but young!

"I told you about the biological effects of contraction," Rori Ron was saying. "The greater atomic energy increases vitality. Old age and illness and natural death are unknown, on Oru."

For a long time he looked down into her quiet lovely face.

"Rori—" he whispered at last, anxiously. "Rori—if an Earthman dared to love the princess of Oru—?"

Her quick smile, and the eager pressure of her arms, were all the answer that he needed.

Trent was young again, and all things were possible.

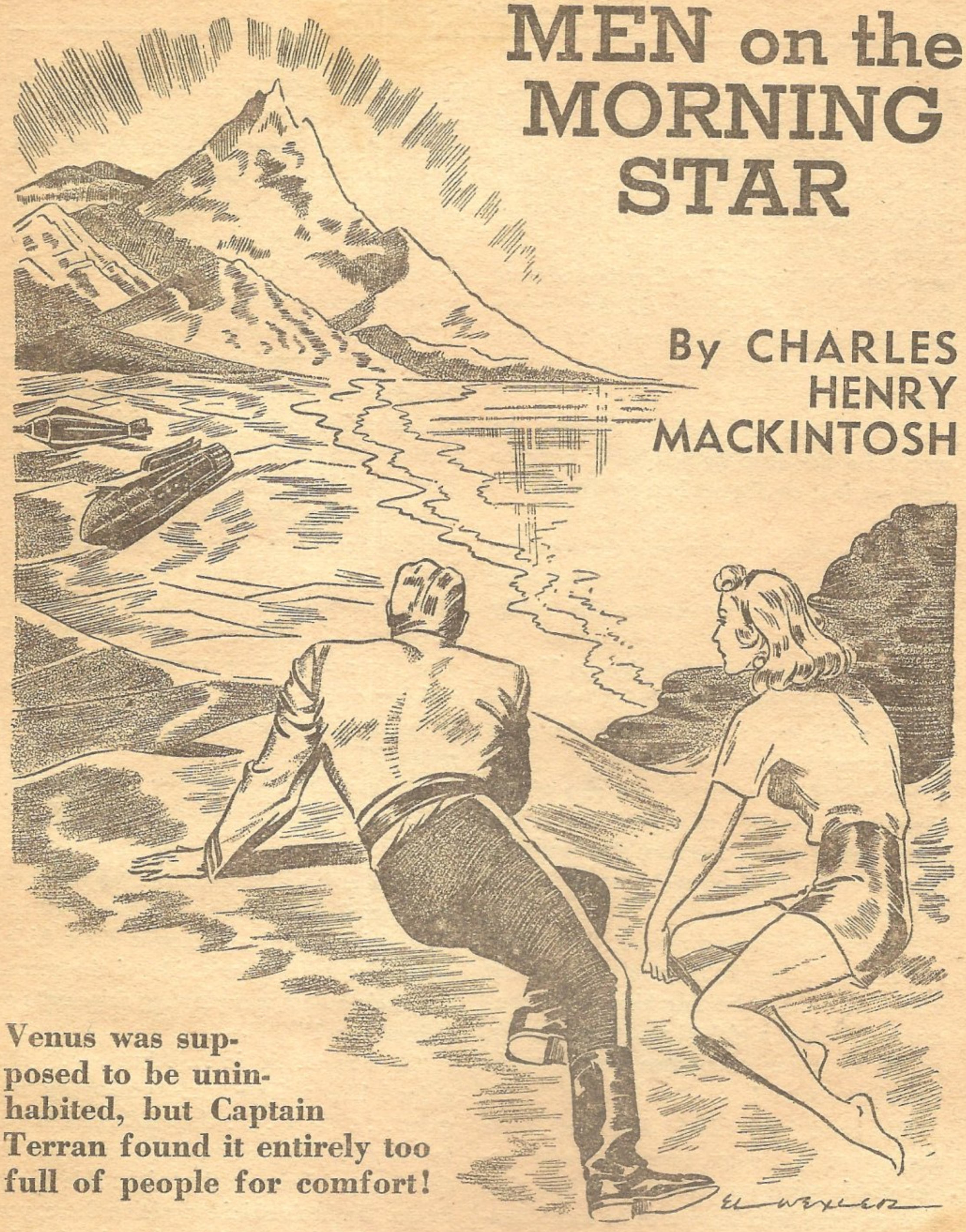
He kissed her.

"I knew," she breathed. "Even when you were old, and I was in the bottle!"

THE END

MEN on the MORNING STAR

By CHARLES HENRY MACKINTOSH



Venus was supposed to be uninhabited, but Captain Terran found it entirely too full of people for comfort!

CAPTAIN ARTHUR TERRAN of Space Police had no orders to attempt a landing on Venus in his one-man scout-rocket *The Crysteel Arrow,* but he had no orders against it, either, since it would never have occurred to his superiors that anyone could be mad enough to attempt such a landing, through unknown miles of zero visibility. It had never been done, in the centuries-long record of space flight—which was an altogether excellent reason for Captain Terran to attempt it!

There had been many tense minutes, as his ship nosed down through the dense cloud-blanket, but his hunch that there

might be a deep zone of comparative clearness above the surface had checked through. Suddenly, his ship emerged from the clouds, and, half a mile down, he saw clearly a wide and sandy beach bordering a blue-gray lake. The purring blast of the nose-jets cushioned *The Crysteel Arrow* down gently as a feather, till the fin-jets could take up the roll of power and ease her back and down on an approximately even keel.

—And now, in another minute, he would be the first human-being ever to have set foot on the surface of Venus!

So?

—Then who, or what, was the creature running toward his ship, already not three hundred yards away across the sandy beach?

If a Venusian, then evolution on Venus must exactly have paralleled that on Earth, which was a bit too much for even an amateur biologist to believe.

He rested his arms on the rim of the three-foot circular sally-port, his right hand, out of sight, touching the butt of a blaster, and waited for welcome or war as the case might be.

A curiously graceful runner, that fellow out there . . . gosh, it *wasn't* a fellow, it was a *girl*—a girl beating him to the conquest of Venus, a girl all alone apparently, or the reception committee surely would have been larger!

His hand instinctively fell away from the butt of his blaster, though an odd corner of his mind quarrelled with him that women have been known to be more dangerous than men.

Still, she didn't seem to be hostile, or even armed, so far as he could see. Indeed, the closer she came the more it seemed to him that she was just plain *scared* rather than hostile or even glad to see him.

What could have scared her, here on Venus? —Tyrannosauri? Sabre-toothed tigers? *Natives?*

She was flapping her little hands at him now, frantically, in a gesture which could mean only: *'Get away!'*

He grinned down at her as she arrived, sobbing for breath, beneath his sally-port. She was a lovely little thing, despite her evident terror and exhaustion—or perhaps she appealed all the more to his protective instinct because of them.

"A nice welcome, I must say," he mocked, crinkling his eye-corners to point the pleasantry. "Here I have come thirty million miles to pay you a visit—picking almost the shortest distance between Earth and Venus, at that, I must confess —and all I get for my pains is, *'Get away!'* Lady, I don't bite, I assure you. Name is Arthur Terran, Art to my friends. Space-pilot, first class. Captain of *The Crysteel Arrow* . . ." He was talking mostly to give her a chance to recover her breath and her own voice. "Tell me," he added, dropping the mask of humor, "what's the matter?"

She gave him his answer in a five syllable rattle like machine-gun fire: *"Rock-et-racketeers!"*

"You mean that space pirates are *here* on Venus? What in h—I mean *what* are they doing here? I thought their hide-away was on the dark side of the moon, and their racket was pirating shipments of refined ores?"

"It was . . .it is . . . but . . ." she gulped like a little girl swallowing her gum . . . "but . . . they followed father to Venus! They must have had spies in the Crysteel Labs on the bright side of the moon. Father's chief technician there, you know. They must have heard what he found here on his first trip, and, of course, they'd never overlook a chance like that!"

"Of course not," he agreed. "What *did* your father find?"

"That's the secret!" she gasped. "Nobody must know—I don't myself."

"The Rocket-racketeers must know at least a little something?" he suggested.

"Oh, yes, they know he has a new plas-

tic—something having countless times the strength even of crysteel, and one which can be worked at comparatively low temperatures once, and then no temperature they can get in the Labs will touch it again . . ."

"But that's obviously impossible," he broke in. "If heat will melt the stuff once it will do it again . . ."

"It won't any such thing," she broke in in turn. "It's not a chemical reaction at all. It's some completely new and strange rearrangement of atomic structural pattern. Comparatively low heat starts the reaction, then nothing can stop it or touch it again. Father discovered it quite by chance when he cushioned down on his blasts here on . . ." she broke off suddenly, and bit her lip. "Here on Venus," she concluded, unconvincingly sketching a gesture towards the far horizon.

TERRAN lifted his eyebrows at her. "You might as well break down and confess that it was right here on this beach," he suggested. "I'm no Rocket-racketeer, you know. I'm on the other side, your side. S. P.—Space Police; that's me!"

She looked at him over a bitten knuckle. "How did you know it was right here?" she gasped.

He laughed. "I didn't, I just guessed; but, of course, I do know now—you have just told me!"

"Why . . .why, *you!*" —She could think of nothing to add.

"I'm all right," he reassured her, "and you are all right, and your father's secret is all right. The only ones who are all wrong, and in wrong, are those Rocket-racketeers. Now, just where did you say I could locate them—without their knowing I'm on my way, of course?"

She shook her head violently. "I didn't say . . . you mustn't! I came to warn you to get away while you can, and bring back a big ship of the Space Police. Why, they'd *kill* you on sight!"

He grinned again. "I'm by way of being quite a killer myself—only in the line of duty, you know; yet, after all, that is my business, in a way."

"But there are *five* of them!"

"And only one of me, huh? Well, I've known worse odds, and I'm still here, all alive-o!"

He climbed through the three-foot sally-port, feeling as clumsy, under her gaze, as a bear emerging from winter quarters. She moved back a little to make room for him, but remained quite close and didn't seem to be scared any more, not, at least, of him. He patted her on one shoulder, gently and reassuringly, though feeling none too good himself.

The Rocket-racketeers were no push-over, he knew that—what member of Space Police didn't? The whole force had been after them for more than a year and, so far, the score had been five Space Police 'missing' — probably permanently. They were tough babies, all right; and the new plastic this girl had told him about—well, she'd told him enough to see that it should mean the entire revolution of spacecraft construction, for one thing, and probably of the whole technique of plastic engineering. Since they didn't stop at killing Space Police on the mere pilfering of a few packets of refined ores, what could stop them now they were on the trail of a billion dollar secret such as this? Still they *must* be stopped.

"Where is their hangout?" he broke off his soliloquy.

She gestured back in the direction from which she had come. "Not far beyond the crest of that sand dune. They are using their space ship—and father's—as a base."

"What can you tell me about their habits? Do they all stick together all the time, or is there any chance of chopping them down on even terms, one at a time?"

"I see what you mean," she nodded

thoughtfully, "but you'll have to be awfully careful, because they have father's new sonic pistol, you know!"

"Sonic pistol?" he repeated. "What's that? Never heard of it!"

"It's another of father's new things," she explained, not without pride. "I don't really know how it works, but I know what it does."

"And just what does it do?" he prompted.

She staggered him with her answer. "It puts people to sleep! —Or, rather," she qualified, "it sends them into a kind of trance, like a sleep-walker."

HIS technically trained mind leapt the gaps in her sketchy account of the new weapon. "Does it send out an actual sound? Can you hear it?"

"No," she shook her head, "you can't hear anything. The first thing you know there's a funny feeling in your head and after that you don't know anything at all, until the sonic is shut off. Meanwhile, you are completely under the control of whoever has it trained on you."

"You say the Rocket-racketeers have it now? Have they used it on your father? Didn't it make him tell them, or lead them to, whatever they want of him?"

"No, and that's something I can't quite understand. Father says it works just like hypnotic control, but . . ."

"AND," he corrected. "That's just the reason, because hypnotism can't make people go against their own sincere inner convictions, you know. Persistent attempts to do so tend to break the trance entirely. I suppose the sonic would renew it automatically, but it wouldn't do any good."

"That's just what happens with father," she agreed, "and it does make them so mad! I'm afraid they will . . . try some other way!"

He guessed the implication she could not bring herself to put into words, and respected her feelings.

"We'll have to stop that!" he said.

"Do you think we really can? Look, I can use a blaster. I'm quite a good shot with one. Father made me practise and practise. Have you an extra one?"

"Lady, I have a young armory," he answered, "and I'll see that you are armed, all right; but I don't want you mixing in any fight with these fellows. They are tough numbers, I'm telling you! I'll give you a baby blaster, one small enough to hide away somewhere—but not in those clothes, I guess . . ." He broke off suddenly, exclaiming "What the heck?"

The girl had stiffened, turned half away from him and his ship, facing towards the dune over which she had come. Two dots, about the size of tangerine oranges, showed bluish-red against the sugar-white sand at the crest of the dune.

His right hand flashed down upon the butt of a blaster . . . but he couldn't draw! There was a curious tingling in the region of his medulla. His whole motor-system seemed to be inhibited from action. He could still order his muscles to jerk out that blaster, but they couldn't obey. Just before he stopped even wanting to draw his weapon, he noticed that the stiffness had gone out of the girl, and her hand was flashing towards his holster. *Tricked* after all, eh?—His mind went entirely blank.

Almost at once, it seemed, full consciousness and command over his own muscles returned to him. Automatically, his fingers clenched on—nothing! The blaster was gone from its holster. Simultaneously, he heard the sound of it, like a high wind whistling through a narrow knot-hole. His eyes were still focused on those two tangerine-sized dots at the dune crest and, unbelievingly, he saw one of them explode in a spat of blue-grey smoke. The other dodged down out of sight. He swivelled his eyes and again saw the girl standing beside him, leaning a little for-

ward, blaster at the point, her eyes fixed upon the far dune crest with an intensity which left no consciousness of him.

"Tumbling asteroids, *what* a shot!" he admired.

She did not take her eyes from the dune as she answered, "I told you I could use a blaster."

"I'll say you can, lady! —You can use mine, and I'll go get me some more." He turned to crawl through the sally-port.

He was quickly scrambling out of the port again, with blasters on both hips and one hung by its lanyard about his neck.

HE TOOK the lanyard from about his neck and threw it over her's. "I'll bet you shoot almost as well with the left hand as with the right," he said, "and so, I'll admit, do I. That gives us four shots to their four, huh, when they come again?"

"*If* they come again," she corrected.

"Huh? You think they'll wait for us to come to them? Well, maybe that would be the safer play for them, but I don't think you're right. We could take off and bring down the whole Space Fleet on them. They'll be back to collect us, pronto . . ." He broke off suddenly, and the girl gasped to hear the high wailing note of a blaster.

Her eyes swivelled from him back to the dune, just in time to see the lower arc of a circle blown cleanly from its crest. "Where did that shot come from?" she demanded incredulously.

"From me, lady," he confessed. "You couldn't see because I used my left hand and fired from the hip. I shoot better blind from the left, and there wasn't time to aim. Lucky hit, huh? That's even-Stephen, one for you and one for me!"

"Did you *get* him?" she asked.

"Sure did. Blew off the top half of his head along with that bite in the dune crest. That's the both of them now . . ."

"But there are three more!" she reminded him.

"You are right, of course—and maybe those three are with father right now, trying to worm what they want out of him! —Oh, Art, let's *hurry!*"

He showed all his fine teeth, both at her use of the friendly abbreviation and at the sudden reversal of sentiment, but said only, "Okay, let's get going!"

Both carried blasters in both hands as they moved warily towards the crest of the dune, using the blasted arc as a sight.

Struck by a thought, Terran said, "Hurray for our side—we've already cut 'em down to our size!"

"But there are three of them," she repeated.

"Well, there are three of us, aren't there? If it was your father taught you to use a blaster that way, I wouldn't want any better third man on my side!"

"Father isn't third man, he's *top* man," she told him, but she smiled when she said it, and he grinned back.

"Okay with me, lady . . ." he began, but she broke in impatiently:

"I wish you'd quit calling me 'lady'! My name is Londra Landrey."

"And a very nice name to have," he assured her before getting back to business. "Look, now, where do you suppose the other three of those racketeers are likely to be, about this time? We still have work to do, haven't we?"

She nodded, but gloomily. "I hate all this killing . . ." she began, but he broke her away from that line of thought.

"It's kill or be killed in a pinch like this," he reminded her, "and I see no reason why we should be on the receiving end just because we don't *like* to kill!"

"I'm going to use the old gag of sneaking my space helmet above the dune-crest ahead of our heads," Terran said when they had arrived. "It may work. It nearly always does."

It didn't work on that occasion, because

there was nothing hostile on the other side of the dune. Nor were there any headless corpses. Both had been removed, and the sonic pistol had gone, too.

"Blast!" exploded the captain. "This means they'll be on guard, as well as that we've lost the sonic!"

HE SCANNED the terrain thoughtfully. The long pirate ship lay less than a hundred yards to their right, its nose pushed up into the dune. The starboard sally-port was closed and there was nothing at all in sight between them and the ship, but he knew only too well that there might be, probably would be, observers either at the polished crysteel prow or stern cones or anywhere along the longitudinal polished band where the two halves of the ship had been welded together under almost inconceivable pressure. They couldn't see in because of light refraction, but anyone watching from within could see out almost as clearly as if he were outside.

He didn't like to use his voice, not knowing how far sound vibrations might carry in the watery air, so he gestured to the right and downward, indicating that they would keep the dune-crest above them and slip along till they were just beyond the spot where the prow of the pirate ship touched the dune.

There again, he baited the old trap with the top of his helmet, and again there were no takers. At this point, however, the dune-crest came to so fine a feather-edge that he was able to stir away a tiny observation trough, without either of them having to lift a head above the barrier.

Another, smaller ship—obviously the Landreys'—lay about thirty yards to the right of the long pirate ship, angling a little away from it, with its starboard broadside turned towards their observation point. There was no one in sight between the two ships, though it was obvious that the sand between the two had been trampled again and again. The starboard sally-port of the smaller ship was open, but the shadows within were too deep for them to see more than that.

Through that open port came suddenly the most nerve-wracking sound that human ears can hear—the gurgling scream of a fellow human-being venting unbearable agony!

The sound shattered Londra's nerve. "It's father," she cried, "they are torturing him! Oh, Art, we must help him!"

The captain's jaw set. He sensed that it was a trap, but he knew they couldn't just continue to crouch where they were and wait for repetitions of that tortured scream. "Blasters at the ready in both hands," he snapped, "and come *fast!*"

They were barely over the crest when the sonics caught them, one from each end of the smaller ship. The third pirate must be inside, extorting the scream . . . so far the captain thought, and then he thought no more.

He came back to the consciousness of a man's voice speaking somewhere near him. He was in black darkness but, by twitching his facial muscles, he sensed that he wore a padded blindfold. His hands were bound behind his back, his legs lashed at the ankles and above the knees. He was seated on a flat surface, leaning against a curved one, a quick curve, which he recognized as the side of a small space ship.

"If I had guessed," the voice was saying, "I would have bitten out my tongue before I made a sound; but I thought they were just trying to make me talk, and I thought it better to scream than to do that!" —That must be Londra's father speaking, and this must be the Landrey ship.

"Is Londra there?" he spoke.

"Oh, Art, are you all right?" her voice came back promptly.

"I'm blindfolded and trussed up, if you can call that being all right," he answered.

"So are we all. Father is here, too, and they didn't hurt him badly. Father, this is Captain Arthur Terran of Space Police. Captain, this is my father, Dr. Landrey, Chief Technician for Luna Crysteel."

A MASCULINE chuckle came across to him. "A bit formal, under the circumstances, eh, captain? Wonder what would be my correct response? I can't very well say 'How do you do?' because you've just told us. I can't say I'm 'glad to see you' because I can't see through this blindfold. I can't even say I'm 'glad you're here', though misery is supposed to love company, because I'd much rather you were free and anywhere else but here. Guess I'll just have to fall back on the good old Americanism, 'Glad to meet you!' "

"I'm glad to meet you, too, Dr. Landrey. —What has happened while I've been 'out'?"

"Nothing much," the doctor answered wearily. "They brought you in here shortly after I was fool enough to bait their trap for them, and then they questioned you as to what Londra had told you. You wouldn't answer, and that undoubtedly saved your life because they knew she must have told you something that seemed very important to you, or you would have answered frankly and at once, under the sonic. They asked Londra what she had told you, and she wouldn't answer either. Then they went away after tying and blindfolding both of you. They've had me this way for days, it seems. They left only a minute or so ago. I'm afraid they'll be back soon. Probably gone to get something to eat."

"For us, too, do you suppose?" the captain inquired hopefully. "I could chew on a slab of your new Venusteel, the way I feel now!"

"What's that you say?" the doctor's voice snapped like a whiplash. "What have you been telling him, Londra?"

She answered in her little-girl voice. "I didn't tell him anything, father. I didn't know enough to tell. He *guessed* —about the new plastic, I mean—just from my saying the Rocket-racketeers were after a new plastic you discovered when you cushioned down on your rocket-blasts here on Venus. It was uncanny!"

"I know very little, Dr. Landrey," the captain broke in on the chilly silence, "nor need you worry about the little I do know. I'm on duty, a captain of Space Police, and I neither know or remember anything beyond the line of duty."

"That is as it should be, Captain Terran," the older man replied stiffly. "This process involves billions," he added, a little less stiffly, and a few seconds of silence followed.

The captain broke it to ask, "Are there any more sonic pistols, other than the two in the hands of the pirates?"

"No-o-o," the doctor dragged out his negative. "I made only two in pistol form for hand use. Of course, there is also my experimental set."

"Where?" snapped the captain.

"It is, or was in the port locker in the control cabin forward," the other answered. "But it's barely portable and, in any event—even if the pirates haven't removed or destroyed it—the 'hypnote', as I term the sonic effect, cannot be directed from the experimental set. It broadcasts in all directions, but, within a much more limited range, it is equally effective."

"By golly," breathed the captain, more to himself than to the others, "if only I could get my hands on it!"

"What could you do with it, Art?" Londra inquired.

"I . . . I'd rather not raise your hopes by being too definite," he answered, "but I've studied sonics at S.P.U., of course, and I have the germ of an idea. Maybe it will work, maybe it won't. Anyway, first I shall have to get my hands free. You are all tightly tied, huh?"

"Tight enough to stop the circulation," the doctor answered grumpily, and Londra's report was equally hopeless.

"What is it they've tied us with?" the captain queried, wriggling his wrists in an attempt to feel the material of his bonds. "Not metal, anyway. Feels a bit like old-fashioned rawhide."

"I think that's what it is, or a synthetic similar product," the doctor told him. "They tied me while I had my eyes—and my mind—open. The material looked like strips of rawhide."

"Huh!" grunted the captain. "Ain't *that* a break!"

"A bad break, I would call it," the doctor objected. "Rawhide like this would hold an elephant, or a gorilla anyway!"

"Not if the gorilla had sense enough to use his *teeth* on it!" crowed the captain. . . .

"I'M FREE! My wrists are free!" Londra exulted, after sustained gnawing. She tore away her blindfold, and then theirs. "Have you a knife on your person, Art?"

"There's one in my right side pocket, if they haven't taken it."

They hadn't taken it.

"Just a moment," the captain exclaimed, as he felt her hand emerge from his pocket with its prize. "Don't cut through all the turns of the thongs. Cut just one place and unwind, so we can use the thongs again to make it look as if we were still tied, see? Save the blindfolds, too. We can wear 'em pushed up on our foreheads, ready to whisk down—leaving a chink—and get our hands behind us again, in case those fellows get back before we are ready for them."

"What are we going to do to get ready for them?" the doctor demanded practically, caressing the swollen veins in his forearms and legs.

"Stay right where you are for the time," the captain counselled. "You, too, Londra. Get back down and be ready to look like prisoners again at a moment's notice. I'm going exploring. First, I want some blasters for all three of us to have in our hands behind us. Next, and most important, I want to see whether the experimental sonic is still in that port locker in the control cabin."

Their own blasters, all four of them, had been thrown through the hatch into the rear engineroom. The captain reclaimed them, gave one each to Londra and her father, and stuffed the other two into his own belt. Then he swooped forward into the control cabin.

"He ought to have let me go after that set," the doctor grumbled irritably. "After all, it's my equipment. He'll probably smash something . . ."

"Art knows what he's doing, father!" Londra snapped, her nerves on edge. "He has an idea—let him work it out!"

The doctor subsided, muttering something unintelligible about a serpent's tooth; but at that moment the captain reappeared, stepping as if on eggs, carrying a long narrow base of some black plastic, on which was mounted a bewildering hookup of silvered tubes.

It wasn't bewildering to the doctor. "That's it!" he exclaimed with satisfaction. "It looks all right. What are you planning to do with it?"

The captain answered his question with another. "Since this set broadcasts, is there any danger that the operator would hypnotize himself?"

The doctor chuckled. "I did, the first time I tested it."

"So? What happened?"

"I got a nice three-hour nap, that was all. Then Londra came in, saw what was happening and switched off the set."

"Did you note your own . . . keynote, you call it?"

"Yes, and I know Londra's, too, but why do you ask? Are you thinking of putting either or both of us under control?

You can control only one person at one time, you know. The 'hypnote' must be sounding continuously."

"I want you to put *me* under control," the captain astonished them. "Can you feel around for my keynote without putting yourself under?"

"I think so," the doctor assured him. "My rate was even higher than Londra's, and my judgment would be that you, with your carefully controlled nervous system, will have a lower rate than either of us."

"I should think it would be the other way."

"Well, it isn't!" snapped the older man, and Londra broke in:

"But why do you want father to put you under control, Art? Shouldn't you be the very one to keep alert?"

"If I understand this rig right," the captain explained, "your father can simply order me to *carry out the plan in mind,* after he has me under control, and I would act accordingly. Is that right, sir?"

"The plan in *your* mind, you mean? Hum. Well, yes, I see no reason at all why that should not be perfectly practical, but it would be the same as leaving you a free agent, wouldn't it? What's the sense of it, anyway?"

"Well, you see, sir, I have a hunch. It may not work, and if it doesn't, I'll have to rely on quick action with my blasters . . ."

THE sound of heavy boots clumping down into the gritty sand interrupted to warn them that one of their captors had just jumped down from the sally-port of the larger ship.

"Quick, doctor," the captain exclaimed, setting down the set between Londra and her father, "curve your bodies towards each other to hide this set, as if you had been talking to each other. Let me get back into place and fake my ankle bonds, then get me under control and leave my keynote on. Finally, arrange your own blindfolds and thongs so that you'll look okay to those babies when they come in out of the brighter light."

Clump . . . clump . . . clump, three sets of clumsy space boots sounded through the sand towards the partly-opened sally-port of their prison.

The captain was back in his old place, his head fallen a little forward beneath the loosened blindfold, as if asleep. His long legs stuck straight out in front of him, the thongs wrapped around at ankle and knee as if still securely tied. Londra and her father seemed equally helpless.

The heavy sally-port groaned protestingly under the pull of a hairy hand. At once, the captain began to jerk at his leg bonds.

"I'm getting free," he gurgled, as if unaware of the pirates' approach. The bonds flew apart with a snap. "I'll have my hands free in a moment," he exulted, twisting his shoulders strenuously.

"Get the sonic on him quick!" rasped a voice from behind the one who was now knee-high on the sally-port.

The pistol came to the point in the hairy hand, and, after a second, the captain stiffened out again.

"Got him! Come on in—I'll hold him so he won't hurt you!"

"Cut the comedy, Jim," harshed a taller, less apelike form, following him in. "Come on, Jake," he commanded the last to enter, asserting his leadership. He waved a blaster to accent the order. The last man carried the other sonic.

Then the captain flashed into action, while the one who held the sonic on him let his lower jaw fall in unbelieving amazement, for both hands appeared from behind the back of his supposedly helpless victim, holding blasters. The blaster in the captain's right hand whined, shortly, a snapped-off note. To Londra's horror, the right forearm of the pirate leader thudded to the cabin deck, its blaster still clutched in its fingers.

The captain swivelled his blasters to cover the two men armed only with sonics. "Drop those pistols," he shouted above the agonized howling of his first victim. They obeyed as if the weapons suddenly had glowed white hot.

"Now, Dr. Landrey," crisped the captain, "as Londra picks up the first sonic and shuts it off, you do the same thing at the same second to your set. Is that clear?"

"Oke," gurgled the scientist gleefully, forgetting his dignity for the moment.

"Down on your faces, all three of you!" the captain concluded his crisp commands, enforcing the order with his brace of blasters.

It was obeyed.

LATER, when the two sound men had been trussed up to the captain's taste, and the leader had been anesthetized and his arm dressed, Dr. Landrey's insistent demands for an explanation could no longer be diverted or denied.

"Do you mean to stand there and tell me you know more about the operation of my sonics than I do myself?" he demanded.

"No, sir, no, indeed," the captain disclaimed. "I claim only to have remembered, from my college days, how to stop your sonics from working."

"But, but," protested the scientist, "my sonics are less than three months old. No-one—except on Venus," he conceded with a grin—"ever heard of them before, or could have taught you, in your college, how to render them inoperative!"

