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"THEM I HEARD A LION GROWL. It had followed the scents of the fresh game! As I worked frantically to free myself, there was a eerie silence in the underbrush! I knew that the lions had covered the darkness! Then I thought of my flashlight... switched it on..."

"THEM SNAKES SLITHERED ALONG moldering stumps at me... ready to spring! But the poison had already flowed from them at the bird's attack. I finally got free of the trap. Thanks to these dependable 'Tennies' flashlights, I was once bashed at camp."

FRESH BATTERIES LAST LONGER...Look for the DATE-LINN

NATIONAL CARBON COMPANY, INC., 36 EAST 22ND STREET, NEW YORK, N. Y.
Dear Mr. Poli,

I don't know why I worry about ethics. Every time I sit down to write a letter to an editor, a tiny, nasty voice with a halo over its head pushes on top of my typewriter,transmitting me with a look of self-righteousness, "I am your conscience, Aarow." (It calls me Aarow, because it knows me so long.) "I am your conscience. Do you think it is proper to write to an editor and tell him that '很多事情 of worth' by Joe Blow, is a terrible story? Is that a way to talk about a fellow scribe? Where is your respect de corps? Where is your mental front? Remember, if writers don't mind together, the readers will get them all!"

So I say, "Well, Blow's gang was terrible. I've got a certain intellectual integrity, and if I think a story deserves a magazine, I'm going to say so. Why don't they buy out some himself?"

To my conscience here and ammeters in a few, Institute words, "But what if Joe Blow writes a letter and hoaxos the hell out of your last story? You can't think it was on his own, remember?"

That makes me. We all have our code of ethics, and so I don't write any letter. But, if you'll notice (and by this time, I imagine you have, if that character on your score means what I think it means), I am writing a sentence this time.

Why, do you ask? Simply because in the May issue of Super Science Stories, there seems to be nothing but junk-satch stuff. I couldn't scrape a lunch out of it even if I tried—that is, if I didn't try too hard. And if I'm not forced to knock authors, I won't get into trouble. (Will someone kindly bring a glass of water? Mr. Poli has fainted. What's wrong? Thank you, I'll drink it.)

First, we have Willard E. Harlow's "Emissary" which is certainly one of the best stories you have yet printed. Then (I'm speaking to the world in general now) is love interest as it should be handled. You've got an orderly progression from scene to scene. Most all authors in handling love fall into one of two pitfalls. Either here and heroine fall in love at first sight (which doesn't make for realism—believe me—no matter how romantic it sounds) or the guy and gals hate each other. She plans all through until he realizes her from the dreams of Mars for the seventeenth time (and very boring it is at that time) at which point she falls in suddenly in his strong, sneaky arms. They give up at each other and our mourners—

But what the hell, that's enough to nauseate the contempt. The point is that Hitchins counts both types with skill and finesse, to my great and unsalted delight. Hitchins is a marvelous character. See what kind of characters to Harlow, mon-sieur—!

And then we come to "Interstellar" (Continued on page 6)
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(Continued from page 4)

Wax-Station” and crosses the time for a few plain words. Why the devil doesn’t Bob Tucker waste his time writing letters and his way articles when he could be grinding out prose even half as good as L. W. Hill? As far as humor is concerned, L. Sprague de Camp could scarcely have done better—and I say that with reverently-bowed head and bated breath. There isn’t a let-down from beginning to end, and the ending—where the hero does not get the girl—is as refreshing as Dottie Lammie is a savior.

Henry Haise’s lead novel “Mission Unknown” was third place—and considering the level of the stories in this issue, third place isn’t so bad. It was about as good as you could expect an action novel to be although it did lag a ways behind the end.

There now, common sense tells me not to prony up with fine five, and six—except that I still haven’t read a Super-science Field that I liked.

The more I see of artists Bob and Tharp, the more I like them.

Oh boy, this has been a pleasure (for me, anyway). I haven’t written a letter like this in almost two years and it almost makes my feet as if I were once more a careless foot without a care in the world sure that making life miserable for editors and authors by frequent and violent knocks.

In fact, just to make the Rusdon even more perfect, I’d add something else. Here goes:

Listen, Mr. Pul (serious snarl) How about some smooth edges? (Loverly lip thrust out). Isn’t it about time we readers get some consideration? How about better paper? (eyes-blinking hard in a servol) And how about coming out monthly and lowering the number of pages?

Wowowow, I’m young again. As a matter of fact, I’m getting old so fast, I’m scaring myself. In a few months, I’ll be registering for the draft, and this November I’m actually going to vote. I’m so shocked, surprised.—[name removed], 17431, Windsor Place, Brooklyn, New York.

Thesp For Cover?

Dear Mr. Pul:

The May cover has a certain two dimensional flammability and artificiality suggestive of a comic book—not up to Mayne’s usual standard. Why not try Tharp?

“Mission Unknown” fell far short of the high standard set by “Genus Homo.” It placed second in the issue with “The Range” first, and “The Brothers” third. Like H. B., I’d rather see longer novels and fewer stories.

Suggestions—for squared edges, and changes to more serious title Science Novels. I’ll be surprised if either of these is ever carried out.—Bill Sney, 140-92 Burdien Crescent, Jamaica, New York.

Wolms Under Difficulties

Editors, Super Science Field:

I have before me a copy of the May 1964, several past-nums, and one baby shelf.—(Arthur, what are you doing?)

The best—I mean baby—has started to impress.

“I am writing my opinion of the latest Wolm, the cover of which is good,” reported L. “That I don’t like the forms of the two people.”

The baby leaves and I read and I write, “Tucker, Shm, Miller, Hawkins are good.”

Oohh, she’s back. “Arthur, read me a story.”

“Who,” says L. “Catch the sound I’m busy?”

“I don’t care, read me a story.”

“No,” says I again.

“Wolveh, read me a story!”

Oh, boy, I can’t write with her around. Will write again in May.—A. L. Schwartz, 224 Washington Street, Dorchester, Massachusetts.
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AERITA OF THE LIGHT COUNTRY

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CHAPTER ONE
Get With Wings

"ADMISSION only one-hundred-thousandth part of a diminuendo, friends. Think of it—one-twentieth of a miserable little gold-dollar to see the wonder Fresh Show of the age. Come up and get your tickets, friends. See the loveliest boy from Bremen. See the loveliest girl with wings. Little flying virgins in all her breath-taking beauty. Who is she? Where is she?"

Alan Grant stepped into the tawdry sideshow to kill an idle hour — and found himself plunged head-over-heels into a maelstrom of battling adventure that took him across a hundred million miles of space, involved him in a vast civil war on an alien planet, and shouldered him with the awesome responsibility for the safety of Earth!
from? What weird language does she speak? Twelve feet spread of feathered wings, my friend. Harum girl of gla-
rious beauty. Flying virgin—the world's greatest mystery. Or is it the other one at a time, please. A tenth part of a
gold-dollar, to see the girl with wings—"

The barman's voice drowned out. Young Alan Grant stood among the little crowd which surged how at the entrance of "Wil-
kina! Wonder Freak Show of the Ages."
A girl with wings? He smiled to himself as he dropped his arm-cylinder, ground it out with his foot and doved toward
the ticket booth. A fake, of course, like
the "Fainting Boy from Barros" and the
“Living Mummy from the Valley of the Nile.”

And then he was inside a dim smoky room, starting at a small desk which was illuminated by a spot of blue indiglo. An announcer appeared.

“And now,” Ladies and Gentlemen, I take great pleasure in presenting the world's greatest mystery. The girl with wings! Wash her gently, friends. Thrill to her breath-taking beauty. Who is she? What weird language does she speak? You will hear her talk—perhaps one of you can tell us where she is from...Now—here she comes!

The announcer stepped aside. From the semi-darkness soft weird music was welling through the smoke-filled room. And then from behind a curtain the girl with wings glided forward into the blue gleam of the overbright indiglo. Young Alan Grant zipped in his breath with a gasp. What he saw was a small girl, hardly more than five feet tall. She was dressed in a long, flowing, gauze-like robe of drapery—pale-blue robe which shimmered in the gleam of the indiglo.

A BREATHTAKING beauty! She was all divine, ethereal, unlike anything he had ever seen before. Her thick, black hair flowed over her shoulders. Girl with wings! Two huge blue-feathered wings arched out from behind her shoulders, folded across her back with their golden tips almost brushing the ground.

For a moment she stood staring out from the dim, smoke-filled room with its circle of curious faces gazing up at her. A girl no more than sixteen, or seventeen perhaps. Yet Grant could see that her openly frank-looking body was rounded almost into the maturity of young womanhood. A face of ethereal, delicate beauty, but of what nationality? He could not tell.

For that moment she stood gazing at her audience as though in confusion, with a little half-mile trembling on her oval lips. Grant felt his heart pounding. The wings were a fake, of course. But somehow that fairy-telling voice seemed pathetic. As though she were frightened?

“Her name is Keptis,” the announcer’s voice was mumbling from the distance. “Yes, she will dance for us...Now, Arris—you understand me?”

At his question she turned and walked. And how in the slow, exotic rhythm of the music she was swaying her hips, then gracefully waving her thin, pale-blue arms. And still her translucent smile persisted.

From the dimness of the audience a raucous voice suddenly protested. “Jeez! What about her wings? A fake of course, Grant’s heart unaccountably was pounding; and he told himself that now he would see where the wings were attached to her shoulders; and if she moved them he would try and see how the thing was worked. Through the standing crowd of spectators he had quietly slipped forward until now he was at the edge of the dance, within three feet of the girl.

"Her wings?" the announcer responded quickly. "But first, I want you to hear her talk. Who is she? Where is she from? What weird language does she speak? She’s the mystery of the ages, my friends."

There was a stifling murmur of discussion from the audience on what seemed his1 idea; but he ignored it. "Now, Arris—you may stop dancing."

The music died. The girl stood motionless; drooping. Her hands were half turned toward the announcer’s voice.

"Now!" he said, "you understand me, Arris?"

"Yes, I understand you—"

Weird, breathless little voice. It had a queer soft intonation; and she spoke the words so slowly, so measured that they seemed automatic. As though she were a
AERITA OF THE LIGHT COUNTRY

large mechanical doll. Grasping it, or was it very clever acting?

"Now, Aerita—tell us something in your own language—anything you like."

For a second there was a hushed silence; then the girl spoke—soft, rippling flow of gentle glib syllables. She gesticulated with them; and suddenly an emotion came to her face. Her eyes, luminous dark pools under long dark lashes, except the narrow circle of her eyelids. Then her gaze seemed to lift upon Grant as he stood breathlessly staring. For a moment it changed to his face. Was that fear in her eyes? A desperation? Whatever it was, in a second it was gone as her glance turned away.

Then she had finished speaking. "Well, you heard her?" the announcer said triumphantly. "What did she say? What language did she speak?"

Had it been only clever,2 educated gibberish? Assuredly Grant did not think so.

"Her wings—" Several voices from the audience were calling it now. "Hey Mis-ter, what about them wings?"

Surely the announcer accepted challenge. "Her wings—why of course. Show us your wings, Aerita."

It was an amazing thing. Grant leaned forward as already now the great blue-finned wings spread out. For a moment they spread at right angles to her little body—but in twelve feet crossed them. And then they were slowly flapping. The rush of air from them stunned Grant's hot face. Slowly flapping wings, so slow, under them, the girl's skin, frail little body was poised on tiptoe. Sensibly almost weightless as gracefully she balanced herself.

A lake? Her draped gauze robe had fallen over her back at her shoulders where the wings spread and joinder body. Grant thought that he would see the wearer muscles there, pink-white where the feathers ended at the base of the wings. Weightless little thing now. Only the tips of her harem belt touched the floor. It was as though in another sec

one she would have risen into the air. Then she dropped her wings, now flat-folded to the floor, and with a little bow, turned and ran behind the side curtain...

A ripple of subdued applause floated out from the audience. At the front edge of the platform-dais Grant stood silent, moved by his glowing emotions. . . . Aerita, like a persimmon it seemed to him, then as though, having seen this strange girl, he had glimpsed something of a destiny which was his. A destiny of—what? Love? Time? There had been terror in her eyes, unutterable . . .

Thoughts were instant things. For that moment Grant's mind was a turmoil of wild conjectures. . . . He was an extraordinary big fellow. Among the pressing group of spectators around him he towered nearly a head over them all—broad, handsome with a sun-burnt face and crisp curly brown hair. Silver, he stared; and as the applause still held, the weird little girl ran from behind the curtain to acknowledge it.

And now it seemed that all her gaze was for Grant, there where he lay stretched in the dimness above the others who clustered about him . . . His gaze and hers, for that instant meeting. Who shall say what can be carried in the crossing gaze of a man and a woman? A tingling surge swept Grant. It was only an instant, then Aerita had turned and again was gone. But in that instant Grant had perceived her both—a statue, pathetic, terrible again!!

CHAPTER TWO

Departure From Earth

The tawdry show went on. For a while longer, Grant stood watching as the "Living Monument from the Valley of the
Nila, was displayed; and then, with a stream of others leaving, he went outside . . . Aeria. Queen that she had affected him so strangely. He tried to tell himself that she was merely some chemical little waif who had gotten into the damp room, and by trickery was pretending to be a girl with wings.

Grant was twenty-four, that summer of 1909. His home was in one of the big Northern suburbs of New York City, where he lived with his younger brother, Philip. They were orphans. Philip, now only eighteen, had graduated from the Government-school and was employed in a research laboratory of experimental physics. Also, less of scientific bent, was a member of the new Government-power batteries for passenger aircraft. He was traveling now, and had stopped for the night in a curiously secluded little up-State town . . .

He had no plans, that evening as he stood lingering near the front entrance of the Wilkins' Museum of Nature's辖区. The outside barker was still pattering about the "Flying Virgin—mystery of the Aga." Grant barely heard him; there was only in his mind the vision of that pathetic little face—enamelled with eternal, fragile beauty. Slim, painted chin; eyes which had scored smiles. Oriental! She did not seem so. Again weird conjunctions flooded him.

Upon impulse, abruptly Grant went to a side entrance and demanded to see the manager of the show.

"You want him," he was told. "I'll see.

Then Wilkins came into the dingy little ball office. He was a hairy, bald-headed fellow of about thirty.

"Want to see me?" he demanded with some impatience.

"Yes," Grant said. "I'm a stranger here—traveling salesman. I saw your show—I was interested in that girl with wings—"

"What about her?"

"Nothing at all," Grant said. "But I just got the idea that her wings are real. Weird sort of things—"

Wilkins' hearty little eyes narrowed with his chuckle. "See, ain't it? That's what I specialize in—mystery of the ages—Wilkins' Wonders—"

"So I just thought you might as well tell me where you found her." Grant cut in. He threw a gold crown from his pocket for a tip. "I don't mind paying just curiosity, you know. And just between us, of course—"

Wilkins took the coin with alacrity. The smell of alcohol wafted from his breath. "Well, thanks," he said. "You're a real Gentleman. Where did I get her?" He leaned forward and his voice fell to a confidential murmur. "Funny damn thing—I found her, only about twenty miles from here. Over by Twin Peaks. This is between us? By God, if you—"

"Of course," Grant said. He sat tense. Was Wilkins lying? He did not seem so. He was telling now how three months ago, in a bad storm, he had been driving by night through a nearby valley and had seen the girl, drenched, terrified, crouching by the roadside.

"An' there you are," Wilkins finished.

"So I took her in. She had'nt seen of her ever since. Funny thing, I don't know no more about her than you do. Funny damn word of English she knows. I've taught her, an' she knows plenty. Pretty quick, she is. Says it up like a sponge don't water. She's a good model, but she's can't use a lot of trouble now. By the Gods, if she thinks she can get away from me after what I've done for her—"

He suddenly realized that he had said too much. He sat up with an embarrassed jerk. "Say," he added, "what in the devil you interested in her for? If you think—"

"And you've never reported her to the
authorities?" Grant enquired. "Naturally it's just assumed she's a his—for your living memory—"

"And where would I stand up?" Wilkins demanded. "Some society society taking her—where's my profit?" He was suddenly alarmed. He clenched to his feet; his heavy-jovial face was red-purple.

"Hey, listen, you—get the hell out of here. My living memory a hell? Well, it ain't. But the girl with wings is—" He grimaced with a fury look. "You're the first nigger—thought her wings was real? Are you didn't see how she was working those wings with wires? Come around some other night—I'll show you. Now go on—get out of here—"

Worthlessly Grant released. The side door of the Museum slammed in his face. The little metal street he was dark. He crossed it lost himself in the shadows of an inclined ramp. And then he crouched in the darkness. What weird mystery was this?

An hour passed. From where Grant looked he could see the front of the Museum. There were no people going in now, and a steady stream came out. Then the door obviously was open. Still Grant had no plan, except that vaguely he was contemplating notifying the authorities, or some scientific society, in the morning. Would they take him seriously when he denounced an investigation? Would Wilkins be frightened now so that he would try and quit the girl away—

"Well, little one. She was no more than that. Grant realised. Wilkins had estimated that she was trying to escape from him.

A shaft of dim light from the opening side door of the Museum brought Grant from his raving thoughts. Two shadowy figures came out; a big one—the light for a second was on it as Grant saw it was Wilkins. He was gripping a much smaller figure—a little upright dark blot. As they crossed the street Grant could see the huddle of the dark cloak over the girl's folded wings. Then he saw a small black air-roller parked here under the ramp. Wilkins and the girl braced for it.

And suddenly there was a scuffle. "Damn you—stop that—" It was Wilkins' menacing voice. The girl had tried to twist from his grasp. He caught her; shunted her into the little car; and as he climbed in after her Grant saw that he was holding a flashlight in his hand... Grant was unnerved. He was still twenty feet away when the little black roller backed out and headed for the ramp entrance.

In the darkness Grant made a run. He leaped as the car rolled onto the incline. There was a thump as he landed upon the car's rear tire; but the thump was lost in the rush of the metal phosphating as it went up the incline. Then the car's wings slid out; on the ramp it gathered speed, came to a take-off jump and slid smoothly up into the air.

From his precarious perch there was only starlight above the digging Grant; a vision of the town sliding away beneath him and a rush of air past his ears. A rear window of the small concern of the air-roller showed him his dim interior—Wilkins at the controls and the girl huddled beside him. For another five minutes or so Grant clung to the fan. The car was roarring; Grant was calculating that he would need altitude if it went over the control. Then presently he hitched himself to the side running board. One of the back windows was open; he drew himself up, slid through it...

Wilkins' voice was audible now. "Guards—I'll have to hide you for a while, Arinta—a little trouble tonight—"

"You—let me go—"

"Guess you'd like to jump out one of those windows, eh?" He chuckled. "An' then you'd be away? Well, I guess you could do that, for a fact."

His voice went...
around her as he drew her to him. "Listen—my wife isn't going to care of you any more—I've killed her. You escaped, got the idea? So you are?—I got a little place up here in the hills—we'll get better acquainted. I ain't such a bad fellow—get the idea?"

Wilkins did not see the blob of Grant as he slowly shifted forward and pressed. The girl screamed as linked together the two men fell over the exostis. But it was a brief struggle. Wilkins' gun was on the seat beside him. He searched it; tried to level it. But Grant's fist caught him under the jaw. The gun bisected with a shot that sliced into the roof of the metal cabin and sent down a shower of sparks. Then Grant took the gun; crawled it down on Wilkins' head.

In the dim little estaminet of the sidetrack, Grant sat staring at the terrified girl. Wilkins lay on the floor; dead or unconscious. The car had fallen about a thousand feet, but Grant had righted it now.

"You—came?" Aelia suddenly screamed. The starlight was on her face, the terror there fading as thin smoke she was staring at Grant with awe, and with what other emotions he could only imagine by the response within himself. What would he do now? Land the car? Take her to the police? And then how in the damn hell of scientific investigation which would explain her? A freak of nature? Somehow the term was suddenly absurd to him...

"Well," he murmured, "look here—you seem to speak English pretty well. Who are you?"

"I—Aelia..."

"He said he found you wandering out here somewhere. Where did you come from? You're the only girl on Earth with wings. How did you..."

They were further questions. He checked himself. Quite obviously she did not understand him. His utterance terrified her; she twitched away as his hand went to her arm. She was going down out of the window now in the mountainside woods to trail some three thousand feet below them. And abruptly she gave a little cry.

"There is where I came from. See—down there."

She was pointing. The Twin Peaks which Wilkins had mentioned. They loomed off to the north a few miles away. A broad meadowed valley lay here to one side, with a ribbon of heavy road threading it.

"There?" Aelia pointed. "See?"

She was excited now; her face flushed; and as she gazed again intently at Grant her eyes were glowing as though with a sudden determination. "You come," she repeated. "I will show you."

Was her place—the home, down here in this valley? Impossible... He landed the car on the little road and brought it in a step.

"What do you mean, Aelia? That this is where Wilkins found you? How did you get here?"

It was a small road, with no traffic at this hour of the night. "All right," he said, "I hope you're not trying to fool me. Come on out and show me."

She smiled, and as he opened the door she threw off her shock and leaped from the car. Little blue-feathered figure in the moonlight. And suddenly she spread her great blue-feathered wings. He gasped, stood amazed. Here suddenly was the reality he had pictured. And yet he had never quite believed it. As a great graceful bird slowly she rose into the air, her little body tilted diagonally from the rush of wind, her shapes and her long silvery hair flapping. Magnificently she soared, as with great, flapping, blue-feathered wings she sped over the trees and was gone.

Grant stood numbly. What a hell he had been to have lost her... His che-
AERITA OF THE LIGHT COUNTRY

girls mingled with a stab within him... his sense of loss... It was as though she had meant to him, not just something of interest to science, not just a mystery to be solved... something—manifestation... Then she heard again the flap of giant wings and out of the dimness beyond the trees she came scolding, fluttering down with hack-flapping wings until another moment she landed, plopped on tiptoe almost beside him. She was panting; breathless.

"So bad the flying here—it is very hard for me." Then at his expression, she laughed—little rigid sipple of self-laughter. "You come," she added. "I will show—tell you—"

She acted wholly to him but her fear of him now. An eagerness was on her as she gripped his hand, leading him. They went off the road, down into the wooded meadow. Quies... He had vaguely fancied that if she walked, or ran—she would be like a little elf, with fairy lightness. But now as she walked along the path under the trees a shagginess crept on her; as though she weighed too much..."

THEN Grant suddenly saw the thing to which she was leading him. It lay in a wooded dell, some distance off the path and by chance wholly hidden by brush and boughs until they were quite close to it. A dark, dull-black, narrow cylinder. It seemed some twenty feet high at its center and, perhaps fifty feet from tip to tip. It lay sprawled in the brush like a great, withered leaf, with side limb, and pinioned head and tail.

A queer little Grant stared in startled astonishment. He had known of course, that nearly a hundred and fifty years ago, here on Earth, a flying craft had been invented. Vaguely he remembered that he had read somewhere of a Dr. Norton Grant, and a Balloon Flying Cade. It had gone to Mercury, and later had been destroyed so that the science of interplanetary navigation was lost to Earth.

"Was this girl from Mercury? Young, Alan Grant was a practical fellow. He had made more than half believed the things he had heard of those weird incidents so long ago. He reached now that they had encountered strange girls with wings. That part of the tales which his great-grandfather had been fond of telling him when he was a little boy, he had wholly disbelieved. Yet here was the reality before him!

Aerita was urging him forward. They reached the little cylinder. A small side doorway stood open. Grant's heart was racing; suddenly it seemed that an eagerness was on him; a lust for adventure... His like, and this girl's, destined to be so strangely intertwined...

"Come—I will show you." Aerita was unerringly. "You will go with me? Oh, never did I want to come here to your Earth—"

He followed her through the doorway. The darkness sprang into a luminous glory as she touched a lever on the metal side-wall. A tiny incision with a few steps fed up into a small circular turret. Grant saw a table with a little bench in front it—rows of strange-looking controls—levers, little switches, rows of triangular buttons and a score of indicator dials.

Aerita was staring at him, her face eagerly smiling. Her eyes were haggard with the strain of her emotion.

"You could help me—help me—so much," she said softly. "And I would not be so afraid of the trip. Oh, you will come?"

"You," he muttered. Still staring, he stood watching as she shifted one of the levers. From down the incline a click sounded as the entrance door slid closed. Then she was on the bench at the controls. Certainly she seemed to know what she was doing—her deft fingers were pulling levers, pressing some of the little trans-
gathering electrons. The pallid interior was hazy; a slumberous, dreamlike, rhythmic hum, and Grant could feel a draft of moving interior air as the ventilating system began operating.

And through a view-pane, like a thick transparent indigo haze in the side of the circular turret, he could see the outside ground dropping away. Soon it was gone as the little cylinder, with a luminous rocket-stream like a coarse-fall behind it, slanted up toward the stars that lay across, a myriad glittering gems on the blue-black velveteen of the sky.

CHAPTER THREE

The Attack on the Palace

From the control turret of the space-cylinder, where he sat with Arctica, Grant gazed down upon the, indistinct landscape of the tiny planet, Mercury. He knew now that Mercury presents always the same face to the Sun—the hemispheres eternally in darkness, and the other they with heat and glowing light. Arctica had guided her small vehicle now into a traffic zone, where to one side the horizon sky was thinly red-yellow with scattered glow and to the other there was only pallid starlight.

It was a weird and tumultuous landscape upon which Grant now, from a height of some ten thousand feet, gazed silently down: a barren waste of mantle, coppery hills with peaks of towering jagged spires; moons like goblins stalked by some menacing, insinuating blackness; mountains of the red metal.

It was a blank landscape indeed. From here there seemed no life—but black, glittering hills, in place glimmering with starlight and in others black and unlit with the shadow of interlocking, tangled red and green clouds. No kind of vegetation was visible. There was no soil, nor a glittering red-brown metallic dust, worn by the rains and winds from the metal mountains.

"This—your Light Country?" Grant murmured.

"Yes. The First Country is off there." She gazed toward the dark, red-yellow horizon. "And then in the opposite direction. "And that way—the Dark Country."

It had been a long trip from Earth; Grant almost had lost track of the passing time with no sky nor night here, just the great black abyss of Interplanetary Space with its myriad-place, distant worlds. Two weeks of Earth-time had passed. It had been an amazing journey, with this strange girl of another world. But with his started adventure past, a spurt of great cosmic adventure had come upon him so that he had settled into his life here in these little oddy rooms, impatient for the arrival.

To Grant, never before interested greatly in science save as it applied to the mechanisms of Earth's modern aircraft, Arctica's little spacecraft was at once a wonder and a fascination. Its rocket streams of electrical gases, serpents under pressure, were like a comet's tail behind it. That, leaving Earth's atmosphere, the rocket mechanisms had been shut off; and the incredible spires of shifting gravity plates went into operation—attraction and repulsion so that the great mass of the distant stars acted upon the tiny mass of the ship, a flight toward the Sun cutting the orbit of Venus; and then at last they had come within Mercury's attraction. . . .

To Grant the voyage was an adventure far beyond the wonder of Interplanetary Space which now were spread around him. There was Arctica—the amazing things she had to tell him. They were incredible things—yet some of them went with what his great-grandfather had told him.

Arctica had not learned English from Wilkins! She had been frightened; had
wanted only to tell nothing of herself and escape from him. Her grandfather, an
aged scientist, had built the spaceship—a single one of its kind even on
Mercury. Her grandmother had taught her English; part of her education, as she
remembered, had proceeded on Earth. We had terrible weapons then on Mercury, I do not know what
of the things were like so long ago—now it
is forbidden now to study it.

“Why?” Grant demanded.

“Because much evil came from those weapons and things of science. Many
people were killed. And so—I do not know how—all that was destroyed by our
rulers. One little world and your great
Earth—better that they should remain separate. At least, so our rulers have
thought for more than a hundred years.”

A ND Arria was descended through six
or seven generations from the girl of
Mercury and the Earth. Grant,
wanted to connect with Earth. Grant,
thinking of Earth’s great war—Earth’s
terrible instruments of hellish science
for the killing of humans—could not un
derstand that attitude of Mercury’s ref
eral.

But the ability to speak English had
come down through Arria’s family. Her
grandfather spoke it quite well, she said.
She did Altis Jemath, the present
Great
Ruler of the planet; and a few other lead
ning men of the government spoke it also.
To them it was a sign of culture, as a
script on Earth is proof of his knowledge of
the dead language.

It was a strange situation existing now
on Mercury—a situation which a hundred
and fifty Earth-years before had caused,
and seemed to have been solved. But it
had not, for now it was considering
threatening the little civilization of Arria’s people with death. They were
the people of the Light Country; their capital
was known as the Hill City.

To such a world, perhaps over all the
Universe, it would seem that the Creator
had meant to show a selection of the
wisdom of arria! On Mercury, only the
female of the Light Country wore the
wings. And for generations up to now, it
had been the law that upon reaching the
wings of the young virgins must be
clipped, and with a terrible mutilation
the muzzle cut so that never again could
they be used. It was like a judge of
assassination to the husband. The young girls
had been brought up to consider it truly,
as that they submitted.

Grant could not realize how
the custom had grown. The physical
appearance of the male—to every normal
male human, surely that must be an
in
sult.

And these young girls of Mercury,
loving as flaming birds in the air—terri
gible in contact with them, the Mercurial
young men, chained to the ground, left
in
ferior, humiliated, envious. Grant’s mind
went back to that night with Arria just
before they left Earth. Out on the dark
little road, she had suddenly stopped him,
flitted up into the air, and like a bird,
was gone. He recalled his anguish; his sense of
guilt.

And so here on Mercury, no wife could
have wings. Then at last, just a year ago,
the young virgin had refused. A thou
sand of them in the Hill City, led by
Arria, had vowed that never would they
marry until the law was changed and they
could keep their wings. Many of them
had died to the city, established a wild little
city far up in the mental mountain which
no man could reach; and much of their
time was spent there.

“But my grandfather,” Arria ex
plained, “he really thinks now that the
girls are right. He is trying to persuade
Altis Jemath, our ruler, to change the law.
But that has angered our young men—especially those among the workers. They want to saw form upon an organ—seize of us that they can touch.” She was talking whimsically. “That is their trouble—they cannot catch us.”

“I can well understand that,” Grant retorted.

Then she went on to tell him that on Mercury there were only two races—the Light Country people, and monies who lived in the Dark Country. Among the savages, there were now some four hundred criminals. Hill City man who in the past generation had been hanged for crimes. One of them, their leader now, was named Ralgh. He was a man of scientific learning who once had worked for his grandfather. He had committed a crime against a young girl—and been exiled to live among the Dark Country savages.

“Your grandfather’s friends believe in the idea of keeping Earth free from contact with Mercury,” Grant asked. “Is he built this ship?”

“Oh, yes, yes, he does,” Arrinna exclaimed. “He built this little vessel only with the idea of transportation around Mercury. Or perhaps an adventure to some vastly unusual!”

The cylinder had been built, but not yet tested; and one night Ralgh had consegured it to the Hill City, naming it and Arrinna, carrying her off in it to the Dark Country.

“But I escaped from him,” she was saying. “And I got out the cylinder!” She gained at Grant statistically is a way that made his heart pound. “A woman may think she knows much of science—my grandfather was trying to teach me—and so I escaped in the cylinder.”