"It's the principle of the thing, sir," the captain explained. "You had your experimental set virating at my keynote, and then the first pirate cut in on the same note. The one cancelled out the other. I was certain to be entirely a free agent from the second any one of the pirates cut down on me with a sonic."

"If you were so certain," Londra put in reproachfully, "why couldn't you have let us in on the secret?"

The captain grinned. "Oh, I wasn't so certain as all that," he conceded. "I'd heard the principle, but I'd never seen it demonstrated. Why, your father has just told us the sonic pistol has only been invented less than three months. I had to take a chance that the principle really was a principle."

"What if it hadn't worked, captain?" Dr. Landrey cut in grimly.

"Well, in that case, we would have had to kill them!"

"Will you *stop* talking about killing people!" commanded Londra, but with admiration in her voice.

The captain grinned at her again, boyishly. "All right, let's talk about feeding people instead of killing them. Three people, Us!"

"Can't feed people with talk!" Londra gave him back his grin and then vanished into the forward cabin where the food was stored.

"Captain Terran," her father began gravely when she had gone, "I have a proposition to make to you. Luna Crysteel is going to need a powerful police force of its own, in developing this discovery and shipping material to the plant on the moon. Will you organize and head that corps? I'd like to know that you are in charge if we run into more trouble, as well we may with billions at stake. Londra would like it, too, I'm sure."

The captain's eyes went forward to focus expectantly on the girl, as she returned carrying a loaded tray.

She nodded. "I heard what father said, and I'm all for it, Art!"

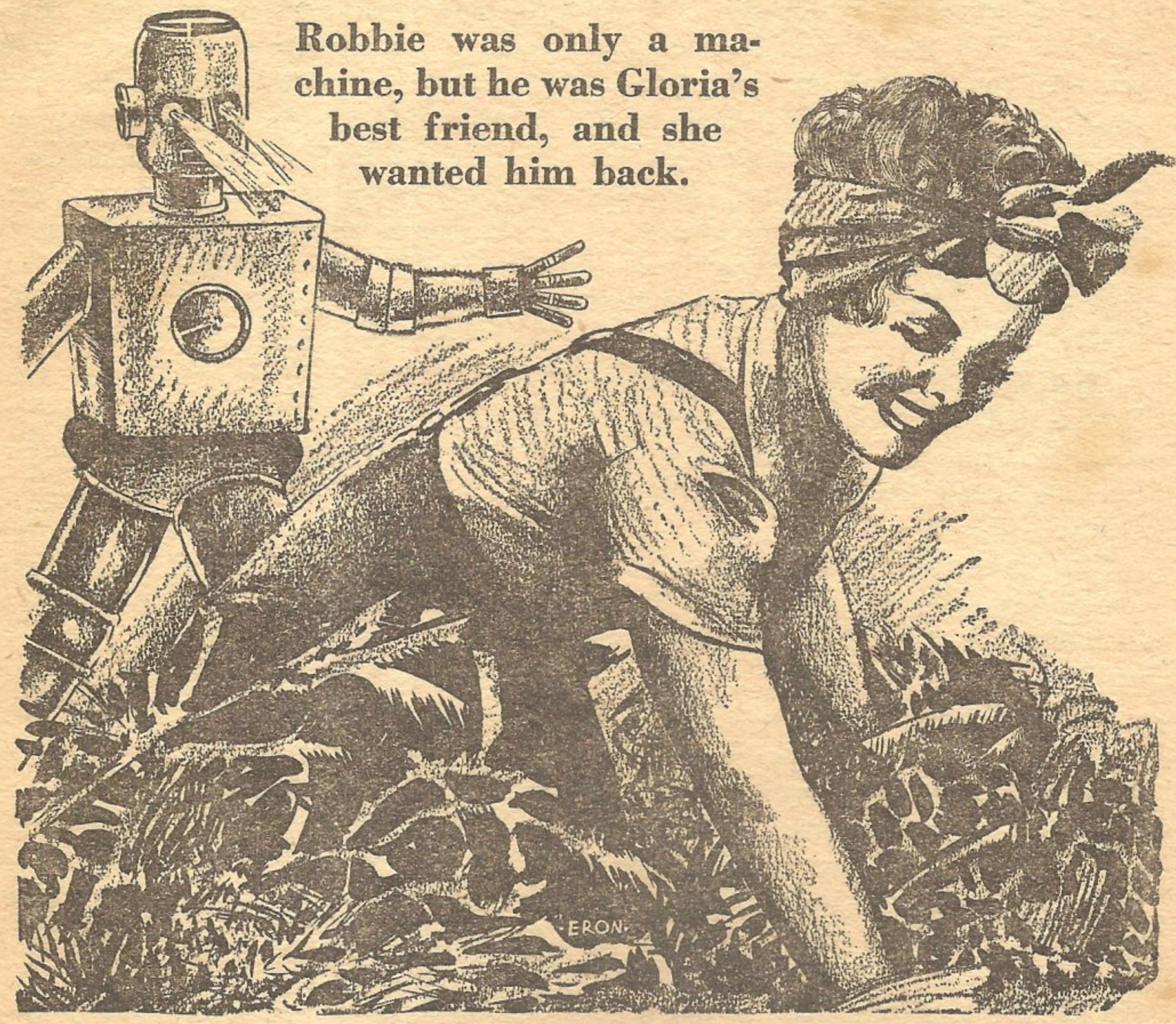
"Well, if you can stand having me practically in your hair, I'm for it, too," the captain agreed.

"But when do we eat?" he added plaintively.

THE END

STRANGE PLAYFELLOW

Robbie was only a machine, but he was Gloria's best friend, and she wanted him back.



By ISAAC ASIMOV

"NINETY - eight — ninety - nine —one hundred."

Gloria withdrew her chubby little forearm from before her eyes and stood for a moment, wrinkling her nose and blinking in the sunlight. Then, she gazed about her carefully and withdrew a few cautious streps from the tree against which she had been leaning.

She craned her neck to investigate the possibilities of a clump of bushes to the right and then withdrew further to obtain a better angle for viewing its dark recesses. The quiet was profound except for the incessant buzzing of insects and the occasional chirrup of some hardy bird, braving the midday sun.

Gloria pouted. "I'll bet he went inside the house, and I've told him a million times that that's not fair." With tiny lips pressed together tightly and a severe frown crinkling her forehead, she moved determinedly towards the two-story building off on the other side of the fence.

Too late, she heard a rustling sound behind her, followed by the distinctive and rhythmic clump-clump of Robbie's metal feet. She whirled about to see her traitorous companion emerge from hiding and

make for the "home" tree at full speed.

Gloria shrieked in dismay. "Wait, Robbie! That wasn't fair, Robbie! You promised you wouldn't run before I found you." Her little feet could make no headway at all against Robbie's giant strides. Then, within ten feet of "home," Robbie's pace suddenly slowed to the merest of crawls, and Gloria with one final burst of wild speed touched the welcome bark of "home" first.

Gleefully, she turned on the faithful Robbie, and with the basest of ingratitude rewarded him for his sacrifice, by taunting him cruely for a lack of running ability.

"Robbie can't run," she shouted at the top of her eight-year-old voice. "I can beat him any day. He's a *terrible* runner!"

Robbie didn't answer—because he couldn't. In spite of all science could do, it was still impossible to equip robots with phonographic attachments of sufficient complexity—not without sacrificing mobility. Consequently, he contented himself with punishing the little girl by snatching her up in the air and whirling her about till she begged to be put down again.

"Anyway, Robbie, it's my turn to hide now," she insisted seriously, "because you've got longer legs and you promised not to run till I found you."

Robbie nodded his head—a small parallelepiped with rounded edges and corners attached to a similar but much larger parallelepiped that served as torso, by means of a short, flexible stalk—and obediently faced the tree. A thin, metal film descended over his glowing eyes and from within his body came a steady metallic clicking—for all the world like a metronome counting off the seconds.

"Don't peak now—and don't skip any numbers," and Gloria scurried for cover.

With unvarying regularity, seconds were ticked off, and at the hundredth, up went the eyelids, and the glowing red of Robbie's eyes swept the prospect. They rested for a moment on a bit of colorful gingham that protruded from behind a boulder. He advanced a few steps and convinced himself that it was Gloria who squatted behind it. Thereupon one tentacle slapped against his gleaming metal chest with a resounding clang and another pointed straight at the boulder. Gloria emerged sulkily.

"You peeked!" she exclaimed with gross unfairness. "Besides I'm tired of playing hide-and-seek. I want a ride."

BUT Robbie was hurt at the unjust accusation, so he seated himself carefully and shook his head ponderously from side to side.

Gloria changed her tone to one of gentle coaxing immediately, "Come on, Robbie. I didn't mean it about the peeking. Give me a ride."

Robbie was not to be won over so easily, though. He gazed stubbornly at the sky, and shook his head even more emphatically.

"Please, Robbie, please give me a ride." She encircled his neck with rosy arms and hugged tightly. Then, changing with the suddenness of a determined child, she moved away. "If you don't, I'm going to cry," and her face twisted into an appalling position.

Hard-hearted Robbie paid scant attention to this dreadful prospect, and shook his head a third time, albeit not quite so energetically, and Gloria found it necessary to play her trump card.

"If you don't," she exclaimed warmly, "I won't tell you any more fairy tales, so there!"

Robbie gave in immediately and unconditionally before this ultimatum and nodded his head vigorously until the metal of his neck hummed. Carefully, he raised the little girl and placed her on his broad, flat shoulders.

Gloria's threatened tears vanished immediately and she crowed with delight. Robbie's metal skin, kept at the constant temperature of seventy degrees by the high resistance coils within, felt nice and comfortable and the beautifully loud sound her heels made as they bumped rhythmically against his chest was enchanting.

"I knew you'd let me ride for the fairy tales, Robbie," she giggled. "I knew it." She grasped him about the head and began bouncing up and down, going through the immemorial rites of the pick-a-back.

"Faster, Robbie, faster," and the robot increased his speed until the vibration forced Gloria's happy laughter out in convulsive jerks. Clear across the field he sped, to the patch of tall grass on the other side, where he stopped with a suddenness that evoked a shriek from his flushed rider, and tumbled her onto the soft, natural carpet.

Gloria gasped and panted and gave voice to intermittent whispered exclamations of "That was *nice!*"

Robbie waited until she had caught her breath and then lifted a tentacle with which he gently pulled her hair—a sign that he wished her attention.

"What do you want, Robbie?" she asked roguishly, pretending an artless perplexity, that fooled the wise Robbie not at all. He only pulled one golden curl the harder.

"Oh, I know! You want a story," Robbie nodded rapidly. "Which one?" Robbie curled one tentacular finger into a semi-circle. "But I've told you Cinderella a million times. Aren't you tired of it?" The semi-circle persisted.

"Oh well," Gloria composed herself, ran over the details of the tale in her mind (together with her own elaborations, of which she had several) and began.

"Are you ready? Well—once upon a time there was a beautiful little girl whose name was Ella. And she had a terribly cruel step-mother and two very ugly and *very* cruel step-sisters and—"

GLORIA was reaching the very climax of the tale—midnight was striking and everything was changing back to the shabby originals lickety-split—when the interruption came.

"Gloria!" It was the high-pitched sound of a woman who has been calling not once, but several times; and had the nervous tone of one in whom anxiety was beginning to overcome impatience.

"Mamma's calling me," said Gloria, not quite happily. "Carry me back to the house, Robbie."

Robbie obeyed with alacrity for somehow there was that in him which judged it best to obey Mrs. Weston, without as much as a scrap of hesitation. Gloria's father was rarely home in the daytimes except on Sunday—today, for instance—and when he was, he proved a genial and understanding person. Gloria's mother, however, was a source of uneasiness to Robbie and there was always the impulse to sneak away from her sight.

Mrs. Weston caught sight of them the minute they rose above the masking tufts of long grass and retired inside the house to wait.

"I've shouted myself hoarse, Gloria," she said, severely. "Where were you?"

"I was with Robbie," quavered Gloria. "I was telling him Cinderella, and I forgot it was dinner-time."

"Well, it's a pity Robbie forgot, too." Then, as if that reminded her of the robot's presence, she whirled towards him. "You may go, Robbie. She doesn't need you now." Then, brutally, "And don't come back till I call you."

Robbie turned to go, but hesitated as Gloria cried out in his defense. "Let him stay, Mamma, please let him stay. I want to finish Cinderella for him."

"Gloria!"

"Honest and truly, Mamma, he'll stay so quiet, you won't even know he's here. Won't you, Robbie?"

Robbie nodded his massive head up and down once, in manifest fear of the autocratic woman before him.

"Gloria, if you don't stop this at once," you shan't see Robbie for a whole week."

The girl's eyes fell, "All right! But Cinderella is his favorite story and I didn't finish it. —And he likes it so much."

The robot left with a disconsolate step and Gloria choked back a sob.

GEORGE WESTON was comfortable. It was a habit of his to be comfortable on Sunday afternoons. A good, hearty dinner stowed away; a nice, soft, dilapidated couch on which to scrawl; a copy of the Times; slippered feet and shirtles chest;—how could anyone *help* but be comfortable?

He wasn't pleased, therefore, when his wife walked in. After ten years of married life, he still was so unutterably foolish as to love her, and there was no question that he was always glad to see her—still Sunday afternoons just after dinner were sacred to him and his idea of solid comfort was to be left in utter solitude for two or three hours. Consequently, he fixed his eye firmly upon the latest reports of the Douglas expedition to the Moon (which looked as if it might actually succeed) and pretended she wasn't there.

Mrs. Weston waited patiently for two minutes, then impatiently for two more, and finally broke the silence.

"George!"

"Hmpph!"

"George, I say! *Will* you put down that paper and look at me?"

The paper rustled to the floor and Weston turned a weary face towards his wife, "What is it, dear?"

"You know what it is, George. It's Gloria and that terrible machine."

"What terrible machine?"

"Now don't pretend you don't know what I'm talking about. It's that robot Gloria calls Robbie. He doesn't leave her for a moment."

"Well, why should he? He's not supposed to. And he certainly isn't a terrible machine. He's the best darn robot money can buy and Lord knows he's set me back half a year's income. He's worth it, too—darn sight cleverer, he is, than half my office staff."

He made a move to pick up the paper again, but his wife was quicker and snatched it away.

"You listen to *me,* George. I won't have my daughter entrusted to a machine —and I don't care how clever it is. It has no soul, and no one knows what it may be thinking. It's ungodly, that's what it is. A child just isn't *made* to be guarded by a thing of metal."

"Dear! A robot is infinitely more to be trusted than a human nurse-maid. Robbie was constructed for only one purpose—to be the companion of a little child. His entire 'mentality' has been created for the purpose. He just can't help being faithful and loving and kind. He's a machine—*made so.*"

"Yes, but something might go wrong. Some—some," Mrs. Weston was a bit hazy about the insides of a robot, "some little jigger will come loose and the awful thing will go berserk and—and—" She couldn't bring herself to complete the quite obvious thought.

"Nonsense," Weston denied, with an involuntary nervous shiver. "He was constructed by the most reliable firm in the world and guaranteed for six months without overhauling, and you *know* I have Johnston here every week to go through him with a microscope. Johnson is an expert Roboticist and he'll swear to you that there's no more chance of Rob-

bie going mad than there is of you or I suddenly going looney—less, in fact. Besides, Gloria is crazy about him and it would just about kill her to part with him." He made another futile stab at the paper and his wife tossed it angrily into the next room.

"That's just it, George! She won't play with anyone else. Lord knows, there are dozens of little boys and girls that she should make friends with, but she won't. She won't go *near* them unless I make her. That's no way for a little girl to grow up. You want her to be normal, don't you?"

"You're jumping at shadows, Grace. Pretend Robbie's a dog. I've seen hundreds of children no less crazy about their pets."

"A dog is different. George, we *must* get rid of that horrible thing. You can easily sell it back to the company."

"That's *out,* Grace, and I don't want to hear of it again. You'd better stop reading Frankenstein—if that's what you've been doing."

And with that he walked out of the room in a huff.

AND yet he loved his wife—and what was worse, his wife knew it. George Weston, after all, was only a man—poor thing—and his wife made full use of every art and wile which a clumsier and more scrupulous sex has learned from time immemorial to fear.

Ten times in the ensuing week, he would cry, "Robbie stays,—and that's *final!*" and each time it was weaker and accompanied by a louder and more agonized groan.

Came the day at last, when Weston approached his daughter guiltily and suggested a "beautiful" visivox show in the village.

Gloria clapped her hands happily, "Can Robbie go?"

"No, dear," and how his conscience did twinge, "they won't allow robots at the visivox—and besides you can tell him all about it when you get home." He stumbled over the last few words and decided within himself that he made a terribly poor liar.

Gloria came back from town bubbling over with enthusiasm, for the visivox had been a gorgeous spectacle indeed, and the antics of the famous comic, Francis Fran amid the fierce "leopard-men of the Moon" had evoked delightfully hysterical bursts of laughter.

She ran into the house joyously and stopped suddenly at the sight of a beautiful collie which regarded her out of serious brown eyes as it wagged its tail on the porch.

"Oh, what a nice dog." Gloria approached cautiously and patted it. "Is it for me, daddy?"

Weston cleared his throat miserably, and wondered whether the substitution would do any good, "Yes, dear!"

"Oh—! Thank you very much, daddy." Then, turning precipitously, she ran down the basement steps, shouting as she went, "Oh Robbie! Come and see what daddy's brought me, Robbie."

In a minute she had returned, a frightened little girl. "Mamma, Robbie isn't in his room. Where is he?" There was no answer and George Weston coughed and suddenly seemed to be extremely interested in an aimlessly-drifting cloud. Gloria's voice quavered on the verge of tears, "Where's Robbie, Mamma?"

Mrs. Weston sat down and drew her daughter gently to her. "Don't feel bad, Gloria. Robbie has—gone away."

"Gone *away?* Where? Where's he gone away, Mamma?"

"No one knows, darling. He just walked away. We've looked and we've looked and we've looked for him, but we can't find him."

"You mean I'll never see him again?" Her eyes were round in horror.

"We may find him some day, and meanwhile, you can play with your nice new doggie. Look at him! His name is Lightning and he can—"

But Gloria's eyelids had overflown, "I don't want the nasty dog—I want Robbie. I want you to find me Robbie." Her feelings became too deep for words, and she spluttered into a shrill wail.

Mrs. Weston glanced at her husband for help, but he merely shuffled his feet morosely and did not withdraw his ardent stare from the heavens, so she bent to the task of consolation. "Why do you cry, Gloria? Robbie was only a machine, just a nasty old machine. He wasn't alive at all."

"He was *not* no machine!" cried Gloria, fiercely and ungrammatically. "He was a *person* just like you and me and he was *nice.* I liked him and I want him back again."

Her voice rose to a scream, "He was *not* no nasty machine!"

Her mother groaned in defeat and left Gloria to her sorrow.

"Let her have her cry out," she told her husband. "Childish griefs are never lasting. In a few days, she'll forget that awful robot ever existed."

BUT time proved Mrs. Weston a bit too optimistic. To be sure, Gloria ceased crying, but she ceased smiling, too, and the passing days seemed but to increase the inner hurt. Gradually, her attitude of passive unhappiness wore Mrs. Weston down and all that kept her from yielding was the impossibility of admitting defeat to her husband.

Then, one evening, she flounced into the living room, sat down, folded her arms and looked boiling mad.

Her husband stretched his neck in order to see her over his newspaper, "What now, Grace?"

"It's that child, George. I've had to send back the dog today. Gloria positively couldn't stand the sight of him. She's driving me into a nervous breakdown."

Weston laid down the paper and a hopeful gleam entered his eye, "Maybe—maybe we ought to get Robbie back. It might be done, you know. I can get in touch with—"

"No!" she replied grimly. "I won't hear of it. We're not giving up that easily. My child shall *not* be brought up by a robot if it takes years to break her of it."

Weston picked up his paper again with a disappointed air, "A year of this will have me prematurely grey. Look," he dropped the paper a second time and pulled at a lock of hair, "count the silver tresses."

"Don't be funny, George," was the frigid answer, "You always were pretty poor as a wit. What Gloria needs is a change of environment. Of course she can't forget Robbie here. How can she when every tree and rock reminds her of him? It is really the *silliest* situation I have ever heard of. Imagine a child pining away for the loss of a robot."

"Well, stick to the point! What are you going to do now?"

"We're going to take her to New York."

"The city! In August! Say, do you know what New York is like in August! It's bad enough I have to be there eight hours a day. No ma'am! We don't leave for any city until October."

"And I say we're leaving now—as soon as we can make the arrangements. In the city, Gloria will find sufficient interests and sufficient friends to perk her up and make her forget that machine."

"Oh, Lord," groaned the lesser half, "back to the frying pavements."

"You'll have to," was the unshaken response. "Gloria has lost five pounds in the last month and my little girl's health is more important to me than your comfort."

"It's a pity you didn't think of your little girl's health before you deprived her of her pet robot," he muttered—but to himself.

GLORIA displayed immediate signs of improvement when told of the impending trip to the city. She spoke little of it, but when she did it was always with lively anticipation. Again, she began to smile, and to eat with something of her former appetite.

Mrs. Weston hugged herself for joy and lost no opportunity to triumph over her still skeptical husband.

"You see, George, she helps with the packing like a little angel, and chatters away as if she hadn't a care in the world. It's just as I told you—all we need do, is substitute other interests."

"Hmpph," was the skeptical response. "I hope so."

The preliminaries were gone through quickly—arrangements made for the preparation of their city home and a couple engaged as housekeepers for the country home. When the day of the trip finally did come, Gloria was all but her old self again, and no mention of Robbie passed her lips at all.

In high good-humor, the family drove down to the airport—Weston would have preferred using his own private autogiro, but it was only a two-seater with no room for baggage—and enter the waiting liner.

"Come, Gloria," called Mrs. Weston, "I've saved you a seat near the window so you can watch the scenery."

Gloria trotted down the aisle cheerily, flattened her nose into a white oval against the thick clear glass, and watched with an intentness that increased as the sudden coughing of the motor drifted backward into the interior. She was too young to be frightened when the ground dropped away as it let through a trapdoor and she herself suddenly became twice her usual weight, but not too young to be mightily interested. It wasn't until the ground had changed into a tiny patchwork quilt, that she withdrew her nose, and faced her mother again.

"Will we soon be in the city, Mamma?" she asked, rubbing her chilled nose, and watching with interest the slowly shrinking patch of moisture which her breath had formed on the pane.

"In less than an hour, dear." Then, with just the faintest trace of anxiety, "Aren't you glad we're going? Don't you think you'll be very happy in the city with all the buildings and people. We'll go to the visivox every day and see shows and go to the circus and the beach and—"

"Yes, Mamma," was Gloria's unenthusiastic rejoinder. The liner passed over a bank of clouds at the moment, and Gloria was instantly absorbed in the unusual spectacle of clouds underneath one. Then they were over clear sky again, and she turned to her mother with a sudden mysterious air of secret knowledge.

"I know why we're going to the city, Mamma."

"Do you?" Mrs. Weston was puzzled. "Why, dear?"

"You didn't tell me because you wanted it to be a surprise, but *I* know." For a moment, she was lost in admiration at her own acute penetration, and then she laughed gaily. "We're going to New York so we can find Robbie, aren't we?"

The statement caught George Weston in the middle of a much-needed drink of water, with disastrous results. There was a sort of strangled gasp, a geyser of water, and then a bout of choking coughs. When all was over, he stood there, a red-faced, water-drenched, and very, very annoyed person.

Mrs. Weston maintained her composure, but when Gloria repeated her question in a more anxious tone of voice, she found her temper rather bent.

"Maybe," she retorted tartly. "Now sit and be still, for Heaven's sake."

NEW YORK CITY, in this good year of 1982, is quite a place for an eight-year-old girl,—especially for one who has spent most of her short life on a farm. Gloria's parents realized this and made the most of it.

It was on direct orders of his wife, then, that George Weston arranged to have his business take care of itself for a month or so, in order to be free to spend the time in what he termed "blowing Gloria to a high old celebration." Like everything else Weston did, this was gone about in an efficient, thorough, and busines-like way. Before the month had passed, there remained not a sight or a highlight to the city, which could conceivably delight a child, that had not been introduced to Gloria.

All that could be done had been done. She was taken to the top of the half-mile-tall Roosevelt Building, to gaze down in awe upon the jagged panorama of rooftops, far off to where they blended into the fields of Long Island and New Jersey. They visited the zoos where Gloria stared in delicious fright at the "real live lion" (rather disappointed that the keepers fed him raw steaks, instead of human beings, as she had expected), and asked insistently and peremptorily to see "the whale."

The various museums came in for their share of attention, together with the parks and the beaches and the aquarium.

She was taken half way up the Hudson in an excursion steamer fitted out in the delicious old-fashioned style of the "gay Twenties." She travelled into the stratosphere on an exhibition trip, where the sky turned deep purple and the stars came out and the misty earth below looked like a huge concave bowl. Down under the waters of the Long Island Sound, she was taken in a glass-walled sub-sea vessel, where in a green and wavering world, quaint and curious sea-things ogled her and wiggled slowly to and fro.

In fact, when the month had nearly sped the Westons were convinced that everything conceivable had been done to take Gloria's mind once and for all off the departed Robbie—but they were not quite sure they had succeeded.

The fact remained that wherever Gloria went, she displayed the most absorbed and concentrated interest in such robots as happened to be present. No matter how exciting the spectacle before her, nor how delightful to her girlish eyes, everything was dropped the moment a clanking humanoid machine passed.

Noticing this, Mrs. Weston went out of her way to keep Gloria away from all robots. In this, she was helped greatly by the City Law of 1963 which prohibited "automatic mechanical men" from appearing in the city streets except in a closed vehicle driven by a human being. However, the prevalence of robots in almost all buildings proved to be very annoying. This was particularly true in the case of the visivox theatres, all the more elaborate of which boasted robot ushers.

IT WAS the episode at the Museum of Science and Industry, though, that finally convinced Mrs. Weston that all her arts and wiles did not seem to prevail against this love of a child for her nurse and companion—machine though it was.

The Museum had announced a special "children's program" in which exhibits of scientific legerdemain were displayed specifically calculated to attract the child mind. Realizing that attendance there would prove both educational and entertaining for Gloria, the Westons placed it upon their list of "musts."

It was while she was standing totally absorbed in the exploits of a powerful

electro-magnet (which proved later to have ruined Mr. Weston's heirloom of a watch) that Mrs. Weston suddenly became aware of the fact that Gloria was no longer with her. Initial panic gave way to calm decision and, enlisting the aid of three attendants, the Westons began a careful search.

Gloria was not one to wander aimlessly, however. For her age, she was an unusually determined and purposeful girl, taking after her self-willed mother in that respect. She had seen a huge sign on the third floor, which had said "This Way to see the Talking Robot." Having spelled it out to herself and having noticed that her parents did not seem to wish to move in the proper direction, she determined to see it for herself. Consequently, seizing an opportune moment of parental distraction, she calmly disengaged herself and followed the sign.

The "talking Robot" as a scientific achievement left much to be desired. It sprawled its unwieldy mass of wires and coils through twenty-five square yards, and every robotical function had been subordinated to vital attribute of speech. It worked,—and was in this respect quite a victory—but as yet, it could translate only the simpler and more concrete thoughts into words. Certainly, it was not half so clever as Robbie in Gloria's opinion—and with all the latter's speechlessness, it probably wasn't.

Gloria watched it silently for a while, waiting for the two or three who watched with her to depart. Then, when she stood there alone for the moment, she asked hurriedly, "Have you seen Robbie, Mr. Robot, sir?" She was not quite sure how polite one must be to a robot that could talk.

There was an oily whir of gears, and a metallically-timbered voice boomed out in words that lacked accent and intonation, "Who—is—Robbie?"

"He's a robot, Mr. Robot, sir. Just like you, you know, only he can't talk, of course."

"A—robot—like—me?"

"Yes, Mr. Robot, sir."

But the talking robot's only response to this was an erratic splutter and occasional incoherent sound. The conception of other robots like him had stalled his "thinking" engine, for he had not the mental complexity to grasp the conception.

Gloria was still waiting, with carefully concealed impatience, for the machine's answer when she heard the cry behind her of "There she is," and recognized that cry as her mother's.

"What are you doing here, you bad girl?" cried Mrs. Weston, anxiety dissolving at once into anger. "Do you know you frightened your Mamma and Daddy almost to death? Why did you run away?"

"I only came to see the talking robot, mamma. I thought he might know where Robbie was because they're both robots." And then, as the thought of Robbie was suddenly brought forcefully home to her, bust into a sudden storm of tears, "And oh, Mamma, I do want to see Robbie again. I miss him like *anything.*"

Her mother gave forth a strangled cry, more than half a sob, and cried to her husband, "Come home, George. This is more than I can stand."

THAT night, George Weston left on a mysterious errand with regard to which he was unusually reticent, and the next morning, he approached his wife with something that looked suspiciously like smug complacence.

"I've got an idea, Grace."