A little knowledge is such a dangerous thing. She had thought she understood the workings of the complicated machinery so that she could pilot the cylinder from Ralgh’s stronghold in the Dark Country, back to the Hill City. And suddenly she had found herself bargaining not through the Muscoviad atmosphere, not the abyss of intergalactic space... but had been a terrifying voyage. But she had arrived; had been only able to understand the initial workings of the rocket—streams and the little gravity planes when she found herself near the great globe of Earth... And the she had landed and wandered, terrified, confused by the fog of Earth’s gravity; not knowing where to go or what to do until in the vicinity of that summer electrical storm Wilkins had found her.

To Grant, as he sat now staring down at the raised copper hills of Mercury with the desolation of her house so near at hand, it was all as though Nature had written a monotonous, intricate pattern of myriad events—all the pattern of his life and hers—moving the separate threads until now so strangely they were being intertwined.

Swiftly, silently, the cylinder started downward. The distant Twilight of the Light Country had been dispensed by heavy, filthy, colored clouds which now were clear overhead. A rainstorm obviously had passed here. Streams of water were cascading down the naked copper hills. Pools of it lay glistening in the welter. And then Grant saw little patches of soil and trees—great wheel rock which was not too metallic had been worn into a soil. And with the brent, burnt heat, a luxuriant vegetation had sprung. The cylinder presently passed directly over a little patch of forest. Grant saw gray, spiny stalks of blue-green trees. They glistered in the dimness with an infra-red glow of the chemistry within them. Vegetation pithing carbon dioxide from the sultry air after the storm so that the leaves were palpitating with red immens-ity. It was a weird little patch of jungle. The trees seemed frozen, persistently...
were heavy with hanging air-foam of giant spreading leaves and vivid, exotic flowers.

"My home," Azrin suddenly mur- 

nured. "Off them—see it."

The patch of jungle was past; the solid copper hills had come again. Then there was a valley of trees and fields. And now it seemed to Azrin that he could see fig-

ures working in the fields where things were growing.

THERE Hill City lay on the bottom and on the inner sides of a great bowl-like depression in the manner upper planes of copper wastes which surrounded it. It was a strange little five mile spread of houses—spot nodal dwellings of glittering burnished copper. On the level mound on the house were set in crescent rows, with terraces overhanging them. They were sparsely set houses, each with its garden and its little field.

The outskirts of the city went up the inner slopes of the bowl. There were wide-

er streets, like backwoods in concentric rings such a level higher on the slope. And there were other little streets that ascended, running like spines of a wheel from the center of the valley floor to the thousand foot height of the upper circular rim.

Near to the top, on a great broad copp-

ery ledge with a giant flight of terraced metal steps down from it, a larger dwell-

ing soared like a government palace perhaps.

A procession of slaves backed it, and adorned its broad flat roof.

Azrin gestured. "That is my home.

My grandfather, he lives there with the Great Councillor and his sons who rule us."

The cylinder was dropping close now.

In the semi-darkness with the black clouds still overhead, eyes of light showed in the

---

Get this, man, if you have trouble

With tender skin and wiry stubble:

Those Thin Gillette—four for a dime—

Give slick, clean shaves; save dough and time!

Save Extra Money! Get The Big New Economy Package, 12 for 25c.
The small city was flanked by a high wall, through which a single gate provided access. Arrita was heading for the upper city where the palace was located. The gate was closed, but she managed to sneak through a small hole in the wall. The sky was dark, and the city was lit by streetlights cast by the moon. The streets were quiet, and Arrita moved stealthily through the empty streets, trying not to draw attention to herself.

Inside the palace, the council was waiting for her. The room was large and grand, with high ceilings and ornate decorations. The councilors sat around a long table, each with a cup of tea in front of them. Arrita approached the table and bowed before them.

"Arrita," said the council leader, "we have received reports of the rebellion in the suburbs. What can you tell us about it?"

Arrita hesitated for a moment, but then spoke up. "I was there when it started. The rebels are led by a young man named Zephyr. They are determined to overthrow the current regime and establish a new government."

The councilors exchanged glances, and then the leader spoke again. "We need to act quickly. Gather our forces and move immediately to suppress the rebellion."

"But what about the rebels," asked one of the councilors. "Are there any intelligence reports about their location or their strength?"

"We have intelligence that they are based in the old part of the city," replied Arrita. "But I think they are more powerful than we think."

The councilors nodded, and the meeting ended. Arrita left the room, her mind racing with thoughts of the rebellion and the challenges that lay ahead.
sented three or four little men. They were perhaps five and a half feet tall; some of them shorter—gray-skinned men with black and silver-streaked hair, boldly to the hue of the neck. Flowing, glittering fabric-cost of gaudy colors enveloped them.

"Arrita—Arrita—" They gusped as they saw and recognized her. And then they saw Granti—slender, stunted with stunted arms and tense. In another moment they scattered, flung into a dark door near at hand.

Granti still had the small tradition which he had taken from Wilkins. It was jeered in his belly; he knew it not now. Arrita saw it and grabbed him. Her flushed face was grim.

"That—maybe—" she murmured. "But I hope not to have blushed."

He followed her as they went down another log staircase. Near the bottom, inactively, Arrita opened her great wings and flattened down. Granti took a leap, leapt a dozen feet and landed sprawled. He heard a cry of awe and fear. Another group of the palace inmates was down here—three or three other men; and an older woman. Her white hair was braidad and piled on her head. Her folded wings arched behind her shoulders—wings surrender with features reddened in places from them, and shrieked in fear of us. A lightly tanned figure hanging down her back partially covered them.

"You come—" Arrita again was drugging him. She slid the big metal door-slate of the front entrance, and he rushed out with her to the stage at the top of the great stairs.

It was a tumultuous sight. The milling crowd on the steps was more than half way up now. There were a thousand people at least—men, and a few women. The women carried blinding torches. The men brandished clubs, weapons—implements of the field; knives like swords; huge clubs for battle—...

An Arrita and Granti appeared, a great cry went up. And then a shower of dirt preceded the steps. Most of them fell short, missing the half dozen men of the steps. But one or a few whitened by hastily missing Arrita.

Granti smiled. "You come inside—you'll get him—killed—"

She flung him off: "I will do this—I will stop them—"

At the edge of the great flight she stood poised—an impetuous little figure, facing her angry, frenzied people with her barefeathered wings spread wide and her arms filled in a gesture consuming silence.

CHAPTER FOUR

From the Canvas Screen

FOR a moment the angry throng on the steps was quieted. They were gray-skinned men, garbed in what seemed leather garments—bucket and face-length tunic. The blacklight paintings them; and illuminated the figures of the women—short, squat, enormous-looking figures in banded, speckled wings. In milling, shrewing ranks on the hoge staircases they stood staring up at Arrita.

And now she was talking—a fluid flow of syllables, soft, persuasive at first, then rising into an impassioned note of command as with an uplifting hand she evidently or dered them back down the steps.

Granti, in the shadow of a copper column of the big building, stood watching, holding his breath. From the doorway beside him he saw a man that an old man had come. The man had white flying hair, a scarred, parrot-like green face. Arrita's grandfather? And with him was a man perhaps Granti's age—a tall fellow, Ashan six feet, with bristly white hair, long to the base of his neck; a bunched face; high-bridged, hawklike nose; wide mouth and square chin. He stood for a
A stone suddenly whirled up from down the staircase. It brought Grant's attention back to Artilia. At her com-mand, for a time the crowd had wavered. Then some leader down there ruffled them. The stone came hurrying; and as though it were a spark from gunpowder, a murmur of angry muttering went up. There were interruptions; then a roar of alarm. Another stone came... Another! then a hail of them as again the namining crowd began surging upward.

Artilia had lost. A stone struck one of her untrained guards so that it sprawled, emptied of the pain. But still she held her ground, her little voice calling with imperious command... With a leap, Grant was beside her.

"Artilia—Artilia done!" He waved his Rodglin at her. There was no way of re-engaging it here on Mercury, but he knew that it had two or three small bolts left in it. "Artilia, I'll show them..."

"Oh—Oh Ahs—my people!

But surely it was unnecessary. Grant could see now one of the leaders down there—a big gray fellow with a grizzly rug around his forehead. Bravadoing a gitter-ber, speculator, he assumed the pose, urging the others alt-er him. Grant leveled his little weapon. The crowd had not noticed him before. But now it saw and a great shout went up—the gasping of a few voices, then others until a thousand threats were cry-ing out with mingled anger and awe.

Grant's flashgun in that same second spat its little bolt—fading, sidling prec-iely of charnel shatter, visor-out in the twilight dimness. It caught the big man full in the chest. His scream was lost in the roar of the crowd as he tumbled forward. In a leap his body hit the upper stairs, wavered and then fell back-ward—gathering momentum as it went down and over end, then reeling with limp, falling arms and legs—then the steps until it crashed into the terrified crowd behind it... It was just one shot of the little Earth- gun. To the Mercurians it was devastat-ing. For that instant the throng, swayed into terrible silence, stood stunned stum-bling. Shivers in the air, were still shock-ing in anger; but those in front began wavering until in another moment they all fell in terror. The giant chairman was empty, with just the bulged form of the dead man lying there alone.

"Well, we did it," Grant murmured. "But if they come back..." He stared raptly at his little weapon.

"Oh they will," Artilia gasped. "Not tonight, maybe. But they have dared once—and they have been threatening it so long. We will have to see with my grand-father what is to be done."

She was staring out over the fortress. Storm-clouds seemed again gathering out there—swept clouds with a lurid red shawn to them. And now there was a puff of wind.


Those final hours on Mercury to Grant, were strange indeed. He and Artilia were given room in one of the big palace rooms where the girl breathlessly explained what had happened to her. The old man whom Grant had seen behind them on the terrace was Ahs, her grandfather. With Ahs Jankit, gray-bearded ruler in a long braided robe.
they sat talking of Aerita’s adventures; and then Grant was telling them of Earth. The young Mercian who had been called Taline had reminded. No was Grant undreamed now, one of Jerath’s young lieutenants in the administration of Government affairs. They all spoke in English, seeming proud to be able to speak it.

Outside the palace, Grant could hear that the swell Mecenem storm was coming closer. The winds were more frequent and more violent. The lightning flashed sheeting into sight—an outer darkness lurid with a red stain. Here in the palace room, with its low vaulted metal ceiling, metal furniture and luxuri-ous fabrics, the bearer out a yellow flickering glow. But at the oval window, the blood light of the lightning outside was like a red stain in the night. And now it began raining—a rain against the palace walls and on its metal roof.

Old Taline had been questioning Grant with a sense, grave intelligence on the recent history of Earth. He had seen Grant’s dealings; smiling gravely, he had made Grant box the tiny bolt through the window until the girl’s change was exaggerated. He had heard Grant tell of Earth’s horrible lethal weapons, so large to size that a thousand men might be killed in one flash from them. And then he said gravely,

“When your world here is over, Xarben-mann, should you miss any little space-ship to go back to Earth, then you will provide me to finish it when you arrive. Here on Mercury we have no science like that. Perhaps we are better for it.”
Then young Talose silently appeared and gave a sign to join them. Arvia, with Grant, had withdrawn to a side of the room, where they sat together, silently listening as the two older ones, and Talose, excitedly discussed the rebellion of this workmen.

"I do not understand our people," the gray-bearded Jehosh was saying. "I have promised them that I will do my best to preserve the young Virginites.

"But they do not believe you," Talose put in. He was standing a little apart from the others, tall, graceful figure in blue-grey trousers and shirt, with a swaying thick, brown strand from his shoulders. Light from the room's burning brass chandelier glinted on his handsome, hawk-nosed face, and it Grant saw that same half-smile, almost a leer, it made him uneasy. Somehow it seemed that he wasn't going to like this young Talose. He tried to shrug it off, wondering if it was because Talose had seemed unsympathetic to Aurora.

"And now," old Pucher was saying, "the workers seem to be having some complaints. Their conditions are certainly worse than they were.

Could it be that the people were being incited into dissension? The thought leaped into Grant's mind.

"If we could do something about it," Jehosh went on. "It turned momentarily toward Arvia and Grant. "Yes, Arvia, I have let you influence me. And now I see another danger. These annual invasions of the Dark Country—never have we treated them as we should treat them. But now I fear bad rumors that they are planning something. That dangerous fellow Ralgar whom we dismissed—if he would dare organize them—"

Was Ralgar and his murderous black band of Hill City criminals, out there among the invasions of the Dark Country, planning now as invaders? A conquest so that he and his men would rule here, and force the flying girls to their will? If that were so, this discontent of the workmen here would be exactly what he wanted.

"If you would try and build us some weapons of science, Pucher," Jehosh was saying. "Or send young Grant to Earth, to get some—"

"Never!" Pucher exclaimed. "Then men are to kill, always he find reasons to kill. The example of Earth is not for us."

The talk went on. After a time, young Talose withdrew. Outside the palace, Grant now could hear that it was raining with a torrential downpour; and through the crecent windows the green-yellow and crimson glow of the street-lights was even more evident. The rain was now a drizzle against the metal building; and there was the roar of the irrigation-rainers—wide metal chimes which carried the water down from the metal hills beyond the city, carrying it far out to assist the distant fields which between storms were parched by the heat and by the fire storms which came at intervals from the Fire Country.

Then Arvia withdrew upon some household duties. In a corner of the room, Grant was left alone. An unwonted was in him; a sense of something of evil which might be impending now. Old Pucher and Jehosh were still arguing. But Grant hardly listened to them. And suddenly, out in the rear of the weird Mecanican storm, it seemed that he heard a faint cry. Then there was a flapping of wings; and through an open window on the far side of the room a young girl came flapping.

Her name was Arvia. Grant had heard of her from Arvia. She was one of Arvia's closest friends—an enant worker in the cause of the Virginites. Threshold so that her gold robe clung to her body, her long pale hair streamed with the rain she fluttered to the floor. She was
postings, gazing out in her own language.

Then the saw Grant.

"Oh," she gasped, "An Englishwoman? You see, I speak the English—Aerita, the English girl, I have just come from our mountain nest, to see you and Aerita."

These Maroviol girls were her birds, able to wing so swiftly from one plant to another! One of the Mill City girls had flown with the news that Aerita and a strange man from another world were in the palace.

"And one of our girls was flying today high over the Dark Country," Arma added hastily. "There is something that they are doing there—strong lights, and men are assembling. Where is Aerita?"

The threatened intervention of the strangers, and Rondy's crimes? Was that coming soon?

"Where is Aerita?" Arma demanded. Grant was on his feet. And suddenly he was stricken with a stilt of horror.

Through the palace a distant scream sounded! A girl's scream of terror! Aerita! Her scream wailed out! And then abruptly it was smothered, choked with a ghastly strangledness so that it died away into stammering, horrible silence!

CHAPTER FIVE

The Flight on the Flying Platform

BE THAT a breathless second, Aerita, the young flying girl, snared with old Polker and Jamneh—all three of them snared, transfixed. Grant got his knife. Instantly he turned, dashed from the room. The scream had seemed to come from a nearby corridor. He plunged into it; saw a distant open doorway with the light of a broiler streaming out from it. Then a bounding leap took him almost to the corridor ceiling, and landed him at the door.

On the floor of the room Aerita was lying, apparently unconscious. Her wings were bound behind her; and over her a man was bending; with their ropes tying her ankles and wrists. From his gigantic bulk, Grant had landed in a heap in the doorway. The man saw him; straightened from Aerita. It was Takor. His face was grim in the hoister light; his dark eyes were flashing.

Grant was scrupling to his feet, but Takor was quicker. A table was near him, with a heavy pepper-corn sack upon it. He seized the sack; hurled it. Grant had no time to dodge. He was aware of the crash of the sand sack on his head. And the room seemed to burst into roaring light as he fell. Dimly he was aware that Takor contumaciously had kicked him.

And that Takor was billing Arma; carrying her through a nearby window, out into the roar of the storm. . . . Then for Grant everything faded into the blank sleep of unconsciousness . . .

Then he was aware that within a minute or two he was recovering. He found himself sitting up, with blood marking his hair and his senses still reeling. Arma, Polker and Jamneh were just entering the room.

Grant staggered to his feet. "Takor!" he gasped. "He took her--"

They crowded after him as with returning strength he staggered to the window. The rain and hoister's work made the scene outside a tumultuous blue. A vivid flash of crimson lightning split the sky. For a second or two the invisible upper hills were illuminated. For away to our side at the edge of one of the giant forests, Takor was visible; carrying Arma. And then, with her he leaped into the flames. The darkness closed in, but in a moment there was silence. Flat down the roaring flame, Grant had an instant glimpse of what seemed a tiny raft with Takor and Arma upon it, riding it down the ten mile long channel of roaring water. . . . For an instant Grant stood numbly.
No man could follow that plunging little cshift. Then he thought of Peter’s space-cylinder, up on the palace roof. He smiled Arna. "You come with me. We'll go after her—"

"Oh yes—I can fly. But you—"

"In the space-cylinder. It's here on the roof."

Peter was standing behind them. Jeseph was at the doorway, shoutingBelow on orders at the other people who were running. Grant grinned at them all, with Arna after him (he hurled out of the room; up the palace stairs, out onto the rain-swept roof.

The space-cylinder was gone! There was no sign of it here, save the small tree which it had crested in landing. Into Grant's mind leaped the memory that Talor had been missing for an hour or more earlier; in the evening; and perhaps some envoys from the South had doubtless asked the ship then; and with the storm, no one had happened to come up here and discover it still.

GRANT stared intently at the wriggled girl beside him. A snatching party of men on foot would hardly be able to withstand and locate Talor now in a storm like this.

"I can fly to find them," Arna timidly offered.

Grant shook his head. "You couldn't do anything if you did. He'll make for the Dark Country—just some of his men out there somewhere, very probably." He grinned. "Arna listen—if you could fly now and get some of your girls. Just seven—here in the city—"

"For the platform? And on it, we carry you—"

"Yes."

Arna had told him how she had built a little platform on which the flying girls could carry her grandmaster. They had practiced with it, but all Peter had disdained it—the flying girls were be-
tossed it excitedly. For a moment Grant feared that it would turn over or be wrinkled from the girls’ hands. Beside him, face on each side, they struggled with frantic flapping wings. Then the gust eased a little; the platform came into control, bowed as the girls, settling into a rhythmical beat of wings, flew swiftly onward.

For a time Grant could see very little.

The great sheets of red crimson in the stormlight, flashed him. The wind and the rain dashed past his ears. There was only a bar of dark purple coppery ground; far down, the tangled, black-evergreen and crimson cloud-masses crept; and the reality of the flying girls here beside him.

He called to Anna. The wind tore at his words and herded them near. “One past that flame-end, Anna. A few miles and then circled—dying now—we ought to be able to see them—”

She nodded. The girls were sweeping lower now; the plateauine rain-soaked hills seemed only a few hundred feet down. They passed the flame-end where it divided into a network at a huge coppery field, beside which the water was dammed into a system of small channels to be used when needed. There was no sign of any tracing figures down there. The fruit wind-bound platform swept on. Beneath it Grant saw only naked, undying copper fields now. The storm-light gleamed on them with a crimson show. Suddenly it made Grant shudder with a new state of apprehension. It was a blood-red little exchange. Even the wind-tugging draperies, the hair and the beating wings of the girls flying beside him—all were tainted with the blood-glow. It was as though these were an omen of things to come.

Abruptly Grant was aware that Anna was peering; then he heard her muttered words: “See! Does there abead—”

Far ahead, down on a ragged little plateau, a cluster of dark dots was visible. They grew in a moment to be revealed as hurrying men. Takone, with Aretta beside him. And they had been joined now by a party of a dozen or more. They were not the coppery almost naked savages which Aretta had described, but men in the fashion of the Light Country people. With dark, dake-adorned faces, they were hurrying forward. They were cimules of Tokyo’s wonderland band of savages, Grant realized.

“Anna—ah—” he called. Could he hope successfully to attack them now? Grant’s little flaxen friend had been exhausted. He had only a long, thin-bladed knife here now.

He was suddenly aware that the platform was sweeping down; and beside him, with one hand free the flying Anna gestured.

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A BIG O.K. FROM U.S.A.

Pepsi-Cola is made only by Pepsi-Cola Company, Long Island City, N. Y. Bottled locally by authorized bottlers.
"We have knives—all of us—you will see."

Her hand moved the little knife. The storm-queen glinted blood-red on its tusked copper blade. Before Grant had time to give any commands or to plan anything, the platform had swayed ahead of the dark figure of a man down on the rocks. They saw it, and a scream flared up. They stopped; gathered in a group with Aurora in their midst.

Then, two or three hundred feet beyond them, in the crimson haze of rain and semi-darkness the platform landed with a thump. Grant, knife in hand, leaped to his feet.

"Arrest—hold here—you girls!"

But they had dropped the platform-handles, heedless of him, they were droop- ing up into the air; gathering into a flitting group. For a second Grant stared at them, transfixed with wonder, aiment. Off in the haze he could see the figure of Talone and his men. On a run, he started toward them, and close over his head the girls were flitting. They went past him like a little flock of birds, lifted up into the wind that they were over Talone's men. And then with great wings panted motionless, they soared down to the attack!

IT WAS a run of steel to Grant as a web of bounding logs he went forward through the rain. He was still nearly two hundred feet away when the girls swooped down, like an amazing little cloud of giant birds. The grimied men, with the wind attack making them by surprise; for an instant were confused. Armed with knives and swords, they tried to slash upward, but the flitting figures above them. It was an instant of indecision. Grant could see the men standing on the rocks, wildling flailing their arms, confused by the bird-like attack of the girls who were flitting, stabbed down and instantly darts up again. One of the men fell; then another. A girl who had darted down and up again, arced wounded. For a second she flapped, and then plummeted down, coaching on the rocks where she lay motionless with only her wings quivering as she died.

Grant realized that he was choosing now—choosing death to draw attention to himself. He could see that Aurora was off on her own; her wings were still braced, and the figure of Talone was beside her, gripping her. The flitting girls, in a sudden, nothing little group were lowering ten feet above the flinted man; and then again they dived...

Grant was within thirty feet of the girl when suddenly he checked his advance. Before the beam of a light source, several of the men had fallen. Two or three others were making away in the hard, storm-swept darkness. And Grant saw that Talone had swept Aurora off her feet into his arms—carrying her, running with her. A girl pursued from the mark above him, but Talone beat her off. He was bounding for a great clump of western rocks which lay against the side of a rocky ascending slope. Grant turned, made after him.

Clouds of crimson storm-wraths were here now, wings of fog, red as blood, trailing close above the ground. Through them, Grant just barely could see the figure of Talone as he climbed the rocks. They like a pounding anvil with hewn logs. Grant was upon him, so that Talone dropped Aurora and turned. His sword-knife was in his hand; the blood light of the crimson fog illuminated his contorted face, stumped with his murderous fury.

Grant's scimitar whirled, and hit. A rivulet of hot sap went through Grant's shoulder as Talone's blade struck deep. They fell together as Talone went backward from the impact, locked together, rolling, plunging. Grant's knife had shattered from his hand. The
long this Made of Talon’s knife broke off in Grant’s shoulder as they fell. Grant’s sense for an instant ceased with the pain of his wound. He was aware that the eight Talons had switched beams and came to his feet. With his head reeling, Grant staggered up, stood for a second staring dully into the mark of the storm. Then he saw Talon running over the rock, making away, and in another instant he had vanished. Arnet was here on the ground, swooning dead. Grant bent over her. “You’re all right, Arnet? Not hurt?…”

“All right…” she murmured. “But, oh Alan—you—your shoulder…”

“Damn him—he got away…” He turned to run after Talon, but Arnet asked him.

“No, Alan—you shoulder—the bullet there. . . Let him go. He can do no harm now.”

Her wings were bound. She left Grant as he staggered; he almost fell, and she made him sit on the ground until the girls came and gathered around them.

ON THE flying platform, the wounded Grant lay with Arnet beside him as the girls sped back through the dying storm. . . . It was a triumphant return. But not there on the rocks, two of the girls were crying. . . . Arnet was still dazed from the shot Talon had fired upon her, but she was recovering now. . .

She clung to Grant, holding him with one of her little hands caressing his rain-drenched hair. “You are all right now?” she murmured. “Alan—you—hurt too badly?”

“No, it’s nothing, Arnet. Just a fresh wound. I’m all right. And you too? Thank God!”

Beside them the six flying girls labored on through the red rain and wind which now were blowing. Grant was pondering. Would Bully dare now or some time soon, to attack the Hill City?

“Has he the space-cylinder now,” Grant told Arnet. “Heaven knows what he’ll try and do with it. Arnet, your grandfather said that he had built a tiny affair with which we might send a message to Earth. If Earth only knew that we needed electoral weapons here…”

“Maybe we can send it, Alan. I think even that gnawgull would have sent it himself, if we had not run away. He is very envious about not wanting any connection with Earth. But he would want Earth weapons very quickly, if he knew that any terrible danger threatened us. He is very worried about us by now, Alan.”

Then she lay with her arms around him, her moment silent as the crimson clouds moved past them. And Grant was conscious that she was regarding him with her quiet, bohemian smile.

“I was thinking,” she murmured, “that I am still eager for my own—out to have our wings unbound.” Her great wings, colored tears, spread a little. She was gazing at Grant absently, and she added shyly:

“But I know now, I could love a man so much—he could cut my wings when I was his wife, if—if that is what he wanted.”

“Out of time,” Grant replied. “His heart was pounding. His arm tightened around her. “My wife will have her wings—by force, if necessary. That’s what I want.”

She had no answer; there was just the trembling pressure of her hand on his. Then suddenly a cry from one of the girls sounded. Following her gesture, Grant and Arnet shader into the crimson storm. Far afield and to one side, a blob showed in the gloom—cylindrical form, with a luminous stream of gas like a tail behind it.

It was the space-ship! It carried Bully’s note! They had sent the struggling little platform, undoubtedly. In a
great creosote, the ship was sweeping down. All the flying girls had seen it now. For an instant they flinched in a panic. Then Aruta calmed them with vehement words of command.

The hurried little platform was buffeted by the wind as the girls struggled through the storm. There were only six of them. Carrying both Aruta and Grant, from the start it had been too heavy; and the girls were tired now. Vainly they tried to sweep aside, to escape the incoming ship; but it saw them, turned its swift-acting course again to cut them off. Then it was done; hardly more than a hundred feet. Grant could see that its lower door-way was open; men were standing there.

And then a light sprang from the doo-ray—a little blue-white snakelike that caught the platform, halted it in a glass. In the silence of a whip-hail a voice shouted with a triumphant jibe—

"Turns out! Grant answered tersely.

"They can't turn as quickly,"

The platform dived sidewise. But the light clang—the little cylinder-ship, agile with its sudden wrench, made another sweeping arc. It was behind them now—five hundred feet, but with its greater speed, it was overwhelming them. Then it turned a little: again came almost alow.

"Aruta线路—" Grant answered. His scowl by the shoulders.

"Tell your girls to land—quickly now. They can waste and fly away—"

"No! No, Aruta—"

The light still clung to them. In the illuminated doorway Grant saw one of the men raise his arm as though hurling a slip-shot. A copper knife-blade glinted—little fast-long slender blade of copper with a fixed fin-tail. It glinted as it came speeding like an arrow in the shaft of light. And it struck one of the girls. She screamed with a terrible, suppressed little cry; wavered against the platform handle she was gripping. The blade was in her breast. For a second, like a great melodramatic bird she flapped. The platform handle broke off as her body hung on it; and then she was falling down and backward in the dark.

"Good God!" Grant gasped. "Aruta—land us, I tell you!"

"Oh Alas—yes—you'll be killed—"

Another little light came flying; then another. Two more of the girls were hit; one of them dropped. Grant was watching that they must land. The platform was wavering, hurrying. Beside him Grant could see, some two hundred feet down, the dish, backward-sliding spread of crimson copper rocks. Only five frightened girls to struggle with it now, and one of them was bearing almost a dead weight on her handle with her wings quivering where a copper blade had buried itself in her shoulders between them.

It was a class to Grant. He was aware that he was trying to hurl to his feet, to jump from the soaring platform so that the girls would drop it and wing away.

"No!" Aruta screamed. "Alas, no! You will be killed—"

They were a hundred feet over the rocks now. Grant half fell, half jumped from the platform into the air; and in that same second Aruta had leaped and selected him! falling to him, her arms around his, her wings wildly flapping, trying to level the fall.

"Oh—Alas dear—"

They wavered down . . . Grant saw her sprawling, grazing endburnt rocks . . .

He was conscious only of Aruta clinging to him, her wings wildly flapping . . .

"Aruta—let me go—" He was trying to push her away.

"Oh Alas dear—"

The sprawling, jugged rocks were close. He was vaguely conscious of the crash—all his body swaying suited with pain for but a second as his senses were
CHAPTER SIX

Riddles from Space

IN THE living room of his house, in one of the Northern district suburbs of the great New York City, Philip Grant sat staring at a sheet of charred fragments of paper-like sheets which lay on the table before him. He was a handsome young fellow; the brother of Alan Grant—and, alike with a tousled mop of black curly hair. He looked older than his eighteen years—perhaps especially old tonight as with grim face and pimply dark eyes he gazed moodily at the cryptic charred sheets. This fragmentary message, seemingly from another world—why the devil had it been addressed to him? Why indeed, unless it had something to do with Abe's disappearance?

It was mid-August, 1929—a month and five days since as unaccountably Alan Grant had vanished—when the news of his death in the autres one of the Hawaiian islands, a small, hotel-like establishment of shining copper was founded. A projectile which seemingly had fallen from the sky; its outer copper casing had burst and spilled over with the heat of falling through Earth's atmosphere. And it had crashed, so that most of its weird mechanism were broken.

The native who found it had notified the local authorities. And then they discovered that there was a message—or at least it seemed like something of the sort—an enigma written upon a strange form of paper within the projectile's interior. They were words somehow in English, but the heat had charred the paper, punctured or whatever it was, so that most of the words were unrecognizable. Its address was legible—to Philip Grant—his address in the suburb of New York City.

And the signature was the single word—"Pusher."

The weird little copper mechanism was examined by several scientists; but its mechanism was so complicated that they could make almost nothing of it. The cryptic, fragmentary little message was studied; and then by trial it was forwarded to Philip Grant.

Philip all this day, had been studying it with the authorities of his district; and with his employees in the Government Laboratories of Research Physics, where he worked. Now, hallowed, he had taken it home, carefully placing it on his table, under the blue-white glare of a tube light—sitting as though by sheer will power he could draw from its charred salves the secret hidden there.

They were tantalizing fragments. He studied them over and over, pondering them with wild conjectures. "...Voilà the holy key of wisdom?—That phrase was fairly clear. Someone needed help. And then there seemed a more sinister hint: "And as you... etc. If Rubby comes... etc."

The burned scroll gave nothing else which could be concluded to have any meaning at all... Except the words: "Flame—yes hurry!"

Young Phil Grant, with a hand rampaging his wavy black hair, sat sprawled before his table. It was now nearly midnight. This house where for several years he had been living with Abe, was a small
mural cottage in a lonely neighborhood of the little hilly region which skirted both from the shining Hudson river. His landlord had gone for the night. He was alone here. The living room was dim, with just a spot of twilight on the table where the scattered fragments of the message were lying.

"Cast as you...
benzene

The scared words in quarter-
ly formed letters stared up at Phil as though eagerly trying to add something else... "And as you..." Did that mean him personally? Probably it did, since "Phil" was the only other person in the vicinity.

"Phil..." whoever he was, had addressed the message to Phil Grant. "Burns or..."

"Who in the devil was..."