"About what?" was the gloomy, uninterested query.

"About Gloria."

"Well, go ahead. I might as well listen to you. Nothing I've done seems to have done any good. But remember, I will *not*

consent to buying back that awful robot." "Of course not. That's understood. However, here's what I've been thinking. The whole trouble with Gloria is that she thinks of Robbie as a *person* and not as a *machine*. Naturally, she can't forget him. Now if we managed to convince her that Robbie was nothing more than a mess of steel and copper in the form of sheets and wires with electricity its juice of life, how long would this aberration last?"

Mrs. Weston frowned in thought, "It sounds good, but how are you going to do it?"

"Simple. Where do you suppose I was last night? I persuaded old Finmark of the Finmark Robot Corporation to arrange for a complete tour of his premises tomorrow. The three of us will go, and by the time we're through, Gloria will have it drilled into her that a robot is *not* alive."

His wife's eyes widened gradually as the excellence of the plan dawned upon her and something glinted in them that was quite like awed admiration. "Why, George, how *did* you manage to think of that?"

Weston's chest expanded several inches as he basked in her open adulation.

"I can hardly wait," there was a gleam of determination in Mrs. Weston's eye. "Gloria is not going to miss a step of the process. We'll settle this once and for all."

MR. STRUTHERS was a conscientous General Manager and naturally inclined to be a bit talkative. The combination therefore, resulted in a tour that was fully explained—perhaps even overabundantly explained—at every step. In spite of this, Mrs. Weston was not bored. Indeed, she stopped him several times and begged him to repeat his statements in simpler language so that Gloria might understand. Under the influence of this appreciation of his narrative powers, Mr. Struthers expanded genially and became even more communicative—if possible.

Weston, himself, displayed an odd impatience, nevertheless—an almost angry impatience.

"Pardon me, Struthers," he broke in suddenly, in the midst of a lecture on the photo-electric cell, "haven't you a section of the factory where only robot labor is employed?"

"Eh? Oh, yes! Yes, indeed!" He smiled at Mrs. Weston, "A vicious circle in a way—robots creating more robots. However we are not intending to make a general practice of it. We turn out a very few robots using robot labor exclusively, merely as a sort of scientific curiosity. You see," he tapped his pince-nez into one palm argumentatively, "the robot factories of the country are cooperating with the government—"

"Yes, yes, Struthers, I once heard you make a speech on 'Robots and the Future of the Human Being.' It was very interesting, I assure you. But about that section of the factory you speak of—may we see it? It would be a most interesting experience."

"Yes! Yes, of course." Mr. Struthers replaced his pince-nez in one convulsive movement and gave vent to a soft cough of discomfiture. "Follow me, please."

He was comparatively quiet, while leading the three through a long corridor and down a flight of stairs. Then, when they had entered a large well-lit room, that buzzed with metallic activity, the sluices opened and the flood of explanation poured forth again.

"There you are," he said in part, and with quite a bit of pride in his voice. "Robots only! Five men act as overseers and they don't even stay in this room. In five years, ever since we began this project, not a single accident has occurred. Of course, very few robots here are intelligent. . . ."

The General Manager's voice had long

died to a rather soothing murmur in Gloria's ears. The whole trip seemed rather dull and pointless to her, though there *were* many robots in sight. None were even remotely like Robbie, though, and she surveyed them with open contempt.

Her eyes fell upon six or seven robots busily engaged about a round table half way across the room. They widened in incredulous surprise. One of the robots looked like—looked like—*it was!*

"ROBBIE!" Her shiek pierced the air, and one of the robots about the table faltered and dropped the tool he was holding. Gloria went almost mad with joy. Squeezing through the railing before either parent could stop her, she dropped lightly to the floor a few feet below, and ran toward her Robbie, arms waving and hair flying.

And the three horrified adults, as they stood frozen in their tracks, saw what the excited little girl did not see—a huge, lumbering tractor bearing blindly down upon its appointed track.

It took split-seconds for Weston to come to his sense, but those split-seconds meant everything, for Gloria could not be overtaken. Although Weston vaulted the railing in a wild attempt, he knew it was hopeles. Mr. Struthers signalled wildly to the overseers to stop the tractor, but the overseers were only human and it took time to act.

It was only Robbie that acted immediately and with precision.

With metal legs eating up the space between himself and his little mistress he charged down from the opposite direction. Everything then happened at once. With one sweep of an arm, Robbie snatched up Gloria, slackening his speed not one iota, and, consequently, knocking every breath of air out of her. Weston, not quite comprehending all that was happening, felt rather than saw Robbie brush past him, and came to a sudden, bewildered halt. The tractor intersected Gloria's path, half a second after Robbie had, rolled on ten feet further and came to a grinding, long-drawn-out halt.

Gloria finally regained her breath, submitted to a series of passionate hugs on the part of both parents and turned eagerly towards Robbie. As far as she was concerned, nothing had happened except that she had found her robot.

Mrs. Weston regained her composure rather quickly, aided by a sudden suspicion that struck her. She turned to her husband, and, despite her disheveled and undignified appearance, managed to look quite formidable. "*You* engineered this, *didn't* you?"

George Weston swabbed at a hot, perspiring forehead with his handkerchief. His hand was none-too-steady, and his lips curved in a tremulous and exceedingly weak smile, "But Grace, I had no idea the reunion would be so violent."

Weston watched her keenly, and ventured a further remark, "Anyway, you can't deny Robbie has saved her life. You can't send him away now."

His wife thought it over. It was a bit difficult to keep up her anger. She turned towards Gloria and Robbie and watched them abstractedly for a moment. Gloria had a grip about the robot's neck that would have asphyxiated any creature but one of metal, and was prattling nonsense in half-hysterical frenzy. Robbie's chrome-steel arms (capable of bending a bar of steel two inches in diameter into a pretzel) wound about the little girl gently and lovingly, and his eyes glowed a deep, deep red.

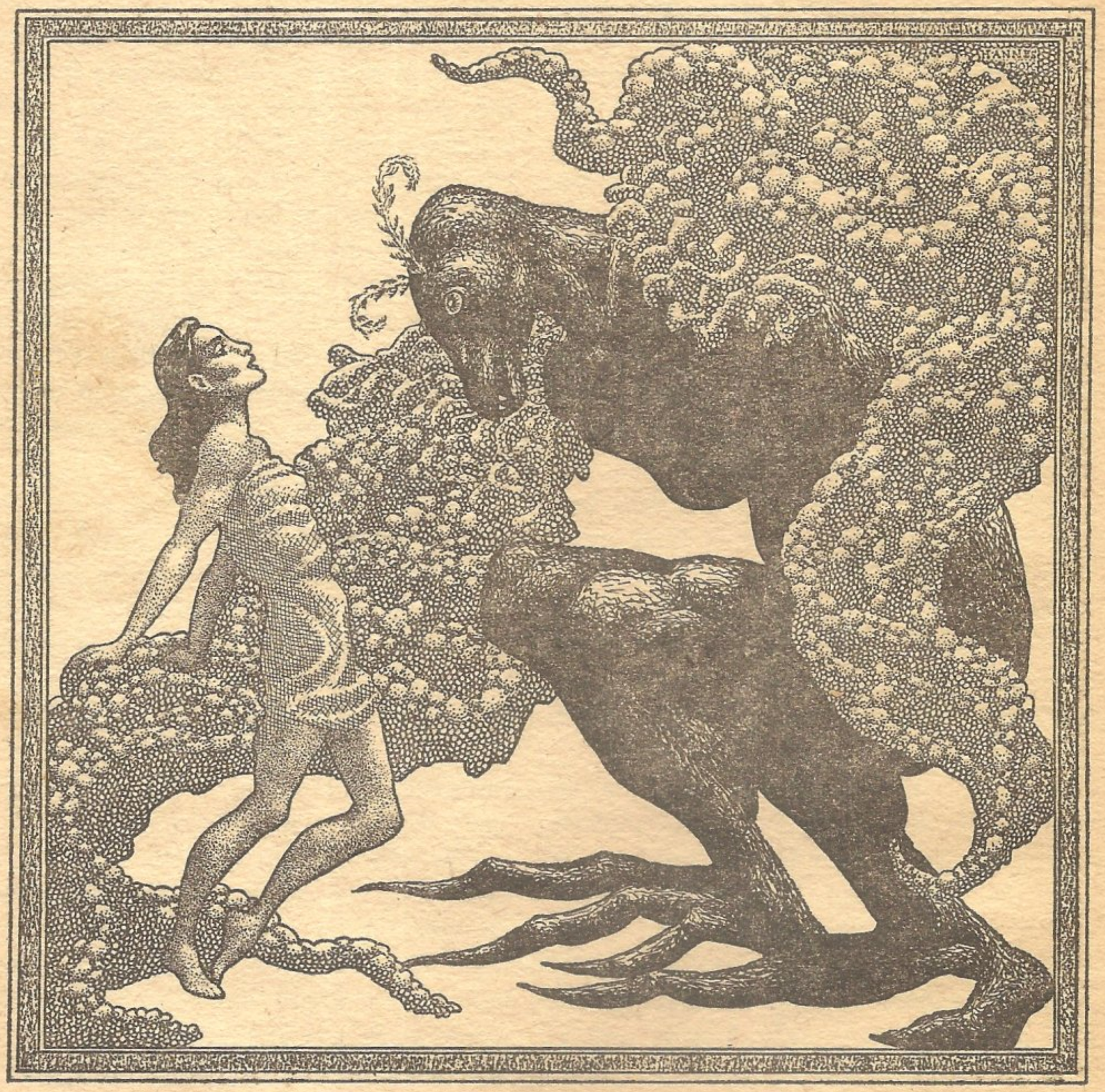
Mrs. Weston's anger faded still further, and she became almost genial.

"Well," she breathed at last, smiling in spite of herself. "I guess Robbie can stay with us until he rusts, for all I care."

THE END

VENUSIAN TRAGEDY

Udeen was marooned more thoroughly than any shipwrecked mariner of Earth—and the only sources of companionship he had were the monstrous, anamorphic Volons.



By MAX C. SHERIDAN

CHAPTER I

Boredom

GREY shadows danced like animate veils in the dusky murk above Venucity; great formless patches of altered darkness which wove a melody of restless movement against the opalescent haze of mile on endless mile of cloud-banked sky.

The low oval domes of the Earth colony shelters were but vague knolls in a world that guarded its myriad of enigmas with a jealous shroud of secrecy.

Dale Udeen flattened his nose against

the thick convex glassite of the Button's sole window, and his grey eyes squinted in an unsuccessful effort to pierce the curtain of eternal mist.

To add to the watcher's visual troubles, darker wisps of semi-substance pirouetted and gyrated against the vast grey screen like strange mischievous imps dancing with malicious glee.

Udeen stared silently into the nebulous haze, impatiently following one, then another of the perverse shadows which hovered elusively at the very boundary between obscurity and vision.

At last, he turned from the window with a frustrated oath, and his clear-cut features twisted in the grimace of a petulant child.

"DAMN it, Cap!" he complained, turning to watch his grizzled companion's complacent study of a fat book and his contented puffing on a battered briar. "Do I have to sit here in this stinking button of a house, and do nothing but read and read—and watch you sit at that packing-case desk, smoking that rotten hod till the smoke is as thick as the air outside? I came to Venus for adventure! For the romance of the skys, for the mysteries and wonders of a far-flung world as yet almost untouched by the foot of Man!

"—And what do I get?" Udeen's lips twisted in a sneer. "I get thirty-three days of hell in a rotten little rocket ship filled with foul air, putrid food,—and space-sick men! Romance of the skys—bah!"

Udeen spat disgustedly. "And then what? —Just forty-six days more of monotonous existence in this two by four 'button' that the citizens—all twenty of them—of metropolitan Venucity dignify by the name 'house'!"

"Cap" Armstrong looked up from his book, and his delft-blue eyes twinkled with amusement.

"Easy does it, boy," he chided. "That makes, uh—seventy-nine days since you brushed the dust of Mother Earth from your cloven hooves. If you continue to lose your patience at the current rate, you'll be hopelessly bankrupt before winter. Just take it easy, and think about all the things we're going to see and do when the winter equinoxial precipitates a little of Venus' famed water-vapor."

The grizzled veteran looked up at the younger man with an infectious grin, and winked. "I'll guarantee you'll be able to see as much as fifteen feet ahead of you by then," he declared.

"Humph," was Udeen's desultory comment. "—And how about the Venusians,—the weird outlandish creatures you saw on the first expedition? When will we try to contact them?

"—I'm so damned sick and tired of sitting here trying to see through an atmosphere of whipped cream that I'll be asylum-fodder before the week is over if something doesn't happen quick!"

"Hold it, son." Armstrong cautioned. "Can't rush Nature, you know. Next trip maybe the boys back on terra firma will have us a portable infra-red vision unit doped out. Then we won't have to wait for the winter clearing of the atmosphere to do our looking around."

"Too bad Evolution didn't equip us with eyes sensitive to the lower band of the spectrum," growled Udeen, "—like these fantastic Venusian creatures you've been spinning yarns about."

THE veteran snorted. "Can't have everything, you know. For instance, —the Venusians wouldn't get a thing out of one of Beethoven's masterpieces,—or even from the doubtful melody of a swing band."

"Why not?"

"No ears," was Cap's laconic reply. "Seems funny that in a world with such an excellent medium for transporting

sound, evolution provided absolutely no means for utilizing it."

"How do they communicate,—or do they?"

Armstrong nodded. "Oh yes, no trouble about that. They have slender filaments or antennae of delicate nervous tissue which arise in the cortex of the brain and extend up through foramina in the skull, somewhat like the feelers of Earthly insects."

"Telepathy?"

"Yes, but very efficient and workable modification. Here evolution has devoted its faculties to perfecting telepathy, instead of wasting its time on elaborate equipment for the secondary senses of hearing and smell."

"Then your famed Venusians are nothing more or less than overgrown insects?" Udeen asked, with a scornful smile curving his lips.

Armstrong turned to survey the younger man with thoughtful eyes.

"Not insects,—and not reptiles as we know them," he said slowly, "but a queer and fantastic intermingling of certain characteristics of each, with perhaps a dash of mammalian likeness."

"Humph!" grunted Udeen. "I thought you said they were the equal of—and perhaps superior to Man. Imagine a heterogeneous hodgepodge like that equaling the accomplishments of Man on Earth!" he added with a snicker.

Cap regarded him silently for a moment, a queer smile hovering at the corners of his mouth. "Youthful intolerance and cynicism is a wonderful thing, youngster," he said. "It gives one the confidence to attempt miracles—and sometimes to accomplish them. However, it also has its disadvantages. It leads one to be didactic in his assertions and beliefs. It cramps his point of view to a narrow uncompromising fanaticism concerning any deviation from his own mean little path of experience."

"Don't preach!" snapped Udeen.

"Won't," said Armstrong. "But maybe someday you'll recall this:—If you come to know these strange creatures of Venus as well as I did on our first expedition, you'll realize that, nothwithstanding their fantastic appearance according to our standards, their minds—yes—even their souls, are built of divine stuff—by any standard!"

CHAPTER II

Storm on Venus

SEVEN endless weeks dragged by like seven ages of Eternity for Dale Udeen, before the crisper days of a Venusian autumn brought a progressive thinning of the almost viscous white atmosphere outside the tiny shelter.

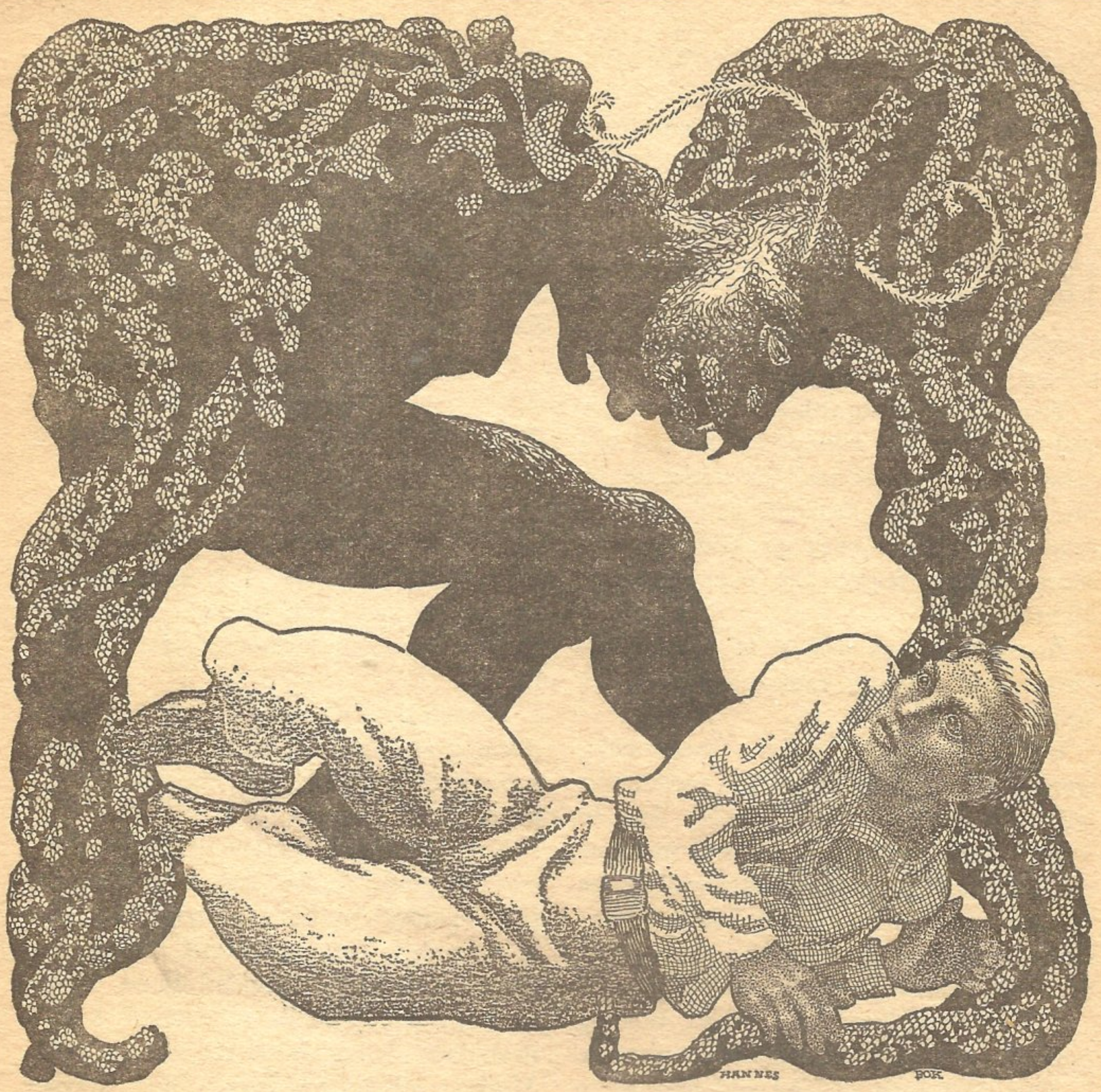
Gradually the dissolving veil permitted the Button's impatient occupants an increasingly more comprehensive view of the almost impervious network of interlacing botanical miracles which hugged the little clearing of the colonists in close embrace.

Mighty misshapen fronds mingled with coiling snaky tendriles and hideous bulging stems in weird portrayal of the astounding success of an utterly alien symbiosis.

Dale Udeen followed the retreating wisps of mist with eager, searching eyes, and each new miracle brought a dozen wondering questions.

Cap Armstrong met each new interrogatory outburst with an understanding patience that was utterly wasted on his youthful companion.

"Damn it all, Cap!" Udeen exploded, turning to face his all-suffering informant. "Why in the name of all that's holy do I have to mope here in this stinking Button? Why can't I go outside and see and investigate these things for myself—instead of sitting here listening to your wild



yarns about them! The mists are almost gone,—so what in the devil is holding us back now?"

"Our common sense," returned his companion. "If you'll stop and think, you'll remember I told you that the Venusian flora attains a state of metabolism paralleling Earthly growth only during the winter months.

"During the summer, a blanket of water vapor is so dense that not enough sunshine reaches the surface to enable the plants to manufacture their sustenance through photosynthesis. They simply 'hibernate' during the warm season, and wait for the thinning of the cloud bank to allow penetration of the essential solar energy."

"Well?—" snapped Udeen. "What's all that got to do with us?"

"Plenty," said Armstrong quietly. "While the plants are resting, they no longer extract carbon dioxide from the atmosphere to synthesize carbohydrates. Exactly the reverse is true,—they use oxygen and give off CO2 as the necessary by-product of a sustaining metabolism during their non-productive months. As a consequence, at the end of the summer season, the air has an excess of CO2, and an insufficiency of oxygen. So, we must wait until the renewed growth of plant-

life again renders the atmosphere fit for human consumption."

"How long?" was Udeen's impatient query.

"Month," said the veteran laconically.

HOWEVER, for once Cap Armstrong was decidedly wrong. It wasn't a month—nor even a day more that they were to spend in their tiny shelter.

That very evening came an event which both disclosed the reason behind the peculiar flat dome-shaped construction of the Earth-colony Buttons, and demonstrated the inadequacy of Man's somewhat dubious supremacy over versatile Nature.

Armstrong was sitting at his improvised desk, writing interminably in his voluminous diary.

Udeen was lying on the low couch, watching with sullen eyes and wondering what the veteran could possibly find to write about, when a hushed murmur crept through the thick plastic wall of the Button. It was an indescribably melancholy soughing that brought Udeen to his feet with a startled exclamation.

"Hear that, Cap?" he asked, turning apprehensive eyes toward his companion.

The older man nodded and hurried to the shelter's sole window.

That first faint lamenting murmur was now a harsh toneless moan that grated on Udeen's nerves like an off-key organ note.

Armstrong turned from the glassite window, and his face was grave. "Post-Equinoxial storm," he said. "Cooling air of this hemisphere rushing to the warm hemisphere. Better be getting ready. Can't tell what'll happen, you know."

Udeen nodded and turned to the telephone in the corner, by which they maintained contact with the occupants of the nine other shelters in the little clearing.

He gave the nine rings which was the emergency signal calling all the group, and waited impatiently until all had reported in.

"Button No. 1, Udeen speaking. Hurricane arising, wind from approximate magnetic North. Prepare for emergency. Don space-suits and oxygen helmets and make everything tight. Communication may be cut off any minute,—and then it's every man for himself. Good luck!"

Udeen hung up and turned to help Armstrong, who was lashing all movable objects in the shelter to the eye-bolts set in the floor.

AFTER everything was fastened to their satisfaction, Cap unpacked the two space suits and helmets from their metal container and handed one outfit to Udeen.

Silently the two stripped off their outer clothing and donned the pliable rubberoid suits and plasticoid helmets, leaving the visor plates open.

Now the rising torrent of air from the cooling polar region lashed around the tiny hemisphere in a gargantuan wave of booming roaring sound. Sand and gravel scoured the rounded dome. Rocks as large as baseballs rebounded with a deafening clamor from the plastic walls. Mighty misshapen fronds and strange writhing tendrils flung around the Button like malignant ghostly entities striving to reach the two Earthmen within.

Higher and higher grew the ululant whine of the lashing winds as the fury of the storm climbed toward an unimaginable peak.

The dome shelter quivered in ghastly resonance to the battering waves of maddened atmosphere. The lashed furnishings danced and strained at their fastenings as if imbued with a hideous life of their own. The eye-bolts which extended down through the base of the Button, and deep into the rich Venusian soil, groaned and grated as the mighty forces gained a grip on even the sloping dome.

The two men looked at each other in silence, then Udeen stepped forward with outstretched hand.

"Well—" he said, with an apologetic smile, "—Just in case,—Cap, Old Scout."

Armstrong grasped the gloved hand in his own, and his eyes met Udeen's in a look of mutual understanding.

An eye-bolt across the room snapped off its shaft with a report like an express rifle, and the men stepped back and hurriedly dropped their visors into place, tightening the clamps securely.

Now the mounting tide of forces battered with unbelievable intensity against the Button, buffeting it so violently the two men could barely stay on their feet.

Udeen grasped the edge of the desk to retain his balance, and turned to Armstrong.

"Cap—" he shouted, his voice a thin whisper above the gloating drone of sound.

—And then it happened! A discordant crash of sound exploded against the tiny shelter with terrific force. The anchoring steel bolts snapped like match sticks.

Udeen's scream of warning was utterly lost in the roaring torrent of noise that lifted the Button from its base and flung it like a leaf before the racing blast of tortured air.

CHAPTER III

The Volons

DALE UDEEN opened his eyes and instinctively grabbed for support. Slowly his tensed muscles relaxed as his clearing mind grasped for the significance of what he saw.

He was lying on a soft resilient mound in a room whose walls were of stone-grey, and around him loomed queer incomprehensible masses of gleaming metal.

Udeen pushed himself up on one elbow, and the pain of the effort brought back a flood of memory:—The storm that had lifted the Button from its moorings; the few seconds of buffeted agony as it hurtled before the blast; —then sudden darkness and oblivion.

Udeen groaned and painfully lowered himself back to a comparatively comfortable position, his mind furiously at work on the enigma of where he was and how he had arrived. His eyes searched the room eagerly for some trace of his grizzled partner, Armstrong, but there was nothing but those strange intricate mechanisms which reminded Udeen of nothing so much as experimental apparatus in a scientific laboratory.

A thousand questions swarmed through his aching brain in unrelated succession: Where were his unseen benefactors? Had the colony of Earthmen survived the fury of the Venusian storm, or had all gone to their deaths on the wings of the hurricane? Was Armstrong dead? Was he, Dale Udeen, the only human survivor on an utterly alien planet?

His befuddled reverie was rudely interrupted by the appearance of a nightmare shape in the low-arched opening which was the sole entrance to the room.

Udeen cried out in terror and loathing apprehension. He wrenched his battered body erect, tried to turn and flee from this demoniac apparition of an unwholesome dream.

A grotesque and hideous creature stood framed in the doorway, like the preternatural materialization of one of anamorphic monsters. Repulsive squat reptilian lines mingled shockingly with characteristics Man associates only with the eternally mysterious family of Arthropods. But the thing that brought a sudden surge of nausea to Udeen was the faint, the haunting but unmistakable touch of mammalian resemblance in this frightful composite of a dozen genera.

In frantic desperation Udeen crouched for a horrible battle to certain death with

the alien creature, when strange irrelevant thoughts came unbidden to his mind—

"Queer," he muttered. "Must look as outlandish to the monster as it does to me. Maybe I look like a horrible exaggeration of certain tendencies to it, just as it appears to me as a frightful mixture of a thousand opposing elements."

Then he realized that those thoughts would not have occurred of their own volition, under the stress of the present crisis. They were the intrusive convictions of an alien intelligence—the thoughts of the anamorphic monster in the doorway!

Udeen relaxed a little and stared at the fantastic creature. The foot-long flexible antennae above the hideous skull moved with a sinuous caressing grace that Udeen could have sworn was intended to convey reassurance and good-will.

Suddenly the Earthman understood. This was one of the strange Venusian creatures encountered by Armstrong on the first expedition. And in Armstrong's opinion, the Venusians were extremely intelligent, and affable and kindly in nature.

Udeen relaxed, sinking back on his 'bed' as the weakness of his battered body took ascendancy over temporary stimuli.

THE Venusian creature moved toward him with slender antennae oscillating reassuringly. Udeen moved apprehensively, and immediately there came the knowledge that it meant him no harm—meant only to administer to his needs.

With mingled gratefulness and loathing, Udeen suffered the Venusian to rub his tortured muscles with a faintly fragrant oily liquid which the creature poured from a metal container which it carried in one of its ten sinuous tentacles.

And all the while those writhing prehensile arms were tenderly massaging the pain from Udeen's body, the delicate antennae moved rhythmically, and a lethargic sense of well-being crept through his mind, bringing a drowsy contentment. In a few moments he drifted into deep and restful sleep.

When Udeen awakened, he was amazed at the complete absence of pain and soreness. He felt as well or better than he had since leaving Earth—and was immediately impatient to learn of his companions' fate, and of the strange creature who had ministered to his hurts so tenderly.

As if in answer to a call, the Venusian monster appeared in the doorway and a query formed in Udeen's mind as if it were a thought of his own.

"You are feeling better?" was the solicitous import of the strange communication.

"Very much!" Udeen said aloud, forgetful of Armstrong's tale of the Venusians' complete lack of any auditory apparatus.

The mobile antennae moved in understanding, and Udeen gained the impression of the gratified satisfaction.

Then memory of the disaster flooded back to his mind, and he asked with fearful apprehension:

"My companion—Armstrong—is he—allright?"

The answer came hesitantly, sorrowfully:

"No. He—is no more. We could not bring back his vanished consciousness to the mutilated flesh. I am sorry."

Udeen felt the numbing weight of a great loss. His shoulders sagged, and moisture crept unbidden to his eyes.

"And the rest—" he said dully. "—they are gone too?"

Again the compassionate answer came, "Yes—they too. The storm of the Change was furious beyond precedence this period. We were unable to rescue any save you."