IN THE alcove of his living room, Phil sat huddled in his chair. Somehow he felt alone even though now there was a man near—something wild, perhaps, which might be staggering hint. The room was on the ground floor of the little cottage. The opened windows were dark triangles with a splash of darkness from the trees which were outside. Then the silence abruptly was broken by a roar, so unexpected that it jolted with Phil's instantaneous racing heart.

Sure enough, he saw it now. The message was from a man who worked in the Government. Some of the fragments had been found near the scene of a murder. The letter was addressed to Phil Grant.

"Phil..." whoever he was, had addressed the message to Phil Grant. "Burns or..."

"Who in the devil was..."

The newscaster's voice drowned out the last words. Suddenly there was another announcement:

"Mackey Projector Plant Raided! Murderous Doby's Perry Raiders. Files Against the Big Mackey Headlines in and Research Laboratory. Eight Workers in Night-shift found Dead!"

"The Mackey Plant! It was in the Doby's Perry Neighborhood—a factory where the modern glass-fiber, high-range projector was being built! Five of them were found to be missing. The Mackey Research Laboratory recently had been taken over by the Anglo-American Government, and it was there that Phil worked. He searched for his public-service typewriter to try and call his employer. But another even more startling announcement came from the newscaster checked him.

"Mystery Gun Found Near Raided Mackey Plant!"

In a small field, where evidently something had happened, crumpled the grass and a few stipplings, a small white object of what might be a strange form of paper had been found. Words in English were scrawled on it, in brownish—perhaps meant to be blood. It was a weird inexplicable message, the newscaster was saying. The words were:
"Phil—quickly out—after XL-22—"

It was suddenly a heavily written little message. The signature was only an illegible semen. . . .

BUT Phil understood it! He sat breathless, tense, staring numbly at the grid of his teletype. That little message in code was addressed to him. XL-22 was a formula for a new-type electronic flash of greater duration and higher voltage—research work which he had been doing here at home—in his own private little laboratory here which adjoined the living room. He had hoped to perfect it and then present it to the Government. No one knew of it, except Alan. . . .

Then Alan must be here among these nickels! Alan was trying to warn him! . . .

The teletypewriter's voice was still droning, but Phil hardly heard it. From a desk drawer near at hand he seized his small flashlight, and then a second later the teletypewriter was saying something additionally startling, so that he dropped back into his seat, with the gun on his lap. . . .

"Mr. Kilgore's Observatory Reports Strange Object Detected This Afternoon above Earth's Stratosphere . . . Tiny Flying Negative Object . . . "

It could not be the little projectile which had brought the message from "Polton"; that had dropped from the sky over the Pacific yesterday. This was this afternoon! . . . These nickels—

Abruptly Phil's mental thoughts were switched away. Mingled with the soft thud of the teletypewriter's voice there seemed a sound over by one of his windows. He stared; but the windows, twenty feet away from him, was only an empty dark triangle. Phil's flashlight was shone in his hand. Then his gaze drifted to the little shelf of charred paper which lay on his table.

The charred papers were moving! Trembling? quivering? And then all in that second the charred shelf was sliding on the table toward the window. Air was sucking it! The sheets broke apart, snapping as with a rush they went out of the window!

Phil was on his feet now; and suddenly he could feel the suction—all the air in the room, suddenly sucked into the window so that there was a hiss from behind him of air coming in the door from the house corridor. He heard himself in the blue, but the rug on which he was standing was sliding with his body toward the window. The door behind him flung as it swung wide open.

It all happened in a few seconds. Something—some mechanism—was at the window, reaching out the room's air; pulling Phil forward! Then it seemed that he saw a dark moving blur there. His flash flashed through the opening—spat! In blue-white bolt: evidently missed, for he heard a low started oath, and then a guttural laugh.

The thump of Phil's body against the window something all but knocked the breath from him. But the suction was gone now. He stood himself back into the room, with his wagen levelled, quivering again out into the darkness. Then he was aware that something had been thrown at him through the window. It seemed to be a tiny globe. It exploded itself; shattered like thin, splintering glass. Something went up down his face. He dashed it away with his mustache; and then, with a leap, sprayed out the room-light and crashed behind a chair, with the flashgun up on its seat, again leveled at the empty window.

They'd have a pretty hard time getting in here at him. If they tried a rush, he'd kill as many as he could. . . . His public-wear sunglasses was here on the table; cautiously he reached for it . . . The wet stuff on his face was pungent with an acid smell. Was that what was making his head matt? . . .

Phil's grasping hand never reached his
CHAPTER SEVEN

Lost in the Copper Desert

PHILL came to himself with the feeling that a long time must have slipped by. He felt that he was still lying on something soft; and that his body was bathed in cool sweat. But he sensed no injury; and as he opened his eye he could feel his strength readily coming back to him. His main walls were firmly visible—walls of a narrow little cubby hole. It closed with a weird shun and thrashed with a low rhythmic drumbeat him...

"Oh Phil—spoke to me..." It was a familiar, anxious voice. Then he realized that Alex was here beside him, leaning anxious over him.

His older brother Alex, the himself was a prisoner him in the small space-cylinder, set on its way now to Mercury... Phil, still dazed by the drug which only now after many hours was wearing off, try listening to his brother—try to understand these weird things...

Alex and Anivia had been captured by Raalgo and his band of criminals, that night in the crimson storm when the flying platform had fallen. And now Raalgo had come to Earth in the small little ship which Anivia's grandfather, old Pohor, had built.

"They brought Anivia and sat with them," Alex was saying. His voice turned quiet. "'They've threatened her with torture—to make me tell what I know of Earth. Where weapons could be found—and about you—your formula XX-22. Did they get it, Phil?'"

"No, I guess not," Phil murmured. "I had it locked in my desk in the lab. I don't know— that damn drug-bomb knocked me out..." He glanced at Alex. "I heard a strange noise about that message from you..."

Alex's handsome, rugged face bore a faint evil smile. "I stuck my finger—under the lid. Just a chance that it wouldn't get to you..."

In the darkness of the cubby, for a time Phil lay quiet, trying to understand what Alex was telling him of Mercury, of the Raalgo who was planning an invasion of the Light Country, and to its capital, the EEl City, and Raalgo had the weapons now that he needed.

"Did you hear what was taken?" Alex was asking. "They kept me confined here on the ship—after they'd forced me to tell them where to land..."
"A thousand or so of the Erenette short-range hand-guns," Phil said. "And at the Madyan plan—I guess only five of the big projectors."

"And fly-traps, probably," Alan muttered. He seemed shuddering. "Phil, good Lord, if you could realize what weapons like that will do to the little Hill Crit—without much more than flying gibs—maybe a thousand of them—to protect it."

Phil had no answer. He was still weak and dazed; his head was reeling. But every moment now he could feel his senses clearing and his strength coming back. The rhythmic distant boom was a faint thrum... It seemed to pull him, as though it would pull him back to sleep. He raised himself, shook off his lethargy and sat up beside Alan.

"Where are we?" he demanded.

"On the way back to Mercury."

"For me?"

"Well beyond the Earth's atmosphere," Alan said. "You were—"

He checked himself. Phil heard a door-snap open; a shaft of blue pulsing light came in from what seemed a small visited corridor; and a dark figure was there. It was a woman. Phil searched blindly as she came forward with a tray of food and drink for Alan in her hands.

"Oh—thanks yes, Zara," Alan said.

"He—that your brother?" she murmured in soft, broken English, "He—better now?"

"Yes, thanks, he's all right."

"I left to Rahgg."

She put down her tray and then she bypassed, standing at Phil and then at Alan. The corridor light disclosed her now to be young, a girl hardly more than twenty perhaps. A strange, harumscarum young girl. She was lean, no more than five feet tall, clad in a blue smock-like red robe. The skin of her hands, neck and face gleamed in the pulsing lights—bronzeflesh, glittering like burnished copper. Her face, flexuous, with a wide mouth firmly smiling now, was quizzically sensuous.

One could have imagined that among her own savage people she was beautiful, exotic. She had no wings. The copper disk of her bare back was smooth as burnished metal. On her head, her small black hair was piled high, with glittering baubles for ornaments stuck in it; she was a savage woman of the Dark Country people. Phil realized it by what Alan already had told him. Barleys dangling from her wrists and loins, they twinkled as she moved. Then she lowered, with hands on her hips, her dark eyes staring at Alan with a smouldering glance.

"Your brother, not so big—like you," she murmured.

"No—that's right, Zara," Alan said.

He spoke to her as though she were a child. "You tell Rahgg my brother is all right now."

"Yes. But still she improved. "You like—food there? It good?"

"Oh yes. Thanks, Zara."

She turned; the door-snap clicked closed and locked after her.

"Well, I'll be damned," Phil murmured. "She likes the look of you, doesn't she? What's the idea?"

Alan laughed; but it was a grim laugh.

" Seems to have taken a fancy to me. Because I'm so big, she says. She's been waiting on me ever since we left Mercury."

"You taught her English in that little time?"

"She knew none of it—learned it from Rahgg. She's been his serving maid.
keep your mouth shut about it. Not a word, where there would be any chance
so? be overheard."
"All right.
They finished the meal. Then Kontopo sounded. The slide opened again.
"Oh, you Talonis," Alan greeted.
"What do you want?"
Phil stared as the handsome Light Country villager came into the cabin and
stood gazing down at them. Talonis’s dark cloak was slung over one of his shoulders
with his accoutrements arranged; grey, seashell-face, here a faint leering smile.
"The Master wants to see your broth-
er," he said. "You come with me,"
The key cask was in the center of the
cylinder. Silently Phil followed Alan and
Taloni to the small mural-sealed curt-
tain. And Phil had his first sight of Aeria
—strange little flying sleigh of the Light
Country. She was on her feet near the
turret doorway—ethereal little creature
in brief, pale-blue drape; with her silver
hair braided, falling forward over her
shoulders. And behind her, the folded
blue-tafted wings swivelled down with
their soft tips almost brushing the floor.
"You are Phil?" she murmured.
Mindy Phil reddened; and then as Tal-
oni shuved at him, he stumbled past her
into the Palli turreted where Rahgg
stood at the bench by the ship’s controls.
THE MASTER: . . . Murderous criminal; planning now the conquest of his little
world! . . . He stood up to face his newest
captive. He was a six foot burly fellow,
well-above-kneek, powerful, clad in cop-
pory gleaming garments of spun and
wov-
ened metal—death-like mask and short
trousers out of which his legs came like
great, graypally pillars of hairy enough.
Phil for that moment stood rammed, flabbergasted. There was a radiance of pow-
er about this fellow Rahgg. The aura of
genius—murderous, prevented genius, with doubt. A shivering coppery cloth
hung from his shoulders down his back.
He flung it around him as he stood up.
His heavy, grey, smooth and hairless face
was wreathing in the power of its ugliness
—a wide, ferocious, accented by a half
waltz head of close-clipped black hair; nose,
high-bridged, wide nostrils; and a quartly pointed chin. The mouth, smiling
faintly now, was cruel, this lips. His
eyes, deep-set under heavy black brows,
stared at Phil with an ironic gleam.
"So?" he murmured with a slow, gen-
eral drawl. "You are recovered now?
Your name—Philip Grant?"
"Yes," Phil murmured.
"I am Rahgg—the Master. Has your
brother told you that you must cause no
trouble?" He swung and gaped in Alan
and his smile broadened. "Young Alan
and I have never had trouble. But that is
over now. His directions were good—we
get what we wanted."
He stared at Phil through another il-
lozenge. "And now what?" Phil demanded
shrewly.
Rahgg’s gesture—his powerful grey
hand busy with ornaments—was depre-
cating. "You are young. Honestly—al-
ready you should know not to question
the Master." His fingers were twirling
with his left. Phil saw a strange-looking little
disengaged device hanging there; and a
thin copper blade with frayed tip like an
arrow. And already Rahgg had hung
there one of his stolen Red-glass.
"There was a formica we could not
find," Rahgg said shamefully. "I will not
need it for this conquest of the little Hill
City. But here—you have it in your retin,
young Grant? You will be able to help
me when the time comes that we on Mercury
we build more of your Earth weapons?"
Phil hesitated. Inside him he heard
Alan murmuring, "Of course—"
"Era," Phil said. "You won’t have any
trouble with me."
"That is good." Then Ralgy’s dark ironic gaze swept to Aertia. "Come here by me, little Aertia," he added. "You and I—we must plan the ruling of the Light Country—there are many things I have not yet talked with you. I have the weapons now. Our invasion will be ready very quickly."

He was ignoring Phil and Alan as he sat Aertia beside him on the control board. It was as though he were amusing himself with these captives—playing with them. "I am worried over the flying wheels of the Hill City," he was saying. His ironic smile broadened. "They seem to be fighters—you remember those ships which carried the little flying phantoms, they were all killed. I did not like that. My men are too interested in your thousand young girls to have them killed now in the great battle I am planning. They must live."

"They will fight," Aertia murmured.

"Yes, I know they will. I was wondering—perhaps if we reach Myroovy I would not loose, you would fly and tell them not to fight?"

"Yes—you turn me loose," Aertia agreed.

It made him laugh. "He! You see! I know how to please my little Aertia. Like a bird she would fly away from me if I gave her the chance. But I won’t. I like you too well, Aertia. For ever since I worked for your grandfather and you were only a child there—always was I dreaming of this coming day." His voice was low, intense now. To Phil the gleam in his eyes was like a scorching madness. But he was only mad with his dreams of conquest—and with his lust for power.

"Ralgy, the Master," he was saying softly. "Ralgy—Emperor of Myroovy. And then—perhaps Master of the great Earth—of all the Universe—who knows? And yes, my little Aertia—you would like to share that with me?"

His arm went around her. Across the pulsed turmoil Phil suddenly saw young Talor, minding racing at Aertia. And then staring at his Master Ralgy—staring with a slow secretive smile. A smile of treachery!...

"The days passed. Days? To Phil they were a succession of spells, seemingly endless intervals of living-slumber, here in the tiny cubicle of the space-cylinder as it ploughed so silently forward through the great black, star-streaked abyss. He and Alan spent much of their time in the cavity near the stem of the cylinder. Zan brought their meals. She was an attractive, copper-skinned little savage—with voluptuous curves and welcoming eyes, always the ingred, guiding at Alan, talking to him in her quiet broken English.

Greedily Phil found that he and Alan more and more were permitted to move
about the slip. Apparently, sometimes, almost free to do what they liked. But above it soared, out of Ralgy’s sight—alone, grey-shadowed, Light Country crimson ship near there... Alan was planning something with Zara. Phil was aware of it..."

"The small space-cylinder plunged on, heading for the Sun, crossing the orbit of Venus and then at last approaching Mercury. It was a tiny world of stuff, those empty hours—this cylinder plunging with immense velocity on its trajectory through Interplanetary Space. With what truth one can say that whenever nonsense exists, something awful will be with them! Often Phil pondered it—the sly little group of humans captured up here, Ralgy with his dreams of conquest... Alan and Zara, each with their own secret plots out of which violence could come."

"Then at last, with what to them was night of their living routine, the space-cylinder was through the atmosphere of Mercury; it dropped down through weird banks of gathering storm-clouds, held with cuminum and yellow shower; and through the hollows of their dark valley, Phil had his first view of the naked copper plains of the little planet. All he could see was a procession, numbly, disembodied, of copper rods, wet with rain, glittering with a sudden crimson sheen as though they had been drowned with blood."

"If you are at all, "It looks sorry of everything. Are we near the Hill City?"

"Yes, I think so. Auris told me it would be an hour now; perhaps less when we pass on our way. We'll be heading for the Dark Country." He lowered his voice until it was barely a whisper. "I think no one can hear us. I've got everything ready."

PHIL knew now what Alan so carefully had been planning with Zara. "With the little savage girl in view that he was not seen, he had been able to feed most of the small Erenumin band-scrapers upon an emergency glider which was stored in a hull pressure port."

"You think we can make it without getting caught?" Phil tensely whispered. "Now that the time had come he found his heart racing. If they get caught, it would be death."

"Yes. And there’s a storm gathering. We ought to try it in half an hour now. In the storm they won’t see us dropping down."

Then Alan whispered the full details. Zara thought that only Auris would escape in the little winged glider. Zara was glad to be rid of the Light Country girl—foolish of her with a smudged polka-dot which sometimes had made Alan shoulder innocently for Auris’s safety later."

"You get down into the port. Phil."

"Alex was whispering. "I’ll watch my chance and bring Auris down there. Zara will be preparing a meal for Ralgy. She thinks she’s going to help me get Auris away a little later."

"Talons would be in the turn with Ralgy. Most of the other men would be forward—a dining cabin there where Zara was storing them food. It seemed a good opportunity now."

"I’ll go up to the turn, " Alex whispered. " and get Auris."

Tensely, Phil nodded. "You’ll find me in the port. Make it soon, Alex. And—watch yourself. We won’t live long if Ralgy gets onto us."

"Alan opened the door, and closed it after him. For a few minutes Phil sat waiting in the dark silence. The distant rhythm of the cylinder’s mechanisms seemed to blend with the lumping of his heart. Then he decided that he had waited long enough. Carefully he drew the slip. The small vaulted corridor was empty. He moved like a shadow back along the corridor where it narrowed.
into the flared peak of the stern. The rocket-kill mechanisms were thrumming and blaring here. Phil went down a short ladder into the pressure port which was a downward hole in the stern-hull.

The little glider was here by the closed outer pressure emergency door slide. The glider was a real fast clacking affair, with its wings folded now. Phil was skidding in the operation of somewhat similar gliders of Earth. He corrected the controls here; they looked simple enough. In the hooded central cockpit the Etehna-lookout flash-weapon were gilded, bolted down and with a square of fabric over them.

Then at the inner doorway of the dark pressure chamber, Phil cracked and waited. Why didn’t Alsat and Aerita come? . . . The minutes passed. There was nothing but the hum and buzz of the rocket-stream mechanism . . . Had something gone wrong with Alsat?

Abruptly Phil heard a faint footsteps, and a dark shadow rose up before him. It was Alsat.

“All right, Phil,” he whispered. “So far so good.”

“Where’s Aerita?”

“Closing. Robbing called her back into the tunnel. She’ll get away in a minute, and then—”

His whisper died. He gripped Phil as they stood there in the darkness of the little pressure-chamber. A low murmur of voices sounded from up the small fissure.

“Takes—” It was Aerita’s voice! Her sharp cry of protest, with words in her own tongue. And then Phil heard Fal- son’s voice, and the sound of his and Aerita in a scuffle.

A LAN trended, with a low muttered oath. He started for the innis, but Phil gripped him. “Well—ill go with you—we can catch that fellow Takes up there—kill him—”

Could that be done without an alarm that would bring half a dozen of the men down here?

“Listen,” Alsat was softly murmuring, “we’re heading for the Dark Country now. Too late to glide for the Hill City, if we don’t get across. You go, Phil—you can make it—remember what Aerita told you at the landmarks?” Phil felt Alsat shivering at his back. Then Alsat, in the little space at the foot of the steps, was closing the pressure-chamber door slide . . . Aerita had screamed, up the innis where quite evidently Taker was forcing his enemies on her. There were other, more distant voices up there now—men of the crew coming to investigate.

“You go,” Alsat was insisting, with swift reverence. “I’ll stay with her. Give the weapons to old Flater. Tell him—when the tension comes—to do the best he can. . . .”

The steps lunched between them; Alsat was gone. In the darkness of the emergency escape room, Phil opened the outer slide. In a moment he had the glider wings partly spread . . . The little glider hunched wildly up into the wind as Phil backed himself; spreading the wings full, throwing the weight of his body against the ladders until he had his sail craft steady. For a second or two he was engulfed in the luminous gases of the cyclone’s rocket stream. Then the space-ship glistened on. And like a bird with restless wings, Phil soared downward and outward until in a few moments more the ship was gone; just the streams of its sails were merging with the luminous glow until they too, had vanished.

On the sweeping little glider Phil lay prone, manipulating its controls. There was a steady breeze, with which he knew he could glide his soaring craft for a very considerable distance. But which way should he go? He gazed down, awed by the bleak copper waste. They were still far down; six or eight thousand feet.
it seemed. Overhead, the crimson cloud masses were breaking as that little portion of starry sky were visible. The crimson aura apparently was not coming. But far off to the side, the yellow-red radiance that streamed up from the horizon seemed to place getting brighter. The Dark Country was off there, Alan had said him.

Which way was the Hill City? Like a pinhead, but led by gilded, flying lower now. There seemed nothing here that Affin had described—nothing here, but a barren, tumbled devastation of copper hills and black metal peaks . . . That yellow glass from the distant Dark Country must certainly was interesting. He could see a dark cloud rising from the horizon off there. A cloud! It looked more like a puff of upward-moving tepid smoke, than cloud-vapor. And suddenly on the breeze it seemed that there was a new smell to the air—arid, chemical smell like saltpeter. Was a fine storm coming?

Phil was really perturbed now. Surely he would have to leave the Hill City quickly. To be lost out here—trapped in a wild, horrible storm—would probably be the end of him.

Suddenly the distant darkness, away from the glassy gray glass, he thought that he could see little dots in the air. He headed for them and presently saw that they were tiny fluttering figures above a wild, tumbled rocky peak.

It was the mountain fortress of the rebellious flying virgins who had fled from the Hill City. Like great birds they cowered around Phil’s glider as he soared down into their rocky land.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Mount of the Nine Stars

"We CAN do it, Zara. And now is our time."
"Yes, Alon. Now—our time—so I be with you—forever always."

In a dim grove room of Ralagh’s encampment in the Dark Country, Alan sat with the little savage girl, Zara, planning with her how now his chance to escape had come.

Her dark eyes were unwavering, her breast heaving with her emotion as she gripped him, staring at him with fierce barbaric passion.

"I do this," she murmured, "I love you. Ralagh—kill you maybe—if you stay here."

"I wouldn’t wonder," Alan agreed. But there was no humor in his voice.

The Spacely-cylinder had landed at Ralagh’s stronghold, far up in the rugged black mountains of the Dark Country. It was a rough, wild region, of dark, foreboding desolation, with wide, black deep curtains of slant black walls and peaks rising like pointed needles—a ragged, tumbled land, raw and torn as though by some giant cataclysm of nature, ages gone by.

At the head of one of the broad, valley-like canyons, where the cliffs were honeycombed with tunnels, caves and grottos, Ralagh and his men had established their encampment, with one of the primitive, squaid little villages of the Dark Country savagery located nearby . . .

There had been a classic, tense time on the spaceship, just before it landed—when Ralagh had discovered that Phil had escaped, taking most of the smaller women with him. Ralagh’s fury then wasSANAC. He had lashed half a dozen of his men, but Alan had escaped his wrath. It had turned also on Takami—who had been found with Zuina in the ship’s cargo, with Alan promising him from Takami’s unconscious attention. Ralagh had seemed pleased.

"You do well to serve your Master’s interests," Ralagh had told Alan. "You would let no harm come to my little Arina—that is good." But there had been a sudden gleam in his dark eyes as he
had said it. And when continuously he ordered Tallos away from him where they were gathered in the central torva, he turned again to Alan. "You think you fool me?" he asked. "But you do not." Little lightnings were dancing from his dark eyes. "With you I will deal later?"

And now Alan, with Zora, now his chance to escape. The seven or grotto rooms here were half artificial—tusken walls of copper rock which were boarded in glass with pinning. This one, to which Alan had been assigned, had a wall of boards, dividing it from others like itself. It was crudely furnished; draped with dark fabrics; and dimly, eerily illuminated by a tumbler. On a low couch in its corner, now as hour or two after the cylinder had landed, Alan sat planning with the anonymous Zora. A
rill in the broken rock, exuding the slight odor of the deep brook canyon. A little patch of the black sky was visible—a growing red-yellow flare was up there. Suddenly a puff of wind came down, bringing an ominous sulphurous smell. Few stormy nights? Alan muttered to Zara, and she nodded, shuddering.

"Yes—maybe. We go inside now—five storm days ahead—"

THEIR plan was simple; Alan could only pray that it would succeed. Aarla, Alan knew, was in a little green-roofed, only thirty feet along a small tunnel passage. The exit to the green rooms was guarded now by Rahgg's men. Two of them were standing at a nearby corridor mouth, beyond which was the broad dark

floor of the canyon. It was Zara's plan to engage the guards' attention, distracting them so that Alan could slip past them. Then out among the rocks of the canyon floor he would wait until she had joined him.

"In the Hill City," the goblin whispered to her now, "I will make sure that they appreciate you, Zara. You're a good girl—you'll be rewarded for this—treated well always among the Light Country people." He meant it sincerely; but what he did not tell her, was that Aarla would escape with them. It was five miles from here to the Hill City. Once they were safely on their way, Aarla would fly ahead, and come back with the platform carried by flying goblins which would take them swiftly to the entrance of the canyon.

Zara's arms were pressing him against her. "In the Hill City—always I be with you?"

He nodded. "Yes. Go going now—get those goblins as far away from the entrance as you can!"

The goblin's hanging upon her copper-colored tresses and words muffled as she moved into the little exit passage, Alan set out. If only now Aarla was alone in that other part. He could get her in here, and in five of ten minutes they would be slipping past the guards... In the silence of the murderous night, sounds from outside were dimly audible. For an hour now the outer canyon had been a hub of activity. Rahgg's invasion of the Light Country was in swift preparation; the great projectors which had been brought from Earth were being assembled, mounted on huge wheeled carts. And an army of ancients was assembling... their gathering, gutural voices were faintly audible; and the voices of Rahgg's men... Within an hour or two the motley army would be streaming down the canyon...

The lightning Alan already traced, went cold. From the small interior tunnel passage between the grotto and Aarla's her voice, sharply muffled came floating. Someone was in there with her! But the terror that Alan, about now, would be coming for her, and she had expected to be alone. Rahgg had gone outside, busy with the assembling of his men and had left Zara to wait upon her.

Squeaky Alan crept into the small dark tunnel. A curtain draped to further end. In a moment he was crawling there, cautiously moving an edge of the dark drapery. Within the other little grotto, Aarla was sitting on a couch with Rahgg standing beside her. A few panned rings of vines was in his hand.

"Waaaw..." he pointed.

He answered with soft tritic words in his own language as he meekly placed her wings together. He was planning to take her with his exultation to the Hill City, no doubt, and did not want to chances her escaping from him.

Thus as he stood, Alan was suddenly unconscious by sight of one of the dark wall-drapes behind Rahgg. It hung apparently over a recess in the rocky wall
—and now it was moving silently aside. Talor was standing there, wrapped in his dark cloak! The beaming light gleamed on his corseted, leering eyes, his eyes, apparently more with murderous fury as silently he drifted forward. And the light gleamed on the naked copper blade in his hand, as he raised it to stab Ralgp.

For that second the crushing Alain bellowed sternly. Then Talor must have made some slight sound, Ralgp whipped, saw the blade glinting at his back. His voice like an indrawn snarl, rose with a roar as he streaked at Talor's side. The knife clattered away; and then the hefty Ralgp was upon Talor with a blow that knocked him backward. It was a swift, variant contact, gritty with its sheer brutality. Before Talor could recover his balance, Ralgp had leaped away and drawn his long bronze sword; but he did not stroke. Instead, he slashed with the blunt edge of the sword, with a skilful blow that struck Talor on the cheek. He roared on his feet, tried to gather himself for a jump. But the sword swirled through the air again, cutting Talor's other cheek; and then the side of his breast; and his forehead. They were swirling, slashing blows as though the flexible sword were a whip...

"No—no—!" Amara screamed.

Talor had crumpled to his knees now. His face was swelling with bruises and purplish red with eviscerating. His eyes were closing, and blinded by blood. And still Ralgp slashed, silent with his grim fury. Talor fell, but with a thick powerful hand Ralgp lifted him up, pounding his face now with the sword-hilt. Through an interior doorway now had come running; but Ralgp scattered them, and swiftly they followed him as he carried Talor out, with the sound of the blows still reverberating... .

In the gloom momentarily Amara was aloft, crooning on the floor, her face covered by her hands. It was Alin's chance. He dashed in, "Aerim dessa—our chances now—come on—"

He did not stop to watch her wings. With his arms around her, they hurried back through the other pass, now cut through the other hundred feet long chasm. The sounds of Ralgp and Talor eventually had moved out here. The exit mouth was empty. Crouching there with Aerim for a moment, Alin could see the dark figure of the two guards, fifty feet or so away. Then was between them; one of them was enfurrowing her. They were too occupied to notice the dark silent figure of Aerim and Alin slipping past them...

"Far enough," Alin whispered presently. "We'll wait here for Zara. I promised her—and if we left her now, Ralgp would punish her for our escape."

They crouched in the dark shadows of a rock cranny. The honey-colored cliff which was the end of the canyon was here close beside them. Five hundred feet away the rocky canyon was dotted with lights and groups of moving figures—Ralgp's men and the assembling savages. Every moment as they waited, Alin feared that their escape would be discovered. Then at last an approaching dark figure was visible—Zara coming to join them. Softly Alay called to her.

"Hers, Zara—"

She came with a little cry of triumph. "So good! Now we go—! I shall see you there; this tunnel here to another valley—"

And then the new Aerim. The storm-clouds overhead were yellow-red, with little dots of flame leaping through them—something gawd carried by an abnor-
mal wind from the Finn Country, hurrying now into tempest of flare. The light gleamed on Zara's bronze face. Her jaw dropped with her amazement. Then dis-
illusionment, rage, jealousy convicted her features. And suddenly the spring at Aerim.
"You?" she gasped. "So—you try take him from me?"

Alan raised her. "Don’t be silly, Zara. We’re going to the Hill City. Come on now—"

The scuffle, and Zara’s raised voice, faded out over the noise. From overhead, there was a shout. Standing up, Alan had a brief glimpse of figures up there on the canyon rim—men going down. Then something came whistling down, clattering on the rocks within a few feet of Zara and Arleta. It was a flat-tipped knife-blade. And then another came hurling. Zara gave a low moan; staggered and fell. The blade quivered in her breast, where a red stain was spreading.

"Oh, Zara—Zara dear—" Arleta gasped. She bent down. Zara’s little hand was trying to push her away, clenching for Alan.

"You—my men—so big and strong—" Zara faintly gasped.

Alan bent to her. "Oh, Zara—I’m so sorry—"

"No—can’t now—men coming—"

A parachute shook her; then she stiffened with a gasping breath as the light went out of her eyes and she was gone. Alan jumped to his feet. Another flying blade came hurling down. He gripped Arleta’s hand as together they plunged into the nearest tunnel opening, reeling in the darkness.

"Will this lead us to that other valley, Arleta?"

"Yes, I think so."

There seemed no pursuit. In the darkness Alan staggered, doubled until he had cast the ropes loose from Arleta’s wings. Ahead of them a yellowish sheet showed, where the tunnel emerged; and in a moment more they were out. It was a scene of wild desolation here—a spread of dark rocks and little ravines with masses of black naked cliffs rising in tiers, with the great metal mountains of the Dark Country behind them.

A DESCENDING narrow valley seemed to lead down into open country in the other direction. Its rocky floor was piled with strown boulders and crags. The light from the flaming clouds painted them with its host glass and cast monstrous lacy shadows in the hollow. Climbing together, Alan and Arleta stumbled forward. They could feel the storm-wind now—shifting puffs, aimed with the smell of saltwater. And suddenly from a whistling black cloud these overhead, a tongue of flame leaped down like a living thing trying to seize them. It lasted just a second, and then the sizzled away as it burned out and it was gone.

"Arleta—don’t you fly ahead?"