Udeen knew all the agonizing panic of a diver severed from his life-line on the ocean floor; knew the numbing terror of

one hopelessly lost in the intricate mazes of an utterly lightless cavern.

But they at least had a slender chance of rescue—a possibility of returning to the familiar world of Man and his friends. He, Dale Udeen, had none!

As if in sympathetic understanding of his emotion, Udeen caught the compassionate, comforting message of the alien creature:

"Perhaps it will not be as bad as it now seems," came the thought. "We *Volons* differ surprisingly little mentally from you of Earth, notwithstanding our grotesque physical appearance from your point of view. Mayhap you will come to understand us—to enjoy our companionship, our pleasures to the extent of at least lessening your sense of loss to an endurable degree."

Udeen's face contorted in a grimace of disgust. He—a human—come to enjoy the companionship of inhuman monstrosities hideous beyond belief? He, an Earthly image of the divine Creator ever to more than loathe the sight of a Caliban creature whose very presence brought a surge of nausea?

Udeen sneered at the thought, unmindful of the blow he dealt the Venusian's friendly attempt to comfort a lonely otherworld creature.

THE Earthman racked his mind for some possible chance of again reaching Earth—and knew there was none—for the rocket-ship was unquestionably strewn over a thousand miles of Venus' alien surface. He fondled the hope that another ship might be sent from Earth—and knew he was fostering a delusion, for the rare materials of half a century's production had gone into the construction of the single ship and its fuel.

Udeen looked up at the Venusian, and his words were vicious with his frustrated longing for Earth and humankind.

"Very likely," he said bitterly, "—that I should come to respect something more repulsive than the foulest things in our jungle swamps; something that is a blasphemous parody on the very meaning of Life!"

For a long time the Venusian regarded Udeen with wide-set faceted eyes, and the Earthman understood that his words had hurt the creature deeply, but had not changed its compassionate determination to ease his lonely exile on an alien world.

In the days that followed—bitter in his isolation from everything even remotely familiar to his experience, Dale Udeen spurned the friendly overtures of the 'Volens', as the Venusians termed themselves, and gave a thousand provocations which a less tolerant people would have revenged in a manner befitting Udeen's actions.

However, all the Venusians, and particularly Dale's original benefactor whom he came to know as 'Kaldee', treated the Earthman with the same unchanging consideration and friendliness he had encountered from the first.

Gradually Udeen learned of the great civilization of the Volons, painstakingly constructed in vast caverns beneath Venus' surface.

With Kaldee, he viewed the huge underground cities of broad avenues and many-angled buildings, all of the clearest rose-colored crystal. He saw the tremendous subterranean factories with their almost humanly intelligent mechanisms which performed their myriad of duties with noiseless efficiency.

He learned of the benevolent governmental system by which eternal peace and order was maintained throughout the world of the Volons. He learned that two types of Volons developed from the immature fetuses cared for in the developmental and educational institutions of the nation.

One was the Subjective, or Introspective type, from whose ranks the scientists, the inventors, the artists, were drawn. The

other was the Objective, as typified by Udeen's companion, Kaldee. From this group came the educators, the advisors and constructive supervisors.

Absolutely no distinction was made between the two contrasting types as to rank or class. Each had the same privileges as the other, and all worked harmoniously toward the common good.

Slowly Udeen came to realize, in part, the truth of Armstrong's assertion of the superiority of Venusians over humans—for how many of Earth's noble citizens would work day after day in the unselfish effort to benefit mankind as a whole, with no promise of personal gain?

Slowly he came to understand and to respect the personality which dwelt within the fantastic body of Kaldee, his constant companion. He began to alter his own intolerant and cynical views of anything outside his own little path of experience.

More and more, with the passing days, Udeen recalled and comprehended Armstrong's warning against intolerance and didacticism. More and more he realized that beauty of mind and soul is *not* peculiar to the genus *homo sapiens*.

CHAPTER IV

Forzani

ONE day Kaldee led the Earthman down through tortured, dimly lighted passages—far below the mighty caverns of the cities. At Udeen's questions, the Venusian seemed singularly reticent—far less communicative and inclined to a spontaneous good humor than ever before in Udeen's memory.

Before long, a low murmur grew to a vibrant roar that shook the solid rock of the passage floor.

At last the two emerged into a vast amphitheater whose magnificent extent was illumined with a lambent reflected glow from the huge pit at its center.

As they neared the rim of the pit, Udeen felt the radiant heat of a mighty conflagration, and knew that he beheld the upper manifestation of the terrific volcanic inferno deep in Venus' substance.

At Dale's unspoken question, Kaldee turned, and there was a strange ineffable sadness—an enigmatic despondency in the mental message the Earthman caught.

"This is Forzani, the entrance to the seething heart of Venus—and the fiery tomb of a million Volons! Forzani is replete with traditions of ancient sacrifices in our race's indiscreet youth. It is haunted by the souls of Volons who have found themselves incapable of continuing a frustrated material existence. It is the resting place of those of our people whose affections for another have been thwarted or unreciprocated."

Kaldee's thoughts grew vague and unintelligible, but the Earthman sensed an ineffable haunting sorrow in the creature's mind.

"Forzani," mused Udeen, "the Kilauea of Venus—the River Styx of a strange and fantastic race. Forzani the beautiful —Forzani the terrible!"

Kaldee slowly turned away, and Udeen followed, with one last glance at that vast flaming liquid pool which held the heart of a planet in its fiery depths.

During the dark and torturous trip back through the ancient passages, neither of the strange pair voluntarily exchanged communications, but both caught the strange, melancholy thoughts which each fought to repress. Thoughts that were not so strange of themselves, but for the esoteric similarity and grotesqueness of their objectives.

In the days that followed, secure and comfortable in the vast underground civilization of the Volons, Dale Udeen struggled with a quixotic unrest that resisted all his attempts at analysis. An unrest which the Earthman sought to attribute to his isolation from Earth and humans

—and knew that he was wrong—was fearfully evading the fantastic but none-theless real issue.

He sought to crowd out the strange insatiable ache by pursuing his study of the Volons and their civilization with a frenzied eagerness which both astounded and pleased the amiable Venusians.

Udeen saw less and less of his companion, Kaldee, until it became increasingly apparent that the creature was purposely avoiding him.

THE knowledge brought a haunting pain that drove the Earthman to the limits of bodily endurance. In time, he became a student assistant in the great genetics laboratory which formed a single unit of many hundreds in the vast scientific center of the Volon city, and spent every waking moment in the huge gleaming laboratories.

He met and worked with the aristocracy of Volon science. He learned new and fantastic truths which transcended Man's Earthly knowledge as the sun overwhelms a star's feeble glimmer. But always there was that terrible insatiable longing for something—something Udeen no longer dared consider.

The Earthman's tortured efforts to occupy his mind to the exclusion of all else brought him an increasing recognition among his Venusian associates, and in time he was given the opportunity of penetrating to the inner sanctum of the Genetics department—the laboratory of the almost fabulous "Okar".

The genius of the aged Venusian scientist had recognized the possibilities of the Earthman's determined zeal, and he offered Udeen the honor of an assistantship under his regime.

Udeen gratefully accepted, and began his life under the sternly disciplined but tremendously able leadership of Okar with an eagerness that astounded the Venusian savant.

He counted chromosomes. He saw and catalogued the gene determinants through the great electron microscopes. He watched and even aided in the artificial production of living tissue, and the molding of that tissue into rude forms of life.

Then, one day while Udeen was busy with a new experiment on the transfer of genes from one chromosome to another, he heard a soft step behind him. An unexplainable surge of joy swept through his mind, and he turned with a glad cry of greeting for his erstwhile companion, Kaldee.

For a moment, Udeen caught an overwhelming rush of tender inquiry and affection, then the creature closed its mind to the Earthman and became stiffly formal in congratulating him upon his success and questioning him concerning his work with Okar.

Udeen felt a tearing sadness at the almost outright rebuff, and answered the inquiries with lifeless monosyllables while his mind fled furiously along a thousand paths in frantic search for some solution to a fantastic enigma.

HE REMEMBERED with an infinite shame, his imperious ridicule of Armstrong's claim that the Venusians were superior to humans. He recalled his inexcusable insulting of the "revolting anamorphic monster"—and realized with an ineffable sorrow that that same "revolting monster" had come to mean tremendously more to him than anything on Earth—or in the heavens!

Udeen at last had allowed full recognition of the haunting knowledge which he had steadfastly forced from his mind during the long months of loneliness. He realized with a start of surprise that the admission did not evoke the feeling of self-loathing and disgust he had foreseen and dreaded.

Instead, a paean of joy and exultation rang through his heart, dulled only by the

sorrowful realization of the insurmountable barriers existing between two creatures of different planets—and of alien genera!

But were the barriers so insurmountable? Was not there some solution—some requitement for a love so great it transcended racial differences as wide as the vast abysses of the heavens?

Udeen's emotion overcame restraint, and tumbled from his lips in a flood of words that tore aside Kaldee's aloof reserve—and revealed a replica of the Earthman's transcendent devotion.

Okar, busy at his work across the laboratory, caught the import of the scene, and slowly crossed the room to stand solemnly before the two.

"My children," was his compassionate message, "I realize and sympathize with your dilemma. I know, far better than you imagine, the magnitude of your emotion—" The savant paused for a moment, and Udeen caught a glimmer of strange, incredible episodes in the scientist's past, then he continued, "And I know far better than you, the magnitude of the barrier between you!"

Udeen nodded in sorrowful understanding, but Kaldee's delicate antennae vibrated with emotion, and a flood of protest lashed the savant.

"Why is the barrier between us insurmountable?" was Kaldee's vehement query. "Why cannot our barrier be dissolved—as was another long ago—in your own past?"

Okar started perceptibly, and Udeen caught another glimpse of an incredible drama in the savant's past.

The aged Venusian drew himself erect, and his reply was stern.

"That was a mistake, a mistake so grave that our civilization trembled on its foundations because of it!"

Udeen caught the savant's terrible sorrow as he continued.

"A mistake which under no circumstances will I see duplicated so long as there is life within me!"

Kaldee's vehemence was replaced by a wistful sorrow as the Venusian pled their case.

"But why, Okar, why? Need an unforeseen tragedy in your case be duplicated in our own? Tell me why!"

The savant's answer was grim, "Because a love so great can never be barren! Because it is the vicarious happiness of two beings against the destiny of a great race—perhaps of intelligent life in the entire universe! No, Kaldee, it can not be done!"

CHAPTER V

Okar's Story

IN THE lonely days that followed his temporary reunion with Kaldee, the Earthman's sorrow was mingled with a puzzled wonder concerning Kaldee's reference to a strange episode in Okar's past—and his own sketchy glimpses of the Venusian savant's secret thoughts. He plied the scientist relentlessly with a thousand queries, until at last the Venusian acceded to his demands for an explanation.

"Long ago," he began, "perhaps two hundred Earthly years, I made the discovery which started me on the road to scientific preeminence." Okar paused, then continued bitterly. "And incidentally it also brought about a tragedy which has eaten away my very soul in the long dreary years of my unhappy, friendless existence.

"If it had been only my happiness at stake, it would not have been so horrible. But, you see, in my blindness, I jeopardized the future of my race—even the existence of sentient life!

"I created a chimera which had to be destroyed to save a planet—and with that destruction went my hopes and dreams—all my chances for joy and happiness. At

least in this life," the Venusian added slowly.

Udeen's impatient, "Well?" brought the savant from his reverie, and he continued:

"Long ago the Volons were not the only race on Venus, nor were they even the most advanced.

"A strange type of life was produced and nurtured in the vast caverns which we now occupy, far back in the primal days of Venus' youth, and reached the peak of its advancement long before the Volons on Venus' surface had developed the first rudiments of intelligence.

"When Volon civilization began to reach a period of scientific curiosity, an exploratory party discovered an entrance to this vast series of caverns. They entered and found the remnants of a once-mighty race living amidst crumbling and decaying grandeur.

"There was a great battle, which, by reason of the softened decadence of the troglodyte race, ended in favor of the Volons. The victorious Volons returned to the surface, and in time persuaded their race to forsake the rigorous climatic conditions of the planet's surface for the safety and comfort of the great caverns.

"The Volons, by reason of their inherent racial vigor and greater numbers

soon crowded the remaining troglodytes from the major caverns into small secondary caves, where the 'Drali', as we came to know them, continued their progressive deterioration.

"At last, when I had just reached maturity, there remained but two of the once all-powerful Drali, and while I was struggling with the first rudimentary glimmer of my Great Idea, the last of the troglodytes was born. Within a month after the birth of the strange bit of life, the two parents succumbed to the inevitable, and the fantastic infant was left alone—a helpless and pitiful fragment of a race which once had attained to inconceivable heights!

"The strange infant was removed to a magnificent nursery building created by a sympathetic Volon populace especially for the queer little waif.

"YEARS passed, and my Great Idea was evolving slowly into accomplished fact. I had been eagerly following an involved cytological research which gave promise of astounding results—results which meant an almost infinite control over Life itself!

"It had begun with my discovery that the hormone and enzyme secretions of body glands held the key to the formation and replacement of all tissue, and in fact—the secret of protoplasmic formation!

"I found that male could be transformed to female, and vice versa, through an exchange of the gonads, or by injection of the opposing hormones. I found that parts from one animal, when grafted upon even another species, soon attained all the characteristics of their new host, and in time became indistinguishable from the original parts—if a high enough rate of metabolism were maintained.

"After extended experimentation, I prepared a composite of the hormones of one species of lower animal. I injected this composite, which contained hormones of all the vital glands in correct proportions—into the body of another species.

"The results surpassed my wildest hopes—the second animal within a week attained all the characteristics of the species from which the hormones had been derived!

"A hundred repetitions of the experiment only served to establish its infallibility—and I was ready for my supreme gesture!

"I called a conference of all the able scientists of that day and put my proposition before them for consideration. I asked that I be allowed to prepare a hormone composite of our—the Volon species—and inject it into the body of the 'Drali' waif, who was now attaining maturity!

"My proposal brought a storm of protest and condemnation, but I staunchly maintained my stand. I repeated my experiments on lower animals before them. I displayed my tabulated records of previous experiments. I dramatized the lonely existence of the last descendant of a race which the Volons had helped to destroy. I called upon their sentiment, their pity, their sense of fair-play—and at last I won them over!

"I worked day and night in the preparation of my hormone composite. I calculated and recalculated the proportions down to the last decimal place, and then repeated the entire procedure to obviate any possibility of error.

"Finally I was ready, and the strange lone survivor of the Drali race was injected with the hormone composite.

"Perhaps it was mere chance; perhaps it was an obscure and esoteric plan of Fate—but whatever the reason—the Drali-metamorph developed into a delicately formed and transcendentally beautiful Volon female!

"Not only were her physical characteristics unsurpassable—but she showed unmistakable evidence of possessing a mind far above the Volon average!

"Naturally it fell my lot to supervise the subsequent education of the metamorph in preparation for her entry into Volon life. She proved an exceedingly apt and diligent student, and eventually—what has happened to many a tutor—happened to me:—I fell in love with my pupil!"

OKAR paused and regarded Udeen with wistful, sympathetic eyes. "That will not seem so fantastic to you, my friend of an alien world, for you too have found that species is not an inalienable barrier to affection!

"However," he continued, "it is only too surely an utterly inalterable barrier to happiness!

"To resume my story, Lanil, my pupil, returned my affection, and in time we registered our contract of union with the authorities and began our conjugal life.

"I was sublimely happy in my life with Lanil—the blind unseeing happiness of a sublime fool!

"It was not until I knew that Lanil was with young, that I began to discover the hideous, the unspeakably horrible chimera I had actually created. It was only by accident that I discovered something which eventually led to the revealing of the whole hideous truth.

"I discovered some notes in our private laboratory which indicated that Lanil was dabbling in the chemics of venoms —venoms so virulent that a billion to one dilution would still be instantly fatal to any life!

"When I questioned her, she vehemently denied all knowledge of the notes. I said no more of the matter, and bided my time, watching her carefully without her knowledge.

"A short time later, Lanil gave birth to our offspring."

Okar paused, shuddering with an infinite horror of the memory.

"The sight of that hideous monstrosity is seared in my brain with an indelibility which a thousand years of cleansing time could never erase!

"You see, I had brought about a metamorphosis of the physical aspects of Lanil's body—even to the form and number of nucleur chromosomes with their gene-determinants—but I could not alter the inherent characteristics containued in the cytoplasm of the germ cells—characteristics which are determined by some esoteric quality of cytoplasmic molecular structure."

The Earthman nodded slowly as he recalled various experiments which had been conducted on Earth, in the field of cytoplasmic inheritance. He remembered that one of the first such was made by Dr. Ethel Harvey of Princeton, who disproved the theory that the chromosomes of the germ-cell nucleus are the sole carriers of distinctive features of heredity. She had taken the eggs of sea-urchins and completely removed the nucleii with the contained chromosomes. Yet the eggs had started development without the slightest vestige of a chromosome!

Okar continued, and his thoughts were laden with an infinite sorrow,

"It was at this time that I discovered the whole ghastly reason behind Lanil's dabbling in venoms. She had been living a life of lies,—living and working with the sole fanatical goal of revenge for the destruction of her race!

"She was almost prepared to loose on Venus a self-perpetuating vaporous venom which would erase the last trace of life from the planet—and would inevitably filter into space to eventually traverse the void on the wings of light-pressure to all habitable worlds!"

Udeen waited with bated breath for Okar's message. At last it came.

"Forzani—" the Venusian savant continued wearily, "Forzani is the vast flaming tomb of Lanil and her child. I de-

stroyed them! And with her died all my capacity for joy—for love knows no sin, even treachery!

"Now you know," Okar completed slowly, "why I will not accede to Kaldee's request that one of you be metamorphosed to the superficial characteristics of the others."

CHAPTER VI

Irreversible!

A YEAR dragged by like an infinite eon to Dale Udeen, who pursued his work in the laboratories with a listless routine, while his soul cried out against the agony of eternal separation from Kaldee.

Time after time he besought Okar to give him one last chance for happiness by subjecting him to the composite hormone treatment. Each time, upon Okar's refusal, he threatened to eventually discover the process for himself.

But he knew his threats were abortive; knew that endless years of research would be required to grasp even the rudiments of a usable knowledge of the intricate enzymes.

Heartsick, he returned to his periodic pleas to the Venusian savant, and, to his infinite surprise,—one day Okar acceded to his demand!

"All right," the scientist reluctantly agreed, "but do not blame me for the consequences. Remember that, whatever happens, I have only done what I thought best."

The Earthman pondered often and long on Okar's enigmatic and ambiguous statement while he helped the scientist in the laborious preparation of the hormone composite.

At the last, after the strange enzyme solution had almost been completed, Udeen felt a queer hesitancy in submitting to the injection. Some esoteric inner voice seemed to warn him of an unforeseen climax to this almost metaphysical tampering with Life. It was like a warning. . . .

Impatiently he thrust aside that psychic unease, and urged Okar to speed the consummation of their efforts.

Finally came the time when the Earthman's body was immersed in a complex solution of organic salts, and his veins injected with the precious hormone composite.

His mind was dulled to a semi-stupor by sedative drugs,—but even through the protective anesthesia of their influence, the terrible,—the soul-rending pangs of a cataclysmic transformation tore at his nerves like malignant, utterly corrosive acids.

Every fibre,—every atom of his body and soul quivered and flinched from the unendurable agony of a thousand tortured deaths.

Every nerve fought to resist the searing twisting pain of a thousand alien and conflicting impulses.

Time raced through a millenia of centuries for Udeen's tortured consciousness during the hour of the metamorphic transition,—and at last the agony faded to an occasional sharp twinge which told of last-minute adjustments in delicate neural chains.

Weak, and deathly sick from an hour of terrible suffering, Udeen was, of necessity, lifted bodily from the liquid bath by a solicitous Okar.

After an extended period of rest on the resilient mound which was a Volon couch, Udeen at last felt strong enough to determine the success of the transition.

HE TOTTERED weakly to his feet—and found that he was standing on six limbs! He paused, undecided,—then felt the twitching of twin nerves at either side of his head, and knew that he pos-

sessed a pair of the delicate Volon antennae.

Udeen turned to the intently watching scientist, and he telepathed his thoughts with an ease and facility which amazed him.

"It's successful! Oh, Okar—It's come true!"

The Venusian's thoughts came back with an unprecedented clarity, and Udeen was puzzled at the complete lack of satisfaction;—at the compassionate sorrow in the other's message.

"Yes, my son. The transformation was successfully completed."

A sudden movement at the entrance to the laboratory drew their attention, and the two turned to face—a human being! —A girl!

She walked hesitantly toward them with slow, graceful steps, and Udeen marvelled at the beauty,—the consummate loveliness and perfection of every delicate feature,—of every soft curve of her exquisite figure!

Suddenly he knew;—knew that this lovely girl who stood before him was—Kaldee!

A myriad of puzzled questions swarmed through his brain in torrential confusion. A thousand garbled solutions for this enigma struggled for supremacy in his bewildered mind.

Then he saw the look of utter terror on the girl's face;—saw the finger of accusation she pointed at Okar. As in a dream, he caught the import of her condemnation.

"Okar,—Okar! Why did you do it! You knew! Knew that another had discovered the secret of your hormone composite! Knew that I planned to utilize it to attain human form!"

The irrevocable horror of his forever-lost love gripped him. Kaldee continued, piteously, her whole soul apparent in her words.

"You knew that one transition is all the metabolism of living protoplasm can withstand; knew that when we both had once undergone the metamorphosis, neither could return to his former state! Oh God! How could you do this to us?"

Okar's answer came slowly; weighted with an infinite compassion and pity for them.

"Yes, my child. I did. I know that you revile my action as the vilest collusion,—the most unspeakable treachery. But, you see, I could not allow a few moments of questionable happiness for two creatures to alter—perhaps destroy—the destiny of a Universe!

For it is not in the plan of Fate that we lowly ones should tamper with immutable Life!"

FORZANI flamed in all its molten glory.

And on the vast circular rim of that fiery pool of Venus' heart stood an aged and weary figure.

Strange was this creature, Okar the Venusian who swayed unsteadily on his three pairs of limbs, while delicately tapering antennae wavered slowly at either side of the hideous skull.

Stranger still were the thoughts of the alien creature as he gazed long and sorrowfully into the vast flaming pit whose two most recent voluntary sacrifices were by far the strangest it had ever received.

"Beautiful Forzani, grave of all the hopes and joys and sorrows of my dreary and frustrated existence. Forzani—the molten tomb of two lovers whose like no world has ever known! A human of Venus, and a Volon of Earth.

"Forzani the Beautiful. Forzani the Terrible!

"God help me!—I have done thy will as I have seen it."

THE END

REBIRTH OF MAN

The green planet of Earth was only a laboratory for the knowledge-sated Great Ones. But they doomed themselves by the success of their own experiment. . . .

Hannes Bok

By BASIL E. WELLS

HAMMOND clamped a warped hand to his shoulder. Blood spurted from a tiny puncture there. Above him he saw the shining metal of an instrument swiftly withdrawn; then a flooding surge of the injected serum sent him reeling.

Convulsions wracked his bony frame. His puny fist threatened those omnipotent beings peering down at him through vast lenses. Then a ghastly blueness swept across his face and terrible spasms tore his body.

Through clouding eyes Hammond seemed to see his wife and little Hammond crouched fearfully in the vast village pen. Then his memory flashed pictures—rapid, tragically clear—of a dead world, untamed by the Great Ones, a green world where men ruled supreme.

Then had come the Great Ones out of the airless void about the planet. Men's weapons failed them. Swiftly they were eradicated, a mere handful being retained as laboratory creatures.

Hammond screamed shrilly. . . . He had been a doctor in those other days, working and experimenting with white

rats and guinea pigs. Ironic to die as they had died. . . . Light streaked and seared his brain. His muscles convulsed and life gasped out with his breath. . . .

THE Great One shook his mighty hairless head. Carefully he lifted the small carcass that had been Hammond and dropped it into a vat of acid.

"A thousand hairless inats have died," his fellow scientist, Kov, said. "It is useless. Let us destroy the inats and return. The secret of immortality has eluded us."

"No," the Great One answered, "we dare not return.

"This distant planet was chosen by the Lords. We work in secret that they alone may become immortal. It is death to return without success."

HAMGAR, great grandson of Hammond, slipped back into his hut of woven branches and grass. Three Great Ones, their vast bald skulls touching the clouds, loomed above his tribe's walled pen. Always they chose mature healthy humans—only the crippled and weak lived to grow old.

Hamgar stuffed a fish, speared in the nearby stream, into his mouth, crunching the bones between firm teeth. When he had eaten his fill he tossed the remnants to his mate and their three sons. He could hear the rumbling of the Great Ones overhead, a booming thunder of conversation.

He wiped his hands on a mat of woven grasses and was reaching for the water dish when a hurricane seemed to strike the hut. The frail shelter toppled as an enormous eight-fingered hand groped inside. Hamgar felt his body crushed between two of the massive digits.

The hand swept upward so swiftly that Hamgar choked. His eyes flashed across a vast gulf to the noseless face of the Great One. This then was the great moment that his tribal priests made medicine and prayed for.

Hamgar had none of the priestly desires, or faith. He wanted his mate, Una, and his little brush hut. He loved the forests and grasslands that covered the ten square miles of their great pen. He squirmed in the Great One's grip.

"Odd little beasts, these inats," the Great One boomed, but incomprehensibly to Hamgar. "The clever way they construct their nests and live together seems almost intelligent.

"When we first came," he went on, "the inats built tiny winged ships and wheeled vehicles. Those instinctive actions seem to have failed since their domestication."

"Luckily for our experiments," the other laughed, "they cannot fly over even these low walls. They seem most tractable."

Hamgar felt the loathsome flood of serum released beneath his skin. His body began to waste away. Great sores burst from his body, dripping foul matter and blood.

Seven days later Hamgar smashed his head against a metal wall and died.

"We are learning," the Great Ones said eagerly. "Another hundred revolutions of the planet about its sun and. . . ."

HARG the Hunter writhed in agony. Like his remote ancestors he had been inoculated with an improved serum. The science of the Great Ones had won a partial victory. Harg had lived two years.

An arm had wasted away. His giant frame was warped and twisted. His eyes were dull, a somber glow of unquenchable hate burning far back in them.

He had seen others from his pen inoculated and die. Hairy inats and black-skinned inats from the steaming southern jungles were penned with him for a time—only to become fuel for incinerator or limp helpless flesh.

"Let us return this inat to his pen," one of the scientists suggested. "Young

inats bearing his blood might respond fully to our treatment. We cannot lose anything by such an act and may learn much."

HARG shook his aching head and sullenly faced the snarling priests of his tribe. His mate crouched at his side, her soft body tense against his leg.

"The Great Ones are not gods," Harg growled. "They are demons. They torture and maim. There is no joy and peace. Men turn blue. Their bones rattle. The Great Ones are evil!"

"Silence," snapped Rolt, the priest. "Go to your hut with your mate. You have blasphemed; so, for your sin, you must die."

The next sacred day Harg was dragged from his rude hut, bound to the top of a dead tree, and the tree fired. Harg lived until his body crumbled into ashes—tribute to the genius of the Great Ones.

But the appetite of the penned inats for blood was now aroused and they cried out for the mate of Harg. A kindly woman saw the path their minds were taking and hurried to Avot.

Avot snatched up a spear and slipped away into the matted forest. Not a moment too soon had she fled for the thudding of many bare feet reached her ears as she fled. Roars of foiled rage warned her that she was fair prey for that crazed mob.

Avot sent her lithe-limbed body racing along at a greater speed. If she could but conceal herself for a moon she could return safely. Their memories were short. . . . Thorns tore at her bare shoulders; branches snagged her fur-clad hips, but Avot ran on.

Once she stopped and melted back into a thorny clump of brush. A shaggy bull, one of a wild herd of cattle, was drinking from the brook. Further back she crouched—and a twig snapped!

The great bull focussed wild eyes upon the girl's retreat. Avot froze, her breath silent. The great beast wheeled, head dropped and nostrils wide. In a moment he would see her. Frantically she fought the impulse to cry out. The bull rumbled angrily for a moment before he returned to the interrupted quenching of his thirst.

Avot crept silently away then, further into the thicket. The thorns were thick here but she was hidden from the trail. Suddenly, as she parted the bushes, the earth gave way beneath her feet and she plunged downward into blackness.

For a time she lay half-conscious in a muddy pool of water at the bottom of the pit made by her falling body. Then the coolness of the water revived her and she struggled to her feet. Above her, fifteen feet or more, green leaves mocked her. Then the voices of men, excited by the chase, sounded close by.

Wildly Avot searched the narrow pit. Crumbling walls of masonry surrounded her, but in one corner, half-buried by accumulated mud and debris, a half-circle of deeper blackness opened. Into this cavity she crawled and, shortly, was feeling her way along a cement tube, some five feet in diameter.

Beneath her feet a weak trickle of water flowed. Surely, she thought, the water must come out again further along the way. So, cautiously, her crude spear thrust out before her, she made her way along the tube.