"And leave you here? No—"

He tried to shove her away from him, but she clung. "Arleta—don’t be silly. These storms don’t last long, you said. I’ll be all right. When it’s over you can come back with some of the girls and a platform to carry me—"

He checked himself suddenly. Close ahead of them, two dark figures suddenly rose up. Alan knew Arleta behind him; turned himself for a leap. "Alan! One of the figures suddenly called it. "You—Alan?"

It was Phil’s voice. And over him, in the girl’s opera, had been Phil’s opera had been Arleta called it. "You escaped?" Arleta gasped. "We were hoping to help you—"

Then Phil was here, eagerly gripping Alan. "Good enough, Alan! Arleta wanted to have me, but I came—"

Phil had landed with his weapons to the girl’s opera; and told Arleta what had happened on the space-cylinder. "We’ve got a platform near here."

Phil was saying, "Only about a mile down the ravine. A dams flying girls—she told them to wait there. Come over—"
"I will fly and bring them," Arista interjected. "This storm—perhaps we had better stay underground until—"

Her words ended with a gasp as she sucked in her breath. All four of them, staring in horror, stood staring. Close ahead of them, down the dark narrow mine, a blight of yellow light had appeared on the ground. It was a weird flying thing! It seemed so large as it came from a smoking hole in the ground—expanding until it was a ten foot rounded blob.

"A fire monster!" Arista gasped. They could see now that it was a weird, pulsating blob of living pains. Tongues of yellow-red light-disk radiates strained from it like an arm. Master of the Fire Country, it was wobbling here as it followed the sulphurous wind—a huge, headless, pulsating thing; but it had a cluster of wriggling legs supporting it; and a belt of eyes at its middle. The eyes were the glowing fire-dots.

Then it saw the four human figures. Its voice bellowed like water pouring on hot coals; its eyes brightened with triumph as it came lunging forward.

CHAPTER NINE

The Battle in the Copper Desert

This weird glowing monster was as intent on no more than fifteen feet from them. Arisai slung at his companion. "Can't fight it—scatter—get out of here!" He shouted at the girls. "You fly—!"

With curving wings they turned verti- 

ally up: Phil made a leap; his body, here with the slight gravity of Marurr, tilted in an arc directly over the quiver-

ing, coughing monster. Arisai, delayed by urging the girls, had no time to jump; and all in that second, with a weird lunging posture, the monstrous jelly-like, free-

thing was upon him.

Arisai had tried to leap sideways; but from the monster a great writhing tend-

acle-armed like a tongue of red-yellow flame licked out and wrapped itself around him. It was jelly-like, hissing oozes, hot and sticky; fiery, ghostly stuff, luminous with a radiant glow. It closed around Arisai, engulfing him. And then the thing's quivering luminous body engulfed him. He fought to keep his head. With flailing arms and legs be wriggled the fiery, wind-ease apart. The heat of it burned his flesh. It blazed on the air as he flung guts of it away... He knew he wasn't half. That would be the end...

...The damnable thing, as he broke it apart, like visious but rather fused to-

gather, burning its wounds. In horror, his voice was gibbering now; the cluster of its eyes, deep in its glowing middle, was like a mass of shining red-white coals.

A skip of the sticky stuff hit his face.

He wiped it away. Then he was aware that Phil had come back with another leap: Phil frantically pulling at him. And now the two girls were flapping in the air close over the monster, reaching down, pouncing at it.

"You keep away!" Arisai shouted.

"Keep back!"

The glowing mass of the damnable thing, as Phil and he tore at it, occasionally burst into flames—combustible gases within it, released as it wriggled, igniting with the oxygen of the air. Phil felt his clothes burning. He beat at them with stalk hands.

At last Phil tore him loose. Together they staggered away, as the monster, dis-

tracted by the flailing girls, was borne-

ning heavily into the air, trying to reach them. Buffeted, suddenly it was keeling off along the rocks, until in a moment it plunged into a hole, crunching yells with the yellow-red light-glare from it streaming on into the darkness.

Arisai and Phil, with Arista and Arista, bashing them, plunged on down the ravine. Then Arista fell ahead; and presently...
through the hard, yellow-red storm-mark, the platform marked by twelve of the girls came flitting. Alain and Phil climbed on it; flying room as the girls gripped its handles and with rhythmic beating wings strokes lifted it into the air.

Heading for the mountain's cycle of the reddening shadows of the Hill City, the platform sailed swiftly forward through the murky glare of the gathering fire clouds.

"It is reaching its worst now," Anila murmured. "In a little while it will be past."

With Alain she crouched in the shelter of a rock cliff on the mountain top of the girl's cycle. Anilis and Phil were nearby, and among the cogs and small gear created groups of girls were huddled. The wind's force storm seemed now to have reached its height.

It was a wild, eerie scene.

Great whirling cloud masses were circling overhead—wary black vapors with little tongues of red-yellow flame leaping through it. The wind was circular now, a low alternate burst heavy with chugging-gas fumes. Occasionally the circling cloud seemed exploding—rent as though by yellow-red lightning with a thunderclap as some pocket of pure-up gas was ignited.

It was a demonic catharsis of nature. The flame-lightning split through the clouds as if the wind rebelled against the great masses of acid smoke, hurled skyward in massive columns, then clumping together and reaping down again. Sometimes the huge tongues of flame licked toward the ground, swirling for a second or two as they landed the copper desert and then puffed into muteness.

It lasted half an hour. Then Alain could see that the storm center was past; over the black, rusted peaks of the distant Dark Country mountains, the flying, weaving turned seemed now at its worst. And then the rain came—shattering sheets on the flying wind; rain that bled out of the overcast marks, settling like water on a fire. The glare now rapidly was falling from the clouds; darkness again was falling upon the naked tortured wails of the copper plains.

"It is over," Anila murmured. "Now our girls can start."

The little hand projectiles of the Erminine Bats, which Paul had taken from the space-ship, had been distributed among the flying girls. It was thought that Raleigh's expedition must already have started from his Dark Country Hill. Traveling on foot, they might still be in the deserted canyon-valley.

"The storm must have stopped them," Anila was saying. "But they will be starting again. We must hurry, Alain."

The flying girls were fluttering with excitement among the trunks of the little mountain-tops, with Anilis among them, making sure that each had her weapon; organizing them, with directions of what they should try to do. Their jollifying, excited little voices mingled with the flapping of their great wings. It was a weird little army, preparing now for battle.

About a thousand of them were here.

"We leave," Alain protested, as he had several times before. "You can't let war girls do this—so many of them will be killed—you know it—"

Anila's face was grim, solemn, but her eyes flashed. "It is our only chance. And that you know—"

He did indeed. Earlier in the night, girls had flown with the next to the Hill City. An army of young men was organizing them, making ready to refresh out and meet Raleigh's men and his herd of scavengers to meet them out on the copper desert, try and turn them back before they could put within range and devastate the Hill City. But men on foot, armed only with shot-projectors of thirty feet range—when chance would they have
against these giant machines Rakgg was belonging? Rakgg had five huge projectors of the Mackay high-voltage flash which would bring death at three hundred feet or more. The young men would be shot down.

"We girls, from the air, will have a better chance," Avita was saying. "You must see it, Alan. And think too—we have been in rebellion against these young men, so that by law our wings may not be cut. But now all our hearts are free. They will be our husbands, when this terrible time is over. How can we let them now go out, to be killed in a battle where they have no chance?"

Alan and Phil who were now joined them, had to yield. They could see it was hopeless to dissuade these excited, crusading girls. And there was, indeed, no argument against Avita’s logic.

THEN presently the girls were ready: each of them held in the thirty foot Mrincine Sac; and with little slingshots and forced copper knife-arrows. In small groups they began running upward, wheeling, like birds gathering in coys. They were amusing, fantastically beautiful with pink-white limbs, flamelike dresses and hair; and the giant blue and white feathered wings flapping as they passed, with excited little voices calling down to their comrades in joy.

Alan and Phil, silent and grim, finally took their posts on the oblong platform, with little girls gripping their handles as with folded wings they flung it into the air. Avita and Anna were flying first, with the girls in small groups strung out behind them. Like a great migration of flying birds swiftly they winged forward to the battle.

"You and Anna—stay close by us," Alan called to Avita who was flying nearest. "What we say to do—you can tell the girls."

"Yes. All right. But in his heart Alan knew that these reckless girls would quickly be beyond command. As an alti

tude of five hundred feet, gliding down as he lay prone on the platform floor. Alan could see the glittering copper spread of death. This entrance to the broad valley lay ahead. And now it was, in the dark hall light the winding passage of the enemy was visible—hilt feet of Rakgg down there—Rakgg’s three hundred men, on foot, and gathered around them, an unorganized horde of two thousand or more of the Third Country image. They saw the coming girls. There was a strange silence over them—the men in front crouching; then in the rear pressing forward. Within a minute they seemed to be converging—a rolling, snarling, suddenly startled by this enemy in the air above them.

At the center of the throng Alan could see nearly a dozen huge wheeled carts. Then as the platform dropped lower, he was able to make out that the cars each carried one of the giant Mackay projectors, raised a few feet above it in a metal chassis. The other cars doubled were loaded with bombs and miscellaneous equipment.

At five hundred feet, Alan shouted, "Keep away for a moment; and when you attack, head for the cars. No closer than twenty feet—ten—and then come up."

Avita and Anna, flying overhead, called back agreement. In the dull, yellow night-air, Alan had a glimpse of their silhouetted figures. Then from below, a sudden boil stirred up—a little violent pulsating of electric voltage. For a second of duration it spread and then died. "Three hundred feet range is right," Phil muttered.

It fell short of the harem girls, so that they joined with a wrasseing dance. A little girl’s face almost was white. Alan as he saw that tentative burst from the enemy. This was the Mackay project—narrow beam hardly more than a
few inches in breadth. It would not be
easy to unlike a humming, swiftly moving
girl with it and hold it upon her for that
second or two. At least they had a chance.
"There they go!" Phil suddenly excla-
minted. "Start us down, Alan?"

At Alan's command his leading
girl, the platform swerved to a long
curving downward spiral. To Alan, lying
prone beside his brother, weapon in hand,
it was a chain of shifting, flitting figures
and creamy swaying vision of the dimly
coppery dusk and the sky and the girls were
flitting even more swiftly. In little flit-
tering groups they passed close over the
curtains, fired their flinty hot bolts and
mounted again into the air.
To Alan it was a moment of wild
chaos. Flames were blinding up from the
earth as the girls swept down. Alan caught
his breath with a rush of horror as he
saw the first girl struck—swerving blue-robbed little creatures with the penel-
ye of the giant flash striking her back.
For an instant she flinched with one of
her great wings arched away, then her
little body flipped, turning end over end
until like a wounded bird she crumpled into
the huddle of searing—flying noisily figures
regarding her like vultures.
The platform in another few
seconds was sailing close above one of the
curtains. Alan and Phil fired their little bolts down
over the platform edge. A hit! One of
Rughly's crazed men, manipulating the
shooting, fell upon it. An uprooted
spindly stafforous bird struck a corner of the
platform, tackling it away. Bemused.
And then they were past, and soon, with one of the
forward girls hanging upon the handle,
hurled rocketed safety where the flash had
struck her.
Alan reached for her. "You came up
and fire her with us!"
She was one who spoke a little English.
"No," she gasped. "Still can by."
Arms was paused, and took her shot
at the handle. And in a moment she had
prevented the wounded girl to leave.
Gratefully Alan turned as the girl wavered
through the turpulent darkness, winging for
the Hill City.
Again at some dozen hundred feet of
altitude, the platform lowered, the girls circling around it. But there was so many
less of them now! Some were dropping away
in struggling groups toward the Hill City
and others were slowly flitting to
the ground where still others were seen.
"But we gained something," Phil was
muttering. There were dead figures of
men strewn down them, and one of the
curtains was arched in font. Then suddenly
its projector exploded—a puff of flame
and resounding report, with flying frag-
ments of wood, metal and human bodies.
It started a little panic among Rughly's
crazed warriors; that motion of them,
burst back by the explosion, unwholesome
ash was shortly falling and then snuf
off into the darkness.
Plume-bearers were leaping now from
other parts of the curtains—blazing fangs of elec-
tronic light that came up and burst with a
vivid orange gleam. One of them struck
a wheeling girl at the edge of the forma-
tion. As it burst there was just a horrible
little clarence thunk, and then nothingness,
where the girl had been.
Then again the girls swept up, the
platform among them. It was a con-
tained attack this time, such girl for her-
self so that now the glaring scene was a
wild, fantastic dance. "Ten minutes! Half
an hour?" Alan and Phil, crumpled there
on the swaying little platform as it
swayed, towered, and roared again
and again, lost all track of time. They
were aware only of the horrified chaos of
flying lights, spilling, blinding flashes,
with revoler bodies on the ground; wildly
milling, brightest orange trying to escape and
fluttering, framed girls.
Alan saw presently that Phil beside
him, was wounded—Phil, with his left arm gone at the elbow, and in his right hand his last little projector was empty of its charge. His face was pallid, strained. He shook back, groaned.

"Can't—keep at it. Alan," he gasped.

"But we're getting there?"

"Yes. We're getting there."

Down through the glar on the upper ground, fires were flaring. All but one of the huge projectors had exploded now, or were out of action. Only one was left, so that now the girls were attacking more feebly. And the dark heaps of wrangles and some of Rulga's vanishing men were scattering its roar, with the girl flitting singly after them—stabbing at them with the little bolts, or dashing upon them to stab with their flying arrows until as swords.

"Just one projector left," Alan muttered.

"That looks the Rulga, standing there missing it. We're going down—\" Activia flattered past—still, unturn, thank God. Throughout it all, Alan had been in an agony of apprehension for her.

"You stay up here," he shouted. "Almost over. Activia."

Linda Ame was hanging on the handle, exhausted. Alan drew her up; put her beside Phil. There were only right girls left at the handles now; the platform wavered, then stilled and swooped.

In came Rulga, standing there on his last cart amid the burning wrangle of the stepped ground. He saw the platform com ing at it shored to fall close over his head. He was trying to twist his broken projector to train it on Alan. Then he gave it up, and shouted in try and rally his flaying men.

In a sweeping arc, the platform dived and straightened. From its forward end, for that breathless instant Alan stared down. His little flash-weapons was aimed. Then from no more than ten feet, he saw Rulga's face with the fire-glow lighting it. It was a grim, white, heavy face; and on it was stumped his disillusionment—this, the final wrecking of his mad dream of conquest ... disillusionment of a madman—\" ... with despair.

The staring Alan, for some reason which he could not have named, withheld his shot. The platform sailed past, rising again. And Alan turned, gazed behind him. Rulga was still standing there, clinging to his broken projector. For a second he swung onward, staring up at Alan; and on his face there was a defiant, ironic smile. Then he gripped the big projector, wrenched it loose from its raised chassis; and flinging it, toppled sidewise with it, down into the flames of an adjacent burning cart. There was a second of silence; then a puff of reddish glace and the roar of the explosion—flying dark fragments of the cart and the projector, and the body of the man who had thought to make himself the Great Master of Mercury ... .

High overhead, the philial remnants of the flying girls gathered with the platform in their minds. Far down, the copper desert was lighted by the dying yellow fire ... . Hundred, broken dead forms were waken everywhere ... . And then a heavy black pall of smoke was settling like a shroud to hide the state, tragic scene of death ... .

A LAN and Phil were married in the Hill City, in Activia and Arsy—a huge wedding at which two hundred or more of the girls were joined to the young men of their choice. There was no talk of the mutilation of the wings of the young wives.

No further connection with Earth was established—old Peter stood firm against that. But Alan and Phil secretly felt that they would like to go, of course. Perhaps, some day, they would go back ...
VENDETTA ON VENUS

By KERRY LASH

For twenty thousand years the Super-Egos of Venus had been stalemated—until a tiny-brained Earthman came along and was given a command secret even from himself!

TOM MATTHEWS, round faced veteran Cartographer of the Venusian Survey, lobbed his head forward on his neck and stared at the immense panel of the speeding Tritonsath plane. With the dancing red point of the altimeter as a focus, a little picture had formed on the panel. Little black Venus hopped around and around, prurient miniskirt tongues at Matthews.

The Cartographer stared in horror for a second, until sudden realization made
him curse softly. He had been partially hypnotized again.

Matthews spun around on the control seat and gazed at the grinding rocks attending the Cenax tetragonic recorder.

"Just a mind master, Cenax," growled Matthews. "None of your questionable Project Research Institute jobs. This job is important."

"Keep your mouth shut, Cenax," said young Alan Trevor with the informality of the Survey branch of the Space Service. "I'm just trying to illustrate a bunch."

"A bunch?" queried Matthews accusingly. The junior could not quite forget this new recruit who had set the entire personnel of Division No. 6 of the Survey in the colonial capital of Terra Nova, by the ears with his telepathic gibes.

"Yes, a bunch," replied Trevor. "This Cenax-Pedus mystery, you see, the phenomena that has been studied this Jeffing of mountains and valleys—cannot be due to atmospheric refraction. The Cenax plans would record genuine surges. As it is, we see the hills in this sector one way, the Cenax summer eyseen them differently."

"That doesn't come under the heading of science!" snarled Matthews, doing a look out of the gleaming rowing of the craft.

THERE was little Triplex ship was sliding out alongside the summit of a tremendous range. For Allen Terran miles the mountains, the Solars, stood out of the shining mouth of the Venuton sun below, to heap their shadow-filled blackness into a blazing mind. The great savior forever visible to the devious at the解决 place of the planet.

Matthews said: "Just what are you getting at, son?"

Trevor shrugged. By chance, during his apprenticeship on Earth, the young speciemen had gained a mastery of 24th-Century principles of astrological projection, a knowledge with which he had amused himself and his comrades. Matthews was definitely not the old world and would not at connecting a harmless trick of hypnosis with the Minicoa Pedus mystery.

"Still a bunch," said Trevor feebly.

"Oh some great intangible would force that plays about in the Minicoa Pedus region. It might be," he added, "but we never see the panorama the Cenax records because we are hypnotized into seeing something else." At Matthews' court of intangibility young Trevor became preoccupied in defense of his theory.

"Why can't it be? Why couldn't some great mental produce a range in our brains?"

He did not finish the list of argument. He was violently interrupted.

Matthew Trevor was Matthews actually saw the long quick shadow flash of great height that drove up from the front of the Solars below to strike the Triplex ship. But both were thrown with stunning force, when found jet rime, along the planet's power load, kicked back the nation alive.
grumbled a hard-set wall of the cliff, and settled.

The silence, then, after the long drawn screaming of tortured metal, seemed pain-
ful. On the cracking, buckled floor of the plain cabin Tom Matthews stirred and
curled, lifting his head to a bump the size of a goose egg on his forehead. Trevor,
who had jarred his face into the instrument board at the last shanty top, shook his
head to clear it, unstrung himself from the control seat. The radios kicked
open the forward door, tilted Mat-
thews and sent out.

Still somewhat mechanical in his
response, Trevor carried his chief down
the raster. Matthews kicked his legs. "What
the—" the Cartographer said, "What
went on?"

Trevor dropped the veteran steeply,
as he saw the situation. Trevor just
stood there, staring.

The rocky ravine was steep-sided, nar-
row, but opening up to the distance to a
strange vista—a talus piled on the
flanks of three peaks. On the land were
the ruins of a city. For the moment, how-
ever, Trevor noted few details of the fa-
vine. His gaze was focused on the Figure
that had appeared, not thirty feet from the
two Terrans.

"Hey!" groaned Matthews, getting up
to his knees. Then he saw the form ahead
and his jaw went slack. "Great balls of
Jordan fire!" whispered Matthews. "I've
never seen—"

"He does look like Buddha, at that,"
smiled young Trevor, his macho face,
his right hand shadowing toward the
deadly little fine beams at his back.

The Figure was huge, almost filling the
narrow gorge. A great bronze colored
dracon with inward turnings, an
appearance that created —nothing. In-
numerable arms were folded over the
huge torso, which was topped by head and
masses of proportionate size. The features
were blindly amusing, conveying a vast

self assurance and the large eyes were so
jet black that Trevor had a feeling of
vertigo looking into them.

The most distinguishing characteristic
of the Figure, however, was that Trevor
could see through it.

Matthews was on both knees now. "A
trick!" he whispered. "Our friend is a
phantom. Some projection spell—"

"Barlings—"your cocked thoughts
are idle. You deal with Great Hsh."

Matthews jumped to his feet. The
word had sounded little in his head but
the Cartographer's mind worked in fi-
"They're ribboning us!"

"Who are they?" asked Trevor, flicking
his gaze over the surroundings.

Above the right wall of the ravine was
nothing but a slipper that climbed and
climb. That vast mound of stone, on
which nothing moved, was curiously
scared as if a giant blow had played
over it and Trevor, in his swift appraisal,
had a sense of distortion. Facts grew
here and there, totally unlike the forms of
any world—with men, women, food, and
polished laws, glowing like colored glass
in the sun, like the husky creations of
some mighty mind!

To the left the rinsie wall shot out all
view but ahead, just the ghostly Great
Hsh and the weird multitude of a city, far
off over the mountains, did down,
could be seen the steaming ruins of the
jungle hovels.

Trevor said: "The growth around here
—n—strange—"

"This whole region is cockeyed,"
groaned Matthews, increasing uneasy.

"We should try landing Hsh, just to
get his reaction," suggested the younger
one. Scarcely were the words out
of Trevor's mouth when his arm jerked.
He drew the first beam point out of his
flats. And threw the weapon with great force,
over the left wall of the gorge.

"Are you crazy?" indignantly de-


VENDETTA ON VENUS 33

ranted Matthews. And immediately repeated Trevor's action.
Then the Cartographer really began to sweat.

TREVOR said: "What do you think of my lunch now? Hypnotism, super-
by-phonism—that's what we're up against. We both blindly obeyed a normally pro-
lific order..."
Matthews' reply was still somewhat panoramically skeptical, but his eyes were
waxing.
"Brrrthing..." said the weird voice in
their skulls, "I have one for you of you."
"What one?" asked Trevor.
"As a pawn," answered the voice of
Great Hob. "As my pawn in destroying the
Super-Ego, Hoburn.
Where is the Super-Ego?" asked
Trevor, his mind reeling.
"Hoburn sits facing me across the
Gorge of Meditations," replied the
apparition in the matter. "For twice ten
thousand of your Terman years has
Hoburn strived to beat me. Great Hob.
His hyper-intellect has gone from refra-
rent to refraiment of strange in mortal
combat. Now I will throttle him by simple
devices—the use of a Missal-Ego.
"What is all this?" growled Matthews.
"Stop—he's laughing you?"
"Hoburn does not know," chuckled the
fantastic voice in the heads of the two
Terrians. "That I have set my cerebro
shields to Stunt 4, Defensive and under
cover of electronic veiling, taken this
astral excursion down the mountains to
meet you..."
"A cruel Bulldog!" snarled Matthews.
"Talking of a feud twenty thousand years
old. Aural xenomimes. Gibberish!"
The Cartographer was nudity to hear
his own reasoning voice. Inwardly Mat-
thews was menaced and menaced away. He had
never even heard of any such creature as
the one before him and his physically
trained mind was baffled to account for
the situation. Matthews' thoughts began to
focus on a strong desire to get away
quickly.
"Let's leg it," he said.
"Suit us," agreed Trevor, pinning
"I don't like the look in our usual friend's
eyes. Ax?" he yelled.
Both started to sprint, back toward the
weirded flyer. And both, after the first
burst, began to tand this air!..."
"Hey!" yelled Matthews, pumping his
legs furiously. He was drifiting. Then the
motion dwindled. Matthews was left un-
perished in midair. Quickly turning his
head, the Cartographer saw Trevor driftin in
the opposite direction and hold, by some
enigmatic force directly before
Great Hob.
Trevor caused his futile endeavor ef-
forts, washed.
"You are an impudent one, Earthling," said Hob.
"Courage lies in your minute ego..."
"Be careful—he's up to no good," shouted Matthews.
"I will make a bargain with you, Earth-
ling," said Hob. "Your safety and your
transportation along with your small
brained companion back to Terrania, in
exchange for a simple act of villiion. You
are to walk, of your own will, to the site
of the City of Hob, and ascend the moun-
tains to the Gorge of Meditations. Of your
selves will, then, you are to approach the
Super-Ego, Hoburn."
Trevor knew he had toquire time to
think. Matthews was yelling to him to
make no bargain. But that Figure, the
projection of some weird creature wait-
ing somewhere beyond the ruined city,
possessed power enough tolettuce matter.
It was plain that Great Hob, whoever
and wherever he was, could kill them both
by an act of will alone.
"Trevor had no choice. "I agree," he
said. "Lead on, Great Hob, to Hoburn."
"Impotent, for a pawn," chuckled the
voice in his head. "Impotent."

GREAT HO! vanished—the immense,
coiled figure simply dropped out.
"Now!" yelled Matthews. "Is our
charge?" But both Terrars were still
grappled in the triumphant but powerless
levitational force—a force that closed them
around, lifted them, up to the right rim of
the rim. And then began a fantastic
progression.
Trevor, once on the gorge wall, found
all his muscles responsive again to his
own will. But Matthews was not set
down. The Cartographer’s legs remained
drawn up, his arms were forcibly folded
across his chest. Thus, his language very
pungent, Matthews flailed on nothing.
Trevor made a try to get back to his
companion. But immediately as he turned
the comprehension of Hob’s will was upon
him. He found, by experiment, that he
was free to move of his own volition only
in one direction—toward the northland to
the north, toward the pincers of the ruined
city under the three peaks.
"Trem," Trevor called over his shoulder;
"stop fighting this thing—now." But
Matthews still cursed as he slowly moved
forward.
"Your companion," said the ghost voice
of Hob, "will from this moment be an
audio-apparatus." And Trevor, feeling
slightly chill, looking over his shoulder, saw
all expression blank out of the Cartog-
rapher’s face.
Trevor stopped. "If harm comes to my
friend, Hob—he begins in all."
To his surprise it was Matthews who
spoke, in a strange mechanical inflection.
"Imponderable—your mind is still
seeking explanations—you were not pre-
spared to encounter any such creatures as
the Super-Signs. In Terrarita and On
Eartha the belief is general that the highest
forms of Venusian life are the swamp am-
lphibas and the creeping Reachers that live
on the moist prairie weeds of the tidal
mud of the planet. Your biologists," he
mechanical voice added, "have not come
upon the evidence of the one unique life
of Venusian evolutionary ascent."
"Trem," slowly walking, shifted his
gaze, from the scene ahead, back to the
transformed Matthews—he said. "The
Venusian tree of life has but one branch,
that climatized in this city, Hob?"
"The Super-Signs are the culmination,
Enacting!"
Set hand, Trevor moved nearer and
toward the ruins of Hobb. Matthews no
longer spoke, but Great HO! adopted an-
other means of communicating with his
pass. Trevor began to see visions, men-
tal visions superimposed upon the actual
smell scene.
He saw life ebbing away, in, the
lowlands of Equatoria. Out of the queen
of the swamp came curious chelaraks
and vertebrans, transforming through
the aquatics into a species of highland
birds. Then came a civilization of one region,
at one city, with a bizarre, grim climax.
With a mighty effort of will, Trevor
shook off the creeping visions. As the
Trevor turned, to feel the shell that was
Matthews, he could feel the heat of the
great yellow sun in the sky. His long re-
pressed feelings broke in the Rockies.
"Trem!" he yelled. "Trem!"
The Cartographer stopped, abruptly—
he was a struggling heap on the ground.
Trevor reached him in three quick leaps.
Around him was profound silence. Nod-
ing moored. "Trem!" stopped. Trevor.
"This—Hob—he knows the location
of Terrarita, he is familiar with conditions
On Earth. And—"
"He’s a mass killer," noted Matthews.
The Cartographer, still plainly shuddered,
looked around. "It was Hob and Hobbs
themselves who helped destroy the civiliza-
tion which produced them."
Matthews, too, had evidently seen the
creeping visions. Now the Cartographer
pointed. "Look!" he said in a swift, low
whisper.
Trevor, turning, focusing his gaze, saw them—the Two. Beyond the raised city, in the north, they the tables had fallen away and between its walls and the moun-
tain cliffs was a yawing gap filled with bluish fog. Over this same main they sat, bared brown backs to the sheer walls over-
looking the gorge. Hob and Holburn.

COMPULSION returned upon the Two. "Earthlings," said the ghost voice of Hob. "Approach!"

They walked slowly. The rocky's jaw set. Matthews curiously. "Evolution on Venus," said Trevor, "seems haywire. Strangely enough, to them, the earth. Their beings are the culmination of a

different development."

"Insolent One," warned the voice of Hob, "remember the bargain!"

Trevor flashed his glare over the ruins of Hob, over the remnants of a world where everywhere we moved, we moved with

fear that moved the stuff of careless dreams. "Nob," said Trevor. "Was any visitor real? Did you, then, know Hop's

existence, ago?"

"Yes, Eartherling. The evolutionary forces of our world, that had produced the City, found expression in the genius

of a great scientist. By short wave mani-

pulation of the genes of our unique human-

age, this ancient scientist bred the Select Ones—twelve male—a great nation."

"You destroyed Hob?" asked Matthews

breathlessly.

"As the Select Ones grew to full man-
tual power, we saw that the achievements of our race were gamy. We wanted no more energy in trying for mass progress through the use of machinery. We destroyed the City and the small brained ones who were

our ancestors and devoted ourselves to ourselves. We accelerated variation and yet kept the change in control—we achieved immortality."

"But the other Super-Egos?" asked Trevor.

"Died. Destroyed. Destroyed by a process of elimination in mental war, a war that lasted ages, till finally, but I, Great Hob, and also Holburn, were left. And for twice ten thousand Terran years have we two waited for the supreme, cul-
mating moment."

"What an anti-climax!" muttered Trevor. "The abhorrent life force of Venus had ended fantastically in a kind of vely, power with a
colossal power to use these powers in a gigantic

context of wills, had more and more withdrawn from the order of Nature."

"Little Eartherling," said Great Hob's voice softly, "you cannot comprehend our immense intelligence. Nor can a

Million-Ego ever conceive of the ambitions of a Super-Ego to reign alone. Think of the ambitions of your greatest Ter-
inian, of your historical figures—think of Caesar, a Napoleon, a Hitler—"

"You think of them," said Trevor. "On Earth we are trying hard enough to(T)

get them!"

A CHILL of disapproval was in his

mind, like a cold wind. Trevor con-
trolled his thoughts, silently he walked. Again the visions came to him.

The most tremendous of battles had been fought in three minutes. A battle

of—N=14.

Two atomic intellects had been con-
trolled. With that somehow had a direct

connection to the gigantic, many of matter were able to become pure. They could send molecules-falls of pure energy for miles. But neither, with actual weapons had been able to penetrate the force shields each cast around himself. The heat had
grown increasingly mental, and increas-
ingly tremendous.

The great minds of Hob and Holburn had knowledge of events and forces throughout the Solar System. They ranged over space and time in search of inspiration, conjuring against one another
all manner of troodels and apparitions, phantoms with a much greater potential than other phantoms had to successfully counter them to repel the assault upon the WII.