Sometimes, as she advanced, the water was about her waist and clammy slime clawed at her ankles. The air was foul with the sour smell of dank, impure earth. Openings in the rounded walls admitted more streams of water until she was wading along a sluggish deep river.

Abruptly the sewer ended in a vastly larger opening, a circular tunnel fifteen feet in diameter.

Here Avot stopped to rest. The water in the larger sewer was gradually growing deeper. She could not swim—none of

the inats had tried to swim for many generations—so she finally retraced her steps to the smaller sewer.

Perhaps, she decided, another opening along the small tube would lead to the surface. She chose the first opening on her left hand and started up this new tunnel, fighting against the crawling current.

HOW long she mechanically slogged along through the sticky mud and water of the tube, she could never have told. When at last weary feet stumbled, and she fell, moist dirt was beneath her arms. The water was left behind!

A faint current of moist air stirred her tangled hair. Avot stretched her body wearily in the darkness and fell into sodden sleep, heedless of the water that beaded and dropped upon her.

Hours later she moved her chilled bare limbs and groaned with misery. To go further was hopeless. She would lie here and die. Harg was dead. It would be good to die. Avot lifted a hand to her face, a muddy and befouled claw, and with the action weariness fled.

She could see her hand! It was moving in the dull grayness! Her eyes sought the tunnel roof and she cried with joy. A great crack lay open above, the roots of crowding trees snaking down through the orifice to the dampness below.

Half an hour later Avot rested on the green sod beneath a mighty tree. Behind her lay the gaping opening from which she had escaped, and beyond that, a mile beyond, towered the mile high walls of the Great Ones' laboratories. For the first time in five centuries a human being walked free upon the continent!

Three hundred miles stretched away behind Avot before she made permanent camp. There, on an island in a wild lake, she raised a warm hut of mud and sticks and rested. For she was grown heavy with child.

Alone in the savage wilderness, once called the Finger Lakes, she gave birth to a son and called his name Harg after his dead father. And Harg grew until he had seen ninety moons pass.

Avot had not taught Harg to fear the Great Ones—only to hate them. In all the world Harg alone feared not the evil spirits and demons. Avot had defied the gods and she taught Harg to be likewise defiant.

So when Avot slipped from the fishing logs and drowned, Harg did not berate the unseen powers. Later, when he had dragged her lifeless body from the lake and covered it with great stones, he ran to the hut and buried his face in her sleeping skins.

He was lonely. . . .

When Harg was twelve he could kill a deer with a thrown stone and with a single arrow cut down a soaring bird. He had learned, by watching the frogs, how to swim in the water. Many times he had tried to make wings, to join the birds in their play, but could not. He floated on two joined logs to fish, pushing them along with a pole.

It was on this frail raft that Harg ventured to a more distant, rocky island, in the long lake. The wind caught at his brown-skinned body and helped his carved short pole at its work. No longer did Harg need bottom to pole his craft—he poled against the water now.

Harg fastened the rawhide thongs of his raft about a sturdy scrub-beech at the water's edge and climbed a rocky slope to the central level expanse—perhaps an acre. A few dwarfed trees had rooted here along the borders of the sinister bald plot, but no grass grew.

Harg strode across the seamed rock strata, his eyes intent on a circle of sunken rock. As he neared it he saw strange letters and figures chiselled into the sunken slab, ringing a central corroded metal ring.

To the men of the village pens this would have been fearful—taboo. Only the priests might examine any strange thing and bless or destroy it. Usually they destroyed what they could not understand. And they understood little.

But Harg knew little of superstition and nothing of fear; so he lifted the heavy stone slab and found a winding concrete runway leading down into the depths.

Further down the ramp a corridor opened and a dozen paces along this passage brought him to the first of several sealed openings. Harg approached the door, felt a quiver beneath his feet, and sprang back.

His knife was in his hand as he watched a thick slab of stone slip silently into the wall. A light flashed on and he heard the murmur of a human voice from the emptiness beyond.

HARG stepped cautiously into a spacious well-lighted room, hewn from the living rock. A vast amount of strange equipment, housed in sealed containers of transparent material, lined the walls of the chamber. The soft hum of hidden machinery, set in operation by the pressure of Harg's feet before the door, was in his ears.

His eyes went to a strange box with a barred metal grill across its front. The mysterious voice was coming from this box. Harg came closer.

"Hello, hello," a metallic voice was saying, "this is J. J. Franklin speaking. Push the red button. Push the red button. Push the red button. Hello, hello. . . ."

Harg listened to the words repeat again and again the same message. At last his finger poked the red button and the voice changed. A square of light came from the machine and centered on the dark-shadowed wall above the box.

"A, b, c, d, e, f . . ." the voice droned on. "The symbols that represent these letters appear on the screen above. The alphabet of 1960, men of the future. In the sealed cases are histories and the scientific texts of our day, as well as many of our tools and weapons.

"Perhaps you have learned much that we do not know. Perhaps. But if civilization has gone, as I fear it may, this store of knowledge may help mankind to climb again from the level of the beast.

"Listen and follow the directions I will give you. There is much to learn. First of all our written language. . . ."

Harg listened to the fascinating history of an older, wiser age. For a week thereafter he explored the treasure trove of ancient knowledge. Then with three of the metallic-leaved books and a small acid pistol, he paddled homeward. . . .

Years passed. Harg was a young man of twenty-five. He could read the ancient books and solve the number problems of the ancients. He no longer paddled a raft, the books had shown him the graceful swift canoe, and a revolver had replaced his stone hatchet.

Harg realized his limitations. One man could do little with the knowledge of the Ancients.. Many hands were needed to build machinery and equipment. A thousand trained minds must concentrate on new weapons and defensive mechanisms.

Harg knew where the pens of his people lay, far to the south and east. Avot had told him of the ancient tubes, piercing the earth below the tribal pen, and how to traverse them. Yet he hesitated. The superstitious fear-ridden inats of the pens were poor material from which to forge a new civilization.

Suddenly Harg grinned at a new thought. Tomorrow he would go to the lair of the Great Ones and lead a few inats to freedom. They would obey his every command as though he were their father or the priest.

The next morning he slung a silent air rifle, loaded with acid pellets, across his bronzed shoulders; belted an acid

pistol about his hips, and saluted the distant rocky island.

"So long J. J.," he laughed. "Don't get lonesome."

Harg followed the game trails south. Sometimes he rode a log along a broad stream but a network of trails and crumbling concrete roads made travel on foot more practical.

A week after he left the lakes Harg came in sight of the soaring walls and towers of the Great Ones. Harg was a man, a tall man well-muscled and broad, but he dwindled ant-like beneath the glowering bulk of that awesome pile.

Once a Great One came through the wall, a section swinging outward. His vast noseless face, three hundred feet above, was a rounded bluish hill atop his massive trunk.

Harg hid between two great boulders watching the Great One pass. Every step crushed small trees and brush down into a broad circular depression some forty feet in diameter. Harg was amazed at the vast size of the alien being. He had not dreamed. . . .

FOR two days Harg circled the walls, searching for the opening through which Avot had climbed. It was the second evening when his search ended and he descended the tangled roots into the old sewers.

Unlike Avot he could see. He carried a small carbide lamp and could travel swiftly where she had crawled. There was little water in the tubes. Harg grinned. He could bring the inats with him on their own legs.

He found the opening into the inat pen, the mouth well-screened with thorny brush. A stone fastened to his rawhide rope solved the climbing problem by wrapping securely around a sturdy limb. Then Harg slipped silently away toward the crude village of his kinsmen.

Thereafter, for a week, in four huts there was sadness. Evil things, spirits from the forest, had stolen away their young—two boys and two girls, none of them older than sixty moons. The priests grew rich as terror gripped the tribe. Nor did the priests venture alone into the ominous forest shade. . . .

Harg toiled northward, his progress maddeningly slow. The four tiny children he had kidnapped hampered his progress. He killed for five now, and searched for the more open trails as they went. Even so a march of five or six miles exhausted their little legs; then Harg fashioned a sledge of poles for them to ride upon.

A week away from the pens of their people Harg left them and went into the forest after game. Shortly, coming out into a grassy glade, he saw a small herd of wild horses. Memory of those hours every day when he must drag his crude sledge along the forest trails made him grit his teeth. He fashioned a loop in his rope and crept nearer.

Not until the next afternoon did a much-battered and weary Harg lead a plumb mare into his camp. The four hungry children greeted this new captive with wide eyes, wondering if this was to be their dinner. But Harg tied the mare to a tree and went out in search of a deer or pig.

For more than a week he worked with the mare until she grew gentle. Then he slung the four children in twin sacks of skin across her back, took the rope halter, and set out for the lakes at a trot. . . .

The boys grew into young manhood. Two more dwellings, well-lighted and warm, were raised near Harg's. Then, when Jon looked softly at Maro, Harg joined their hands and sent them to one of the new homes.

Wilam and Salo, the other young ones, quarreled often after that, but Harg saw Wilam sit idle for hours, his eyes on the shining golden hair of the girl. Harg took Wilam away to the island of J. J.

and left him there to study—and shortly Salo's hair seemed to dull and she laughed rarely. All day she sat and watched Harg and Jon at work in the hidden workshop.

Harg laughed silently, then, and took Salo to the other new dwelling.

"Bake food and prepare meat," he told her, "for this evening you will take your mate's hand and we will feast together."

Salo smiled up at Harg. Harg felt, uneasily, that he was a man, and she a woman; so it was that he hurried down to the lake and paddled swiftly away. Salo's smiling face danced before him. His fingers ached to stroke that shining hair. . . .

When Harg placed the hand of Salo in the hand of Wilam, that evening, the girl paled and her eyes went up, bewildered, to those of Harg. Only then did Harg know that Salo loved him. . . .

THE years dragged along in the lake country. A dozen times the people of Harg, Yankas they called themselves, raided the inat villages to carry off their young. The few houses expanded into a village, and the village into four others. Jon and Wilam died and their grandsons followed them to the grave. Another Salo, the tenth generation offspring of Salo, had taken the hand of Harg.

Harg searched his head for grayness and his skin for wrinkles. He was a young man among young men, yet two hundred years had passed since Avot fled the inat mob.

Two-score dirigibles were moored beneath concealing green roofs of hemlock and spruce. A hundred swift fighting planes and bombers lurked in underground hangars. The Yankas were girded for war.

The people of Harg numbered more than a hundred thousand and their five sunken cities were marvels of perfection and utility. Already they had equalled and surpassed the knowledge of the Ancients. And in every city a bronze tablet was raised bearing the initials J. J. to honor the ancient dust of an eccentric American scientist.

It was Harg, in a tiny fly-like craft, who first explored the vast buildings of the Great Ones. Safe among the swarms of huge flies that had journeyed to this world in the space-ship he cruised for a day along great halls and above gigantic machinery.

Among all those vast walls he found but two of the Great Ones. But two of the hundreds that had so triumphantly exterminated the annoying inats.

The two scientists were old. Their life span of a thousand earthly years, was almost at an end. They must soon return if they would walk the gray plains and harsh yellow hills of their own distant planet.

So now, flying far above the bald blue skulls of the Old Ones a tiny inat, blessed —or cursed—with the deathlessness, implanted within his sire's warped body, transmitted to his own body, watched them refueling and provisioning their ship.

Harg watched great robot machines perform their myriad duties. He saw a science, mighty and unbelievable, that had made the Great Ones invincible. Only a miracle could destroy these mighty intelligences. And Harg had planned that miracle.

Had not the Great Ones been old and homesick they might have noted the discolorations that circled the control turret and the main lifting jets. They might have seen, every night, a score of flying craft hovering over the ten miles of dully gleaming metal dropping a steady rain of soft acid shells.

Harg scouted the vast rooms of the Old Ones daily. His radio was constantly in touch with Yanka headquarters and as the Great Ones prepared to enter their great ship all the massed aircraft of Harg drew near.

All the ships dove down upon the great

ship as the outer locks clanged shut behind them. Acid bombs dropped upon the pitted outer skin of the ship. Tons of dynamite blasted at the control room. They were as mosquitoes about an elephant.

Suddenly a vast shimmering bubble of flame built up about the ship and expanded. Dirigibles flared up on contact with that wall of force and bombs exploded harmlessly.

The undamaged ships withdrew quickly but not before twenty airships and thirty airplanes had become hot dust about the great ship.

The space-ship quivered, slipped ahead, and surged upward into the cloudless sky. A hundred miles—two hundred miles—she roared out into space before one of the jets, acid-eaten and weak, exploded violently.

SHE pitched crazily, curving back toward Earth, while the Great Ones fought their controls. Then the control turret gave way and the frigid emptiness of space swallowed their precious air. One of the Great Ones reached a sealed lifeboat before the cold stiffened his great carcass, but his fellow died in his cushioned harness.

The lifeboat flashed free of the hurtling derelict as the Atlantic Ocean was just beneath. For a short time the little ship wavered on into the east until, over France, the twin hearts of the aged Great One failed him and he crashed, in death, against the Alps.

Back in Avot, capitol of the Yanka nation, there was joy. Mankind was free to again cover the continents with vast cities and squares of cultivated ground—or to indulge in bloody suicidal war.

Harg stood on a hill, high above the city. He felt the warmth of his mate's smooth flesh. . . . But a vision was come upon him. . . .

He saw her grow old and wrinkled . . . saw mankind, grown strong and arrogant . . . friends were gone and new faces about him. . . . New conquests, new worlds to pioneer. . . . He was weary, and the world grown old and cold and bare. . . .

Harg laughed suddenly. The world was young and Salo beautiful. . . .

THE END

TALES OF THE FUTURE OF SCIENCE

Jim Cragg sought the secret of the deadly air-bombs of the invading Gan hordes, and found, in an enemy cantina, the girl he loved and thought was dead. Don't miss Edwin K. Sloat's "The Deadly Swarm," complete in the August issue.

10¢ ASTONISHING STORIES

On sale June 25th

A NEW HIGH IN MYSTERY-TERROR FICTION

Have you ever dreamed of creating life out of nothing? Of creating a new race of super-men whose immortal bodies and minds would be yours to command? Frankenstein did it once—and was destroyed. Could a modern man try it again—and succeed? Read I AM A FRANKENSTEIN! a long novelette by Wayne Rogers. . . . Also stories and novelettes by such noted masters of the weird and eerie as Ralston Shields, Raymond Whetstone, Donald Dale, and many others. . . .

TERROR TALES

Sept. Issue! On Sale July 25th!

THE RADIUM-BUGS

CHAPTER I

The Freezer

"YOU'RE under arrest." Two green-shirted men stopped Mark Evanthes as he mounted the porch of his home in Albany.

He leaned a dirt-covered shovel against the wall before he turned his long body to drawl, "I was expecting you, gentlemen. Come in."

"Expecting us, were you!" The younger man was baffled. "That amounts to a confession."

"I confess I was expecting you. Nothing more."

"The charge is treason," the older green-shirt said gruffly. "Come along!" Then, noticing the dirt covered shovel, asked suspiciously, "What have you been doing with that?"

"I buried my dog," Mark answered.

By HELEN WEINBAUM

"Unfit to live!" That was the verdict of the Elders on Mark Evanthes. But he had to live—had to protect his new world against the plague that menaced it from below.

"He ate too much of the bread my uncle, the Dictator, feeds the people."

"That's treason in itself," the older man growled. "Now enough of this. Come along. You're as good as frozen already."

MARK EVANTHES moved his long body on the damp floor of the vault. The ice had melted, releasing him from his five hundred year imprisonment, but his mind was not yet working and he could not hear the steady drip of water, nor feel the dank mouldiness of the granite walls, nor see the six others who lay immovable beside him on the floor. So he lay, half limp, half frozen, unaware that for the last few hundred years he had been forgotten, that his potential life had been protected

only by random chance, that it had rested on the inertia of a man whose father and whose father's father had tended the machine which kept the ice crypt at a temperature of -273°C, not knowing the why nor wherefore of it, yet tended it, nevertheless, as in ancient days man had put food on the altars of the Gods, not stopping to think that if the God were indeed Godly he could feed himself, yet heeding the tradition unquestioningly which made him serve the same mysterious thing his fathers served.

For Mark Evanthes had been tried and found guilty and been sentenced to the crypt of punishment for having heart enough and will enough and courage enough to rebel against the unbearable Dictatorship of his uncle, the famous dark horse of 1944. So, for five hundred years he had been frozen in a block of ice, life and mind suspended, over his inert body the caption "traitor", though history might term him "patriot."

The water seeped slowly through the drain. Mark opened his eyes, wondering whence came the feel of cold and damp, not yet aware that his life had been suspended these five centuries. For an hour or two, until his blood circulated freely, he had a limp, ragged feeling. His skin was pudgy to the touch, the nerve endings insensible. Memory was not yet awakened. Then, gradually, he remembered the moving belt which had carried him into the crypt, remembered the dart of pain through mind and body as the terrific cold had numbed his senses. Slowly he stirred, thinking that when the ice melted the vault doors should open, when, suddenly, came the knowledge of other living things beside him and he recalled that at the time he had entered the crypt, two others had been already inside: the half mad, half genius Dr. Wade, sentenced for using the "mercy killing" privilege on his wife for, while she suffered from an incurable disease, he was heir to her fortune and the court questioned his motives; and the notorious Vassa Evens, stocky, dark Communist leader, imprisoned for preaching her ideals by the same Dictator who had called Mark "traitor."

In the dark beside him he heard a stirring and, tentatively, tried his voice. "Our time . . . must be up. . . ." The words came strangely from a throat so long unused. There was a deep sigh, then, "Why don't the vault doors open?" a man's voice asked. From farther down came other murmurings, mutterings, creaky like the sound of a long unopened hinge, and always there was the drip of icy water flowing through the drain.

Slowly they spoke; the ice numbed memory until they willed it to return. So it was that Mark Evanthes, tall, sinewy "patriot," remembered only how his heart had bled for humans suffering under the oppressive rule of a Dictator and, until it was forcibly recalled to memory, forgot the scene outside his house in Albany five hundred years before, forgot the dirt covered shovel and the thing he had been occupied in doing before the evil of his uncle drove him to drop it and fight for human rights.

Now he stretched himself and sat upright, dragging words back to memory. "How many of us are there? I'll start numbering . . . one." . . . *two* . . . the word came from beside him . . . *three* . . . faint, yet unmistakably a woman's voice . . . *four* . . . a man's . . . *five* . . . another man . . . *six* a woman . . . *seven* . . . a woman.

That was all then: three women and four men. Gathering his strength, Mark rose, stepping carefully in the dark until he came to a wall. Not a gleam of light shone through, not a creak gave warning of the opening doors. There could be only a few hours of life left! The air would be getting thin soon. He breathed deeply. Funny!

His lungs expanded painlessly. . . .

"WHY don't the doors open?" There was panic in the voice. "Let us out! Our time is up!"

"I don't think our time *is* up," Mark said slowly. "The doors should open before the ice melts. But keep cool," he added hastily, "we'll get out some way."

"How?" the man shouted.

"The air is getting thin," another voice said. "We've been awakened just to die."

Then there was panic; shuffling feet, soft thuds as bodies bumped in the dark, the sound of women's frightened voices, the chattering of a crazed man.

"Be still," Mark cried. "You're using up the air." He threw back his head, breathing deeply. As before, it refreshed him; there was no strain on his lungs. Then, as his eyes swept the ceiling, he saw, faint above, a gleam of light.

Quickly he gathered the men and climbed on their backs, his fingers exploring the region of the crack. A few pieces of stone fell to the floor. As he scratched feverishly at the time-softened granite, he talked, taking pleasure in the use of his voice, silent for he knew not how long. Of Vassa Evens and Dr. Wade he already knew; it was the four sentenced after himself he questioned, hoping to trace the course of the government in their stories.

A woman spoke first. Her name, she said, was Countess di Grazzo, her period the same as Mark's. Her crime, she said wearily, was called *the new treason.* She had married a foreigner, taking her vast fortune out of the country and giving up her citizenship. Then, forced to leave the land of her adoption, her fortune lost, she returned to America, only to learn she was still under jurisdiction of the United States and that renouncement of citizenship constituted a crime under the Dictatorship, made worse by the fact that she had deprived her native country of the money earned within it.

The voice which had shouted, panic-stricken, in the darkness of the crypt spoke next. He was Conrad Wright and, at the turn of the system, when the Dictatorship was giving place to Communism, had been accused of misusing the people's money.

A full, throaty voice interrupted him. "I'm Adria," it said, "Adria, Woman of New York." She paused as if expecting recognition of the name.

"And your crime?" Mark asked.

"Willful waste of lives. Two men killed themselves for love of me." One could almost feel her preen herself in recollection.

"In my day," he said, "women were not ostracized for that."

"Your day," she answered wearily, "must have been long ago. When the people rule, lives become important. At least that was the feeling of the court. Ask Len what it means."

"Well, Len," Mark asked, "why are you here?"

Len's voice was rough, uncultured. "They called it sa-bot-age." He mouthed the word parrot-like, unsure of its meaning. "I worked on a lathe, always I pressed a lever, day in, day out. Then production slowed and I was put in here."

At last, through the efforts of the four men, they opened a hole large enough to admit their bodies. Once outside, they blinked their eyes against the sun, reveling in its warmth and the smell of vegetation. So, for a moment, they did not notice the deep crevice beside the crypt, nor see that the crypt itself was covered by the earth of centuries. It was Mark who saw it first.

"How long we have been gone," he sighed. Above them towered a giant oak, its roots grounded in the dirt above the crypt. At that moment, Conrad Wright pointed to the crevice where, toppling perilously on the edge, was a battered, ageworn engine, with pipes, uncovered by the shifting earth, leading to the crypt below.

"It's the ice machine," Dr. Wade exclaimed, "the machine which kept us frozen!"

"An earthquake must have put it out of order and cracked the crypt," Mark added, looking at the bottomless crevice, running, straight as a ruler, for some hundred yards.

AT THAT moment an anguished cry sounded behind them. From the voice it was Adria, Woman of New York, yet the thought of two men killing themselves for love of this wrinkled, haggard crone was inconceivable. She walked toward them, hands outstretched, thin, claw-like fingers curled upwards in her palms. "Old," she screamed. "I'm old! And I was twenty-five when they entombed me."

"You're plenty more now," Countess di Grazzo said coldly.

"It must have been the ice," Mark reflected.

"But we were all frozen," Vassa Evens objected, running stubby fingers through her short-cropped hair, "and we're no older."

It was true. Countess di Grazzo sighed as she felt the youthful contour of her body; Len flexed the muscles of his brawny arm; Conrad Wright settled his spectacles, running a tentative hand across the pink and whiteness of his face; Dr. Wade tossed the shaggy head so often pictured at the time of his trial; and Mark, stretching his long body, gratefully felt the pull of youth in his muscles.

"Perhaps Adria froze too slowly," he remarked. "Instantaneously frozen ice crystals are cubical and fit closely together—that's the whole theory of suspending life in ice—slowly frozen ones are pointed. Adria's must have been slightly pointed and injured her body tissue."

"Old," Adria repeated. "I'm old!"

"If I had my kit," Dr. Wade said, his voice silkily smooth, ironic, teasing. "But they took it away when I went on trial. . . ."

"If you had your kit," Adria repeated eagerly. "What could you do, Doctor? Could you make me young again?" She walked toward him, heavy jowls sagging.

"No." He bared irregular teeth in a smile. "I was just going to say that I've never seen a more fit subject for a 'mercy killing.' Any court in the world would acquit me."

"Beast!" She sprang, stretching tense claw-like fingers toward his throat. He pushed her aside and she fell, breathing in hoarse rasps. Mark bent over her, watching the dying of her feeble pulse. "Too bad," he said, "but perhaps she's better off."

"I'm sure she is," Countess di Grazzo said coldly, feeling the contour of her flaxen head with a comforting gesture.

CHAPTER II

The Great Insects

THEY walked through the lushness of what had once been called Death Valley, leaving Adria, Woman of New York, lying near the crypt which had harbored her body so long. Silently, they walked, awed by the miracle of earth and flowering shrubs in the dry wasteland they remembered, aware of the contrast of fresh growing things to that tomb of ice behind them, grateful to the disturbance in the earth which had brought them to life again. Only Len, the worker, felt no sense of restraint. He walked buoyantly, humming a strange melody. Len, congenitally bereft of thought, had been trained to follow, to act upon bidding. Still, human beings who approach the robot state do not commit sabotage. Some keener-minded man above him must have been to blame.

Mark, however, had been pondering

the changes around him. Part of the lushness of what had been wasteland might be explained by the shifting surface of the earth—the washing away of hills and mountains into valleys—but the change in climate must be due to some astronomical factor. Perhaps the earth's orbit had flattened out because of less attraction from other planets. In that case, this little section of California would have a long, cool summer, just the climate to encourage growth of this sort of vegetation.

Suddenly a vibrant drumming met their ears. Above the brush waved large antennae, dark green and shiny. A gigantic animal—no, insect, it must be—sleek, armor-plated body divided into three sections, sloping wings beating against its sides, broke through the bushes. The head was irregular, strong laterally opening jaws—black extended eyes. Identically, even to the shiny disks of ears in the anterior legs, it duplicated, a thousand times enlarged, the cicada of Mark's civilization. Yet the eyes were different, expressive, inquiring.

The small group huddled about Mark. How could they protect themselves, unarmed, against the strength of that gigantic insect? One leap, and who could escape those mammoth wings!

The fleshless legs tightened . . . the antennae paused . . . the drumming silenced. . . . Suspended in a moment of eternity, the six people waited. . . . Then, suddenly, Mark shook himself from his lethargy. To come alive after centuries only to meet death from an insect, however large, was anti-climactical. Mind and body rebelling, he squared his shoulders, staring into the black beady eyes, determined to fight to protect his life.

Under his gaze, the insect seemed to falter. The antennae moved, the legs unflexed. Then, with a whir of wings, it rose, beating its way upward, finally to be lost in the distance.

Countess di Grazzo sank to the ground. Dr. Wade, pale and shaken, scratched his shaggy head, muttering, "The six of us would have made a juicy meal."

"Perhaps he was a vegetarian," Mark essayed, "his ancestor was."

"It's easy to change a vegetarian into a carnivore," Dr. Wade replied, "merely by withholding food for awhile. And if man bred that cicada, which I believe he did, he'd make sure it didn't consume his crops."

As they proceeded, the land took on the appearance of habitation. Following a path, they gazed ahead to see long, straight furrows in the earth and, silhouetted against the horizon, another giant cicada harnessed to a future-looking plow.

"That proves your reason for their being carnivores," Mark exclaimed to Dr. Wade. "They're used to till the fields." Yet, strangely, they noticed, no human being drove the giant insect. Alone it continued, conscientiously, dutifully, to do its work.

AS THEY turned a bend, a figure approached—a girl, slim and lissome, clad in a flowing dress of some spider-webby material, her patrician head topped by red-gold hair.

"Hello," Mark shouted jubilantly.

She stopped, peering up at him with jade green eyes set above high cheekbones as if he were some queer species from another world. At his disarming smile she eased, saying questioningly, "Hell-oh?"

At her queer inflection, his hope sank. If only she spoke English!

"Spoke English," the girl said.

"Yes," he answered excitedly. "*Do* you speak English?"

"Yes. Speak English."

"What year is this?

She wrinkled her forehead, as it concentrating intently.

"Is it 2150?" That was the year his own sentence should have expired. But it must be later. Len and Adria had lived in the 22nd century. It might be the 23rd now, perhaps even the 24th.

"2450," she said.

Strange. She spoke English yet—it seemed as if she waited for his mind to work before she answered. Perplexed, he thought of the two giant cicadas: the one about to attack, the other doing the work of a horse, unguided. What had made the attacking cicada leave? It was almost as if it had read the determination to fight in his mind.

"Yes." Her voice broke his thoughts. "Lahra reads your mind. So did the horse."

Horse! He started. That giant insect was far removed from the ancient horse. Then the marvel of Lahra's understanding usurped his mind. Incredible that thought-waves could be received!

Conrad Wright spoke irritably. "How are we to get along? It's unfair," he grumbled, "to be interred five hundred years in one's own land and come out a stranger."

"Think all possible answers," Mark told him. "If you ask about the weather, think of weather—hot, cold, rainy, dry. Watch!" He turned to Lahra, thinking of the centuries they had been in the ice-crypt, of the wish they now had to find a city so they might adjust themselves to life again. Then he told her that they could not read her mind, that she must speak in words.

"Then you must think in words," she answered. "You think in—" she stopped.

"Pictures," Mark supplied the word. So he retraced his thoughts and Lahra answered, "A city is near."

As she walked beside him, her red-gold head barely reaching his shoulder, Mark thought he had never seen so perfect a woman. She smiled mischievously and quickly he switched his thoughts to less personal a subject. . . . *What marvels must exist in this age of telepathy! Scientific theories caught and understood as the thought crystallized. . . .*

"What marvels?" Lahra asked. "What did you have in your time?"

So he strained memory, numbed by the ice, and thought of space ships, how man had visited the dead planets and returned to tell the tale, of medicine, of amusements, of the high level the theatre had attained.

Lahra answered in the words of his thinking. "We have no such amusements. Telepathic thought leaves nothing novel enough to entertain. Humor is valueless if one knows the end of the joke as the beginning is conceived. Thoughts are panoramic—no beginning, no middle, no end.

"Space ships are seldom used," she continued. "When one man has been to Mars, everyone has been. Knowledge is common property. We learn as we sleep, through educators, each of whom specializes in one subject. So, all knowledge, all experience, all emotion, is ours without the necessity of undergoing it ourselves."

How did you attain this state? Mark wondered, thinking in words the answers Lahra might wish to give.

"Survival of the fit." Infallibly she selected the words from his random thoughts. "When we get a throwback who cannot learn by telepathy, it is done away with."

"THEN what will happen to us?" Conrad Wright exclaimed.

"If you cannot learn—" the girl shrugged. "However, the elders will give you tests and, if your aptitude is high, you may continue your education."

"I don't understand," Mark put in. "How did you learn that word 'elders'?"

"You thought it. You pictured an ancient court when you first asked of our civilization. And," she laughed, "it was

not too different from our present court."

Before them was the city, high marble walls supporting a clear glass dome. Inside the gates, square glass houses, alike as beehives, bordered wide avenues. But strangest was the sun! Mark stared unbelievingly at the immense, yellow, glareless ball.

"It is really no larger, Mark." His grey eyes softened at the sound of his name on her lips. "Sunciti is the center of astronomical observation now, due to the changing inclination of the earth's axis which traces out a circle in the heavens every 25,000 years."

"Like the axis of a spinning top as it 'sleeps'," Mark interrupted.

"Yes. So the lens," she waved a tiny hand at the glass dome almost half a mile above them, "aided by powerful telescopes, allows us to observe the Second

Solar System which space ships have never reached and of which even we, with our mechanical aids, can see only the faintest traces."

Now and then they passed fair-skinned, wide-browed people, clad in the same translucent cloth as Lahra wore. A few turned curious glances on the motley assembly of strangers, dressed in clothes of other ages but, for the most part, they passed silently, having learned all they needed to know from the random thoughts of the six newcomers.

Lahra stopped at one of the square glass houses. Inside three greybearded men sat silently around a table. For a moment she stood before them then, resting encouraging eyes on Mark said gently, "Think, my Mark. They wish to know more of you," and, turning, left them alone in the Court of the Greybeards.

As Mark stood before the court, his mind dwelling on his long incarceration in the ice, he wished Lahra had not deserted him so quickly. Responsibility for the other five people made him feel helpless in this strange world without her. He looked at the expressionless faces of the three elders, wondering how well they read his fear, when suddenly, his mind went dead. From far away, came a faint humming, like the sound of an intermittent motor . . . a pause, almost a period, then a recurrence of the sound. Slowly he felt the rhythm of a thought, *knew* it was a thought, knew it was Lahra thinking it. Desperately he tried to analyze the pounding at his brain . . . . the rhythm . . . the sentences . . . the pictures. . . . .

One of the greybeards smiled. "We are not barbarians, my friend. You do not need help from the woman, Lahra. If you show aptitude you live; if not—" he waved Mark away in a loose, flowing gesture.

One by one, the newcomers came before the court, knowing neither what tests they were being given, nor how well they passed them, until finally, they were led away and put each in a separate room, furnished with bed and chair and nothing more. Thus did their education commence.

CHAPTER III

The New Training

AS THE days passed, Mark saw Lahra often. The others had paired off, like with like. Countess di Grazzo and Conrad Wright, both superficial and selfish, found pleasure in recalling other days: Vassa Evens and Dr. Wade—probably drawn by their fanaticism—were a common sight together, their stocky figures determinedly pacing the quiet streets. Len, as always, stayed apart, spending his animal energy in striding outside the city gates, humming always the strange melody from his own civilization.

From Lahra, Mark learned that an educator was teaching them telepathically at night. Yet, so soundly did he sleep, and so little memory did he have upon awaking, that he did not know it until she told him.

"It takes time," she said. Then, reading his discouragement, took it upon herself to teach him.

Outside the city, she had him stretch beneath a tree, had him close his eyes and relax. Then she talked softly, hypnotically, about sleep until at last he lost consciousness and lay, mind open, to receive her thoughts.

At first there were no results. Mark awakened as from a natural sleep, with no memory of the intelligence Lahra sent. But after awhile, came faint memory, as of a dream, until at last he awakened with full knowledge. On that day, Lahra taught him to suspend, Yogi-like, his physical being, so that, without going into the hypnotic sleep, his body and mind were yet quiet enough to receive her message. And,

as Mark grew adept in telepathy, so Lahra learned more of his native language.

Thus it was that he got the feel of the new civilization, though sometimes what Lahra told him was so fantastic that he believed he had not caught her thought aright. The animal world, save for man, was gone. Insects, high in intelligence had been bred to mammoth proportions by injections of a mixture of pituitary and thyroid extract. The people were, of necessity, vegetarians, but the insects, as Dr. Wade had said, were carnivorous, in that they ate their own kind. The horse, as she still termed the giant cicada, had intelligence about the order of Len's—that is, it could receive thought and act upon it, but had no creative intelligence. So it was not strange that Mark had turned away the attacking cicada by merely willing it. Man's will had become supreme.

Human life, Mark learned, was effortless and happy. The wish to perform one service for the community, whether it be mining, educating or making a home (if she be a woman) was given each individual as he slept. So, content to follow his artificially instilled desires, each person fulfilled his destiny, never looking to far pastures where the fields seemed greener.

And you? Mark wondered.

Lahra smiled up at him, green eyes sparkling beneath red-gold brows. *My blood is good. I have been trained for marriage.*

Quickly he shut his mind. She must read no farther until he had justified his existence in this society. Unless he passed the tests set by the elders, he had no right even to think of Lahra.

Once he asked how it was they had been so long forgotten in the crypt; how, if a man had tended the ice machine, he had been unaware of the reason for his doing.

You were as dead, she answered, *and even we have not yet bridged the gap between the world of spirit and of thought.*

THE next day Lahra seemed distracted. Two things were wrong, she said. In the first place, their food supply was menaced. The earthquake which had released Mark and his companions from the crypt had spewed up millions of tiny animals from the inside of the earth. Indeed, it was questionable whether they *were* animals, for all the scientists in the city could not annihilate them. They had tried blasting, burning, drowning, shoveling them back into the crack from which they came and covering them with dirt, yet back they came.

Are they harmful? Mark asked wordlessly.

Yes, and they were strange, Lahra answered. Where they lay the earth dried out, vegetation died, and the air at night took on an eerie glow. If nothing were done there would be no food—and it seemed nothing *could* be done to stop them.

What are they like?

They hopped over the ground like Mexican Jumping Beans. No one could touch them—one man had tried and his flesh had shriveled and his bones melted away. Indeed, even getting too close formed sores and ulcers on the human body. But as nearly as anyone could tell, Lahra continued, they had metallic beanlike shells, inside each one a blob of life which, no matter how you cut, blasted or tore it apart, lived on.

In despair the people had built a wall, but the masonry crumbled under bombardment of the rays.

Radium, Mark thought. *Only radium acts that way!*

Yes, Lahra answered, *Lah, my father, says they must be a new form of animal life—an animal or worm with a pitchblende shell containing a great amount of radium. He calls them radium bugs.*

That night they walked towards the cut in the earth, from which the bugs emerged. From the city gates they saw

queer, green-white rays, emanating from miles away, reaching from earth to sky. Fearing to approach too close, they watched the emanations, sensing the ionization of the air, thinking despondently of the danger to the city if something were not done. Even as they watched, the waves of light drew closer, blocking out a tree which stood high above the rest, fencing it around with light, drying it out with the all-powerful Gamma rays.

Silently they turned, Mark trying to remember something he could not quite recapture. It had to do with dirt. . . . No, not dirt. . . . Yes, it was connected with dirt. . . . He stopped abruptly as another thought drove it from his mind. "Lahra, you said two things were wrong this afternoon. What was the other?"

My marriage, she thought. His face flushed with the beating of his heart as knowledge of the man Lahra had been conditioned by the educators to wish to marry came thrumming into his mind. *You can't,* he thought desperately, *I won't let you.* Then, as if she could not read his mind, asked softly, "*Do* you want him?"

Not now, she thought. *No! Not since I met you. But his destiny is intertwined with mine.* . . .

He put his arm across her shoulders, drawing her slight figure against him. "Then you can't marry him," he said roughly. "People can't fool with things like love."

"Protect yourself first, Mark," she said. "I don't want to jeopardize your life by holding any invisible strings on it. I speak so there will be no doubt in your mind as to my meaning—so you will know this is no miscaught dream or mistaken thought-wave. I want to marry you, but you must first prove to the elders that you are apt enough to live—if you can't, you must escape—leave, without me."

"Lahra," he said hopelessly, "why without you?"

"Because no matter where I went, I should be found. They might allow you to thwart your destiny; mine is inevitably laid out. And a man's is intertwined with it."

"When do the elders decide?"

"Tonight." She moved closer to him in the dark. "And I am afraid you have not received from anyone but me."

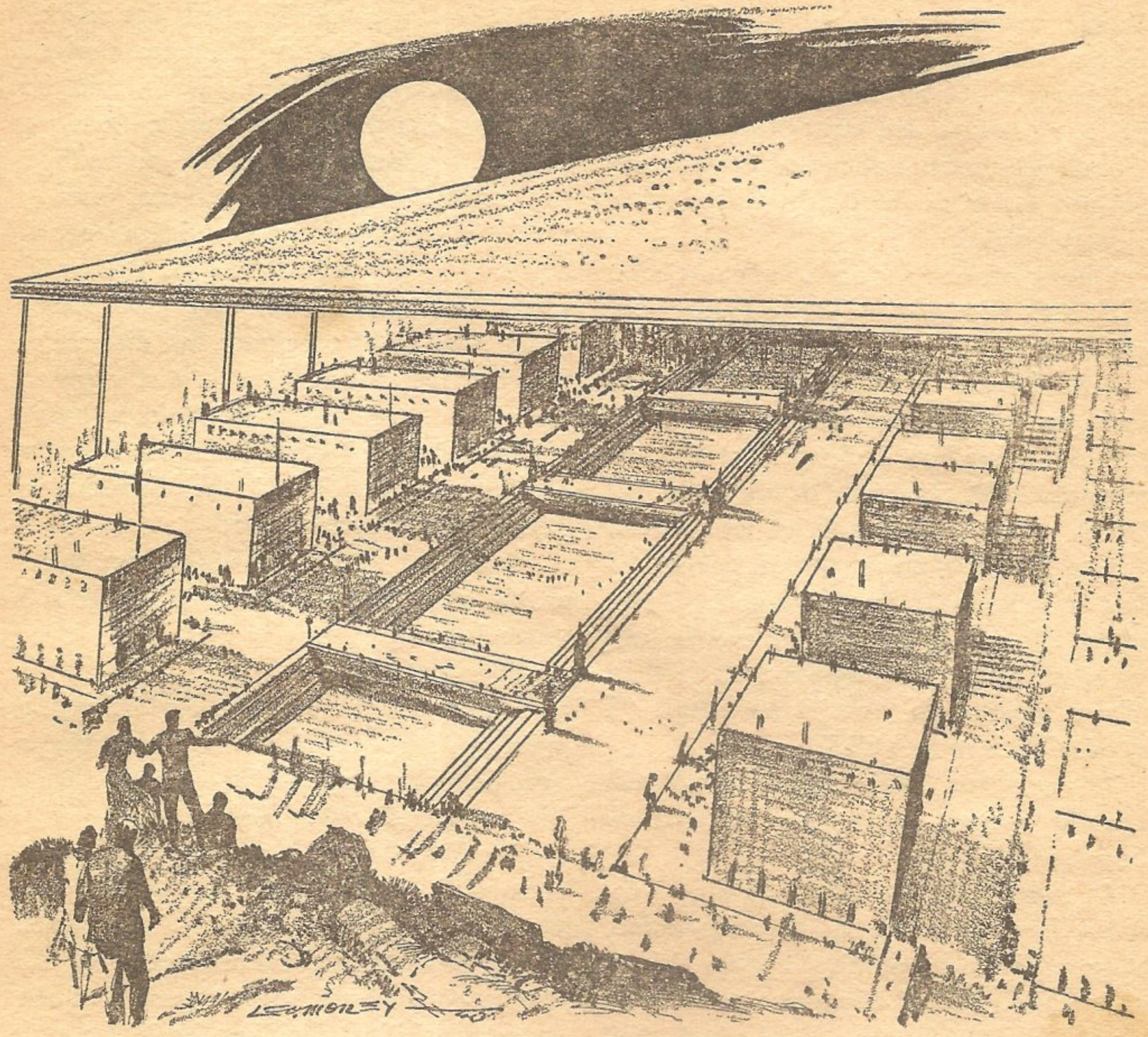
CHAPTER IV

The Tests

IT WAS true, Mark reflected, as he sat in the room of the elders; his night education had had no effect. When he awoke each morning, he knew no more than when he had gone to sleep. Only from Lahra, probably because of the love between them, could he learn without words.

He had been so engrossed in his own affairs that he had had little chance to think of the others who had come with him from the crypt. Now he turned, noting the pale face of Conrad Wright, and the way the Countess di Grazzo nervously twined her fingers in her hair. The others seemed quite calm. Len whistled a soundless tune, Vassa looked as self-satisfied as the proverbial cat and Dr. Wade darted his dark, wild eyes about the room as if he were taking mental notes for someone to whom he expected to tell the whole fantastic tale later.

But the test had started. Something, he knew not what, impelled him to rise and stand before the court. Then came the soundless hum, increasing and decreasing in intensity, forming words, phrases, sentences. He fought desperately to understand them, to resolve them into thought. Only the thrumming continued. Breathing deeply, he tried to suspend his being, to blank his mind as Lahra had taught him. . . . At last! They were asking of his native city.



Racking his numbed memory, he pictured Albany as it had been; the excitement of the year man had conquered space. Then he pictured New York where he had attended school, its fantastically high buildings, its auto-skyways, the streets below, set aside for people. Incredibly he learned that New York was gone, that in five hundred years the continual washing away of hills and mountains and filling up of the sea had spread the water and finally drowned the city he had known as the greatest in the entire world.

At that moment, as an expression of displeasure crossed the faces of the elders, Mark realized that Lahra had been receiving their thoughts and relaying them to him. At once the thrumming stopped. For some ten minutes more, he stood helpless, blank-minded, before the court, until suddenly he found Len beside him. Evidently Len had been summoned and the worker, the robot, like the giant cicada, had sensed the bidding of his masters, though Mark Evanthes had failed!

It was small comfort to know that the Countess and Conrad Wright also failed. Vassa Evens and Dr. Wade showed promise and were allowed to continue their night education along with Len. However, Lahra's interference where Mark was concerned had prejudiced the court against him. Already they knew she loved him and feared that, if he were

allowed to live, she would thwart her destiny. So, with the Countess and Conrad Wright, Mark was termed "unfit" and sentenced to die, quite humanely.

Until Mark met Lahra that evening, he did not know he was not to be given another chance.

"You must leave at once," she told him. "Go east. Live in the forest. What were you before?"

Now, for the first time in five hundred years, he recalled his vocation—the work that had kept him at fever heat for ten years until the rigid rule of his uncle had driven work from his head and forced him to fight for an oppressed people. "I was a scientist," he answered. Then, again, the import of Lahra's words kept his mind from pursuing his past further. "Why must I go East?" he asked. "I could hide here as well."

The radium bugs, Lahra answered. *They're moving Eastward. We must all leave soon.*

At that, Mark's mind snapped into action. He had been a scientist—mind, body and soul a scientist! Plague the ice which had numbed his memory so long! The Dictatorship was dead, had died without him, but science still lived, humanity still lived, and both should profit now by the fruits of his labor five hundred years before.

IN THE throes of scientific research, before he had given himself to fighting his Dictator uncle, he had, after years of labor, succeeded in isolating the natural element No. 93. True, as far back as 1934, Professor Fermi of the Royal University of Rome had bombarded uranium with neutrons thrown off by radium emanations and called the result No. 93. However, Mark, unsatisfied with this man-made element (indeed some twenty-five years later it was discredited) worked alone and finally succeeded in isolating a small vial of the natural element.

But, feeling as he did about the rule of his uncle, and thinking the new element no fit plaything for a benighted world, he kept his discovery secret until, learning he was suspected of treason, he decided to put it beyond reach of man, hoping that if he were found guilty and sentenced to leave home and friends for the crypt of ice, he would awaken to a government more worthy of receiving his discovery. So they had found him as, dirt covered shovel in hand, he returned from burying his "dog" who had eaten too liberally of the nauseous bread the dictatorship deemed fit for human food.

He turned to the girl beside him. *Who is the man who knows most about science, Lahra?*

Lah, my father.

Take me to him! If he could find the small vial he had buried five centuries ago, he might buy his life—perhaps even his freedom to marry Lahra.

Standing before the youngish, grey-templed Lah, Mark saw in his tall grace the germ of Lahra's beauty. Putting such thoughts aside, he concentrated on the menace of radium bugs, thinking of the indestructability of radium itself, the only element of which man had found no way to hasten the disintegration.

Lah smiled sadly. "Yes, it is true."

"Am I right in saying," Mark asked, "that the disintegration of radium is progressive that, unlike nitroglycerine which explodes as a mass, each atom of radium requires a different length of time to break down?"

"Right," Lah agreed. "The transformation period of half the atoms of a given mass of radium in 2000 years. It takes the same length of time for the first part of the second half to disintegrate, and so on. You see it is hopeless." He shrugged his shoulders and sat down.

"Then we must use an element which acts on radium."

(Continued on page 116)

IS YOUR Rupture GETTING Worse?

It is terrible to feel that your rupture is constantly getting worse, taking the joy out of life, even making you feel despondent—without your seeming to be able to DO anything about it! And yet, it's so needless! We have information for you that has brought deliverance and joy to thousands of men, women and children, as PROVED by their letters of gratitude—now on file in our office.

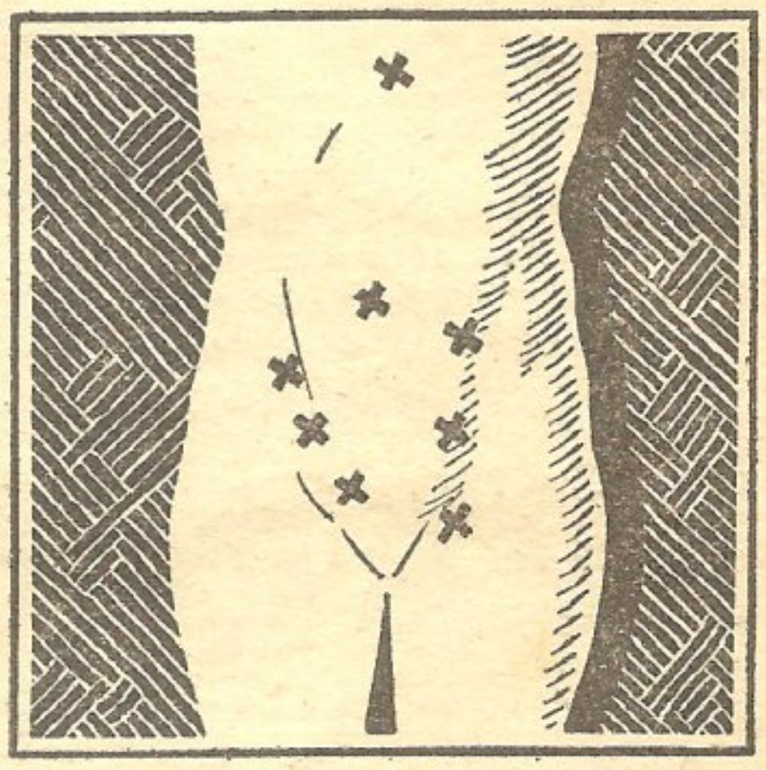
STOP IT, STOP IT!
Be Yourself Again!

As sure as you live and breathe, if you have a reducible rupture, you can stop your rupture worries—find yourself alive and energetic and rid of all the old fears that made your existence a bad dream!

THE FAMOUS BROOKS AUTOMATIC AIR-CUSHION APPLIANCE WILL SET YOU FREE

There is nothing experimental about the famous BROOKS Air-Cushion Rupture Appliance. It has been used for years and repeatedly made better and better! What is the Patented Automatic Air-Cushion? It is the part that holds back your rupture—the most important part of any truss. It is a yielding, air-filled rubber chamber that holds with complete security without gouging in. Ill-fitting trusses do gouge in! The BROOKS permits the edges of the rupture opening to remain close together. Thus nature is sometimes able to close the opening, making a truss unnecessary. While we make no promise, the fact is, thousands of former Brooks wearers have reported no further need for a truss.

The very day you put on a BROOKS Patented Air-Cushion, you will feel reborn! That's because the Air-Cushion clings as nothing else can! No more fear of slipping, to let the rupture down. No more dread of strangulation!—and—at last!—complete freedom to indulge in every normal activity! And what a relief to realize that your BROOKS will have no springs, no metal girdle, no agonizing pressure devices, but—instead—will give such bodily comfort that you'll hardly know the truss is there at all. The BROOKS has proved a Godsend to thousands! Why not to YOU?



X Where Is YOUR Rupture?

WRONG

Hard pad gouging in keeps Rupture open and prevents natural healing.

RIGHT

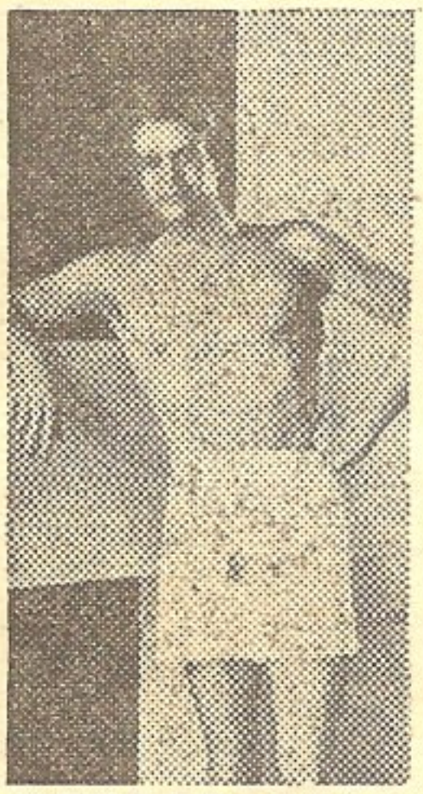
BROOKS Air-Cushion does not spread rupture opening. Gives nature a real opportunity!

BROOKS APPLIANCE CO.
458-L State St., Marshall, Mich.

PROOF!

Proof of the value and outstanding merit of the BROOKS APPLIANCE is clearly shown by the fact that over 9,000 doctors have ordered it for themselves or their patients. One doctor alone has ordered for his patients over 400 Brooks Appliances. Follow your doctor's advice! If he says you have a reducible rupture and advises a proper-fitting support, don't subject yourself to further delay, which may prove dangerous, but send us your name and address immediately.

And a Brooks will be sent on NO-MONEY-RISK TRIAL!



That's one of the best parts of all. You don't have to risk your money to find out just what joy and happiness a BROOKS CAN BRING YOU! You simply try it, and, if not satisfied, the trial costs you nothing! And anyone can afford a BROOKS. It costs no more than ordinary trusses. Every BROOKS is made to individual requirements, made especially to fit your case. Therefore it is never sold in stores. Guard against imitations. Now then: Don't send a penny right now. But DO SEND THE COUPON AT ONCE. We'll prove every statement in this advertisement, under an iron-clad, money back guarantee. DO YOURSELF THE BIGGEST FAVOR IN THE WORLD. MAIL THE COUPON!

FREE BOOK! No Money! Just send name and address for Free Copy of Book on Rupture, easy self-fitting chart and our no-risk trial order plan with low prices. Get the joy of "Air-Cushion" support at once.

MAIL THIS COUPON NOW FOR TRIAL OFFER

BROOKS APPLIANCE CO., 458-L STATE ST.,
Marshall, Michigan.

In PLAIN ENVELOPE, please send your FREE BOOK on Rupture, PROOF of Results, and TRIAL OFFER. No one is to call on me personally about my rupture.

Name..... Street.....

State Whether for Man ( )
City..... State..... Woman ( ) or Child ( )

DIGESTIVE JUICES FAILING?

Then Food CAN'T Digest Right, Your Strength Goes—You Feel Rotten, You Look Older . . . Start those Digestive Juices Flowing Normally Again

If there is nothing organically wrong with you, a common cause of poor digestion is a WEAK flow of DIGESTIVE JUICES. Then food can't digest right. You feel SOUR, often have HEARTBURN, gas, a DIZZY head.

You must do something to start digestive juices flowing NORMALLY again. Set the millions of tiny cells in Fleischmann's Yeast to work on those digestive glands. This yeast is a STIMULATOR. It starts the juices forming faster. Then digestion should pick up—in test cases it was *greatly increased*. When digestion improves, strength should begin to come back so that you feel like a NEW person. Get Fleischmann's Yeast today. Eat one cake first thing in the morning, another ½ hour before supper.

FREE—Write for "You Can't Feel Well If Digestive Juices Are Failing," to F. Y. Co., Dept. **S-S, 691** Washington St., New York. Absolutely FREE!

Copyright, 1940, Standard Brands Incorporated

Learn Profitable Profession in 90 days at Home

Salaries of Men and Women in the fascinating profession of Swedish Massage run as high as $40 to $70 per week but many prefer to open their own offices. Large incomes from Doctors, hospitals, sanitariums and private patients come to those who qualify through our training. Reducing alone offers rich rewards for specialists. Write for Anatomy Charts and booklet—They're FREE.

THE College of Swedish Massage
30 E. Adams St., Dept. 395, Chicago
(Successor to National College of Massage)

Cameo

CAMEO or HEMATITE RINGS, only $1.00 each
MOUNTINGS in 1/40 14 KARAT YELLOW GOLD OR STERLING SILVER.

Double Head simulated Cameos or Single Head Intaglio Hematite rings. Every ring handsomely embossed, massive appearance. Will Last a Lifetime! SEND NO MONEY! Pay postman $1.00, plus small postage charge, or enclose money and we will pay postage. State if gold or silver, giving size. 10 DAY FREE TRIAL. Money back if not delighted. Compare with any $12.00 ring. ORDER NOW! Limited supply.

The Select Ring Co., 906 W. LaSalle St., South Bend, Ind.

You Can Train to Be an ARTIST

Trained Artists Are Capable of Earning $30, $50, $75 Weekly. Many of our graduates are now enjoying successful Art Careers. Our practical method makes it fun to learn Commercial Art, Cartooning and Designing AT HOME IN SPARE TIME. Write for details in FREE BOOK. "Art for Pleasure and Profit", explains course and commercial opportunities. TWO ARTISTS' OUTFITS included with training. State age.

STUDIO 999P, WASHINGTON SCHOOL OF ART
1115-15th Street, N. W. Washington, D. C.

14 BOX ASSORTMENTS 30¢ EACH UP-ODD CARDS 2½¢ EACH

Sell 50 Assorted Name Imprinted CHRISTMAS CARDS for Only $1

Make extra money easily. Send for free samples of our exclusive $1.00 line of Personal Cards and Imprinted Stationery. Request $1.00 box assortment on approval.

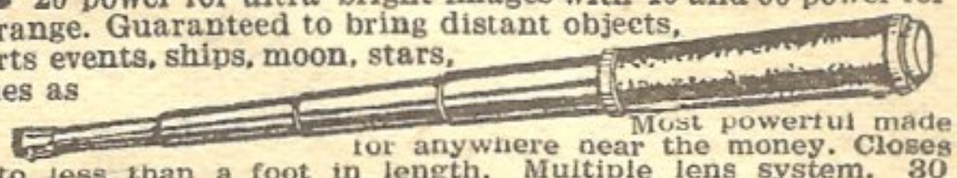
FREE SAMPLES

NEW ENGLAND ART PUBLISHERS, Dept. 481, North Abington, Mass.

60 POWER TELESCOPE...$2.19

VARIABLE EYEPIECE 20X—40X—60X

NEW! Three telescopes in one. 3 different magnifications. 20 power for ultra-bright images with 40 and 60 power for extra long range. Guaranteed to bring distant objects, people, sports events, ships, moon, stars, etc., 60 times as close.



Most powerful made for anywhere near the money. Closes to less than a foot in length. Multiple lens system. 30 mm. objective lens. 5 sections. Directions included for using as a compound 4 lens microscope. American made. Prompt shipment guaranteed. We pay the postage. Only $2.19.

BROWNSCOPE CO., Dept. P, 5 W. 27th St., New York, N. Y.