Then, up the long, hallowed length, over the crest of the long dead city, had come the Revengers of Mars. Phalanx after phalanx charged toward the city, to be met by forces of hero Jovian Taddo. Massive tanks of the Giganticon Techno-men, hurled by Hoburn across the tableland, were cut down by million-iron of Laoweh of the Royal Guard. When Hoburn, assembling a truly gigantic force composed of heroes from every inhabited planet, elected the Travon Alexander the Great as commander in chief, Hoburn, composed of an army as gigantic led by Julius Caesar. In the wagons of Hoburn's host rode Jeung Ki Khan, straight into the battle fire of Napoleon's Old Guard.

So far, the hussars had fought, gaining or losing ground according to the moral forces exerted by the weird orders of Taddo that Travon could clearly see and some when he looked, intangible, over the blue smoke of the Gorge of Metabolations.

The Travon, walking in the beat of the yellow sun, were now well around the ruined city. The nursing Matthews asked, "What's the matter, Alad? What's wrong?"

Travon shook his head as if to clear it. Around them the silence was heavy. But inside Travon's head was a curious disturbance. He seemed to feel Hoburn's mighty will probing in his Travon's mind. He knew at least, quietly, that Hoburn had given him a strong command but that the Super-Ego, by some weird technique of brain cell control, had failed to carry the command beyond the comprehension of the very mind that held it.

"I've got to try another break," said Matthews, scratching.

They were running Hoburn. Ahead of them, an expanse of dead black rock lay like a solid ribbon high across the perpendicular face of the cliffs. Proceeding along this expanse they saw three men and more clearly the two normal human figures standing on the black surface of the gorge under the rock wall. Two figures, apparently alien—but nonetheless Travon recognized. Great Hoburn. Hoburn was across the gorge; furthest from them; facing them. Hoburn was now forty feet away; visible in profile, a scowling bear-like face. Jovian the Super-Ego's great forehand stemmed firmly; visible, huge, intense; feet of light that flicked multiply across the gorge, running against a shimmering screen that enveloped Hoburn.

Behind Travon, Matthews yelled. "What kind of fool strategy is this?"

Then, before Matthews could answer, "Super-Ego" smashed a new, arrogant mental voice that left Matthews staring, his jaw sagging. The voice of Hoburn!

"Travon, balanced on the brink of his life, obeyed."

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with sweat. And his tension increased as he felt Hohar's malignant, searching presence in his brain and noted certain details of the two fantastic figures seated over the gorge.

"What, that's all they are—huts of beings?" Mathews muttered, fighting futilely to rise.

Trevor's legs pressed together. The Buddha-shaped figures of the Super-Egos were illusions. In the sunlight the actuality of them was visible—each was merely a huge dome with conical surfaces from which hung a trilogy of equatorial points.

This marvel actually was proof of the whole fantastic story of alienant evolution on Venus.

Trevor controlled his thought, listened in, to a stream of impressions which the Super-Egos were hurling at one another.

"These Minut-Egos," said Hoh, "will judge between us. As you perceive, the contest is under no compulsion."

It was the very acuteness of the trick that was working. Hohar could see no threat in the mortal. But in Trevor's head surged great tidals—movements of Hohar's super ambitions.

Mathews was silent now, in a great anxiety. "Hoh," said. "I wonder of your feeble efforts and sought new toys—boys of Nature, Hohar." With a screech, crossing Hoh contended, "Examine his brain, rub by cell, times by times. Open every needle of his unconscious. Perhaps I have tricked you, Hohar."

Curiosity was a gigantic passion. Hohar—instinct that curious challenge was accepted. A thousand tiny forks were immediately at work in Trevor's head. Suddenly, set land, cunningly, the young Terrans walked. He was within ten feet of the huge dome and the distant Buddha shape.

Then the gigantic pushing figure of Hohar's intellect found the knot tied in the remnants of Trevor's mind by Hoh. They instantly unraveled the knot.

A mighty, impious, irresistible command surged through Trevor's consciousness: "Larry, Smith?"

The Survey rookie jerked. One great bound.

As that instant great bird of powerless flame, pale in the sunlight, blazed from the head of Hoh across the gorge. The glowing field that enveloped Hohar was momentarily rendered.

Trevor's body crashed to the distance. He reached Hohar. He kicked out, striking with terrific force that plunged, the nerve ganglia that hung from the huge brain of the Super-Egos.

The Teras was slapped, then, by a whirlwind of force. He was tossed like a flake in strong gales, far out over the void of the gorge. Though the blue mist, heading, he fell.

"Ain't! Ain't!" Dully he heard Mathews' voice. The Cartographer had regained power of movement. He was running along the explas, a big figure, high up.

"Hoh!" shouted Trevor. "The bargain!""Well done, Impudent One," chuckled a serenading voice in his ears. He was haled in midair by the grip of eerie forces. And high above him Mathews was still visible, running sinuously, skulking his fat at Hoh. Great Hoh was now aligned above the gorge. Hohar had vanished. Only this wisp of yellow vapor marked the illumination of that titanic and underserved Ego.

"Two ages," chuckled the ghostly voice of Hoh, "we are fairly matched and shaken. The force of one Ego could not overturn the defenses of the other. But the Super-Ego that was, finally was defeat because I stored away part of my force in the rings brems of a creature of so low an offensive mental potential that Hohar could not conceive how his approach could be part of any strategy. Yet
you were the deciding factor, Inspector One. Surrounded by your four, hobos escaped the State's notice—and was annihilated!”

Trevor’s thoughts were very euphemistic, but he continued them. “So now you rid the realm of Super-men, eh?” he asked.

“Now I expect this planet,” replied Hob. “And the System. I am weary of these.”

Hob was rising. A startled figure, the Super-Ego drifted up toward the impulsive peaks of the Sefara. Up on the sprayed Matthews clung his neck, then suddenly yelped. He was swept out and over the gorge!

TREVOR surged up to meet him, along by impulsive forms. Together to the accompaniment of ringing eloquent from the Cartographer, they were draped over the mountain slopes, afterward, across the stinging jungles of Equatorial. Not yet minutes have they been deposited, quite gently, on the small terrene of Droon 6 of the Survey, under the red-dish glow of the Oxygen Layer.

Matthews was visible all that day, but his words alone would never have convinced the Super-Ego Survey personnel. The whole Droon, however, was thrown into confusion after the fantastic arrival of the hobos and the Cartographer.

“Hypomon-hypomon-hypomon,” chuckled the intrepid Trevor, enjoying the situation that ensued. “You see,” he explained, “Matthews aimed a bow for a long spell, while he drifted behind me on the borders of Hool, as a manner of Hob’s will. He now regretly is now charged with power.”

Matthews nodded his head slightly, but he became, for a work, an object of strong suspicion. For a week spaceships around the Droon emerged to service planes they heard and saw but which were not there, ran into walls where they saw doors.

Matthews sat serenely to control all his thoughts. But at night he dreamed. And not merely the Droon personnel, but all of Terrestrial, dreamed with him. The entire colony became familiar with a curtain vision.

A vision of a strange, horn-crowned figure far out in an illusional void, scudding on and on, beyond the Sun.

The end.
WILLIE WINS A WAR

Willie was only a thin blue haze of animated Mercurian ions, but he had definite likes and dislikes—and the ability to enforce his opinions!

"Knock, knock!"

To put it mildly, Bob Courtney was surprised. He knew that he was alone in the communications room of the *Elecro*. Then he realized that the words had come from the radiovisor behind him, and he sighed out loud with relief.

By E. A. GROSSER

"Go away, Willie," he said wearily. "If the Cephalic beams pass—"

"Knock, knock?" The sound was repeated, clearly, even though the radiovisor was turned off.
"All right—where’s there?" Courtney asked sharply.
"Willy?" came the prompt reply.
"Willy? Who?"
"Willy ever get over it?" the voice cackled triumphantly.
"If you’re speaking of the Captain—no!" said Courtney. "And the same goes for Willie if the Captain ever catches him. Now, aren’t you?"
"The Willie don’t want no screen," clicked the radiovoice aggressively. "Willy likes Bob."
"Aw, g’num! I’ll let you say that to everyone."
"No, no! Willy likes Bob."
The radiovoice beseeched for Courtney to go into raptures, and when he didn’t, it continued:
"Willy don’t like the captain."
"Neither does Bob, but I don’t think the captain cares much," growled Courtney.
"Willy likes Bob?" the radiovoice cackled. "Willy likes Bob! Willie and Bob don’t like the captain! Willie and Bob don’t like the captain! Bob likes—"
The radiovoice fell into a leading silence. Courtney said nothing. The radiovoice cackled again: "Bob likes—"
Again it halted suggestively. Still, Courtney said nothing; and he smiled.
"Bob likes?"—The radiovoice cackled like a muffled phonograph record.
"Oh, all right! Bob likes Willy."
Courtney answered:
"Willy likes Bob! Bob likes Willy! Willie and Bob don’t like the captain! The radiovoice cackled with the jumbled words, and Courtney could imagine Willie chuckling absurdly among the voices. "Willy likes Bob? Is that like Willie? Willy and Bob don’t like the—"
"SHH!" bawled Courtney as the door of the communication room opened and the captain came in. Courtney came to attention and snapped a salute to his superior.

CAPTAIN BRESTOW slipped one in his return and, foreseeing, looked around the room. "Who were you talking to?" he queried.
"I’m alone, sir," Courtney evaded.
Suddenly the tones of the radiovoice glowed dimly and a beam of static crackled from the speaker and swept upwards and whirling spirals of light across the screen. The captain’s eyes widened like a bird-sky’s on a fresh scent, and he ejaculated the hush of joy.
"Bob! Bob! Bob! What’s up?" cackled the speaker as the captain started yanking out tubes and removing coils like a muffler.
"Help! Help!" cried a faint voice when the captain enlightened with a triumphant grin. In his hand he held a vacuum tube. And it was from the tube that the faint voice was coming.
"Can always get on my electricity, will you?" Captain Brestow glared, careful not to reach the凭着 of the tube. He held it defiantly by the enamel-glass.
"Help!" cried the captained Willie. Courtney edged closer to the captain.
The captain looked at him quickly with a frown.
"Attention!" he barked. Courtney came to attention, eying the tube playfully from the corners of his eyes.
"Help! Bob, help me!" it cried plaintively.
Captain Brestow grunted like an ape.
"I’ll fix you, you scrawny little blue thing! I’ll toss you out a peet personally!" He started toward the door.
Courtney looked at the vacuum tube, then all of a sudden dropped his stuff pile of attention. He lurched into Captain Brestow, snatched his share a healthy bite, and the tube fell to the floor to shatter into a thousand bits.
Captain Briestor died for it, picked the rusty knife from the floor, but Willie was gone. Courtney came to attention again, and waited.

He didn't have to wait long. Captain Briestor turned the encased tube over in his hands, with disappointment plain on his face. Then he threw it away from him with a curse and turned to Courtney.

"You... You... You... Guard!" he shrieked.

The leatherneck came at a run, halted and presented his automatic rifle.

"Arrest the... this..." Captain Briestor choked with wrath. "Put 'em in the brig!"

The leatherneck saluted, stepped to Courtney's rear, and lowered his bayonet-tipped rifle. Courtney marched quickly forward to a safe distance.

The heavy door of the brig closed with a resoundingly final sound and Courtney slumped discouragingly to the bench. To save an endangered cloud of Marcurian ions, he had tossed away a couple of electrons and a bright future. He knew Captain Briestor well enough to be sure that one big Courtney would never win this duel.

And the U.S. X. Transport Electra, half out of Aphrodite, the capital of Venus, with a full cargo of the invaluable glass spores and various and curious refugees, would find its appointed place in history without mention of a certain ill-starred Sergeant Bob Courtney.

The Electra was drifting through space from Venus to Earth as fast as was rhythmically possible. And two days previously Bob Courtney had looked forward to a brilliant future. The expansion of spinal forces necessitated by war with Venus should have turned him into an officer's training school and a commission, and a few close shaves should have seen him a captain. But now, all was lost. Just because a pretty little blonde from the Mercurian outposts had had the poor judgment to bring along a pet electric loop... and because said electric loop had conceived a case of violent knee-slit-sight with the aforementioned weapon. It was a kiss of death! That's what it was, he knew. It was unkillable!

"Willie likes Bob!" whispered the light globe.

"Oh, go 'way and leave me alone!" roused Courtney. "I haven't caused me enough trouble already?"

"Willie likes Bob!" the light globe persisted again.

"All right, then! Bob likes Willie, too. But go 'way, you've had enough."

"Nooos! Nooos! Nooos!" questioned the light globe.

"Something sooo..." Courtney started to define, then changed, "information."

WHILE maintained a pointed silence. "I tell you nothing wrong," he grumbled at last.

"You're still hard nosed," snapped Courtney.

Willie was silent for a minute or so, then returned to his refrain.

"Willie likes Bob... Willie likes Bob... Willie likes Bob... Willie likes Bob!"

Courtney's mouth contorted to a black cloud of despair. On top of everything else, the Mercurian ion seemed determined to make him. He shouldered.

"Please go away, Willie," he pleaded. "Isn't it bad enough that you've got me thrown in the brig just when the damned war in a hundred years is breaking out. Who, hell! This could have been my big opportunity! But you had to go and spoil everything. Please go away and leave me alone."

The light globe maintained a sorrowful silence for several minutes. Courtney had just about decided that Willie had cornered with the breasted request and was getting ready to sigh with relief, when—

"Willie's sorry. Willie didn't want to hurt Bob. Willie likes Bob!"
"I don't give a damn whether you like me or not! Go away!"


"You're talking nonsense," Missy replied coldly. "There was a way to get out of here! There had to be!"


"Correct—right the way through," agreed Courtenay. Then the glow died out of his eyes when he saw that he was still in the brig. This was a devil of a place to be confined when a lovely little blue-eyed, golden-haired angel was longing for your companionship. He lay back on the bunk and covered his eyes with his arms. There must be a way to get out of here! There had to be!


Courtenay came off the bunk in a bound. "What's a inmate?" he shouted. "Willie! Willie! Willie!

But Willie was gone. The globe was again only an efficient device to furnish light in darkness. Courtenay had departed on an errand which to his indefatigable self was of all-embracing—practically of comical—importance.

Courtenay turned when he felt the generations cut out. He had become so accustomed to them that their humming was hardly audible, until it was gone. He sat up, wondering why the ship was coming. The Captain was a dapper old fellow, but not such a big man that he would try to scare them when the whole Yankee fleet was trying to intercept the Zephyra.

He went to the door of the brig and pressed between the bars. But he didn't see anything enlightening, and wasn't disappointed because he had hardly hoped to. The occurrences had been of the nature of an irrefutable reality.

Then the light globe shrieked: "Venus got us! Venus got us! Venus got us! Willie don't like Venus!"

Bob Courtenay shuffled back to the bunk and sat down. He was hopeless. Everything seemed to be turning out wrong. Now, if he was lucky, he'd spend the duration of the war in a concentration camp. And if he wasn't lucky, he'd—But he preferred not to think of that contingency. Suffice it to say, the events and worries thereof. And after all, death—even relatively slow death such as the Venetians delighted in dealing out—wasn't so very horrible.

"Venus don't like Venus," muttered the light globe.

"Venus don't like Venus," Courtenay echoed bitterly.


Willie waited for approval, and when it wasn't immediately forthcoming, he started all over again.

"Willie's right," said Courtenay hastily. "The light globe again became an ordinary illuminating device, and when Willie
WILLIE WINS A WAR

... spoke again, it was from the wall beside Courtney's head.  "Willie, I know, No-o-o-o-o, the wall props."

"Are you... For God's sake, shut up! I'm trying to think."

"Think? Think? Think?" questioned the wall.

"Huh, you wouldn't know anything about that," grumbled Courtney. "Shut your face for a few minutes, now, I hear someone coming."

"Is Captain Bristol, Willie informed, a fair sort of paint in his veins."

A KEY passed in the lock and the door swung open. Courtney looked up at Captain Bristol and a shiny-shined, very solemn Venetian wearing a lieutenant's stripes.

"Come out!" snapped Captain Bristol.

"To whom do I owe this pleasure?" Courtney inquired formal as he got to his feet and sauntered out of the legg.

"Not to me, you... " snapped Captain Bristol. "Venetian right cruizur, Mr. Swell, get us. We're turning back to Verona under full astern and need every man."

"Even me!" asked Courtney sarcastically. Nothing could mar his position very. And Willie had never told the truth... He didn't like Captain Bristol, but emphatically!"

"Even me!" barked the Venetian, jabbing Courtney with his point. Captain immediately put more purpose in his formen. Captain Bristol charged and leaned against the mural wall of the corridor to let Courtney pass. Then he leaped about three feet into the air with a shrill of pain.

"Willie don't like Captain Bristol," shouted the wall.

"Captain Bristol didn't like Willie either, and turned the air a delighted azeur while he shouted the fact. But the tyrant was careful to avoid the wall.

The Venetian watched and listened with an admiring expression, and there was a hint of envy to be seen on his face. Then the fleet died out of his head on one side and waved the wall questioningly. His hand started out exploringly.

Captain Bristol started to warn the fellow, but Courtney said: "Keep!" and shook his head negatively. The Captain grinned and shut up.

The Venetian's fingers touched the wall, then he too learned how it is easy for sons as Willie gave him full voltage. He did a super-rigid pug dance with an in-volatile adage for a finale, to the brilliant accompaniment of his own prodigiously unc-cortal shrieks. Then he lay on the floor of the corridor, meaning half-unconsciously.

"Willie don't like Venet, either," Willie stated unnecessarily.

"Well?" asked Captain Bristol. "I was lucky. I'm glad you don't dislike me like that, Willie. You carry quite a job."

Courtney picked up the panel that the Venetian had caused to have any interest in. He checked and found that it was fully fuled, then he stepped to the side of the nearby-mentioning Venetian and with a hings-out of the panel barrel, made him completely so. In a way, it was an act of mercy. The Venetian ceased to mean and lay very relaxedly.

CAPTAIN ERISTOW looked curiously at Courtney. His eyes went to the panel.

"What do you think you're going to do?—crush the ship single-handed?"

"Oh, Willie's going to help you," Courtney said confidentially. "He can go through walls, and aren't people even though he can't see them. Here about it, Willie?"

But there was no answer. Willie was gone. Probably to tell Missy all about it, Courtney thought as his hopes augured. "All right, Sergeant," said Captain Bristol, "We'll do what we can. But it's pretty hopeless."
They went to the end of the corridor, then halted, facing the closed door. This was where Willie's cell would have been invaluable, Courtney knew. The little frank could have gone through the metal portal to see if the wall was clear. As it was now, every door might be a Warner in disguise.

Courtney stopped and applied his ear to the panel. He held his breath, listening intently. He heard footsteps on the other side of the door. Then:

"Willie Bluescoot" boomed the panel in his ear.

The door opened before Courtney could straighten, and he looked up to meet Missy's blue eyes. Her lips twitched with a smile.

"What goes on here?" she asked.

Courtney straightened, feeling rather foolish. His color faded.

"We're trying to find out if there was anybody out there," he explained weakly.

"Only me," said Missy. She then looked around curiously. "Willie said there was a lot of fun doors here?"

"He was having the fun," groveled Captain Britlow, regarding the walls suspiciously and moving well away from them. "Did he really?

"Yes," said Missy. She seemed to think the Captain hardly worthy of attention, but her eyes went often to Courtney. Courtney knew, because his own felt her. He was wondering how talkative Willie had been.

"Willie!" he called, and there was no answer.

He recalled a curse. The little fool had run out on them again. The brightest chisel of electricity would have been the best ally possible—if it were dependable. But it wasn't.

The Captain seemed relieved, and merrily stepped off the rubberized target covering the central portion of the corridor. But he turned back immediately with a hoarse yell.

"Ho-ho-ho!" chuckled the metal door.


"Willie!" snapped Missy. "Tell playboy and help us!"

"Sure," Courtney agreed, glancing at Missy to see if she had heard and understood Willie's meaning. But she couldn't be sure. "Come on, Willie, help us. This is serious.

"Serious? Serious? Serious?"

"Never mind!" Courtney snapped. "Is there anybody in the corridor?"

There was a moment of silence, then Willie spoke from the door: "Yea."

They opened the door and went out. Courtney turned to Captain Britlow as they hurried along the passage.

"How many of them are ahead on the Elevator?" he asked.

"About a dozen," answered the captain. "And the cruiser is pacing us."

Courtney chewed his lip as they lumbered to the door of the central room. He felt a soft hand touch his arm, and looked down into a pair of troubled blue eyes.

"You better not take a chance," she warned. "It's hopeless. Even if we capture the Venus on the Elevator, the cruiser will..."

"We've got to try," said Courtney.

"Willie?"

"Willie Bluescoot. Bob Bluescoot..."

"Thank God for that," Courtney breathed. "Willie, how many Venuses are in the central room?"

There was a moment of silence, during which Captain Britlow kept well away from all sound, then Willie spoke.

"There," he said. "Willie don't like Venus."

"What a minute!" Courtney said quickly as Willie's voice faded. Willie came back more strongly. "Willie Bluescoot. What are they doing?" Courtney asked.
"Veneto stood behind pilot . . . behind navigator . . . behind Seats--behind short tank. Willie didn’t like Veneto. . . ." Willie’s voice faded into a low growl.

"Wait a minute, Willie," said Courtney. "We’ll handle this. How about their guns?"

"All got guns," answered Willie.

"Sure, but where are they?"

"All gone in . . . in leather outside pockets," said Willie hesitantly.

Courtney straightened and reached for the doorframe with a menacing glare at Captain Brixtow. "You stay back out of danger," he said to Meny.

She might have been inclined to argue the matter, but he didn’t allow her the necessary time. He opened the door and hurried into the control room with Captain Brixtow at his heels. But quick as they were, Willie was quicker.

The Venetians turned to face the intruders, flashing at their leveled weapons in spite of the threat of Courtney’s. Then one after another, the only-allowed half-doors dropped into the air with a painful boom. It seemed that each one of them had acquired a lead-foot. Two of them dropped their pistols and Courtney neatly bluffed the third out of the Veneto’s clutches.

Meny and Captain Brixtow leaped forward to claim the weapons while Courtney held the prisoners against the wall. And it was notable that Captain Brixtow avoided contact with evil. Willie was laying in ambush somewhere.

COURTNEY and Captain Brixtow found the Venetian’s rifles and guns with lengths of wire while Meny assiduously watched closely, poised ready in her small hand. Her face was visibly enlivened by the excitement, and her breathing was fast. Courtney could hardly keep his eyes away from her.

"Veneto coming?" warned Willie from the panel of the door.

"Hardly they completed binding the captured Venetians, then leaped to the sides of the doorway. Courtney gave Meny a healthy thrashing guide and she staggered halfway across the control room before coming to a very angry halt.

"Bob the Meny?" Willie questioned, petting at the wound.

"Sure," said Courtney. "That’s why Bob warns her to stay out of the way. Will you help, Willie?"

"Sure," Willie agreed cheerfully, and an instant later Meny who had started back toward the door, returned to the railed hallway around the pilot’s chair with one limp and a yell. She tried to approach from a different direction, and immediately returned to the insolating mat. Her eyes sparkled with anger.

"Willie! Let me go!" she stopped.


"It’s morning," grumbled the Captain as Meny tried again to escape and halted.

Time the door burst open. A Veneto burst into the control room with a pistol ready in his hand, but before he had a chance to use it, Courtney pulled his own weapon with a healthy blow. The Veneto struck to the floor and took no further interest in the proceedings.

But his wild body blocked the door so that it couldn’t be closed, and those beheld were more exulted, or more frightened—Courtney didn’t know which. But the effect was discouraging. They remained in the corridor, peering through the open door. Courtney and Captain Brixtow were forced back from the doorway.

"Willie?" called Courtney.

"Willie likes Bob.

"Good! Then slip out there and take those Veneti from the rear, will you?"

"Willie all right?"

"He awaits he needs a feeding of elec-
trickery." Minny interpreted from her place of safety.
They looked around for something to
elaborate the slip. Captain Breitow's
eyes alighted on the chart-tack. It was
electrical and drew a large current.
"Crawl into the chart-tack, Willie," he
suggested. "I'll turn it on."
He stepped forward to help, then
jumped backward, cursing.
"Captain go's way. Willie don't like
Captain." Minny turned the current on while the
two men guarded the door. The automaton
moodles fipped away over, and no three-
dimensional image appeared in the Mach-
ness of the tank. Willie was a veritable
monkey—whom he had the claims?
"How's that ... wh ... imp able to
talk?" Captain Breitow growled.
"He feels the vibration in the metal
he is inhaling at the moment, then makes it
vibrate magnetically when he wants to
answer. He's really quite intelligent," Captain Breitow
grunted unbelievingly and Courtney groaned. He was glad Wil-
lie Hid him. The little fellow was a bad enemy.

SUDDENLY there was a shriek of dis-
away from the corridor and Captain
Breitow bounded forward to look out. Courtney
called him back to safety just in
this to secure his head from being blown
off. But Captain Breitow was shocked.
"Willie's a literal fool," he bellowed.
"I'll bet that poor Venus feels like he
went on a hot stove."
There was another shriek of pain, and
the Captain reddened mightily. "Two," he
counted gladlessly. Another shriek, . . .
"Three!"
"That isn't Willie," said Minny. "Willie's
still in the tank.
Then Captain Breitow screamed wildly at
the same moment that a Venusian cried
out with pain.
"Willie still don't like Captain Brei-
tow," the floor rumbled in a very
nice bass voice.
"But Willie's still in the tank!" cried
Minny. "He's still alive!"
"The hell he is!" the Captain disagreed.
And he looked sympathetically toward the
doorway when the next Venusian howled.
Courtney fainted instantly. There was
no more firing. He clung to his feet
just as the door beneath him purred:
"Willie likes Bob."
An echo from the hall answered: "Wil-
lie likes Bob."
The chart-tack started: "Willie, E-
help-" And the voice became voices
which blended into a good duet. "Willie likes Bob.
"Three of them!" the Captain cried.
"I count four!"
Courtney stood still, thinking. His eyes
began to show with experience. "Willie?"
be called.
"Willie likes Bob." came the chanted
reply. One voice from the hall, one from
the floor beneath his feet, and four from
the chart tank.
The Captain soared. " liabilities!"
he cried discouragingly.
"Willie's lasting, Little Willie all over
the place!" said Courtney excitedly.
"These two in the tank because four."
"Willie likes Bob." came the chant
again, and this time there were a lot
more than four voices from the chart-tank.
"Shut it off! Shut it off!" cried
the Captain, running forward to satisfie Wil-
lie. Then he did a fantastic feat of clas-
sic dancing cross-armed with mop-cloth,
until he achieved the sanity of the rubber-
oid man around the pilot's seat. He lay
back in the seat breathlessly, arms limp
at his sides.
"Willie reproduces by fusion—like an
animal," said Courtney. "Is that right, Willie?"
"Willie just mines—then he gets restless,
and there are two, Willie, Willie likes Bob."
“And Bob likes Willie, too,” said Courtney, almost smiling with glee. “Where’s the real Willie?”
“I ain’t,” they all answered.
Courtney scowled. “And all Willies like Bob?” he asked. “Will Willies do as Bob says?”
“Willie likes Bob,” came the chant of nearly a hundred voices. “Willie do as Bob says.”
Courtney’s eyes widened at the number of the reply. He looked at Missy and tried not to show his fright. “Better turn it off,” he advised.
The switch clicked, and for a moment there was silence. Then the chant: “Willie likes Bob.”
“Yes, and Bob’s damned glad Willie does,” Courtney bluffed. His hands were shaking. Buck never—he shouted with disgust at himself. “How about these Venus’s raiders?”
“Venus all big still,” came the multiple chant.
“Good!” Courtney approved.
“What d’ya mean, ‘good’?” Captain Brownie snarled. “I’d rather have the Venus on my neck any day. They’re ab-

HE WENT to the emergency locker and pulled out a space suit and a big-calibered gun that was used to fire a line for rescue work. Courtney detached the reservoir of small, strong rope and tossed it back into the locker. Then he unfurled a sheet of charges into his pockets and slipped one into the breach of the rifle. Then he ran up through the locker until he had collected about thirty or a hundred assorted bolts, washers, and nuts.
Missy and Captain Brownie had been watching him intently, and soon Captain Brownie entered with disgust as he raced to the controls of the ship.
“You’re crazy,” he snarled. “What do you think you can do? Look at the damage you’ve done!”
“Fire,” Courtney approved, waving at Missy. She smiled in return, though somewhat perversely.
Courtney slipped into the space suit, then placed the nuts and bolts and washers on the floor. “Willie!” he called.
“Willie likes Bob!” came the chant in reply.
“Fine. Bob likes Willie, too,” said Courtney. “Now, Willie, I want one of you to crank into each of these nuts, bolts and washers. Then I’ll shoot you at—”
Bob likes Willie!” the chanters yelled jubilantly.
“Sure, I like you, Willie. It won’t hurt you—at all. How can it?”
“Willie don’t know.”
“Bob likes Willie. Bob wouldn’t hurt Willie!” Courtney assured. “Now, do as Bob says. Then he’ll shoot you at the Venus cruiser, and at the power stations of Aphrodite as we land. Then Willie can eat all the electricity he wants. Won’t that be nice?”
“Yo! Willie don’t wanna!”
“Willie!” Courtney snapped, getting tense with the need for haste. Already the atmosphere of Venus was shrinking around the hull of the Eclipse as Captain Brownie guided her toward Aphrodite under the guns of the cruiser. “Willie!”
“Willie likes Bob!” the chanters assured.
“Then Willie will do as Bob says.”
“Willie don’t wanna!” the chanters wailed.
“Willie has to!” snapped Courtney. “Harry now, or Bob’ll be mad at Willie. Think of all the nice electricity you’re going to get!”
“Willie still don’t wanna!” Chantled the nuts and bolts.
"But Bob wants Willie to, so Willie will," said Courtenay a lot more confidently than he felt. He gathered the nuts and bolts into a cardboard box, and dropped one into the muzzle of the rifle.

"Willie will," the nuts and bolts stood sadly.

Courtenay shuffled down the corridor to the air locks. He went inside, closed the lower portal, then opened the outer after he had clipped his exit hose to the safety hooks inside the lock. The Venetian atmosphere sweped into the open lock and fought to fill him out.

Courtenay braced himself. "Remember, Willie. Don't start shooting on the cruiser until we land. That ship is not subcon- duct. They won't shoot at us as long as we're under its guns.

"Willie won't," he said promised sadly.

Courtenay fed a half dozen slugs at the cruiser, that they were hovering over Aphrodisos. The tall, slender spires of the city scratched upward through the smugling clouds like the towers of a fairy city. Thousands, millions of lights made it a brilliant fairyland. Courtenay looked at it with regret. Then he raised the rifle and shot at the massive target that was a powerhouse.

Again, and again, and again, he fired. And bitter madness swept outward from the place he hit, like great invisible waves. Willie was doing himself proud, Courtenay thought. There must be millions of the little devil now.

Then the Eliza and the Venetian cruiser were swinging in toward the landing field. Hastily, Courtenay fed his last magazine, then closed the lock and sped back to the control room. The Eliza landed lightly as he bustled in on Missy and Captain Brineaw.

Missy ran to him, threw her arms around his neck and pulled his head down so she could kiss him. "It's working! It's working!" she cried happily.

"Uh-oh," Courtenay agreed, holding her tight and showing some initiative of his own. She flustered and tried to withdraw, but he wouldn't let her. And short- ly, she ceased to try.

They saw the lights of the cruiser black- out suddenly and as completely as those of the city, and Courtenay faced Captain Brineaw.