TYPEWRITER ½ Price

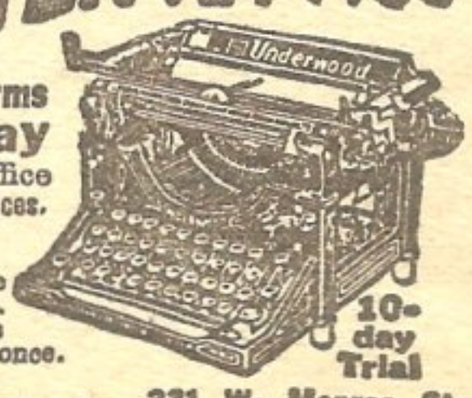
Easy Terms
Only 10c a Day

Save over ⅓ on all standard office models. Also portables at reduced prices.

SEND NO MONEY

All late models completely refinished like brand new. **FULLY GUARANTEED.** Big free catalog shows actual machines in full colors. Lowest prices. Send at once.

Free course in typing included.



10-day Trial

International Typewriter Exch., 231 W. Monroe St. Dept. 939, Chicago

(Continued from page 114)

"If only we had one. But, of the 92 elements. . . ." Lah turned his eyes from Mark as if the conversation were becoming too childish to continue.

Ninety-two! That was all Mark wanted to hear. Strange that in this age of intellectualism, no one had rediscovered the 93rd element. Yet not so strange. No one but himself had known of its existence. No minds had come through the ages to recall it and so inform these benighted intellectuals of a way to save themselves.

Lah sprang to his feet. "You must get it," he said.

If it were only that easy, Mark thought. The vial was buried near Albany, New York. Had five centuries left it there? And if they had, could he find it?

"Albany." Lahra had read his thoughts. "There is no such place."

"Give me a map."

"We have none, silly. What would we need it for?"

"Draw one then—a map of the Eastern coast. Get in communication with your educator in geography." He paced the floor excitedly.

They had no pencils, no need of them—the age of writing, of reading, of all those slow methods of assimilating learning was long past—so Mark burned a piece of wood and gave Lahra the charcoal end, telling her to draw as she received knowledge.

HE STOOD over her, watching the unfamiliar pattern she traced on the surface of the table. New York City was gone—that he had learned this afternoon when he was in threeway communication with the elders, with Lahra as intermediary. But he had not dreamed the coast line had so far receded. New Jersey. Rhode Island, Connecticut and Massachusetts were completely gone, as well as over half of New Hampshire and Ver-

mont and a large part of Maine. From the names she spoke as she drew their boundaries, he recognized the states which now formed the East coast: Vermon was obvious enough; Newham was undoubtedly a contraction of New Hampshire; New York remained the same.

Eagerly he watched as she put tiny dots to indicate cities: Elmire, Syra, and finally, Alaban. That was the one he was waiting for—Alaban, clearly a corruption of Albany. But it was right on the coast now! Was the site where he had had his laboratory still above ground, or had it been covered by the creeping sea?

He turned to Lah, wondering if the elders would allow him to leave, thinking of the Countess and Conrad Wright who, like himself, were doomed to die. Though he had little love for either, it seemed somehow selfish to buy his own life without insuring theirs.

"You are free to go," Lah answered. "And if you disintegrate the radium, even your inapt friends shall live."

Reassured, Mark walked with Lahra to the city gates. Feeling his responsibility, he threw back his head, wishing on the stars which shone large and magnificently through the lens which domed the city. Understanding, she put an encouraging hand on his arm. *Success,* she wished. And he, by the thrum in his head and the thrill at his heart, knew she added the words, *my dear*. . . .

CHAPTER V

The Final Battle

OUTSIDE the gates of Sunciti, Mark boarded the robot-guided rocket ship which was to take him to Alaban, casting one last look at the shimmering sea of radium creeping toward the city before the ship shot into the isotropic layer.

Before they left the air belt, mammoth insects hurtled past the window and Mark's ears rang with the rush of air, but above the atmosphere it was strangely quiet and he found himself thinking of Lahra, forgetting the impossible task before him, feeling grateful to his uncle for sending him to that long interment in the ice. Had his life not been suspended, he and Lahra never would have met. Then he thought of the 93rd element, and at once it struck him that it should be called lahrium, after Lahra herself. For, as she was the ultimate in women, so lahrium was the ultimate in elements.

Lah had read his mind correctly concerning the properties of lahrium. Composed of Alpha, Beta and Delta rays (the Delta rays much shorter and more radio active than the Gamma rays of radium) it should easily break down the radium atom by disrupting the orbit of the electron, so causing the radium to dissipate itself quickly. It was fortunate the plague was of radium instead of lahrium. Nothing could hasten the disintegration of that! Now. If only he could find the spot where it was buried!

The rocket ship landed near Alaban a scant five minutes after it had left Sunciti. Mark, following instinct for lack of reason, hurried to the seashore, casting but a brief look at the city of his birth, hoping against hope that some recognizable landmark had survived.

After an hour of walking, of scanning the shore for a familiar tree, he sat down hopelessly gazing out to sea. Once that had been land. Far down the shore, the greatest city in the world had reared its marble head and, for a brief moment, rested on its glory. Now it was gone and with it the things men had built their lives upon, had schemed, struggled, killed to own. Sunciti, even the world, might go the same way—would go, unless he could find his lahrium. He sighed deeply. Let the world vanish a few centuries prematurely. But there was Lahra. He must save it for her!

He rested his face in his hands, hearing the beat of the sea, until finally it resolved itself into the familiar thrumming. . . . *Go into the city,* Lahra said. *Tell the elders what you are searching for. Hurry!*

On the way to the city of Alaban, Mark thought how exasperating it was that he did not know the latitude and longitude of his former home. Only in that way could the elders give him the exact location of the lahrium; no landmarks remained for them to identify the picture he carried in his mind of the Albany that was. Ironic that a great achievement like telepathy could be thwarted by mere change in the terrain.

At last he found the court of the elders and anxiously stood before it, thinking of the radium menace, of the lahrium he had buried and of the necessity of finding it. A short, dark man detached himself from the group and led him to a high-ceilinged, vault-like chamber, lined from floor to ceiling with shelves on which stood hundreds of instruments.

SILENTLY he selected a strange-looking appliance, one side of which resembled a spectroscope, the other an electroscope, from the bottom of which long, stiff wires trailed. Mark grasped it eagerly. If this instrument were used to locate radio active elements buried in the ground in their natural state, it would serve his purpose admirably. But, as it had been invented since his time, he had no idea of how it worked. Hopelessly, he realized he was being instructed telephatically as to its use. But he could not understand!

Pointing to the spectroscope side, he thought, *Nod if I must operate this.* The man looked confused, but his head did not move. Likewise Mark pointed to the electroscope side, and likewise the man stood immovable. At last, he grasped the trailing wires. The head nodded vigorously. So, by trial and error, he finally learned that the wires were to be shoved into the ground near where he thought the lahrium was buried.

There was no time to question the action of the instrument when finally the element was located. Hurriedly, he sped back to the beach, marvelling at the science which had discovered a way to induce light waves into the spectroscope without vaporizing the element to be tested.

Hours passed without result.

Once again the familiar thrumming beat his mind and he sat down, allowing it to resolve itself into the intelligence Lahra sent. . . . *People are moving farther East . . . many are dead . . . there has been another eruption.* . . .

Galvanized to action, he worked again. It was almost hopeless: that in a territory of hundreds of square miles, he could hit the one minute section he was looking for, that he could find one ounce of material in the billion, trillion ounces of earth he had to choose from. Almost he prayed, working there in the silence with only the lap of water and a dead instrument to keep him company.

Time, interminable time, passed and still he worked. Then, at last, on the gold leaves of the electroscope, he saw a faint reaction. I must be calm, he thought; it may be only radium. On the spectroscope side he saw the spectrum lines shift slightly toward the violet end. That was a good sign. The spectrum shifted to violet as it approached a source of light, toward the red as it left one. Still, that too might mean radium, not lahrium.

He tested the ground around, sometimes finding more reaction, sometimes less, until finally, he located the spot where radio activity was greatest. The gold leaves snapped apart; the spectrum shifted violently toward the violet end.

Seizing the shovel, he dug feverishly until, yards down, it clanged against a

(Continued on page 125)

GROUP LIFE POLICY THAT INSURES THE ENTIRE FAMILY

TOTAL COST ONLY

$1.00 A MONTH

GRANDPARENTS, PARENTS, CHILDREN, AGES 1 TO 75 ALL INSURED IN ONE SINGLE LIFE INSURANCE POLICY

$1,000.00
Maximum Indemnity for Natural or Ordinary Death

$2,000.00
Maximum Indemnity for Auto Accidental Death

$3,000.00
Maximum Triple Indemnity for Travel Death

Genuine Life Insurance— No Medical Examination

The extremely low cost of this marvelous Family Group Life Insurance Policy is made possible because the Bankers Life and Casualty Co. has reduced selling costs to a minimum . . . this policy is sold by mail—no high-priced, high-pressure selling agents will call on you. Bookkeeping costs have been reduced because an entire family can be insured in a single policy—requiring only one policy, one premium notice, etc., etc., for as many as ten persons in a family.

FREE Inspection for 10 Days

Now everyone in your family may enjoy sound life insurance protection. Regardless of which member of your family dies . . . or how they die, after this policy is in full benefit, it pays cash promptly. You don't have to risk a penny to inspect this policy . . . we want you to examine it carefully, ask your friends about it. Don't delay . . . you never know when misfortune strikes. Be prepared with safe, sound life insurance for every member of your family.

Send No Money—No Agent Will Call

Don't send money! Just fill out the coupon and get the details now, without a single penny of expense to you. Learn all about the free 10-day inspection offer.

ACT NOW • SEND COUPON!

LIBERAL BENEFITS SHOWN IN TABLE BELOW

The amount of insurance payable upon the death of any of the persons insured hereunder shall be the amount set out in the following table for the attained age nearest birthday at death of such person divided by the number of persons insured hereunder immediately preceding such death.

Table of amount of insurance purchased by a monthly payment of one dollar.

Attained Age at Death	Natural or Ordinary Accidental Death Amount	Auto Accidental Death Amount	Travel Accidental Death Amount
1-40	$1000.00	$2000.00	$3000.00
41-50	750.00	1500.00	2250.00
51-56	500.00	1000.00	1500.00
57-62	300.00	600.00	900.00
63-68	200.00	400.00	600.00
69-75	100.00	200.00	300.00

ACT NOW—AND RETURN COUPON AT ONCE

BANKERS LIFE AND CASUALTY CO. B-16
Bankers Insurance Bldg., Jefferson Sta., Desk 272, Chicago, Ill.

Please send details and tell me how to get the Family Group Policy for free inspection.

Name ----------

Street or R. F. D. ----------

City ---------- *State* ----------

GUARANTEED TIRES!

FREE! LANTERN With Every 2 Tires ordered

Complete with batteries and newest type reflector bulb. Ready for instant use. Strong, steady light. Useful everywhere. Order now.

GOODYEAR • GOODRICH FIRESTONE • U.S. and Other Standard Makes

WORLD'S LOWEST TIRE PRICES

$2.15 29x4.40-21

Thousands of American customers can vouch for the **long, hard service** given by our **Standard Brand** reconditioned tires, serviceably repaired with high-grade materials and rigidly inspected by tire experts before shipping. **24 years' Experience** enables us to quote **lowest prices** with **legal agreement** to replace at ½ price any tire that fails to give **complete satisfaction.** Tires returned must be prepaid; prices quoted and replacements fob Chicago

EVERY TIRE GUARANTEED

BALLOON TIRES

Size Rim	Tires	Tubes
29x4.40-21	$2.15	$1.05
29x4.50-20	2.35	1.05
30x4.50-21	2.40	1.15
28x4.75-19	2.45	1.25
29x4.75-20	2.50	1.25
29x5.00-19	2.85	1.25
30x5.00-20	2.85	1.25
5.25-17	2.90	1.35
28x5.25-18	2.90	1.35
29x5.25-19	2.95	1.35
30x5.25-20	2.95	1.35
31x5.25-21	3.25	1.35
5.50-17	3.35	1.40
28x5.50-18	3.35	1.40
29x5.50-19	3.35	1.45
6.00-17	3.40	1.40
30x6.00-18	3.40	1.40
31x6.00-19	3.40	1.45
32x6.00-20	3.45	1.55
33x6.00-21	3.65	1.55
32x6.50-20	3.75	1.75
6.00-16	3.75	1.45

REGULAR CORD TIRES

Size	Tires	Tubes
30x3½	$2.35	$0.95
31x4	2.95	1.25
32x4	2.95	1.25
33x4	2.95	1.25
34x4	3.25	1.35
32x4½	3.35	1.45

Size	Tires	Tubes
33x4½	$3.45	$1.45
34x4½	3.45	1.45
30x5	3.65	1.65
33x5	3.75	1.75
35x5	3.95	1.75

HEAVY DUTY TRUCK TIRES (High Pressure)

Size	Tires	Tubes
30x5	$4.25	$1.95
33x5	3.95	1.75
34x5	4.25	2.25
32x6	7.95	2.95
36x6	9.95	4.45

Size	Tires	Tubes
34x7	$10.95	$4.65
38x7	10.95	4.65
36x8	11.45	4.95
40x8	13.25	4.95

TRUCK BALLOON TIRES

Size	Tires	Tubes
6.00-20	$3.75	$1.65
6.50-20	4.45	1.95
7.00-20	5.95	2.95

Size	Tires	Tubes
7.50-20	$6.95	$3.75
8.25-20	8.95	4.95
9.00-20	10.95	5.65
9.75-20	13.95	6.45

ALL OTHER SIZES **DEALERS WANTED**

SEND ONLY $1.00 DEPOSIT on each tire ordered. ($3.00 on each Truck Tire.) We ship balance C. O. D. Deduct **5 per cent** if cash is sent in full with order. To fill order promptly we may substitute brands if necessary. ALL TUBES BRAND NEW—GUARANTEED—

PERRY-FIELD TIRE & RUBBER CO.

2328-30 S. Michigan Av., Dept. 3571-A, Chicago, Ill.

***Get into the* BAKING BUSINESS**

Bakers make good money! Now 7th Industry in wages! Nearly depression-proof. New home study Baking Course qualifies you. Common school education sufficient. If you're ambitious, write for FREE BOOK, "Opportunities in Baking."
National Baking Institute, 3601 Michigan, Dept. 1416, Chicago

HAY FEVER or ASTHMA

TREATMENT on TRIAL. If satisfied, send $1; if not, it's **FREE.** Write for it today. State which.

W. K. STERLINE, 610 Ohio Ave., SIDNEY OHIO

Promotion Begins at Home

Our graduates will be found in such enviable positions as Architects, C. P. A.'s, Automotive and Diesel Engineers, Business Executives, Mechanical Engineers, Private Secretaries, Air Conditioning and Radio experts, Draftsmen, Bookkeepers, Plant Engineers, Electrical Engineers. Will you trade a little of your SPARE TIME for BIGGER PAY in such a job? Our 43 years' experience helps train you QUICKLY for a REAL position. Tell us what work you like—we'll send FREE Bulletin. No obligation.
American School, Dpt. P-649, Drexel at 58th, Chicago

FALSE TEETH

LOW AS $6.85

90 DAYS' TRIAL
TEST THEM
EXAMINE THEM

We make **FALSE TEETH** for you by mail from your own impressions. You have satisfaction of **MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE.** Customers in United States & Canada report SATISFACTION. **30 YEARS' EXPERIENCE.**

SEND NO MONEY **WRITE TODAY for FREE BOOKLET and MATERIAL**

DR. CLEVELAND DENTAL LABORATORY

Dept. 48-MO, East St. Louis, Illinois

NEURITIS **Relieve Pain In Few Minutes**

To relieve the torturing pain of Neuritis, Rheumatism, Neuralgia or Lumbago in a few minutes, get NURITO, the fine formula, used by thousands. No opiates. Does the work quickly—must relieve cruel pain to your satisfaction in a few minutes—or your money back. Don't suffer. Don't delay. Ask your druggist today for trustworthy NURITO on this guarantee.

Fantasy Reviews

THE PHANTOM WAGON a trans-continental-Columbia Production.

This new French import heavily accents the occult and supernatural. The plot blends an old Brittany legend with a morbid tale of Parisian slums to provide a depressing, yet fascinating, story.

The last lower-depths sinner to die each year finds himself the driver of the ghostly cart of death—horse-drawn, creaking-wheeled, broken-axled — which collects the souls of other social outcasts like the driver.

Julien Duvivier (who directed "The Golem") has made the most of trick photography and eerie, whispered dialogue to highlight the mystery of the film. Louis Jouvet is customarily excellent as Georges, the phantom driver; Pierre Fresnay gives a splendid performance as David Holm, a sordid wife-beater. Micheline Francey plays a Salvation Army girl who loves a consumptive derelict.

—Dick Wilson

AT THE NEW YORK WORLD'S FAIR

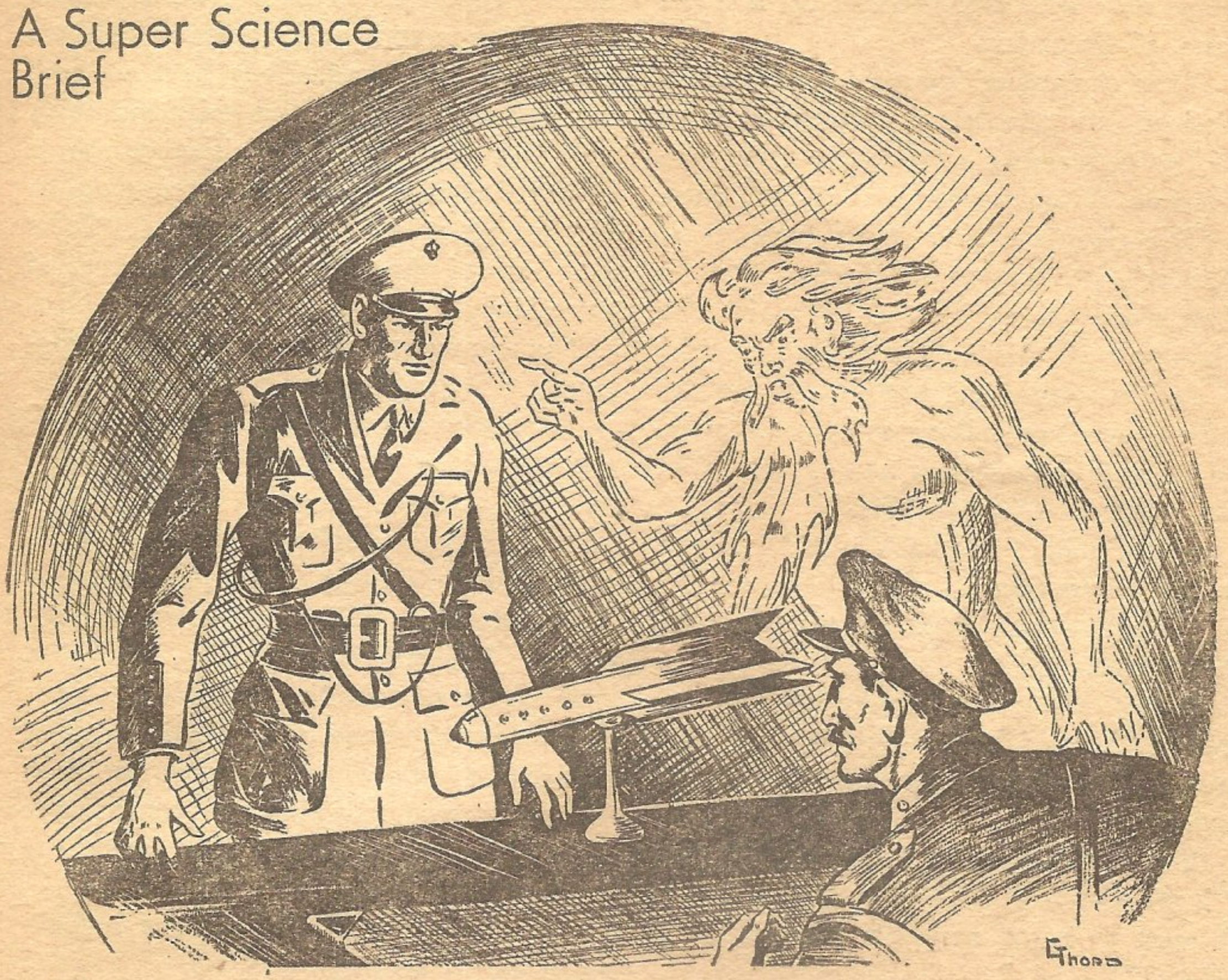
"20,000 Legs Under the Sea" is the new title for what was Salvadore Dali's "Dream of Venus" in 1939. Aside from the addition of Oscar, the Ominous Octopus, the production is the same.

The Norman Bel Geddes-General Motors *Futurama* draws crowds of thousands daily to view the world of 1960, with emphasis on that year's super-express highways. Visitors receive a button reading, "I Have Seen the Future" . . . *Pete Roleum,* the Technicolor movie-puppet, is the main attraction at the Petroleum Exhibit. The oildrop-headed fellow gives an alarming demonstration of the desolation that would soon reign in a world deprived of oil. . . . Within the immense Perisphere, you may see a scientifically planned city of the future.

—Dick Wilson

PHANTOM FROM NEPTUNE

A Super Science Brief



By HENRY ANDREW ACKERMANN

SAM SHEKEL, the producer, agreed to it at last, to Heywood's plan: to act out a scene from "Invasion of Invisible Men" as a screen test for Nat Simon, the promising young Hollywood heavy.

Sam had to give in because he couldn't afford to pass up a single prospect for the role of Kallifer, the leader of the unseen invaders from Mars.

"But," Sam warned, "this Simon better be good or else. . . ." Heywood winced as he thought of what that "or else" meant. It would be as much as his job was worth to waste his employer's time. But Heywood was one talent scout who had faith in Nat Simon.

Everything arranged for the test, Heywood left the studio. He would get Nat Simon now and tell him that Shekel had agreed to give the actor a try-out.

COMMANDER-in-Chief John Karter of the Earth Space Navy sat down heavily behind a desk and gestured young Captain Herbert to be seated opposite him.

"Because of your excellent record," said Karter, "I have selected you, Herbert, to lead a dangerous scouting expedition to Mars."

Karter went on speaking and neither he nor Herbert noticed the strange disturbance of the air directly in front of

them that was accompanied by a queer kind of humming.

Then the vague figure of a man materialized out of thin air directly in front of the conversing men. This shape was tenuous, indefinite as a morning's mist.

The ghostly visitor must have heard Karter's declaration to Herbert for the first words he said were, "Mars? You shouldn't go there. It's a dead world."

As though he had not spoken the two officers went on talking as before. Quickly the man drew nearer and asked, "Why do you want to go to Mars?"

"Good God! What's that?" Karter asked Strongheart.

"What's what?" asked Captain Herbert Strongheart.

Softly the Commander-in-Chief replied: "I could have sworn that a minute ago I heard someone else besides us speak.

The semi-transparent man angrily said, "I did speak, and I'll speak some more! I want to know why you want to go to Mars!"

But without a sign of noticing him, the other two men talked right on. Into the ghostly apparition's eyes crept a look as though he were saying to himself: "What is this? Are these men deaf? Am I dreaming?"

Karter was saying, "The situation with Mars grows worse every day. The Martians are making demands on us which, if we accepted them, would destroy the sovereign independence of the United Terrestial Federation."

The unheard and evidently unseen visitor made a quick move toward Karter. "Martians? What Martians? There aren't any!" His voice was excited and high-pitched. "I know this is some form of Terrestial joke, but I'm . . . I'm all in. The trip from Neptune has exhausted me. I can't take your humor, at least not now. Speak to me! I'm right here!"

But Karter went quietly on: "But if we don't accept their demands, we are liable to sudden attack from them which we could not withstand. They have us beat in both the military and scientific fields and they know it." Karter's voice held a slight note of awe as he leaned close to the young officer and whispered, "It is even hinted that they have the secret of invisibility!"

"Is that right!" gasped Captain Strongheart. "Something must be done!"

"Something *will* be done about it," answered Karter. "That's where you come in. You will take the latest, fastest cruiser. You will have complete control of a well-equipped expedition. The best men in the space navy will be under your command. You will have all this, that is, if you decide to take the assignment. It is voluntary, of course, and no blame will be attached to you if you refuse to go. It is dangerous and your chance of returning is one in a thousand. Do you accept the assignment?"

"Yes, sir," said Strongheart unhesitatingly, "I accept."

It was at this moment that the invisible listener started forward as though to say: "For heaven's sake, men, look at me! Speak to me!" Actually, he did cry out: "Are these Earthlings mad! They talk of life on Mars where there is no life; they talk of sending an expedition there and they do not seem to hear or see me. Yet I *know* their optic nerves are capable of transmitting the image of myself to their brains. These poor, deluded creatures *must* be mad. Too bad! I had such hopes of bringing Utopia to them. But Utopia on a planet of insanity? Never!"

Sadly the dim figure turned away from the two men. He pressed something that appeared to be a button on a box strapped around his waist and the air around his body began to vibrate. His body outline grew fainter, more elusive; then with disconcerting suddenness he was not there.

FIVE minutes later, Heywood re-entered the barn-like studio. He seemed worried and approached his boss warily. "Say," he began, "I'm awfully sorry that. . . ."

But the producer gave him no chance to finish. "Heywood," he beamed, "you're a genius! Where did you *ever* find that actor? He was marvelous! Such feeling, such histrionics! And can he ad lib! In fact, he junked the script and went out on his own all during the test. He has great imagination; talked about Neptune and Utopia and all them stupendous things!"

The producer's broad face took on a puzzled expression. "But I never knew Colossal Pictures, Inc. had such fine technical tricks. The way Nat Simon suddenly appeared and disappeared! It was uncanny!"

"Say, chief," Heywood's voice lacked its usual enthusiasm, was very small now, "can't I talk, now?"

"Why, of course, certainly you can," boomed his pleased superior. "What is it you wanted to say?"

"Only that I'm terrible sorry that he didn't show up, honest I am, boss," quavered Heywood.

"What? Who? Who didn't show up? Make yourself clear, man."

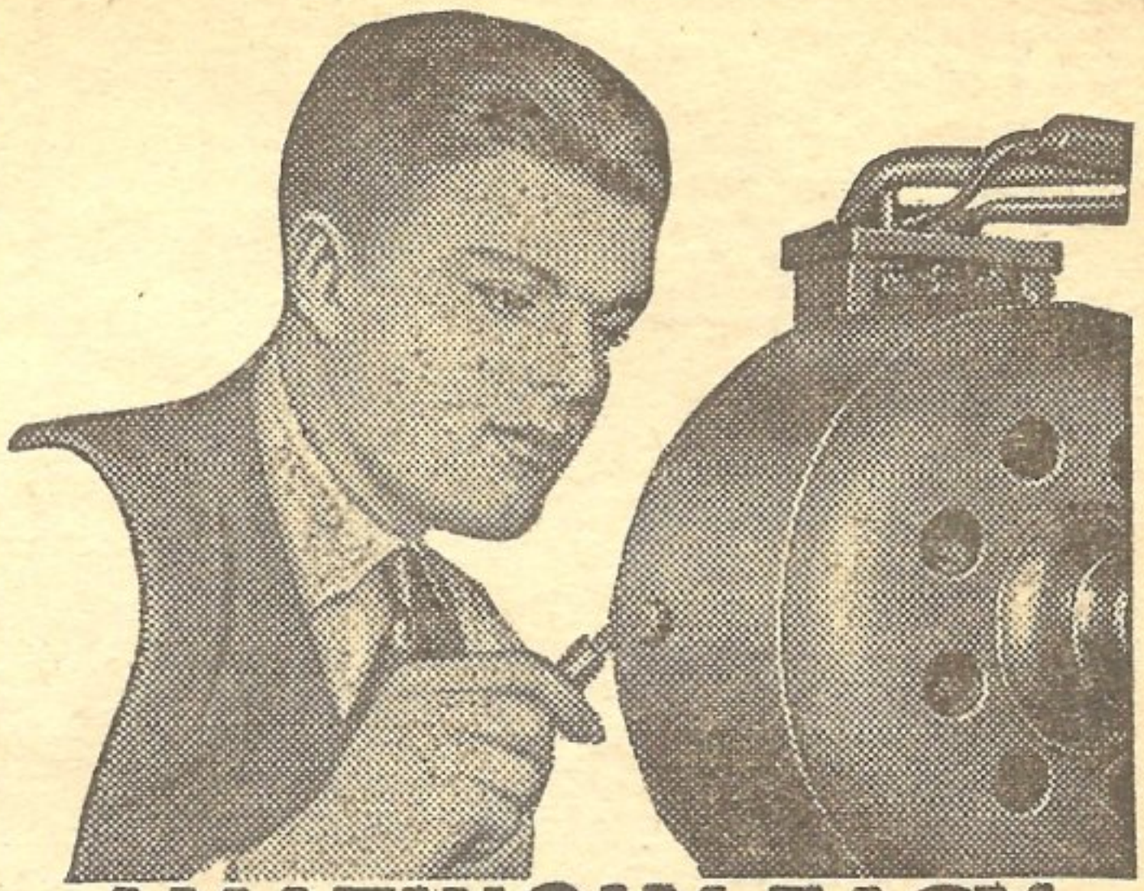
"Nat Simon, I mean. He was taken sick on his way to the studio. The ambulance men are working on him right now."