"Here Spade is in the Venetian fleet, will you Captain?" he asked. "Then when they are out of commission, will you call the Earth fleet. This war's ended almost be- fore it begins."

Captain Brineaw went to the communi- cations, relayed the message, then his muscles went rigid and his body almost at- heared to the current going through him. He couldn't let the commissary go. But he stumbled weakly back to the pilot's chair as the commissary groveled. "Willie don't like Captain Brineaw!"

"Willie?" said Courtenay. "Chas the Venetians out of this ship."

There was no answer, and Courtenay took it for granted that Willie was obli- ging. He returned his attention to Missy. He nearly lost himself in her blue eyes, and shook his head dizzily.

"Bob likes Missy ... Missy likes Bob," chanted Willie.

"Willie, go after those Venetians," Courtenay ordered.

"Bob likes Missy ... Missy likes Bob" Willie said again.

Courtenoy smiled down at Missy. Her soft lips parted in a smile that showed even white teeth.

"You bet, Willie," he agreed happily.

"Missy likes Bob!" predicted Willie.

INVADERS FROM NOWHERE

The Alans looked like so many comic, good-natured Mickey Mice, but they had the brains of a dozen Einsteinus, and their good nature had some curious twists!

By L. SPRAGUE DeCAMP

CHAPTER ONE

The Crashing Alans

WILLARD BUTLAND did not yet know about the Alans as he surveyed Australia's wondrous distances. The proprietor had called the restaurant that to distinguish it from the several Manhattan restaurants named Tony's. Butland would have called the place a den of impiety—or perhaps a sink of impiety; more picturesque—except for the fact that the word "impiety" was, to his lay friends and acquaintances in the States, a comic one. This fact distressed
SUPER SCIENCE NOVELS MAGAZINE

Willard Burkhart. To him, integrity was not at all a fight matter. He often wrestled with his soul on the question, to why resolved; that it was unreasonable to send his young life carrying the gospel to the heathen of India when so many of his fellow-Americans were in obviously greater need of it.

For instance, he thought, coughing from the smoke of the vile weed, there was his cousin Max Piper across the table. Max Piper was tall, thin, and dark, whereas Willard Burkhart was of medium height, large, and sandy, with ambitious foibles lingering on a sub-text of the kind one sees on fussy-Carlyle character. But Max Piper would have cut him a joint or dive, though the voice with his orderly clothes and handsome modern furnishings did not deserve such custody.

Max Piper looked up from his bigbail and said: "Hi, Kimy!

A tall, professionally good-looking beausette came over and sat down. She said: "Hiyo, Max." She looked at Willard Burkhart's glass of milk and added: "So you're not the only milk-drinker. Order me one too, Max darling.

Piper introduced his cousin to Miss Kitty Blake. He added a stage-whisper: "Her name's really Opaline, but people make too many jokes about it."

Burkhart frowned in honest puzzlement. "I think Opaline's a pretty name, and I don't see how anyone could make a fool out of it."

He said hopefully to the girl: "You don't dish?"

"No, I'm in the stage-show at the Magnatone, and I have to keep in shape. But just you wait till my vacation!"

"Oh," said Burkhart, "I thought you might have a higher reason."

The girl looked at him, then at Piper. She said: "Say, what is it?"

"Wine an' whiskey on Sin."

"Really?" said Kitty. "That must be interesting. Mr. Burkhart, what kinds have you tried lately?"

Willard Burkhart reddened. Piper said: "He doesn't practice Sin; at least he's never been caught at it. He tries to ex-terminate it. Missionary. We were arguing on the subject of Sin when you came in. You know; If God made everything, and if everything His made was good, how come Sin isn't God's good work?"

"I said you," said Burkhart patiently, "God made man capable of choosing be-" tween good and evil, so he has a chance to earn his salvation—"

"Good Mohammedan doctrine," said Piper.

"Mohammedan?" said Burkhart. "The only good idea some bloodstream hermis-" cus ever had were borrowed from Chris-" tians—"

Then the Alaha appeared, and neither the innocent nor the cynical knew. He was seated on the blithes channeled thought about Sin for some time.

The manner of the Alaha's arrival was surprising; one moment they were not there; the next they were, in a solemn black-and-white zone, the un-" allowed half of the red imitation-leather cement around the table.

The three monaceamt were about the size of people, and had a similar number of remot beings. They had gigantic, upturned noses and batless tails. They were shone on their feet, gloves on their four-digited, and large saucers on their ears. The effect was strikingly like that of a trio of Mosaic Men.

One of the things said: "Hi! Do you want some tea?"

Burkhart asked the girl: "Do you see them too?"

"I'm afraid so. Maybe we'd better ask Sec."

"He can't help. He's been drinking."

"Drinking?" mocked Piper. "Our bigbail, and he calls it drinking—"

The thing exploded: "Hell, do you want some tea?"
"Uh—very well, thanks," said Piper.

"And you..."

The thing hesitated. It unseparated a pocket in what appeared to be its skin, and brought out a small book. It looked through this, and expostled: "Very well, I thank you. Is this the Earth?"

The waiter approached Kitty's table. He sat it down with exasperation crudity. He had studied to have before it took a good look at the visiters. He continued to depart, but slowly, staring back: "How one who on a lovely moon light walk in fear and tread..."

"Is this the Earth?" repeated the thing.

"That's what we call it," said Piper.

"This city of Ill-Tark?"

They nodded helplessly.

"This thing stuck us back, and said:"

"We are friends. Serr!

"It opened another pocket in itself and brought out three oval objects that looked like magnifying-glasses. It handed them around: "These are for you..."

Bullard put his glass in his eye. He almost dropped the object. The glass made everything near through it untransparencet. The partition that separated their table from the next disappeared almost; Bullard could see the people at the next table, and through them to the next, and so on until people, walls and furniture merged into a white blur. Will Bullard looked sidewise through the glass at Kitty Blake. He quickly looked elsewhere, and worried a little about whether that look would damage his chances of survival.

The thing that had done all the talking asked: "Is this the city with these people of Ng?"

"The best word was pronounced his "serr" without the "s".

Bullard asked: "What is it that Ng?"

Another thing, the smallest of the three, spoke up: "Ng is the signification of the universe. It made these eggs from which the universe was hatched, and itself broke the shell. In my humble way I served him—"

"Some false god of theirs," said Bullard lightly. "Uh—ouch!"

He bent over and rubbed his shin and looked reproachfully at Bee Piper.

Piper said: "Would you mind telling us who and what you are?"

The giver of the glasses said: "I am Zzip. We are Alains."

Kitty Blake said: "I thought Alains were members of a Serlian tribe whose descendants live in the Caucasus Mountains."

"What?" cried Bullard. "How would you happen to know that?"

She turned on him: "So because I drew for a thing, you don't think I know anything, Mr. Bullard? Thank you, I've got a degree from Radcliffe!"

"Here, here," said Piper. "Let's let our friends go on with their story."

Zzip continued: "We are from the planet Al. Since in this English language you make Cultans from Cultus and Australians from Australia, we thought you would understand if we made Alains from Al. We are traveling through these serial universes, and we stopped at this one because we were told that Ng is verisplated here. This..."

He indicated the smallest Alain, "is Serph. He is our—I mean—that you would call a missionary. As they talked, the Alain accent rapidly disappeared.

Bullard started off: "We've got enough false g..."

Before another bit from Piper silenced him.

"Where's this Al?" asked Kitty.

"Right here," said Zzip.

"I don't see it."

"Of course you do not. It is in one term of the names of universes, just as the Earth is in another... We, the Alains, kind..."
h-h—know how to pass from each term to the next. The natives of the different terms are often surprised to see us."

Kitty asked: "Is Zemp your full name, Mr. Zemp?"

"No, it is Zemp lid Pills Guth Rit Boodling Yuith Mingg甩 Gahlsak Gahsh Ngulp Rovhulsh Bihgeen. That is a short name where we come from. Now, if you please, will you lead us to your Sen- ater?"

The people frowned. Piper said: "Our senator? We've got two, Murmey and Dalsy, but they're miles away."

Zemp continued uneased: "We must, the head offices of the Earth."

Piper answered: "No such thing. There were one or two guys who thought they'd like to be, but they're dead."

"You mean here is no one head officer of the plane? Then we will see the one who is head of this political unit." Kitty said: "I'll have to know the next hour how goes on pretty soon."

"No," said Zemp softly. "You will not leave, my dear."

And the Aben leaned at the girl. Kitty sat where she was. An expression of horror came over her face.

"You will not leave," said Piper belligerently. "You cannot. The eyes were turned on him and on Burdell. Willard Burdell felt a sudden terror such as even he a deadly, menacing fear that was all the worse for not being fear of any particular thing. After a few unrecognizing years it left him."

Piper said festively: "The government's in Washington."

"Then," pursed the Aben, "you will take us to Washington."}

CHAPTER TWO

The Great God Ng

They rose and panned out, all six. The Aben attracted much attention. Willard Burdell naturally went over sev-

eral theories in account for his experiences. The most promising one seemed to be that there was a personal devil after all, and these were his agents.

Near Annabic stood the Magnaplan Theater. Along the utmost wall of the theater was a row of cinema fountains containing advertisements of current and coming attractions.

From one of these bawled the face of Mickey Mouse, who had entertained the old and young of five continents for nearly a century.

The Aben saw Mickey and stopped, chuckling among themselves and saying "Ng! Ng!" Zemp told their escorts: "This must be the temple of Ng that one of our inter-universal explorers reported. We must go in at once to pay our respects, and see how nearly correct his worship is.""

In they went. Burdell finished his ticket-money; but the Aben urged him on. They walked up to the ticket-taker, who looked terrified, but did not demand tickets, and in.

The Aben did not seem to mind being stared at. One of those who stared remarked: "Say, isn't that a wonderful piece of make-up? You'd think they really were Mickey Mikes?"

When they had been seated for some minutes, Sleng the missionary said: "It is not so very rare to see a temple of Ng for311

friendship entertainment. I see where you poor creatures will afford a fertile field for our activities."

The Aben were silent until the animated cartoon appeared. Then they bellowed out of their mouths crying "Ng! Ng! Ng!" They pushed out to the side, threw themselves prone, and went through that simulated exercise which the U. S. Army enthusiastically calls the "leaping rest"; in other words, a series of push-ups.

When they had completed these they
ron. Slong said loudly: "What is the matter, people? Why do you not do obe-
siance to the great lord Ng?" People shrank from him, and others came in to
eject them. The new natives went cring-
ing away under the impact of their un-
replagated power to inspire fear. But
the power would not, apparently, work on
many natives at a time. And there were
plenty of natives...

The picture went off and the lights
on. Zap and something in his own lan-
guage to the other Alans, and they ceased
their resistance.
The ticket-taker pointed out Kitty
Blake, Piper, and Butland, who tried to
look inconspicuous. They were ordered
to come along.

It was William Butland’s first ride
in a paddy wagon. He sat on the hard,
empty seat with his head in his hands.
Piper told him to cheer up. Butland
muttered: "But me—of all people—"

The Alans were quite comical. Slong
said in a kindly tone: "Do not fear, it
was not your fault. It was the will of Ng.
All will be well. But still I do not under-
stand the customs of your people, to dis-
play such haughty indifference to a
cinematic representation of Ng."

Piper tried to explain that Mickey
Mouse had been influencing many decades
before by a man named Disney, and that
the character had no disrespectful connec-
tions.

This seemed to perplex the Alan mis-
construer more than ever.

TUE desk sergeant at the police sta-
tion showed incomprehension when con-
fected by the Alans, and never when they
gave their names and origins. He looked
them over carefully and called the son.
The director of the son arrived, saw, and
refused to take any responsibility for the
Alans. The desk sergeant then called the

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commissioner. The commissioner called the mayor. The mayor called the President of the United States. The President dispatched an undersecretary of state named Wilmington Stroud to New York by airplane to look into the matter of the alleged violations from another planet.

By the time Wilmington Stroud arrived it was evening. Kitty Blake, Pfeifer, and Nurse were asleep in each other's arms.

The undersecretary of state was a tall, baldish man with mustache. He faced the Alan with a sage-like equanimity. "How do you do," he said. "Are you a new missionary with the government of the United States?"

The Alan named Vilk replied: "That is right. My Senate, the Great Black Father of the world of Ahi, send greetings to your Senator." Vilk opened a pocket in his side and took out a small black disk, which he handed to Stroud.

"This is for you. You adjust for distance with that knob, and hold the device against your ear." Stroud did so, then jumped. "My word! I seem to be hearing things out in the street!"

The Alan smiled. "That is precisely what you are doing. That receiver, being set for fifty feet and aimed toward the street, hears what you would hear were you fifty feet away in that direction."

"Amazing," said Stroud, and dropped the object in his pocket. "And now, my dear sir, what other evidence have you to substantiate your story?"

The Alan looked at one another. Vilk said: "That is easy. We will take you back to Ahi with us."

"Oh, now really?"

"It will not take long. We need merely go back to the starting-place where we broke through into this universe."

Wilmington Stroud smiled a superior smile. "If it is as simple as that, I'll give you chaps a chance to demonstrate."

The police-sergeant said: "Better take these three along, Mr. Stroud. If it's a put-up job they're in on it. They were with the Midway Mars kids."

Back they went to Anthony's, Stroud in a hansom. State Department car and the rest in the paddy-wagon.

A man in an apron opened the door. Two other men were clearing the floor of Anthony's. The chairs were stacked, the tables were bare, and the restaurant—
or slink of humanity—had a whiff of air.

The Alan bowed the bowers in which they had appeared. They and the undersecretary slid themselves around the red-leather seat. The caps pushed Kitty Blake, William Redland, and John Pfeifer toward the next. These three protested that they did not want to go to Ahi. They were forced into their places reverently.

"Now," said Zup, "we go to Ahi."

WHICH they did, just the same. The Alan gave no visible signal, and manipulated no visible gizmity. There was no sound, no jar, no anything. Yet the sight of humanity disappeared and was instantly replaced by an entirely different room, as quickly as a skill of some in the movies. One second they had been in Anthony's: the next second they were in a circular room whose yellow walls beamed outward spherically. The room contained a table, a couple of chairs, and a view of Midway Mars.

Redland abandoned the theory that the Alan were genuine devils. This place did not look as all like Hell. It had no visible doors or windows. It was well lighted, but no lamps or other sources of illumination were visible.

The young missionary observed with rising alarm that his companion's color schemes had changed in bizarre fashion. Kitty Blake's reddish-brown hair was an impenetrable olive-green, and her skin was lemon-colored.
He said: “Miss Blake, your hair is green.”

Kitty Blake sneaked with dignity, then recovered herself. She said: “So’s yours. And your eyes are purple.”

Wilburt Stroud said: “I say!” He took off his glasses and polished them. By the time he had put them back on his nose, he had recovered his habitual self-possession. But Piper smacked something hard about going on the wagon.

Zrap, Vilk, and Sling talked to the two other Alans in their own language.

Wilbur Roth had been moving his lips silently. He now said to his human companions: “Don’t you think we all ought to pray to God?”

Piper shrugged. “I’m afraid this is out of Yehudi’s territory, Sig’s the boss here.”

“Eh, you’re a hopeless—”

“Don’t talk rot, you two,” snapped Stroud. “Nothing’s happened to us.”

“Yet,” added Kitty Blake.

Zrap addressed the quartet in English: “Friends, as we are back in Ah, my colleague Vilk reminds me. It will conduct you to the Great Black Fakuro.”

Vilk started off. The four followed him. Vilk walked toward the curved wall on which a thin red line defined a rectangle about the size of a door. Instead of opening anything, Vilk marched through the wall and disappeared. The others halted.

“Go on,” said Zrap. “Put your trust in Sig.”

Stroud extended a cautious finger. It went into the wall without resistance. The undersecretary followed. So did the others.

But Roth had an instant of total darkness. Then he was in another spherical room, much like the previous one. A Mickey Mouse sat behind a desk. Vilk talked into its eye. At least, the people around him thought Vilk was the one standing; the Alan all looked as much alike as a basketful of crabs.

Vilk straightened up and said: “Vilk, this is Senator of Ah, Brin Daok Yongoy Gob Ilong Sam Daok Hrekk Fivefoot Sig.”

Stroud said rudely: “We’re very much honored, I’m sure. Are we supposed to bow from the waist or stand on our heads or what?”

“Ah,” said Vilk. “Such politeness is not expected of foreigners. The Senator wishes you to know that, because of our admiration for your struggle toward civilization, we have decided that you deserve a helping hand. We shall therefore establish a mission near the portal between this earth and the universal spirit and years, to spread the true worship of Sig among you.”

Stroud said: “You will, eh? Very kind of you. I shall have to consult my government about that, though.”

The two Alans spoke in their own language. Vilk said to Stroud: “That will be quite unnecessary. We shall establish the mission entirely with our own resources, without making any demands on your tribe for labor or material or anything else.”

“I’m afraid you don’t understand,” said Stroud. “You see my country has things called laws, which determine who is allowed to enter it and under what conditions.”

More consultation. The whistles that stuck out from the sides of the Alans’ noses quivered with a suggestion of amusement. Vilk said: “If your tribal government wishes to put the official approval on our acts, it is quite welcome to do so.”

Stroud said: “My good fellow, has it occurred to you that my tribal government, as you see fit to call it, may disapprove?”

More quivering of whistles. Vilk said: “Disagreement between master and pupil would be unfortunate, is it not? There is no sense in it, since we...”
have only your best interests at heart.
To convince you of this, will you step this way?"

As they did so, wondering what was up, a section of the wall vanished, or at least became transparent. In front of them was a flat plain stretching out in sight in all directions. On it grew plants that suggested a desert: barrel-shaped spiny things. Overhead tall banks of clouds rode through a purple sky.

"You see the plain of Ah!" said Vilk.

"Now watch!"

Over the rim of the horizon came a number of dots, which swiftly grew into rounded mounds. These rushed straight to the window. Some of them were small, and rode on a dozen designer-shaped wheels. Others were a thousand feet high and were supported on single huge legs or cypress-like stalks as wide as themselves. They swelled to huge sizes and vanished.

Piper said: "Look as though they were doing a hundred. But I wonder how the big ones with the single track run!"

The Aunts' whiskers quivered. One of the large machines moved back into view and described a wide figure-eight, throwing up clouds of sand and broken rock.

"Now how?" said Zen Pijer, "did the driver of that thing know I was going to ask that question? Are we looking at the real thing or a model, or what?"

The cacti wobbled. Vilk said: "Look up. The sky was filled with drifting dots. These were presumably flying machines.

"What's that?" asked Kitty Blake, "a Lombardy puzzle. It wasn't there a minute ago." She referred to a dark column that had sprung up on the horizon. Others appeared. They became larger, and were seen to be tall slender clouds of dirt thrown up by explosions. As they came closer, the four human beings gasped at their magnificence. Any one of these phenomena would have wiped a terrestrial country off the face of the earth.

The explosions came closer until the audience solemnly at each one, expecting the next to blow them up. The exploitive ceased, leaving the landscape dotted with pits big enough to hold a forty-foot house.

A vast herd of animals trickled into the picture, moving in streams of thousands of individuals around the edges of the pits, stopping intermittently to nibble at the cactus-like plants. They were nondescript, unpretentious beings, with blunt muzzles, mole-like ears, feathered hides, hooves like feet, and long thin tails. They looked somewhat like a bunch of a bear, a hare, and a rabbit rolled into one.

Then all at once those thousands of beasts dropped dead and melted and ran down the sides of the pits. The sight was not pleasant. When the Great Black Father saw that his victims were on the verge of digestive upset, the wall began to move again.

"You see," said Vilk, "how regrettable would be a disagreement between us!"

"I see," said Wilington Stuart grimly. "What, besides the establishment of your mission, do you want of us?"

Vilk spread his hands. "Practically nothing. Some perhaps sense of the substance you call wood. The plants of our world are all with balled, and we could use some of the harder woods of yours."

Stuart said: "With such advanced science, I don't see why you need such an inferior material as wood."

"Oh, that is because wood is so common on your world that you do not appreciate its properties. We shall pay for the wood, of course, with things that you lack, such as—in I suppose you would call them paraphraxes and paraphenixes; these sewing and listening devices we have shown you."
"I'll tell my government," said Stroud noncommittally. "That will be fine," beamed Vilk. "This way, if you please." He walked through the wall again. When the others followed, they found themselves in a third spherical room with four corners and other furnishings. Vilk said: "Here you will remain for some days, so the portal is unfortunately in use. We shall return you to the earth as soon as possible."

Piper and Bufland looked at one another. Each had a question he wanted to ask, but Bufland was too inhibited a person. As Vilk's tail was disappearing through the wall, Piper called: "Mr. Vilk?"

"Yes?" The alien's tail vanished, and his broad pugil through the wall. It looked like a mounted head, except for its lively speech and expression.

"We—uh—if you're going to leave us here for some hours—"

"Oh, I understand."

Vilk pointed at the opposite side of the circular room, on whose wall at once appeared a green rectangular line. "Through there."

The hand vanished, leaving nothing but smooth yellow wall. Piper extended a finger. The wall was added to the touch. He walked across the room and touched the wall within the green rectangle.

This time his hand sank without resistance into the wall.

"Damn clever, these Akins," said Piper.

"Hun," said Bufland, "I wish you wouldn't use such language—"

His three companions gave him such withering looks that he subsided.

**CHAPTER THREE**

**Enormas on Ali**

They explored the small room—spherical like the rest—beyond the green rectangle, and found it adequately furnished but without means of access other than the marked-off portion of wall through which they had entered.

Piper said: "The walls turn solid or not, whichever the Mickey Mouse happens to want. And when you step through a wall you always find yourself in the room you happen to want to go to."

"Damn convenient," said Stroud.

Kitty Blake asked: "What are you going to do when you get back, Mr. Stroud?"

Stroud shrugged. "Tell the President what I've seen."

"What'll he do?"

"How should I know? But my notion is that we'll be very useful not to antagonize our redem friends."

"Why?" said Bufland.

"You saw what sort of attentions they here and will you want to know why?"

Bufland persisted: "But mightn't all that show they put on be just a show? Something done with a miniature set, like those phantomultimates they have in movies about that shadow civilization?"


Stroud said: "That might be so. We have no way of telling. But it's a fair inference that if they can put on such a convincing show, their science is also capable of delivering the real thing if necessary."

Kitty Blake said: "Mr. Bufland, don't you see a parallel between the way they've treated us and the way you approach your homeland in Alaska or wherever it is?"

"Not at all," replied Bufland angrily. "I preach the true gospel, whereas these scoundrels worship a fake god—"

Stroud slapped his knee. "Of course! You've put your finger on it, Kitty Blake. Our friend Bufland gives the natives bits of cloth and glue to win their confidence; the Akins gave us those gadgets, which to them are no doubt just toys. Everything they've done shows that they regard..."
They burst into a niceties argument that lysed until Kitty Blake threatened to unleash the gargoyles with a clear. She looked capable of doing it. She added:

"Maybe it hasn’t occurred to you yet, but the Midkides are probably listening in on all your talk.

They fell silent. Even the glared Strand looked apologetic. "Speak of the devil," he mumbled as Vilk smashed his head through the wall.

"Friends," said the Alan, "I have here something wherein you can amuse yourselves." He handed Strand a box.

"I apologize for the delay. But you will be conformed to earth as soon as the portal is clear.

Strand opened the box. The other three crossed ground. "Pleasure," cried Kitty Blake. The box was in truth full of precious amulets, rings of human wax, and other contrabands digested to be taken upon and associated with a minimum of speed and a maximum of manipulation.

Strand laughed shortly. "They’re so convenient. Where a southern colored woman will steal her kid’s hand with need and give them features to play with, to keep them occupied, the Alexi give us puzzles. Let’s see how this one works."

Wurhington Stroud gingerly picked up and folded with a bunch of metal pieces resembling bent nails.

"Vlik," said "Ah, friends, at last I can see how you return you to your home universe. I am sorry that you have had such a boring wait. Will you follow me, please? Mr. Stroud first; Mr. Piper next."

They jumped to their feet and knelt up. They heard the noise at which Vilk’s roccodrig head disappeared into the wall, and marched through. Piper followed him. Kitty Blake next in line, bumped hard into a wall that crumbled as soon as Piper had disappeared through it."

...
“Damn it to Hell!” said that fortysomething young woman.

“Please, Miss Blake, your language!” said Will Rutland.

Kitty Blake felt the wall to make sure it had no soft spots. Then she turned and planted her right fist in Willard Rutland’s eye. “That,” she said, “is only a taste of what you’ll get if you make any more remarks about my evening.”

Will Rutland recoiled back, clapped a hand to his eye, and sat down. He felt utterly miserable; he really tried to do the right thing, and people punched him in the eye for it. It wasn’t even a man who had hit him; any man under 300 pounds Rutland could handle. In India he had once been an obnoxious Punjabi chief into a jalebi before he remembered those tests about losing one’s enemies, turning the other cheek, etc. To remove he had then gone around to the hospital where the Punjns was recuperating, and persuaded the unfortunate chief until the Punjns turned Christian in self-defense.

To add to Rutland’s unhappiness, he could not get out of his head his cousin Bertie’s concern about this universe’s being out of Yukawa’s territory. The Bible mentioned Heaven and Hell, but nothing about a series of parallel universes. Who or what was the devil in charge of all of them? If not, then he was indeed lost and abandoned.

“For heaven’s sake,” said Kitty Blake, “stop pacing the floor. You give me the willies. What’s the matter with you?”

Rutland told her. She laughed. “Well, if I hadn’t known you I wouldn’t have believed you. Here you’re imprisoned in another universe by things out of one of the fair Mr. Disney’s dreams, and all you worry about is whether you have an immortal soul and if so how to save it. A big strong man like you ought to be ashamed of himself.”

“What’s your idea, Miss—may I call you Kitty?”

The girl hugged. “Why Misner Rutland, this is so sudden!”

“Oh, all right, make fun of me. I can take it. What I was going to ask was, why do you think we’ve been left behind?”

“Now you’re talking sense. I’d say that they overlooked us, and decided that you and I wasn’t so edd on their invincibility as the other two.”

Rutland said: “They look pretty invisible to me; I just didn’t want to give up without a fight.” He stood up and began feeling around the wall. He said over his shoulder: “They probably have a perfectly simple system of dewaxing the walls . . .”

Vilik shook his head in. “I agree, friends, that it was not possible to soul you back with your colleagues. We will need to the matter own. Meanwhile will you come this way to the study chambers?”

They followed him through the wall. This time they found themselves in an unusually large sphere. It was in fact a two-storied sphere, divided into upper and lower hemispheres by a great yellow disk floating unsupported. Trends and handrails allowed one to climb from the lower to the upper hemisphere through the yard-wide space between the edge of the disk and the wall of the sphere.

They climbed to the upper storey, where they were met by another Alam. Vilk said: “This is Nige, the student. He will study you.”

Rutland frowned. “You mean this is a laboratory?”

(If you ask How stupid of me not to remember the name. This is the first time I have ever forgotten a word of a foreign language, once I had heard it.”)

Vilik stepped through the wall and disappeared.
Butland asked: "Do you speak English?"
"Yes," said Ngat. "I learned it yesterday."
"Could you tell us how we got from one of those rooms to another?"
"I should be glad to, but there are no words in your language to express the circumstances involved."
"I don't mean the theory; I'd just like to know how to do it."
"It is done by a special kind of thought," said the Alei. "These objects worn over our ears amplify this thought. That is the best explanation I can give--it is like trying to explain to your pet cat how to work the lock and latch in one of your houses on earth." The creature said this without humility. "And now may I ask you some questions?"

Some hours later Butland remarked that both intriguers were getting hungry. Ngat exclaimed: "Of course! It is that disgusting abominability of mine." Then Alan led them back to their room.

Butland asked: "Don't you take notes?"
"For such a short little interview? No; I remember."
When their interrogator had gone, Kitty Blake said: "He seems to be a friendly enough sort."

Butland replied darkly: "Never trust a friendly fellow."
"Maybe he regards you as one."
"Even he is ignorant."
"Yeah. Who's afraid of this, anyway?"
"Oh."

Butland fell silent while he hunted down a small cloud revolving about in his mind. When he had ensnared the debris, at least for the time being, he said: "Don't you see, Miss--Kitty, I mean, I can't admit any such possibility. It would mean that my whole life's work had been wasted."
"Suppose it has been?"

Butland squirmed. "You're not deliberately torturing me, are you? No, I can't say it makes me less sure. I'm not the only one who needs this."

CHAPTER FOUR
Specimens

The scientifics, Ngat, called for them the next day and continued questioning. All went well until he inspired a new regard for earthly religions. Butland jumped up and gave him a fern-root and hammer. Ngat got up and, regrettively, gave him a violent push toward the wall. Butland fell off the edge of the yellow disk that constituted the floor of the upper story of the inscription-sphere. He threw up an arm to break the shock of landing the wall of the sphere. But he landed right through. Wham!

He was lying on the floor of the biggest sphere he had ever seen. It was divided into several stories. Each one was full of niches. It was evidently a museum.

An Alei helped Butland up. It said: "Did you trip? I was expecting you, but
I did not think you would arrive so precipitously."

Bolitho gave up trying to figure out the rationale of this world, where nothing seemed to follow the ordinary sequence of cause and effect. He let the Alien—an assistant of some sort of Orgo—show him the exhibits in the cases.

One series of cases held a row of things that were Arais at one end and hooved-like things at the other.

"Evolution," said the Alien. "These are reconstructions of our remote ancestors. Do you understand?"

"Unh." Here too, the greatest delusion of evolution was held! Bartland did not have the energy to argue the matter though. Suppose he asserted the world had been created in six days, as he had really believed; what would he say when his guide brought up the fact that this was another world?

"This," said the guide as they climbed to another floor, "is an exhibit of forms of life from other terms of the universal series—of which your universe is one."

There were a lot of cases, each containing a thing, sometimes with two legs and some times with many. Sometimes with fins, and sometimes with tentacles. Some of them were mounted beside their skeletons, the skeleton..."
ten and the mottled skin in the same attitude.

The guide pointed to a thing rather like a devil with bat-ears. "This one is from the 4 to the nth power term of the series. The plane in that term, corresponding to A is very large, though of low density. Hence the atmospheric pressure is enormous—several hundred times that of A. We and your world, which have similar surface conditions. Since the surface gravity is not much greater than that here, while the atmosphere is much thinner, a flying organism of that size is quite practical. There are an intelligent people—much more so than you of earth; they even compete in some ways with the Aens."

Burland asked: "Is that a real specimen or an imitation made of wax?"

"Oh, a real one of course."

"How did he die?"

"He was killed specially, said the Aen.

"Oh. You mean you killed an intelligent being just to mount in your museum?"

"But naturally! It was done painless-ly by our society for the preservation of cranky to non-Aens. I saw that Aen, I told him they had to move the ones to make room for the next two specimens." So he had. There was an echo of it.

Burland shuffled. "Let's look at something else," he said.

The guide showed him cases full of mechanical objects. These, he explained, were self-propelled weapons. The planet had not had a real war in a long time, and had practically eliminated crime. Burland thought uncomfortably that if this were true, the Aens were superior. The guide said: "This one projects a ball of steel at high speed, so that it penetrates deeply into the body of any organism that it hits and kills it. There is no problem of the propellant and some of the balls."

Burland asked: "If a ball of steel from it penetrated into you, would it kill you?"