"WHAT? Nat Simon wasn't here? Then *who* was it that played the part of the invisible man? My God!" The producer's voice rose to a nervous pitch; then he suddenly shook all over.

Heywood caught him as he collapsed to the floor.

"Quick, somebody!" Heywood yelled. "Get another ambulance! Mr. Shekel has fainted!"

THE END



AMAZINGLY EASY WAY TO GET INTO ELECTRICITY

Send Today for Details of My

"PAY-AFTER-GRADUATION" PLAN

Don't spend your life never sure of a job. Let us prepare you for your start in a good paying field. **Let us teach you how to prepare for positions that lead to good salaries in Electricity** — NOT by correspondence, but by an amazing way we teach **right here in the great Coyne Shops. You get a practical training in 90 days. Mail the coupon below.** If you are short of money I'll send you all details of my **"pay-after-graduation plan"** where many get my training first and start paying for it **5 months after they start school** and then have 12 months to complete their payments.

LEARN BY DOING—90 DAYS

PRACTICAL TRAINING—IN COYNE SHOPS

I don't care if you don't know an armature from an air brake — I don't expect you to! Coyne training is practical **"learn-by-doing"** training. Don't let lack of money hold you back from getting all details of my amazing plan.

MANY EARN WHILE LEARNING

If you need part-time work to help pay your living expenses we will give you the help of our employment department to assist you to get a part time job, as we have thousands of others. **We give you a 12 weeks practical electrical training** in the great roaring shops of Coyne . . . on one of the greatest outlays of electrical apparatus ever assembled and then **include an extra 4 weeks radio course** . . . real dynamos, engines, power plants, autos, switch-boards, transmitting stations . . . Radios . . . Diesel Engines . . . Air Conditioning and Electric Refrigeration . . . everything from doorbells to farm power and lighting . . . full sized . . . in full operation every day!

RADIO NOW INCLUDED AT NO EXTRA TUITION COST

Right now I am including **an extra 4-weeks course of training in Radio** after you have completed your 12 weeks electrical training.

GET THE FACTS Coyne is your great chance to get into Electricity. This school is 40 years old — Coyne training is tested. You can find out everything absolutely free. Simply mail the coupon and let us send you the big, free Coyne book with photographs . . . facts . . . opportunities. Tells you how many earn expenses while training and how we assist our graduates in the field. No obligation to you. So act at once. Just mail coupon.

BIG FREE BOOK! Send for my big book containing photographs and telling the complete story — absolutely FREE.

H. C. Lewis

COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL

500 S. PAULINA ST., Dept. 60-76, CHICAGO, ILL.

H. C. LEWIS, Pres., COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL
Dept. 60-76, 500 S. Paulina St., Chicago, Ill.

Dear Mr. Lewis: Without obligation send me your big, free catalog with facts about Coyne Training and details of your **"Pay-Tuition-After-Graduation" Plan** and your **4 weeks extra Radio course.**

Name.....*Age*.....

Address.....

City.....*State*.....

READY CASH
HOT POTATO CHIPS

Here's your chance—a money-making business of your own. Turn potatoes into newest kind of Potato Chips with my improved outfit. Makes delicious Chips at low cost. A few hours practice does it. Begin anywhere—city, village, town. Potatoes cheap and plentiful. Wholesale or retail. Steady year 'round business. Groceries, markets, restaurants, taverns do the retailing for you.

Start Your Own Business

Great quantities of Chips are eaten daily. Profit large—unusually so. You can start this money-making business on a SMALL outlay of cash. Write for Potato Chip Booklet.

LONG-EAKINS CO.
935-S High St., Springfield, Ohio

WANTED---MEN

to cast 5 and 10c Novelties, Toy Autos, Ashtrays, etc. Can be done in any spare room, basement or garage and no experience necessary. A rare opportunity to devote spare or full time to profitable work. Apply only if over 21.

METAL CAST PRODUCTS CO., Dept. T
1696 Boston Road New York, N. Y.

BE A PASSENGER TRAFFIC INSPECTOR

Railway and Bus--Study in Spare Time

You can qualify by our simple, home-study course *as Railway Traffic Inspector* and earn up to $135 per month plus expenses at start. We place graduates *or refund tuition.* Agreeable, interesting work. Free Booklet describes our 21 years' experience in this service. STANDARD BUSINESS TRAINING INSTITUTE. Div. 9009, Buffalo, N. Y.

ITCH STOPPED *in a Jiffy* -or Money Back

For quick relief from itching of eczema, pimples, athlete's foot, scales, scabies, rashes and other externally caused skin troubles, use world-famous, cooling, antiseptic, liquid D. D. D. Prescription. Greaseless, stainless. Soothes irritation and quickly stops the most intense itching. 35c trial bottle proves it, or money back. Ask your druggist today for **D. D. D. PRESCRIPTION.**

I START MEN IN BUSINESS
My Store Route Plan PAYS BIG MONEY

Hundreds of men like you now make really big money week after week backed by our Money-Making "Store Route" Plan. Let me explain how your earning power should go UP when you take on our big-profit line of 5c-10c goods including many Nationally Advertised products. Show stores how to increase sales and profits up to 50%. Experience unnecessary. Write me TODAY.
H. B. Laymon, President Dept. 69-C. Spencer, Ind.

Professional Model

SEND NO MONEY!—*Save Money!*

TRANSPARENT ROOFLESS PARTIAL

60 Days' Trial! We make **FALSE TEETH** for *you* by **MAIL** from *your own* mouth-impression. **Money-Back Guarantee of Satisfaction.** **FREE** Free impression material, directions, catalog.

$6.85 to $35

U.S. Dental Co., Dept. 9-87, Chicago, Ill.

Free for Asthma During Summer

If you suffer with those terrible attacks of Asthma when it is hot and sultry; if heat, dust and general mugginess make you wheeze and choke as if each gasp for breath was the very last; if restful sleep is impossible because of the struggle to breathe; if you feel the disease is slowly wearing your life away, don't fail to send at once to the Frontier Asthma Co. for **a free trial** of a remarkable method. No matter where you live or whether you have any faith in any remedy under the Sun, send for this free trial. If you have suffered for a life-time and tried everything you could learn of without relief; even if you are utterly discouraged, do not abandon hope but send today for this free trial. It will cost you nothing. Address

Frontier Asthma Co.
462 Niagara St.,
250-F Frontier Bldg.
Buffalo, N. Y.

THE PREVIEW

I FINISHED the last of the coffee, and set my metal cup down on the face of a dignified-looking brown gentleman, who was inlaid in the stone mosaic of the ancient road. There was a tuft of moss growing on his chin, an incongruous green beard, and I plucked it off and tossed it away into the tangle of jungle around.

The road on which I was sitting, the only remaining monument of some long-forgotten native civilization which had flourished here, was well worth the attention of an archaeologist, its curious hewn patterns being utterly unlike the normal work found in the ancient buildings. For instance, that row of little figures of men running,—running for their lives, too, judging by the expressions on their faces. They all looked so identically similar that they appeared to represent the same man in different stages of running. . . .

But my attention was distracted from the road by something which floated overhead in the night sky. A shadow had attracted me; I'd looked up, seen a queer grey-white shape float swiftly across the tiny break in the "roof" of close-set, steaming trees. It was solid enough to block out the stars, but somehow it looked fuzzy and indefinite, as if the eye had difficulty in focusing on it.

A second later—somewhere in the jungle, far off, sounded a hoarse scream, abruptly terminated. This jungle had its share of parakeets, but never had they made a sound like that. It had come from a human voice.

I got up indecisively, then set off along the ancient road. Not a hundred yards away, though around several turns and curves, was a clearing. I entered into it.

There was something dark-red and shapeless on the road at the edge of the wood. Rather reluctantly, I walked over to it, and when I saw what it was, I was almost sick.

It was all that was left of a man.

I cannot bring myself to dwell upon the particulars of his condition. All I can say is that he had been *literally* turned inside out. Bits of clothing lay around; they did not appear to be torn, but were cut into geometrical patterns by shearing edges of incredible keenness. A creature of unnatural abilities and gigantic strength must have been responsible for that. . . .

William F. Temple's unusual novelette of a strange and awesome creature that did not belong to our Earth. "The Monster on the Border," appears complete in the November *Super Science Stories.*

In the same issue are "Cepheid Planet" by R. R. Winterbotham, "The Horizontals," by Frank Belknap Long, "Asokore Power" by L. Sprague de Camp, and six other science fiction stories and articles.

The November issue will appear September 19th.

(Continued from page 118)

metal pipe. He pulled, pried, shoveled, until he had it loose. Here it was at last: the lahrium which would save the world for Lahra.

ONCE in the rocket ship, the precious lahrium beside him, Mark counted minutes until he felt the rush of air which meant the ship was landing. Below was a seething mass, now touching the ruined city gates, and, far beyond, the yawning crack in the earth from which it came. Like a sea in motion its boundaries spread, consuming all they touched, giving to the earth the smell of death. Far Eastward, past the city, herds of people made tiny dots upon the road. Perhaps Lahra was among them!

Momentarily, he hoped the intelligence guiding the rocket ship had not forgotten him, that he would not be landed where he had taken off, a spot now covered by the radium sea. Safely past, however, the ship put down. Running through the East gates of the city, he approached as near as he dared to the creeping border and removed the vial from its casing.

Around him buildings, weakened by bombardment of the Gamma rays, creaked on their foundations. Now and then a falling piece of granite narrowly missed his head. Above, he felt the beat of wings as herds of insects, terrified both by the unrest they read in man and the eerie feel of ionized air, circled the city. Once two great "horses" collided in their mad flight and fell, five hundred pounds of skin and bone not three feet from where he stood. He jumped aside to escape the range of their thrashing wings.

Setting the vial as close as he dared approach to the borderline of radium bugs, he backed away, hoping no Gamma rays eluded the bombardment of Delta rays coming from the lahrium.

Eagerly he watched, anticipating the destruction of the radium atom almost before he heard the soft detonation of its breaking. Then, at the edges, motion ceased, there was a surging backward, a soft pfut-pfut, leaving only a silvery powder to settle slowly to the ground.

Backward he drove, keeping always the vial of lahrium before him, hearing the soft sound of uncountable trillions of atoms exploding simultaneously, a sound which man never before had heard. The radium was disintegrating, leaving in its wake only this soft, silvery dust, a handful of which Mark stooped and sifted through his fingers. It was harmless!

Hours later he found himself at the pit. From its black inside came soft detonations, going down into the bowels of the earth, growing fainter and farther away until they ceased entirely. Propping the vial on the edge, he sat down, exhausted, in the silvery dust.

Then into his tired mind came a humming, in it the long forgotten sound of music. Lahra! Putting his head on his folded arms he gave himself completely to its message. There were the Countess and Conrad Wright allowed to live, given time with the rest to adapt themselves to the new order; there was the city, rising from silver ashes to a new magnificence. Then there was something else, something tempting, beautiful, something about fulfilling a destiny he himself had made. The peace of it so filled him that he could think no longer but, resting his head on his knees, closed his eyes. Then, summarily this time, Lahra's mind called his. . . .

Mark Evanthes, I'm ashamed of you. I've just told you you could marry me. You don't seem too delighted.

Yes, Lahra, he answered sleepily, *I am, of course. I just took for granted that—*

Took it for granted, did you? . . . well now . . . pay attention to me, Mark Evanthes. . . .

He did. . . .

THE END

(Continued from page 4)

be taken up on the modern battlefield of SSS. In fact, I'll launch it by stating once and for all that (entertaining though they may be), stories like "Guardian Angel," "Lotus-Engine," "Phantom from Space," "Emergency Refueling," and "A Stitch in Time" have no place in SSS.—Samuel Anthony Peeples, 400 North Octavia, El Paso, Texas.

Rebuttal

Dear Mr. Pohl:

I'm going to have to take up a new role today. At least it looks as though I'm under the painful necessity of defending the love interest in a story which is being attacked by other readers on that account.

As semi-official anti-love-interest-spouter of science fiction, I should have been the first to howl. But, strangely enough, I liked the love interest in "Let There be Light" a lot.

There's no denying that Lyle Monroe gave the story a liberal dash of femininity, and I can't deny that several spots in the story called for raised eye-brows.

However, Monroe was not obscene, nor was he anything approaching it. He was witty, I think, and humorous, and the—shall we say—daring style of this humor is not *too* out of place in our year of 1940. Let's not be prudes. Queen Victoria, you will remember, died in 1902.

Incidentally, I am entirely consistent. What I have been vociferously objecting to all these years is the slop that is pure hack through and through,—the kind that is brought in to supply rescue-scenes to add a few thousand words and to bolster up an otherwise weak plot.

To quiet any suspicions anyone might have, I may say here that I've never met Mr. Monroe and that I have no ulterior motive in defending him. The name may be a pseudonym for someone—I don't know—but it is *not* a pseudonym for Isaac Asimov.—Isaac Asimov, 174 Windsor Place, Brooklyn, New York.

"Let-Down"

Dear Mr. Pohl:

The July issue of *Super Science Stories* was quite an unfortunate let-down after the splendid May number.

For one thing, the "art" was not much of an improvement; indeed, it was much worse in spots. That new illustrator who did the cover and the work on "Day of the Comet" is putrid.

Wexler's style is similar to that of Schomburg. Same Flash Gordon movie serial settings, costumes, and properties. Not so colossal, but better than most of your brush slingers. Who did the drawing for "The Thought-Woman?" And the one for "Sigma Lyra Passes?"

One other thing, while the question of art is before the board. Don't use Eron any more than you have to. His style is rather striking, even forceful at times; but it is also careless, sloppy, and lacking in detail.

That's all on the July issue. Am enclosing a stamped, self-addressed envelope for application to *The Science Fictioneers.* Will you do me a favor and request all fans living in South Carolina to get in touch with me? Also and all southern fans interested in joining in paying a part of the expenses of a trip to the Chicago Convention next fall. The more southerners represented the better. Proposed trip will begin sometime during the last of August if all goes well.

Here's hoping for a much better September issue of *Super Science.*—Joseph Gilbert, 3911 Park Street, Columbia, South Carolina.

Question

Dear Mr. Pohl:

Just finished second issue of *Super Science Stories* and have a few comments I'm going to pass your way.

The stories were good, interesting reading. Nothing outstanding, but no poor ones with the possible exception of Cummings' "Arton's Metal." But then Cummings has written very few really good stories. Best in issue were Sprague de Camp's "Juice" and Monroe's "Let There Be Light." Monroe had an excellent twist to his story. So far as I remember, one new to stf.

And who slipped up in Ley's article on Ersatz materials? I read these words on page 121: "Isoprene could be made from turpentine which in turn can be made from acetylene, which. . . ." Now—maybe my chemistry is all wrong—but since when can acetylene be used to make turpentine? And since when can isoprene be made from turpentine?—I'd hate to think that I spent four years in college without learning the above amazing facts.

The statement should have the word turpentine eliminated. While both rubber and isoprene may be considered to be

Do you want

..to go to College?

..or to enter a Profession?

(Such as Accounting, Architecture, Nursing, Dentistry; Teaching, Social Work, Osteopathy, Beauty Culture, Optometry, Embalming, Chiropody, Law, Medicine, etc.)

..or get an Office Position?

To get anywhere, you practically MUST finish High School FIRST. You can complete our simplified High School Course in SPARE time at home, as FAST as your time and abilities permit. Equivalent to resident school work—prepares you for college, pre-professional examinations, business, industry. Standard texts furnished. Diploma. Credit for H.S. subjects already completed. Single subjects if desired. Low tuition, easy terms. American School, Chicago, est. 1897—endorsed by educators. Finish your high school education NOW. Write TODAY!

High School Course at Home

Many Finish in 2 Years

American School, Dept. H-649, Drexel Ave. at 58th St., Chicago, Ill.

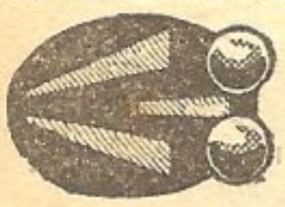
Gentlemen: Send me FREE information covering special training in subjects checked below. No obligation on my part.

☐ High School Course

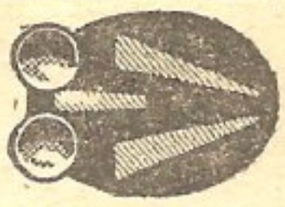
☐ Accounting and Auditing
☐ Architecture and Building
☐ Automotive Engineering
☐ Business Management
☐ Aviation
☐ Electrical Engineering
☐ Elec. and Gas Refrigeration
☐ Air Conditioning
☐ Diesel Engineering
☐ Drafting and Design
☐ Liberal Arts
☐ Private Secretary
☐ Mechanical Engineering
☐ Radio and Television
☐ Salesmanship
☐ Home Economics Courses
☐ Business Law
☐ Retail Merchandising

Name .....

Address .....



NEW TURN SIGNAL



FLASHES from REAR WINDOW—DASH Control

AGENTS A whirlwind seller. Drivers buy on flash demonstration. Dealers buy 3 to 12. Your profit mark-up as high as 264%. Biggest sensation of year. Rush name quick for facts and Demonstrator sample plan. All Free! Rush.

WATCH-MY-TURN SIGNAL CO., Dept. W-659 Walnut Bldg., Des Moines, Iowa

FREE OUTFIT **START YOUR OWN LOCAL SHOE BUSINESS**

your OWN SHOES as a BONUS

BIG CASH COMMISSIONS IN ADVANCE

Make quick profits and get your own shoes as bonus showing complete shoe line. Over 200 styles for men, women, children. $2.95 up. Write today for full information and FREE outfit.

TANNERS SHOE CO., 214 C Street, Boston, Mass.

MAKE MONEY

WITH **NASH CUSTOM TAILORED CLOTHES**

Be your own Sales Manager, take orders; earn money with this famous make of clothes. High quality men's tailoring at popular prices.

WRITE! Write in today. Territories open.

THE A. NASH COMPANY

1914 ELM STREET • CINCINNATI, OHIO

START $1260 to $2100 YEAR

Many appointments each year

Men—Women

Dependable Positions

32 Page Civil Service Book FREE

Mail Coupon Today—SURE

Franklin Institute
Dept. G174
Rochester, N. Y.

COUPON

Gentlemen: Rush to me FREE of charge, list of U. S. Government big pay jobs. Send me FREE 32-page book describing salaries, vacations, hours and work. Tell me how to qualify for one of these jobs.

Name .....

Address .....

terpenes, a class of compounds which make up turpentine, turpentine itself is a mixture of various organic compounds. So I'm wondering just how Mr. Ley expects (1.) to make turpentine from acetylene, and (2.) to get isoprene from it.

In spite of all this, the article was really excellent. May you have many more of the same type.—F. A. Senour, 210 Alameda Street, Rochester, New York.

Answer

Dear Mr. Pohl:

Replying to Mr. Senour's interesting letter I admit with apologies that the sentence on page 121 of the May isue of *Super Science Stories* is wrongly worded or rather incomplete. It should read: "Isoprene could be made from turpentine *or from alcohol* which in turn etc., etc."

Turpentine or, to be exact, Pinene ($_{10}H_{16}$) has been used to make Isoprene (C_5H_8) which is classified as a "hemiterpene." But all the methods now used in the chemical industries apparently start out with calcium carbide and have an alcohol at some stage of the procedure. There exists no comprehensive book on synthetic rubber yet, one that comes to my mind is "Synthetic Rubber" by W. J. S. Naunton (published in 1937 by Macmillan & Co. in London, England). But most of it is devoted to Neoprene.

Thank you for this opportunity to correct an error!—Willy Ley, 304 West 24th Street, New York City.

Classified Advertising

Agents Wanted

WE PAY YOU $5 for selling ten $1 boxes. 50 distinctive assorted name imprinted Christmas cards. Sell $1. You make 50c. Free Samples. Cheerful Card Co., 49 White Plains, N. Y.

AGENTS—Your own hose sent free with big outfit. Amazing guarantee. Silk or Nylon. Rush name and hose size. Wilknit, Desk KK-15, Greenfield, Ohio.

Aviation

AVIATION APPRENTICES — Training for entering Aviation as Apprentices. Write immediately enclosing stamp. Mechanic Universal Aviation Service. Wayne County Airport, Dept. U21, Detroit, Michigan.

Educational

Correspondence courses and educational books, slightly used. Sold. Rented. Exchanged. All subjects. Satisfaction guaranteed. Cash paid for used courses. Complete details and bargain catalog FREE. Write NELSON COMPANY, 500 Sherman, Dept. J-218, Chicago.

Female Help Wanted

Your own dresses free, and earn $5.00 per day, spare time, showing gorgeous Fashion Frocks to friends. No investment. Give age and dress size. Fashion Frocks, Dept. J-1026, Cincinnati, O.

Big Manufacturer wants housewives with spare time to wear FREE SAMPLE DRESSES and show to friends. Give size, age. HARFORD, Dept. J-241, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Male and Female Help Wanted

$30 WEEKLY. GROW MUSHROOMS. Cellar, shed. We buy 35c lb. We paid B. A. E. $1,630.73. 40 PAGE BOOK FREE. Mushrooms, Dept. 756, 1927 Third, Seattle, Wash.

M. M. earned $1,174 in spare time for exceptional "cellar crop" Snow-King mushrooms! FREE Book tells if your cellar, shed suitable. We buy crops. United, 3848 Lincoln Ave., Dept. 551, Chicago.

Patent Attorneys

INVENTORS—Protect your idea. Get free Patent Guide. Write Clarence A. O'Brien, Registered Patent Attorney, OJ26 Adams Building, Washington, D. C.

Photo Finishing

ROLLS DEVELOPED—25c coin. Two 5 x 7 Double Weight Professional Enlargements, 8 gloss prints. CLUB PHOTO SERVICE, Dept. 16, La Crosse, Wis.

AT LAST! ALL YOUR SNAPSHOTS IN NATURAL COLORS! Roll Developed, 8 Natural Color Prints, Only 25c. Reprinting, 3c. Amazingly Beautiful. NATURAL COLOR PHOTO, Janesville, Wisconsin.

TWO BEAUTIFUL Professional Double Weight Enlargements, eight lifetime prints, 25c. Prompt-Careful. Film mailers FREE. MAY'S PHOTO SHOP, Box 870-AJ, LaCrosse, Wis.

YOUR CHOICE! Roll Developed, 8 Permanent Prints and 1—5x7 Hand Painted Enlargement OR 2—5x7 Unpainted Enlargements, 25c. Prompt Service. Individual Attention to Each Picture! JANESVILLE FILM SERVICE, Room 432, Janesville, Wisconsin.

ROLL DEVELOPED, 16 Artistic Deckled Edged Permanent Prints, 25c. Reprints, 3c each. 100 Reprints, $1.50. "AS RELIABLE AS UNCLE SAM'S MAIL!" MIDWEST PHOTO, Room 532, Janesville, Wisconsin.

Piano

ADULT Beginner's Piano Course, $1.25. MOSES, 315 West 86th, N. Y.

Poems—Songwriters

Songwriters. Interesting Proposition. Write PARAMOUNT SONG-RECORDING STUDIO, L-49, Box 190, Hollywood, Calif.

SONGWRITERS: Send your poem today for immediate consideration. RICHARD BROTHERS, 30 Woods Building, Chicago.

Classified Advertising
(Continued)

POEMS WANTED to be set to music. Free examination. Send poems. McNeil, Master of Music, 510-A South Alexandria, Los Angeles, Calif.

WANTED—Poems for musical setting. Submit for consideration. Phonograph transcriptions made. Keenan's Studio, PP, Box 2140, Bridgeport, Conn.

SONG-POEMS WANTED for musical setting. GUARANTEED Publication NO COST-FREE Recordings. MASTER MELODY MAKERS, 6411 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood, Calif.

SONGWRITERS—Write for free book outlining partnership plan. ALLIED MUSIC, Dept. 20, Box 507, Cincinnati, Ohio.

IT'S EASY TO PUT THIS *New 1941* *Midwest* IN YOUR OWN CABINET

FACTORY TO YOU

SAVE UP TO 50%

Only $19.95 COMPLETE CHASSIS WITH TUBES AND SPEAKER

30 DAYS TRIAL — EASY TERMS

14-TUBES *with* AMAZING FOREIGN RECEPTION

FREQUENCY MODULATION AND TELEVISION PROVISION

NOW, you can enjoy the mighty power of a 14-Tube radio, at the amazingly low, factory-to-you price of only $19.95. Brilliant performance. Beautiful tone. Now tune in broadcasts *direct* from distant overseas stations. Our famous 30-day prove-it-yourself plan, fully protects you and enables you to prove Midwest's super performance in the privacy of your own home, without obligation.

USERS SAY:

"Wouldn't Trade For Any Other Radio"

Milwaukee, Wis. —I wouldn't trade my Midwest for any other radio. It is my second Midwest and it is improved a lot especially the foreign stations like Italy, France, Spain, England, and Germany, etc. — S. Caplan.

"Voices and Singing Crystal Clear"

Bethlehem, Pa. —So crystal clear and natural that one would think the person speaking or singing was right in the living room. Foreign stations come in so clear, almost like any station in the U. S. A.— Mr. and Mrs. W. Frank.

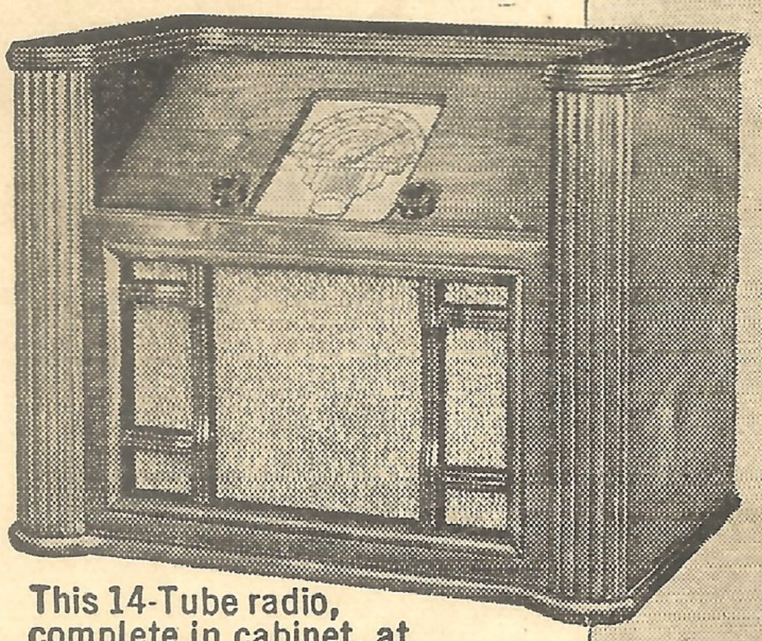
YOU BE THE JUDGE

No high pressure salesmen are needed to urge you to keep a Midwest—its performance speaks for itself. Do like thousands have done—put this new 1941 chassis in your present cabinet. Other chassis and cabinet models are fully pictured and described in our new 1941 Factory-To-You, money-saving catalog . . . from 5 to 17 Tubes, and up to 5-Wave Bands . . . including Radio-Phonograph combinations and Home Recorders.

BRINGS IN WORLD NEWS DIRECT

Tune in broadcasts direct from foreign countries. Hear history in the making before it appears in your local paper, and, before your local station announces its own version of the news! Listen direct to distant overseas stations in remotest parts of the globe.

14-TUBE CABINET MODEL $29.95 COMPLETE



This 14-Tube radio, complete in cabinet, at a price you would ordinarily pay for a set with only 7 to 10 tubes.

FILL IN COUPON AND MAIL TODAY OR JUST SEND YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS ON 1¢ POSTCARD

RUSH COUPON FOR FREE CATALOG ON COMPLETE LINE OF 5 TO 17-TUBE MODELS

FREE RADIO CATALOG

MIDWEST *factory-to-you* RADIOS

MANUFACTURERS OF QUALITY RADIOS SINCE 1920

Midwest Radio Corporation
Cincinnati, Ohio, U. S. A.
Dept. 98-AA

Send me your new FREE Catalog, complete details of your liberal 30-day Trial offer and factory-to-you prices.

Name.....

Address.....

Town.....*State*.....

User-Agents Make Easy Extra Money. Check here ( ) for details.

GET MIDWEST'S ANSWER TO TRADE-INS!

THE ALEXANDER TWINS...Dorothy and Grace, Famous Drum Majorettes . American Legion Post 42, Martinsville, Virginia

SALUTE YOU

AND SALUTE

Chesterfield

FOR REAL MILDNESS AND BETTER TASTE

These are the twin pleasures you look for in a cigarette. You'll find them in every Chesterfield you smoke...and it takes the right combination of the world's best cigarette tobaccos united in Chesterfields to give you the added pleasure of a cooler smoke... *Make your next pack Chesterfield and join the millions of smokers who say*

They Satisfy

Copyright 1940, LIGGETT & MYERS TOBACCO CO.