"Unquestionably," said the guide. "Just a Aren war, everywhere. The guide listened to the ball and did pull-ups. When he had done ten, he looked up expectantly at Wilfred Burland. "What, no assistance to the great lord Ng?"

"No, I serve the true God, and don't bow down to false ones."

The Aen scrambled up. "Oh, you are very much mistaken. You will go to the place of never-ending pleasure when you die."

"What?"

"The place of never-ending pleasure, where had people go."

Burland said: "We believe in something called Hell for sinners, but nobody ever described it as a place of pleasure. It's hot. You think. Where's the punishment in never-ending pleasure?"

"You just experience pleasure without cease for a few thousand years and you'll see. We can imagine nothing more unhappy. That looks, even if you are of an infernal person who is barely able to reason, but you not put your faith in Ng?"

"No," said Burland. "They argued for a while. Burland had never been proselytized, but he gave a good theological account of himself."

Then he remembered the argument between Eno Piper always used to upset him.

He said: "You say that Ng is omnipotent?"

"Yes," said the Aen.

"And omniscient?"

"Yes.

"And all good?"

"Yes.

"And he made everything?"

"Yes."

"But will evil exist?"

"Yes."
“Well, who made the call, then?”

The Alul was stunned, as Butler had been on previous occasions. The Alul shuffled nervously. Finally he threw himself down on the yellow floor, kicking his hands and wailing in his own language.

“What are you saying?” asked Butler.

The Alul left off his wailing long enough to translate. There was an indescribably polite note. “I was begging Ng’s pardon for having doubted him! This is terrible! Nobody ever brought up that point of yours before! I must go to our learned doctors, to hear the truth expounded!”

“You’d better take me back to my room first.”

The Alul did so. Kitty Blaise had already returned. Butler told her what had happened to him. He asked: “If I ever gambled, I’d bet you we’re the next two specimens to go in their course.”

“That sounds silly, Will. When do you suppose they’ll kill us?”

“I suppose when they’ve finished questioning us. There won’t be anything significant about us.”

“Maybe we can stall; keep the questioning going.”

During the following days they practiced the technique of stalling on the unfortunate Ng; speaking slowly, digressing wildly, insisting interminable arguments with each other over trivial points.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Dangers are True

One day Butler proposed to Ngat the question that had so upset Ngat’s assistant, Ngat took motoring for a long while. Then he said: “You must excuse me for the rest of the day. I do not feel well. I will take you back to your room.” Back in their room they found Rima Piper awaiting them. They threw themselves upon him; Kitty hugged him and Butler wept in his hand. Then they saw that he looked very serious.

“What’s happened to our world?” asked Butler.

“Plain, Mr. Piper told them how the reign of Ng was advancing. He gripped his stick, “These Aluls have got every earthly preacher, pamphleteer, advertising man, or what have you placed in matters of sound psychology. They give away tons of junk to get worshipers to come around. They hold a kind of big game. They use colored lights and smells and music.”

“And they use any sort of control?”

“No: we don’t dare say hon, after that little military demonstration they put on. Already they’ve got a tenth of the people of New York City converted. They’ve installed a kind of arena in the tower of the Empire State Building, in charge of one of their priests of Ng. Every time the priest gets inspired he yells the creed, and the men goes off, and all the converts in the city shaw what they’re doing and do it right.”

“That must be tough on the rest of you,” said Kitty Blaise.

“It is especially when the convert is the master’s son or a stockbroker. And— you know the letter is their sacred number? They won’t let us sell anything for five cents or one dollar or any multiple thereof. Numbers are holy, and the priests of Ng wander down Fifth Avenue saluting them with those little gadgets that mastermen on the Fifth Avenue busses used to match our dress with.”

He turned to Butler. “You really ought to be there, Will. You’d know what your poor brothers feel like when you get to work on them.”

“What else is there?” asked Butler.

“Oh, they think our marriage custom is most immoral. They haven’t figured our new ones out yet, but they will.
The trouble is that we have only two senses, while they have three.

Kitty Blake said: "You mean like sex, smell, and other senses?"

"Yes, those human-to-God senses. I'll tell you about it when Will's not around. I don't want to shock him. How's he been behaving?"

"So good it hurts," said Kitty Blake. "Not since Billie was here."

"Okay. You father will be waiting at the portal with a shotgun on your return, but I'll go ahead and explain things. By the way, do you mind if I speak to Will alone?"

THE girl went through the wall at the point marked by the green nestling. Upon Piper pulled out an automatic pistol. His face grew very tense and serious, and he said: "I'm sorry. Will, damned sorry, but I've got to kill you."

"What?" yelled Butler, jumping up. "Kill me, I said. I have to do it, both—"

"You're crazy!"

"Not at all. The President of the United States himself ordered me to. We feel that—"

"Then he's crazy too!"

"—you're too sentimentals. With your profound convictions you make trouble with the Akiu; you intrigue with their damned Ng or something, and they'll take it out on the poor earth. You're too dangerous to be left in their hands. And since we can't rescue you..." Piper raised the pistol.

Butcher, backing away from the menacing reed, stepped on the nearest couch and fell backward. The shot missed him and flattened itself against the yellow soil. Butcher stumbled to his knees and knelt. The couch slid into Piper's temporary. He staggered at it. It was light. He picked it up and ran at his cousin, holding the couch for a shield. The couch exploded, and as Piper was unable to see the upper part of Butcher's body the shot went through the couch and missed Butler. Butler slammed the couch down on top of Piper, crushing his lonely cranium to the floor.

A fist holding the pistol stuck out from under the couch. Butler grappled at the pistol. It went off, the rifle smashed and bruised his hand. He shifted his position to kick the hand. He kicked the pistol out of it, but in shifting he took enough weight off Piper for the latter to get his knees under him. Piper leaned both Butcher and the couch off himself.

They both got to their feet and swung. Butler hurled the first real punch, on Piper's nose. Piper staggered and ran into a clinch. That was an error; Butler picked him up and slammed him down on the floor with terrific force.

When Ron Piper came in, Will Butcher was standing over him with the pistol in his hand. "Get up, damn you, soul," said the missionary. Piper shook his head. "What did you say?"

"I said get up, damn you, soul."

"Did you say damn, Will?"

"You're damn right."

Piper shook his head some more. "I still don't believe it. You must have dropped me on my head when you threw me. Piper stopped his rumbling with his hunderful. "I think you know one of my truths. But it was worth it. If I've lived to hear you say (damn). What's come over you?"

"I've decided that you're right about this being out of the Lord's territory. Or maybe I've just had a change of mind. The treatment the world hands out to those who try to save it. Anyway, from now on I'll do what I think best, whether it agrees with the books or not. Get up."

Kitty Blake stood her head through the door. "Here your hours finished—Baa! Your soul. What's going on?"

Will Butcher told her. He finished: "Are you on my side?"
"I—I suppose so—though I can’t believe Alex would hurt a fly, let alone snitch—"

"I wouldn’t hurt a fly, but Will’s not a fly," said Piper.

Busland snapped: "Do you want to stay here till they mean you in the corri—"

"Of course not. But how—"

"I have no idea how these Aliens’ minds work, even if they are cleverer than us. For one thing, having no crime to speak of, they won’t know how to defend themselves against it. Kitty, you take this gun and cover Alex while I catch some sleep. Shoot him if he moves toward you."

When Nga appeared for the next interrogation, Busland was twirling the pinwheel in his fingers. He asked if Alex would go along. Nga said certainly.

Piper was an honored guest of the Senator, who was sorry to have had to lodge him in the old jail while a new room was being fitted out.

"This is the jail?" burst out Kitty Blake.

"Why yes; it was before we got rid of crims."

"Most comfortable jail I was ever in," said Piper.

"Is that so?" said Nga. "Strange; an Alien would feel it horribly uncomfortable. Of course non-humans are different. Let me proceed to the interrogation. By the way, Mr. Busland, what is that black object you are carrying?"

"A perfume sprayer," said Will Busland. It was the first deliberate lie he had told in fifteen years.

"Ah, I understand. Now let us resume our questioning. This should be the last day thereof."

"But," said Kitty Blake, "there’s lots of things about the earth that we haven’t told you yet."

"True, but those things either are not important or can be inferred from what you have told us. Let us—"

Busland interrupted: "What’s going to happen to us starting tomorrow?"

"You will be turned over to another examiner, who will undertake the study of your somatic characteristics. But do not be afraid; everything will be done to make your last hours painless. Now let us proceed—"

Busland shouted: "You can’t do that! I’m a servant of the Lord, not of your imaginary Ng ruler, and if you kill me you’ll want forever in Hell—"

"I insist, Mr. Busland, that you contain yourself. Otherwise I shall send you to the museum again."

"—with devil dancing around and poking you with red-hot pickforks, along with the other unpuritanish sinners—"

CHAPTER SIX
Escape

AGAIN that push, that fall through the wall of the sphere, and that landing on the floor of one of the stories of the museum sphere. Busland, as he picked himself up, remembered vaguely opportunistic talk from Alex Piper about multi-dimensional space-manipulation and other scientific fantasies—Busland had had no great faith in science, since it so often disagreed with Holy Writ. The Alien man was to involve a multi-dimensional manifold or something. Otherwise how was it that one passed from one sphere instantaneously to another without experiencing any intermediate stages?

The curator, or whatever he was, was there again. He said cheerfully: "Back again, I see. We shall take up where we left off last time."

"Oh no we shan’t," said Busland, pointing his pistol. "You remember those old-fashioned projectile weapons you showed me? Well, this is a thing of that sort."
If you don't want to have a small blob of metal penetrate your body at high speed, raise your hands!"

Instead of complying, the Alan argued, "That device does not look like one of ours. How do I know that you are telling the truth, and not being an Alan and therefore incapable of lying?"

Butland fired at one of the cases. As the echoes of the shot died down, he pointed out the two holes the bullet had drilled in the case.

Another Alan appeared, and made noises that evidently constituted a question as to what was going on. Butland moved to sever both the creature, and said to his acquaintance: "Explain it to him, and tell him that if he doesn't put his hands up too he'll be—ah—plugged, I think the slang term is.

The counter, whose name was Zev, did so, meanwhile raising his own hands. His colleagues started to obey, then halted for and dove through the wall of the sphere.

Butland fired, but too late; the wall had vanished.

Butland grabbed the skinky foreman of the remaining Alan. He felt a tension of the terror that Alans could instill in him, as some unknown means. "Turn it off!" he grated, digging the portal into what would have been the Alan's ribs if he had had ribs. The Alan stumbled. Butland continued: "You are not going to get away like that! What was that you said about Alans being unable to be killed?"

"It is a Lie," answered the Alan, who was dripping with fright and indecision. "Our ancestors were trained many generations back, when we abhorred crime, to make lying impossible."

"That's just fine. Now, answer some questions. Where do you come from?"

"The Earth is where the human race originally came from."

"Yes, I know that. But we have a fast means of transport, the portal. We can transport people and objects instantaneously."

"Oh, we have that ability as well."

Butland asked, "What is it?"

"All right, do so. I'm hanging on to you, so don't try anything stealthy."

The Alan had reached through the wall to a small clearing where, which he explained was his own quarters—or rather, those of him and his two sours. The term "sour" and "husband" having no exact equivalent in the triangular Alan marital relationship, the quater would be put for some time.

"All right," said Butland. "Explain about that portal."

"Do not know the details..."

"Then explain what you do know."

Butland pulled his prisoner with the portal. "Are you familiar with the universal series?"

"Mmm—yes and no; I've heard about it, but I don't understand it."

"It is an equation that defines the relationship of the parallel universes, each universe corresponding to one term of an infinite series. The portals between them correspond to the operation of—"

"What?"

"Our home, the things like plus and minus, though in intra-universal mathematics you do not add or multiply. You see operations resulting, as nearly as I can understand, before-behind-parallel, or after-coming-relative. As I was saying, the portals correspond to the operators of the equation; you pass through them from one universe to another."

"Any other?"

"Any other on your planet? To get to another universe you must pass in the metamatter of hyper-relativity of our own planet, and then—"

"Here, here, stop the mumbo. Get back to how you use the portal."

"One picks a universe where the corresponding portal is just above the ground-level. If the other side of the portal is below ground, it is crossed with
rock and cannot be opened. Then one gravitation one cannot see-"

"One's what?"

"One's pernicious; you have no exact word-"

"Never mind, I think I have what I want. Take us to Nga's office."

NIGHT was interposing Kitty Blake when Zedki and Butland popped through the wall. The latter explained to the startled scientist about the damage that could be wrought by bits of metal traveling at high velocity. Nga took the hint and raised his hands.

Kitty Piper broke out: "You crazy fool, the President was right. I should have stopped you off without warning."

"You have that. Put your hands up too. No, first grab all those little round cases. They're trichromes, aren't they? Kitty, you can't hold of Nga, so he can't dash through one of those broken walls."

He told Zedki: "The minute your colleague shows up with the help he sent but, you take us all through the nearest wall."

His instructions were nearly said. Six Alans burst through the wall of Nga's sphere. Butland fired a shot over their heads. They jumped back through the wall; then cautiously struck the muzzle of their weapons through.

"Come on!” said Butland. He got all his goop through the opposite side of the sphere. They burst in on a trio of Alans of assorted sexes who were making love in the various Alans fashion.

"Excuse us,” said Butland hastily, "Zedki, take us to your sphere," Zedki did so. Butland said: "We're going to the portal room."

"Suppose it is open to a world other than yours?"

"Then you’ll change the opening,” said Butland firmly. "And when we pass through to the earth, you and Nga stay here. As soon as we're in Antor’s, we're going to start shooting at any Alans in sight. Hey, Rux, have you got any more cartridges?"

Piper handed them over, and the five individuals marched through the wall into the room containing the portal.

The Alans in charge of the portal had just admitted another of his kind to a great hurry. This Alan were a thing like a tropical helmet and carried a thing like a rifle. He or she or it (Butland had not yet learned to distinguish the sexes by night) was chattering something at the Alan in charge of the portal.

"The purple square in the middle of the floor,” muttered Zedki. They were moving into it when the six Alan personnel also appeared in the room. They pointed their weapons.

Will Butland seized Nga around the waist, used him for a shield, and fired a shot at the six representatives of the bow. Nga emptied something in his own language. The armed Alan confronted for three seconds and raised their weapons. Nga spat in English: "They are going to shoot anyway! And me with my way will not made out."

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Final Peril

JUST then there appeared in the portal of one thing that had been the cause of the flight of the Alan with the sun-helmet. It was a fellow beast the size of a tiger, with a single enormous hooked claw on each foot. It snarled and sprang. But Piper dashed it in, whipped over its head. The weapons of the Alans went off with one deafening roch. The beast buried among the Alans. That part of the sphere became a blur of ferocious turmoil. Butland saw a black-and-white head with its abdors coiled up howling along the floor, shorn off by one of those sickle-shaped claws.

Then they were in Antor's.
Antonio’s head dropped back as he knew the portal between the earth and Aka. Gone were the restaurant tables and chairs and the bar. It now looked like the waiting-room of a bus or airline terminal. The first of the portal were marked off on the floor. There was a telegraph desk, a U.S. customs officer, a U.S. immigration officer, and a policeman.

Butland sprang to his feet, quickly, while the cop was still feeling for his gun. "You’re a human being, aren’t you? Those half-breeds wanted to kid us and shunt us, and we just barely escaped. Don’t tell ‘em which way we went!” And he started for the door. Kitty was with him. Rick Piper hung back. Then the beast with the four great claws appeared.

Rick yanked, jumped two feet in the air, and came down running.

The beast ran after the fleeing trio before the others in the seemingly slick of infinity could react. The trio leaped up their speed to college-record figures. Helped to a fire hydrant on the curb was one of the Aka’s vehicles, a black egg-shaped thing the size of an automobile body that simply floated in the air two feet from the ground. Butland yanked the door open.

Piper said: "But nobody would dare steal one of these—"

"Get in!” ordered Butland. He shut the beast as it bounded up. It did not come to mind in the heat. He bolted in after the other two, and slammed the door.

"How do you operate this thing?” he asked.

Piper said: "I think you just sit in the driver’s seat and control it with your mind."

BUTLAND tried. The egg lifted, snapped the strap that tied it to the hydrant, and rose.

"It acts kind of logy,” said Piper. Kitty looked out one of the windows and screamed. "Look! No wonder it’s logy!” A long furry tail swished back and forth across the window. The beast was on the roof.

"Up high and then do a barrel roll?” cried Piper. Butland did the best he could. Slowly the egg rose, until New York was an egg-shaped projection of skyscrapers below. Then the grippe the sides of his seat and screamed a shrill scream. Over they went. The flier, with a shrieking scream, rose and plunged toward the scattered clouds below.

"Where now?” asked Piper.

Butland imagined that they were going to Washington, D.C. At once they were on their way to Washington. Butland said: "We’re going to call on the President. Say, what time is it?

"About seven A.M.,” said Kitty Blake.

"Good. We’ll catch him at breakfast."

BY THE evening of that day, every chasm in and around New York City had been stopped by an F.B.I. man and asked the following question: "You believe that Ng created everything?" "Yes." "And that he is all-good and all-powerful and all-knowing?" "Yes." "And that everything he did was good?" "Yes." "But that evil exists?" "Oh, yes indeed."

"Well then, who created this evil?"

Whereupon the Aka, after pondering for some minutes, would throw a mild fit and dash off to the portal, to return to his home world for instruction on how to handle this unprecedented question.

Butland, Piper, Kitty Blake, and the immigration officer checked the Aka off as they departed. They came in such a stream that they made a line reaching into the street.

... two thousand forty-nine, two thousand fifty, two thousand fifty-one, two thousand fifty-two, two thousand fifty-three, and I think that’s all,” said the immigration officer.

An Aka burst out of the portal. "What has been going on here?” he cried. For
hours our people have been coming back so fast we have been unable to get through from the other side."

Butland gave the signal, and the huge concrete-mixer was backed up to the door of Anniversary. He cautioned the Alm: "Better get back to Alm quick. We're going to close the portal."

"What? But you cannot! We will not allow that!"

"Let 'er go!" shouted Butland. The mixer tipped, and wet concrete slanted down a trough and spread out on the floor. Everyone in Anniversary's hot. Butland and the Alm belted for the door and squeezed out past the trough.

"Stop!" screamed the Alm, wet concrete piling up around his ankles; Butland made for the door. He glanced back just in time to see the Alm, and a large glob of concrete around him, disappear. More concrete flowed into the vacuum space left.

They stood outside watching successive concrete mixers systematically fill the whole building with concrete.

When it was all over, after midnight, Butland had his hand wrung by the President of the United States, the Secretary of State, Undersecretary Whittington Stroud, the mayor of New York, Bishop Satchell, Cardinal O'Case, Rabbi Rosen, John Capone of the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism, and dozens more people. The President took charge personally of the books that Piper had saved from Nit's laboratory. He said: "By the time they figure out how to open the portal with all that concrete blocking it, I hope we'll be able to move there on more even terms. And, Mr. Butland, any time you want a job with the government, drop a line to Mr. Stroud."

When Butland finally got back to the Y.M.C.A. where he lived, and was having his swollen right hand treated in the lounge, Ren Piper, after many humble apologies, asked: "Are you going back to missionarying, Bill?"

"Nope. You see, Ren, in the course of telling the President on that argument to open the portal, I incidentally convinced myself... So from now on I'm a hard-boiled materialist like you. Maybe I'll become an anthropologist, and study the backward peoples instead of fermenting them. Or maybe I'll get an ordinary job like selling insurance."

Kitty Blake said: "That earnest air of yours ought to be useful at that."

"Maybe." Butland put the wrong end of a nine-tipped cigarette to the exact center of his mouth, lit it, and coughed himself blue to the face. "By the way, Kitty, one of these days I think I'll ask you to marry me."

"Rah-rally? Why, Will! But you'd better practice being a normal human being a while longer. Ask me again in six months."

"I will. I wouldn't propose in front of my brothers could flex anyhow, for fear he'd—what's the slang expression? —get the works with his cynical remarks. As for the proposition, it'll never be stouter than it is now."

He caught her wrist and hurled her to him with more determination than force. In fact so awkward was his initial attempt at love-making that Kitty was too helpless with laughter to meet.

Ren Piper said: "Hey, guy, you're embarrassing me. I'm not done."

Mrs. McClough, the Y.M.C.A. house mother, stopped in the doorway of the almost empty lounge with a tray of tea and scones that she was bringing the returning men. At the sight of said hero, the tray sagged, tilted, and slid to the floor with a fearful crash of broken cups, saucers, butter-plate platters, sugar-boxes, cream-pokers, and teapots.

The hero did not even moan.
HIGGLEDY'S PIG

Jason Higgledy, when put to the test, won out and brought home the bacon. But the "hazorg" proved more dangerous than the starvation its presence averted!

By MYER KRULFELD

After two years of adventure on her sixteen-year voyage to unpeopled Sirius, the converted space tugboat "Jason Newton" was traveling through the Macht void of space at a speed approaching that of light.

In one of her crewmen holds a flash-light blinder, and Jason Higgledy's slight body emulously approached his secret laboratory. Captain Storm had forbidden experiments after Higgledy's last fiasco, of course, but Higgledy had reached the point where that no longer stopped him. Captain Storm might be happy with his planning for Sirius and the company of his pet turtle Epikorn; Percy Green, second in command, could content himself dreaming of romance with girls who would be grandparents by the time the "Jason Newton" returned to Earth; but Jason Higgledy, after the hundredth reading of Dr. Faux's latest fiction novel, would be satisfied with nothing less than scientific experiments.

A recent hero he was putting happily over an improved Volunteers' chamber containing a fifllened and highly documented gallon of ale from the ship's keg just bulk, his mild blue eyes above under a mop of blase hair. Silly green eyes, huh? Fumbled answer, was he? He'd show them!

Drawing a long breath, he threw down the experiment watch.

BLAST! Flaxen ghosted from the chamber. Higgledy sat himself down, hands into claws. A wall leaped at him.

"AND don't say a word or I'll lose A normal of myself and kill you!" Captain Footwardt, "Storm" roared. "All our stories of anti-acidics! Most of our men! All blow into kingdom come; mixed in with acids, oils, and vitamins from the forest! What it means? Inside of four months we'll all be dead of acidity. At least you'll go first! From now on you're on an exclusive diet of bread and distilled water!—"

The captain stopped to catch his breath. Higgledy loved his food still innocently intact, but asking like seven devils.

"You sure did it up brown while you were at it, Higgledy," Percy Green contributed glumly. "Epikorn is about the only fresh meat left on board."

"Evans!" Storm bellowed, "Hands off Epikorn! If anything happens to him I'll personally throw the one who did it out into space without a coat! You let that turtle alone, understand?"

Dreadful days followed. Vegetarian diet did not improve the temper of the captain. Higgledy became gouty. His eyes flashed from a diet of bread and water, and from his frantic, hopeless search for some way to conjure up anti-acidic vitamins from the canned and old vegetable foods remaining to them.

On the fifteenth day Higgledy spent several hours among the ship's scientific books.

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On the sixteenth day Captain Ferdinand Storm woke to find that his pet turtle had disappeared during the sleeping period.

"You’ve killed him!" he howled, glaring at his two companions.

"Not me!" Green snapped.

"I didn’t touch him!" Higgledy beamed up bravely under the spanial’s suspicious gaze.

"Maybe you’re both telling the truth," Storm conceded grudgingly. "You’d better be! You two keep him in the holds. He might have wandered off. I’ll search up here."

Higgledy wiped his nose with a shaking hand and turned off to the holds. If Storm caught him in the act now... He went straight for one of the least accessible of the holds, where, the day before, he had prepared by making an elaborate crude laboratory of piled up, empty storage cases. Within the small chamber he had set up a powerful portable X-ray generator and a complicated maze of tubes, small boxes, and flasks, all containing differently colored fluids. Also, lying on his back with indignant waving fins, was Epicurus.

One of the flasks contained alcohol.

With the help of a medicine dropper, Higgledy fed some to Epicurus, and shortly the small beast was in a pleasant stupor.

Higgledy picked up a sharp scalpel. By working from the underside and taking advantage of every narrow opening, he managed to push the knife up so as to cut into the turtle’s flesh just under the shell. He did this in several places, always cutting the cut as small as possible, gouging off small pieces of flesh where the wounds were hidden by the shell. When done he had five pieces of flesh, none larger than a small pea. There was no outward sign of his work on the turtle. Epicurus, in his drunken state, showed no signs of pain.

Swiftly Higgledy cut each piece of flesh into even hair fragments, and each fragment was put into a small tube, bottle, or flask.

The important part of the job finished for the present, he picked up Epicurus and walked to another part of the holds, where medical supplies were stored. The bottom of one box near the floor was slightly wet, and an acrid odor was in the air. A kick on the box made a smart, pungent puff off the door.

Satisfied, he walked off with Epicurus. It was a lot easier to manufacture a smile now that the most dangerous part of his job was over. He wore a broad grin on his mild face as he walked into the living quarters with the sliding gate made necessary by the magnetic indoled doors which kept travelers on the floor in a weightless ship.

STORM’s door face fit snugly. He grinned the turtle. "Where did you find him?"

"Know where the medical supplies are stored? Well, one of the boxes contained a glass of pig alcohol bottles. A couple of the bottles broke. Epicurus found it and got drunk!"

"What?" Storm glared. "Epicurus drunk? You’ve every—"

"Smell his breath!" Higgledy suggested, grinning.

The turtle was still sleeping drunkenly when Captain Storm broke a small hole in the back of his shell and hitched him securely with a couple of lines of string to the foot of his bunk. The wriggling arms of Epicurus were over.

The doors went on, shut doors, heavy with the doors that approached in surely and so slowly with each man they hit which did not contain anti-acrid elements. Storm and Green became more and more aware with each aurasen breakfast, dinner, and supper.

Higgledy became greater than ever, even though Storm refrained so far as to let him eat any vegetarian meals which
He and Green could not stomach. Every day Higgledy wandered for hours. The others led him to his fruitless search.

Storm and Green went half way through a mound composed of chia, condensed milk, and potato flour on a certain red-tailed clay, when a sudden new odor filled Storm’s head as at a battle cry. A wild, unwholesome look came into his eye.

He knocked at Green’s door. “Can you smell anything?”

Green raised. “Bacon! Fresh bacon?”

Storm came to his feet, plunged across the room, and thrust the door open.

Perched, Storm and Green looked at Higgledy, who wore a covered plant.

With a slow, dramatic movement he lifted the cover from the planter, revealing strip brown strips rivalling in succulence the umbrellas of the gods.

No questions were asked. Storm grabbed for the planter.

He jogged it. With no gravity to hold them down, the strips of bacon flew to the ceiling. They landed stereo back at different angles.

The hunters sought prey with more lively and concentrated attention than Storm and Green displayed now. Strip after strip of flying bacon were deftly captured on the wing, to be gulped down forthwith.

Not until the last scrap had been devoured did they pause to question Higgledy. “Is there any more?”

“All the bacon you’ll want, and later other kinds of fresh meat, for the rest of the voyage,” Higgledy announced triumphantly.

“Where did it come from?” Captain Storm demanded.

Higgledy gave him a tolerant, superior smile. “I made it!”

“Made it how?”

“The omelet from —”

THE captain turned white. He dashed for the sleeping quarters where the turtle was sheltered. In a moment he came charging back.

“Egiporus is gone! You’ve killed him!” he yelled.

Higgledy slunk behind Green. “I haven’t touched him for over a week!”

“I haven’t seen him for over a week!”

“Where is he, then? What have you done with him?”

Higgledy’s voice wobbled. “Maybe he’s got into the hohl again.”

Storm grabbed his shirt in a grip that made him wince. “All right, then. We’ll look in the hohl.”

They searched. Green bringing up the rear. “And how,” Storm demanded gruffly as they went, “Did you make bacon from Egiporus without hearing him?”

Higgledy smiled wryly. “There are good tests on the whole field of science aboard the Sase Namhio. Have you ever read anything about physiology and histology, Captain Storm?”

“Out of my field,” Storm growled.

“I’m only a cook amongst myself, so nothing is out of my field. I read about a certain Dr. Carroll, who lived in the twentith century. He removed a piece of chicken heart and placed it in nutritious fluids. By growing off the amuse growth as the inner grew, and changing the fluids, he kept glands of that original piece alive and growing for decades. That gave me an idea. All organic stuff is cellular in structure. Every animal is a highly differentiated one-celled organism growing by fusion, with the new cells assuming different functions. Well, I found vegetable fluid compounds which might serve to keep pieces of flesh alive and growing. Then I removed a piece of flesh from Egiporus.”

“Humph!”
I divided the growing tissue and placed it in hundreds of flasks. By subjecting them to powerful radiation I caused mutations. Nine-tenths of them died, but the remaining tenth left me with fourteen new forms of growing organic stuff. Some of them were edible. One of them I call pig-Fried. It made the bacon which—"

\textit{Ker-whop!}

The sound was like a sudden slap on the metal flooring of the hold. It came from ahead.

"My pig!" Higgledy cried. "The tissues! I was so busy freezing the bacon this morning that I forgot to turn off the radiation!"

She broke into a run, Storm and Green after her.

\textbf{HE PULLED an empty packing case out of an appurtenance wall of axes and thrust it into his hidden laboratory. On a table made from another packing case stood hundreds of jars and jars, under the glowing ray generator. One big jar five gallons in size was tipped over and reddish liquid dripped from it into a spreading pool on the floor.}

\textbf{All eyes went to the thing on the floor. It was a swelling ovoid, already over two inches in bulk, with a moist, pulpy shining skin. It heaved weakly toward the small greenish font of Epicam in the turtle, who prefered slowly across the floor.}

\textbf{Ovoid reacted turtle, and Epicam became part of its own mutated flesh. Through the pink effluv of Higgledy’s Pig showed the darker mass of Captain Storm’s pet turtle. An unsightly gulp came from the captive. He thrashed in and delivered a hearty kiss at the ovoid. His head went into the stuff as if it were soft dough. With a howl he tried to pull free. In vain. The pink stuff crept with incredible speed up his leg, covering it with a moist, horrible pink film.}

\textbf{He slumped faintly at it while Green and Higgledy stared, paralized. A second later he glared at his hands, covered with a moist amber which began to spread like a playout on his arms.}

\textbf{Higgledy was the first to realize what had happened. "The cosmic radiation changed the tissue again, made it once alive as a single animal!"}

\textbf{He leaped forward. Even in that short time Storm’s arm and both arms were almost covered by an ever thinned, ever spreading pink film.}

\textbf{Higgledy ripped at the stuff. So did Green.}

\textbf{They could not grip it. Their fingers sink into it as if it were jelly, moist, mold, and slippery.}

\textbf{Horror pricked through Higgledy’s nerves. Storm had become strangely immobile and silent. The pink mass covered almost half his body now, and was beginning to flow up over throat, head, and back.}

\textbf{Higgledy realized suddenly that some of the stuff through which his hands passed as vacuity was left on his fingers. Like some evil paint it stained upward over his own hands and wrists.}

\textbf{Little hairs of fear began to beat at his brain.}

\textbf{"It’s on my hands! I can’t get it off!"}

\textbf{Green’s voice was a shrill scream.}

\textbf{Higgledy’s mind worked with an immense, clean, pale, instant lot. The pink tissue had to have oxygen. While in the jar it had absorbed food and oxygen through its entire surface area.}

\textbf{He ran to a big bottle on a shelf. His fingers felt numb, encased in gloves of red slime, but he could still handle the bottle.}

\textbf{He threw alcohol from the bottle into a wise jar which he covered to keep the liquid from burning out again. Already}
the pink plaque was up over his wrist. He dipped his hands into the alcohol until every particle of the tissue on his hands was saturated.

The pink stuff contracted, wringing a yell of pain from him. Then, with equal violence, it expanded. It separated from his flesh, became a writhing sheet which knotted into a small, convalved cowl moving jerkily in the alcohol. He covered the jar as part of the liquid slopped out. Pain surged through his hands where the alcohol wet his raw-feeling skin.

He turned to his companions, "Alco- hol kills the stuff!"

Green started toward him, meaning: The pink tissue was already half way up his arms. It covered and penetrated his sleeves.

Storm stood immobile. He was almost solidly covered. Only a mask-like opening left his mouth, nose, and eyes uncovered.

As Green started to run, Storm's ex- pression, which had been passive and stu- pid, became suddenly moved by some amorphous emotion. His arms went out stiffly, like those of some wooden toy. His head pink digits touched Green's thread! For a split second they remained, a frozen tableau. The tissue on Storm's fingers already moved in wild waves up over the helpless man's throat! Thren Green fought, but he was no match for Storm.

Higgledy darted forward, the bottle of alcohol in his hands. It was all he dared do. The only res of the four now un- touched by the pink horror, he dared not risk getting infected again, lest they all succumb. Half the bottle's contents splashed over the hands and throat of the transformed captain and his writhing victim.

The pink stuff contracted spasmodically at the touch of the liquid. The fingers of what had been Ferdinand Storm slipped and sank hurriedly deep into Green's throat.

Green went limp.

The tissue expanded convulsively. As the alcohol shook off its thousand drops into the gravitational air the tissue became its sinister self again, though its rate of growth had perceptibly slackened.

Storm's hands came stiffly open. Green dropped to the floor. With rigid pace Storm strode toward Higgledy.

Half the yet remaining contents of the bottle arched full into the mask-like face. A single cry of pain came from the automatons as the raw alcohol seared his eyes. Still clenching the bottle with what remained of the alcohol in it, Higgledy slid the blade. He had to have time—to think, to plan.

Storm ran stiffly after him.

Higgledy got to the living quarters first. The door between holds and living quarters could be shut and locked. In the Isaac Newton's frightening days it had served to separate officers from the rest of the crew. Higgledy abloomed the heavy door and rammed from the massive bolts.

He heard a thump. That would be Ferdinand Storm charging. But the door was immovable. He heard scratching, saw the twisting of the doorlocks. A sigh of relief went from him.

The long breath was still in his nostrils when, from under the door, through the thin space between door-lobes and casing, came a creeping, flat sheet of blood pink, threating its way into the room!

Higgledy was shocked to friend citizens. There was no more in flight. The only way to overcome the menace was to destroy it utterly.

His time-limit was desperately short. Sooner or later the tissue would fall upon him, and that would mean the end, not only of him, but of Storm and Green as well.

He set down the last precious drops of
alcohol in the nearly empty bottle on the table furthest from the door. Blankly, snail keeled up to sleep, head held by the tension, he considered the strength and soundness of the pink life-stuff.

It was primitive. It seemed, breathed, and ate through its inner membranes. Cutting would only cause a new substance to form at the cut. Burning would destroy it, but would also destroy Therm and Green, who by now were both incorporated with it. That method he would never use. Cladding might destroy a few cells, but the tissue as a whole would remain unharmed, since it had no vital organs to be damaged. . . . all of it, every part of it, was equally vital, and any cell could assume the function of any other that was destroyed.

And yet it must have a weakness. The alcohol had overcome a small mass of it, and had slowed down a larger mass when only spilled onto it.

That meant — the entire surface breathed and ate, even at once month, rose, eyes, and the organs of touch and taste. Simulated by alcohol through every organ it would become paralyzed, then die. When spilled on the tissue would become— drink!

The stuff crawling under the door was the size of an egg now, and growing larger. Suddenly it broke off, formed into an oval like an impossible Easter egg and rolled with its cursor jerky bounce along the floor toward him. Behind it more tissue poured into the room.

Higgledy ran the whole length of the forward compartments until he came to the air lock. Blastily he slammed one of the space cells shut. Amusing himself with an impromptu club made out of a long-necked bottle, he went back.

He paid no attention to the two small cubes which hungrily moved the chamber next to the hole. With a twist of massive biceps and a sharp thrust, he flung the door wide open.

Storm was still standing there stiffly. A glass of understanding passed through the crack-like face. The arm lifted suddenly.

Down went the bottle on Storm's skull. Almost without sound the lively pink mass slumped, unconscious.

The film was still alive and active, however. Higgledy remained unwinded.

He strode down the halls. Weaponless now, he was suddenly confronted by another food appetizer. Green!

Higgledy was a peaceful man, but this was no time for argument. Out shot a metal-clad flat. Green met it with his paw. He staggered and fell as Higgledy went past him.

When Higgledy looked back it was to see a pink lemming shape staggering gregariously in pursuit of him.

THROUGH the halls they ran until they arrived at a section devoted mostly to medical stores. Mostly Higgledy looked over the solidly packed cases. He tore several boxes down and flung them back toward Green, a flying, crashing barrier. Green dodged, ducked, slushed, and came more slowly on.

At last Higgledy found what he was after. He picked out a large wooden box just as Green's​sally gunshot fingers fell on his shoulder.

He turned and threw a blow at the pink appetizer. A flat came back in return, nipping viciously on the glass front plate. Another flat slammed hence in the same place, leaving the glass covered with a smear of pink. Green was trying to make a crack through which the tissue could invade him.

Higgledy turned around. A beating
fat struck repeatedly at his face, solid, relentless blows, heedless of pain to pounding knuckles. Sooner or later there would be a crack, and then—

With desperate speed Higgledy pulled down the hose and smacked it to the metal floor, hanging to one corner to keep it from bouncing all over the place. It cracked. Another blow and it split open. Round caps rolled out and flew all over the weightless void.

Green tried to throttle Higgledy with one hand on the other fist beat at Higgledy’s face plate.

Higgledy caught one of the caps as it flew lightly through the air and buried it with all his strength at the metal floor. The core flew off. Cobalt liquid bled out in small and large drops, even there was no gravitation to make it per. 

Flitting the composition of Green’s rigid knee, Higgledy stopped, caught the partly exposed one, and there what liquid was left back on Green.

Seconds ticked off. Green’s hearing flat came slower and slower. It stopped altogether.

Higgledy crouched around. Green staggered and fell.

Higgledy wiped the pink stuff from his face plate. It was simple and unsatisfying.

The man in the space suit stood. His muscles shivered here at the pink stuff. Like fully beginning to harden, the tissue came away in many sheets from Green’s body.

Higgledy worked at top speed. It took only minutes to get rid of all the liquid mass covering Green. As he worked the violet suit which had been clinging to him shrank away, and his own became.

He carried Green to another part of the hold and left him there to recover at leisure. Breaking open two more cans of the liquid he went to the living quarters. Stays still by unconscious in the doorway.

As Higgledy approached pink stuff from the inert body toward him. He poured the fluid into Storm’s body. Rippling convulsions went through the foul pink slime covering the captain. Two minutes and it became quiescent, unmoving. Higgledy was able to pull it off the unconscious man without resistance.

It remained only to shoved the inert pink stuff into a hole to leave the hole in the air lock, and then open the outer door. The onward rush of air removed hot, pink slime and all, into the dark, cold death of space...

"QO I figured out that if alcohol would not so swiftly on it, other more potent drugs would act even faster. Since the stuff had to be taken through the entire surface areas of its skin, a volatile drug like ether would work quickest. I tried it, and it happened to work. It was only a good guess." Higgledy chuckled modestly.

"Are you a good pathname?" Green sniffed. Both he and Captain Storm looked raw and unshaven. "You can’t imagine how glad we felt, to think and understand, and yet have your personality lost to something as primitive as no memory?"

"Well, it’s all finished now." Higgledy declared.

Storm couldn’t very well grumble at Higgledy after the man had saved his life. So he glared down at Epterus. "You’re the one who led us into this mess," he told the turtle. "I’ll bet if we hadn’t showed up at just the right time that mutant would have died before it came upon something on which it could feed."

"I’ve got an idea that mutant was a bit tougher than that. Anyway, it wasn’t Epterus’ fault. I was the one who got him started. My guess is that he went into the hold again because he’s got a good memory. He just wanted to get drunk again!"

THE END
GALILEO’S REVOLUTION

Astronomers are like blind clockmakers—they know the speed and direction of every part of the universe, but the secret of the spring—gravity—is a mystery even today.

By WILLY LEY

"WHY do you ask that question again, oh my pupil Galileo Galilei?" the learned professor asked somewhat nervously. "You must know by now what Aristotle taught—that bodies fall the faster the heavier they are. We read his discussions together."

"Then, oh learned master," replied Galileo, "I may expect a stone weighing twenty pounds to fall twice as fast as a stone weighing ten pounds?"

"Continuum est!"

It was then that Galileo felt ready to ask a carefully considered question: "Pray tell me, master, what would happen then if I stuck a stone weighing twenty pounds and a stone weighing ten pounds and bound them tightly together with ropes? I surmise that they would fall more slowly than a twenty-pound stone alone, since the smaller stone would impede the movement of the heavier stone."

"Quite so."

"But together the two stones weigh thirty pounds and therefore they should fall faster than a twenty-pound stone alone."

"The answer of the professor is not correct."

Thus embarrassed young Galileo Galilei, the learned but hassled pupil, was finally forced to admit that his ideas were behind the times. "Faster," he said. "It was incorrect."

"One must always be open to discovery." The professor gladly refused to confound such knowledge; his pupil was not the first to learn that the speed of the fall of objects is not determined by their mass, but rather by their shape and the force of gravity. This concept was revolutionary.

The professor, innocently, was forced to acknowledge that the ancient Greek master had never done it. They even refused to discuss experiments, and Galileo Galilei was quite alone—at least as far as a learned audience was concerned—which he carried the heavy iron cannon ball up the winding terraces of the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Having arrived at the top, he shot a small leaden bullet from his pocket. Then he dropped both projectiles. They arrived together! The novel and undisputed method of experimentation had given a new answer to the old question. An answer that contradicted Aristotle and Galileo Galilei was expelled from Pisa!

Since then all science has changed. People are not as we used to be, but the same activities of the universe continue. The experimental results are then confirmed to figure the figures and the figures are used for more experimentation (experimentation on paper this time; it’s called mathematics), and after that the research is backed by actual experiments. Thus knowledge really accumulates and understanding of the principles of nature progresses.

How this method works is illustrated especially well by the example of gravity. Astronomy is one of the most recent sciences—not as far as opinions about the nature of the universe are concerned, but as far as the prediction of movements go. That
is one field where we really know nothing, even though nobody knows what gravitation really is.

The microscopist may be likened to a blind watchmaker who has carefully examined a beautiful and complicated clock. He may not be quite certain whether one particular part is made of silver or brass or another alloy, he may not know whether the bearings are rubies or diamonds, but he does know how fast each part moves, and in what direction and manner. Thus can he predict every single movement. The "spring" of the whole thing, in return to astronomy, is, of course, the force of gravity. What it is, he does not know, but he knows in each and every instance how strong that spring is and how it works—even if the why is a mystery.

We know now that all bodies fall with equal acceleration, no matter how much they weigh or what they are. Apparent differences in speed are always due to a secondary influence, usually air resistance.

Discussing secondary influences, the figures are: 878 centimeters per second at the equator, 979.3 centimeters per second under 30 degrees latitude, and 981.9 under 60 degrees; while it would be found to be 983.2 centimeters per second at the poles.

This, of course, is due to the fact that the Earth is not a perfect sphere. And for that reason things do not weigh the same everywhere on Earth, if paired with a spring scale (the weights of balancing scales change weight too, so nothing can be proven by them). The differences are very slight, but they become noticeable when large quantities are involved.

On the islands of Spitzbergen, North...
Norway, there are a number of coal mines. They produce about 300,000 tons of coal per year in peace-time, in addition to their own needs. If the whole year's production were bought by a customer living on the American or African coast near the equator, a low coal would necessarily be fired 1300 tons of mixing weight, not of burning quantity, however.

Even a huge ship would show a noticeable difference in weight. The Russian physicist Dr. Pavel J. Potolski once calculated that if Soviet Russia's largest battleship would lose not less than 80 tons of weight if that matter during a trip from Ireland to the Ivory Coast.

P. THE results of the many experiments with gravity are properly assembled and looked at from a distance one discovers, with much surprise that they usually show only what gravity does not do.

If it does not change with the nature of the matter involved. It does not change with temperature, it can not be influenced by electricity, magnetism, light or darkness or whatever you can think of. It can not be screened by any known means.

That gravitational force follows the same rule as light, magnetism, and sound in decreasing in intensity with the square of the distance does not mean that any conclusion may be drawn as to its resemblance. That is the result of the geometrical fact that the area of a sphere is proportional to the square of its radius. Small wonder that Dr. Paul E. Hind of the National Bureau of Standards once called gravitation on "immutable phenomena" and continued: "Gravitation appears to be a function of nothing but the masses involved and their space coordinates. As to all other properties the evidence is negative. In most cases of a high degree of precision, reaching a few parts in a billion. The cause of gravitation is hidden in a protective armor on which there is not even a protective spot which to hang a hypothesis."

It was Le Sage of Geneva, who made what may be called the "elastic gumes" about the cause of gravitation. He believed the entire universe to be filled with "affronted vacua" flying at high speeds and exerting pressure from all directions at once on all bodies. The obvious point of view and question would be how happens to the heat generated with the impacts . . . but in 1750, when Le Sage advanced this hypothesis, nobody knew anything about the law of the conservation of energy. In addition to this, there should be cooling effects if Le Sage were right and they certainly do not exist.

But Le Sage's idea popped up in various modifications again and again. In fact, scientists insist on trying attempts of that kind.

It was Albert Einstein who was the first to have a novel thought. He looked around for another "force" misbehaving in a similar way, and found it in inertia, especially in the form of centrifugal force. An observer in a rotating circular room, he said, would find himself in a kind of gravitational field turned inside out, forcing him away from the center and becoming stronger the further away he is.

In that case the observer would, of course, know what is happening to him. He would know that the "force" does not originate in the center of the disk but within the objects (including him) themselves and that there cannot be "screeded." Einstein then proceeded to say that a "gravitational field is equivalent to an inertial field produced by a suitable choice of coordinates." And he succeeded in finding mathematically, such a suitable transformation.

His idea is usually explained by comparing matter in space to stones forming a cap at the otherwise flat surface of a frozen lake. Another stone set in motion...
on that surface (assumed to be frictionless) would follow a straight line until it grazed another's edge, when the motion would continue in an altered direction. If the stone got fairly deep into a large depression, it would not leave it again, but would revolve around the larger circle.

That would look like gravity, caused by a three-dimensional effect in an otherwise two-dimensional world. If space were four-dimensional, the presence of matter might cause similar effects that would appear like what is termed gravitation in our three-dimensional world.

That Einstein's thought experiment does not prove that it is true. Edington has said that at this point Einstein's theory stops reproducing phenomena and starts explaining them away. And Edington himself has admitted that "No amount of reinterpretation can ever prove me right." A single experiment may at any time prove me wrong.

The trouble is that four-dimensional space is a mathematical concept but not a proved fact. It seems to become understandable if compared to three-dimensional space as three-dimensional space is compared to a two-dimensional surface, to "Flatland." "Flatland" is also an example, however, and while there is no proof either way, it is perfectly possible, even probable, that reality can only be three-dimensional.

A ROUND the beginning of this century there appeared in Russia a novel by a professional mathematician by the name of Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Rudolph. It had the title "An Account of the Automatic Submarine between St. Petersburg (now Leningrad) and Moscow. Imaginative Novel, up to now only in three not entirely finished degrees." That promised to be at least as interesting in the theme. It was.

A. A. Rudolph informed his readers that tunnels are hardly ever straight and that in fact they should not be straight but curved. If a tunnel of considerable length—say a mile or more—were really straight the rain water would run into it from both sides and assemble in the middle for good, unless it were pumped out.

The reason is simply the curvature of the Earth's surface. A perfectly straight tunnel's center would be nearer to the center of the earth than its ends which are at the surface. Naturally rain water would get into it, running "downhill" from both sides to the center.

If such a straight tunnel were long enough—and consequently deep enough in the middle—not only water would run in. Everything that can flow or roll would do so, including railway cars. No help would be needed—the train would gather speed until the half-way mark was reached, and then continue on out of the tunnel with gradually diminishing speed.

"But at first it would move very slowly," you might say.

"That does not matter, because the speed will be very high in the central portion."

"But friction in the bearings and air resistance in the tunnel would eat up energy and prevent the train from reaching the opposite end."

"Nothing prevents the train from having also some power of its own so that it could travel the last few miles under its own steam. This may also be used to apply the initial push to overcome the friction and to accelerate a lot faster in the beginning."

"But why begin with such an ambitious project as a tunnel from Moscow to St. Petersburg? Why not try it out on a small scale first?"

"Because, in accordance with the laws of nature, the train would always need the same time for one trip, no matter how long or how short the tunnels. That time would be around 50 minutes if there were
no friction. With friction it is somewhat
longer, naturally the tunnel would not
pay if its length could be justified by
such trains in a shorter time.

Berdych was absolutely right with
everything he said. Only such a tunnel
cannot be built. Or, if we prefer to say
"cannot be built at present," the thing
still won't work. If the tunnel were suffi-
ciently long to be interesting, the ve-
cocity in the central portion would be so
excessively high that even wheels made
of the stoutest steel would be torn apart
by their own centrifugal force. And there
would hardly be another way of running it
than with wheels.

Modern electrical engineers might say
that they would not permit the speed to
accelerate too much. They would equip
the train with electric motors that also
work as dynamos. When the train has
reached a certain high speed they would
connect the motors with the wheels by
means of suitable gears. The energy
needed to turn them would keep the speed
low and the electric energy generated
could be stored somewhere, either in the
train itself or outside of it. Later the
current would be used to supply the energy
needed to complete the trip.

But even if that scheme (other applica-
tions of which actually exist's were to be
adapted), Berdych's tunnel would still be
a failure. The centrifugal forces created
by the Earth's daily rotation would form
one important obstacle. If that could be
overcome there would still be air resis-
tance in the tunnel.

Then again there is the little matter of
financing.

And for all these unsolving reasons
there is no hope that the three chapters
of Berdych's novel will ever be fin-
sished.

THE END

THE THOUGHT CHARIOT

Recent experiments with thought-waves
and theories about the driving forces be-
hind thoughts are neither new nor orig-
inal. Thoughts and thought-waves have
been a subject for thought for as far back
as the days of Greece prior to the Roman
conquest. Even in the Middle Ages men
tried to harness thought waves to serve
them. As early as 1326 Jacques de Lu-
sane, a Belgian sage, tried to convert
will-power into horse-power. Many
months of experimentation and years of
gathering deceit had convinced de Lu-
sane that thoughts were a force and that
they could transport an object in the same
fashion that ocean waves or wind currents
push a ship from port to port. In March
of 1376 de Lusane had constructed a
small wickerwork basket on four which
he then gathered together more than 100
friends and adherents. They were in-
structed to concentrate on a spot about
two hundred yards ahead of where the
empty basket stood. They were to will
the basket to move from where it was to
the designated goal. De Lusane entered
the thought chariot and the experiment
was begun. Whether a delusion or not,
the Irish, the Belgian's weight, or a strong
gust of wind was responsible we cannot
today say but it is a matter of record that
the basket did move in the direction of
the desired goal, though no more than
eleven feet.

—SHERFIE M. RINDEL
THE PSYCHOPATHIC MARTIANS

By ALLAN INGVALD BENSON

Steve Bardon awoke suddenly and stretched his stiff body in the hospital bed. God, how he hurt! What had happened anyway? Steve was a tall, bony youngster of eighteen with freckles, red hair, and a
Blode grin. Usually he was a tornado of activity, but not now!

"How ya feelin', kid?" asked a heavy voice.

Steve's neck craned like a gale as he turned his head to look at the heavy-set, bearded, derby-topped, individual who sat at his right. It took no second glance to place the worthy as a detective, perhaps even a chief of detectives.

"What happened, Steve?" demanded the big detective.

"Whoa!"

"You talk first, and then we'll talk. Go ahead, kid," said the detective, and sat back comfortably in his chair. "Oh, by the way," he went on, "Dr. McGillicuddy, and the great across the bed is Swannox. Doctor Swannox, from the Physics Department, University."

"How do you feel, son?" asked Swannox, and Steve turned his stiff neck to inspect his. Swannox was a mild-looking old man, with a kindly, wrinkled face.

"Fine!" said Steve. "What happened, anyway? Did the Marians..."

"Oh, so that's what they were," interrupted McGillicuddy. "Look, kid, I've got to go back down town just as soon as I get your statement. Now you talk, and then Doctor Swannox will explain everything to you. Now, come on, kid!"

So Steve told them his story.

I HAD been out sailing my boat (Steve's sailboat) and had fallen asleep. When I awoke, I was out beyond the sight of land, and the wind had died down. I sat up, but it didn't do any good. The wind was rising up from the north, and I headed back.

It was dark by then, and I ran into the Marians' boats before I saw it. As soon as I sped along the side, a searchlight jumped on me and immediately started jabbering the read. Before I knew what was going on, I found myself hoisted aboard the boat, and surrounded by the most外星ish crowd I ever hope to see.

The Martians were all about seven feet tall, thin, scaly, with clothes that made them look like paper puppets. And every man-Jack of the whole crew was jumping up and down, waving his arms, jabbering and scrambling and making no end of racket. It sounded like the wind down at the point. I was scared stiff.

They hoisted my boat aboard the flat, and lowered it down a hatch. That's the last I ever saw of it. Then we all went below.

They put away their hand-lights and gathered around me. By that time I was pretty calm again, and I inspected them just as thoroughly as they were inspecting me.

They were seven feet tall, as I said, and their skins were gray. More than that, they changed colors like the oil on water. And when they got especially excited they got all red and luminescent like a fire-fly. Their eyes were as big as sport and looked like glass. The pupils rolled around in those scenes like dice in a shoe-box.

They jabbered some more, and picked me, and left my clothes, and one of them even tried to kiss me. And away! They were the friendliest clothes you ever saw! Not one man-Jack of them was dressed like the next one. Two of them were so wrapped up, that you couldn't see anything but legs.

Well, they stuck me in a big machine that looked like something in Buck Rogers, and changed sizes in my shirt and suit and head. Next they jabbered half a mile, and then looked at the dial on the machine.

Finally they stuck a helmet on my head and turned on the jacks. I thought sure they were trying to electrify me. But no, when they took it off, I could understand their language! No kidding! What had just been noise before was words now.

All of them started asking questions at
THE PSYCHOPATHIC MARTIANS

The Martians were a funny lot. I think they were all crazy. They were smart people—I learned their civilization was almost a million years old—but they didn't have any self-control. They were just like mariners scowling and yelling all the time.

They'd come to Earth to get water. They got it. Every night a big cylinder of dehydrated gas, a tank—was rigged straight up into the air by a little black vessel that didn't show any running lights and that didn't make any noise. I never did find out how it worked.

The Martians slept in dark chambers every night. They had their regular Martian air and gravity in there. I was in one once, and about asphyxiated before I could get out. My nose kept for a long time.

But the Martians were crazy. My dad keeps stock and he says if you breed too long with the same strain you'll get animals that are too high-strung for their own good. The Martians were like that. I had lots of time to watch them in the weeks I was there.

They'd use some sort of machine, O.K., they'd dig it, just like that! Snap, snap! But then they'd forget to provide a hatchment for it, and it'd fall over and burst inside the ship before they could stop it. It's a wonder they weren't killed half a dozen times a day! They were the worst mixture of brains and rubains that I ever saw.

Once they wanted a beat for something. They dropped it in a ditch. Their automatic machinery made it right up. They were proud of it because it meant there was water on Mars and their new bath had water in it for nearly a million years. They designed a small engine too. It was about as big as a salami, and to hear them talk, it could pull the moon right out of the sky. But the dopes forgot to include a drive-shaft and a propeller! I noticed it but I didn't say anything. Let them figure those things out for themselves.

They turned on the engine after the beat was in the water and the propeller blew up from centrifugal force. Smart people, these Martians!

And the funny thing about it was that they were adept in lots of ways. But they were always pulling some bower like forgetting to put on the propeller.

Well, they must have stored lots of water before the Coast Guard showed up. The packed boat sailed around the first couple of times, and then hauled out. The Martians had some sort of projector on deck that looked more like a harpoon gun than anything else. They ran over to this, jibbering like mad, and turned it on the Coast Guard. A beam of light shot out and the water just to shivered on the Coast Guard in a huge explosion of fire and embers. The Coast
Guard skipper could see that there was no place for him. He turned his back on the ship and walked away from it.

The Martians grabbed me and started asking questions. I was going to lie, but a job of truth serum prevented that.

Well, I told them that probably the Coast Guard would call the Navy Yard, and they would send over a destroyer or a cruiser—whatever they happened to have—and then it would be hideous for the Martians. There might even be a battle ship in for repairs. When I finished describing the battle ship, all the Martians wore sick quins and every man—Jack of them was a sickled-blue in color.

"Well, we'll have to ask the-ja-ja-ja-ja-ja," they said and went off to get him. "Bo-ja-ja-ja was a visitor, the Martian, who was so sordid odd that he slept most of the time. They broke him out, rushed him down with oil, and woke him up. He was the worst-looking thing I've ever seen.

He was so thin he looked like a coasting salesman on a framework of bone. His tremendous chest was just one protruding rib above another, and his head looked like a skull on a stick. "Bo-ja-ja-ja," the Martians said, "we are in trouble. We need your help."

The old Martian wagged his head back and forth on his thin neck, mumbled, "It won't work," and went back to sleep. They rubbed him down with oil again and woke him up.

"Bo-ja-ja-ja," they said, "stay awake! This is serious! We are threatened by a huge fighting machine of marines. If we are wiped out there will be no water for Mars! That would mean the end of our men! Now stay awake and listen!"

"It won't work," said the ancient Martian, and again they went back to sleep. They rubbed him down with oil once more and woke him up again.

"Bo-ja-ja-ja," they said, "stay awake! We need your help."

"All right," said the old framework of bone, "give me some water!" They gave him a small cup of orange water, and he drank it. It was the only time I had ever seen a Martian eat or drink anything.

He asked them questions. They told him everything they knew. He asked our questions. The truth serum told him everything I knew, then he thought.

"It is simple," he said, after a moment's silence. He raised his skull-like head with its huge writhing eyes, and began to explain.

"We will make an anti-catalyzer. A sphere of force to inhibit all chemical reactions within its range. The Terranoids' guns will have no effect on them, for their ships will be helpless to harm. The chemical reactions upon which they depend for power will stop. They will be helpless.

"But we of Mars, my sons, will not be affected. Our science comes from the disintegrating rays of Uranus! Our ship and all its weapons function on atomic energy, physical energy, and the anti-catalyzer will not harm us. But the Earthmen with their chemical tools will be helpless before our might!"

"To work, my sons! To work, for the glory of Mars!"

Then he gave me some technical dope and went back to sleep.

They built the anti-catalyzer in three hours, designing and all. It had a range of fifty miles in every direction, down, up, and four ways by the compass. All I knew about it is that it put out a sphere of some kind of force that slowed down chemical reactions.

Well, they waited around for the battle-ship, and were disappointed in fact when only a destroyer and two airplanes showed up.

The lead Martian stood by the controls of the anti-catalyzer and lit the three guns on the horror grew in two racing planes and one plunging destroyer.

"We'll win till they are on top of us,
just ready to fire, and then we'll turn on
the anti-catalyst," he snarled. "Haa,
but it will be merry to see their engines
slow and die, their ship stop, their air-
gliders fall, their guns refuse to work. Hee-
hae, hee-ha!" he added in shrill laugh-
ter, his voice a siren, slavish evil.

The destroyer's guns swung to cover us. Immediately the head Martian snapped
on the anti-catalyst. I heard a hissing
in my ears; a great monstrous overcame
me, and I knew I was falling. Then I
went out; cold.

STEVE turned to McGillicuddy and
said: "Now you tell me what hap-
pended.
"That's the complete story, huh, kid?" the heavy-set detective asked.
"Yeah. Now it's your turn,"

Swanson will explain, I've got to go." And McGillicuddy pushed his derby down
further on his square head and strode out.
Steve turned to Swanson, who was
staring at his mask and looking thought-
ful.
"Well?" the youngster demanded.
"How about it?"
"All right," Swanson said, "Here it is."

The destroyer drifted out of the sphere
of influence built up by the anti-catalyst.
Occam's razor, you know. The planes,
unfortunately, must. No survivors. I was
called in when the military received the
report of the destroyer captain. They had
not enough to realize that something
unique was up.

After considerable experimentation, we finally built a small anti-anti-catalyst,
which produced a local neutralization of
the Martians' field, and then we sailed a
small launch up to the float. The Mar-
tians were all dead, of course. The ex-
treme gravity and an alien atmosphere
were too much when they went into-
shall we call it a coma? You were nearly
dead, but not quite. The neutralizer was
neutralized, the destroyer was in and the
ship's doctor saved your life. And that's
about all.

"But how came the Martians dead?"
Steve demanded.

Doctor Swanson smiled and shook his
head. "It was like the best they had, for
which they forgot to provide a propeller.
They overlooked the fact that life, is also
just like an engine's combustion, a chem-
ical function."
The Denver Convention

As most science fiction readers know, the 1943 World Science Fiction Convention is going to be held in Denver, Colorado, on July 4th, 5th, and 6th. It is sponsored by the Colorado Fantasy Society, a state-wide organization of science fiction and fantasy fans. The Convention Committee issues a blanket invitation to all science fiction readers to attend if possible.

Following is the last-minute information on this gala event.

It will be held at Denver’s fashionable band, the serious-dance, in the Colorado and Continental rooms. All fans who write ahead will be met at the bus station or airport and driven to the band. The convention will begin promptly at 9 A.M. on Friday, the 4th.

Friday morning from 9 to 12 will be an informal gathering where old acquaintances are renewed and new ones made. Here you will meet many of the science authors, and fans that you have seen in the various science fiction magazines, and, above all, the Convention’s Guest of Honor, Robert A. Heinlein. Besides Mr. Heinlein, those who are expected include Frederik Pohl, Raymond A. Palmer, F.


In the afternoon there will be speeches, mostly informal, by leading authors and editors present. That evening will be held the traditional costume party, those attending coming dressed as their favorite science fiction character. Refreshments will be free, and after the party the equally traditional auction will be held, where the fans attending may buy the original cover
paintings and interior illustrations of their favorite fantasy authors, and numerous other collectors' items to grace their den and collection.

Saturday (the 9th) will be a meeting of The Colorado Fantasy Society, limited to members only, in the evening. The afternoon will be devoted to an open business meeting of the same old group. An address will be announced at the meeting. A humorous science fiction play was written and produced by author Wilfrid E. Harestha, the showing of H. Rider Haggard's "She," or the showing of the motion picture, "The Mysterious Island," from Jules Verne's book.

Sunday evening the Convention will officially conclude with the banquet in honor of Robert A. Heinlein. Incidentally, a prize of $100 has been offered to the fan who will overcome the greatest handicap to get to the Denver Convention.

Anyone requiring further information should contact Lew Martin, Secretary-Treasurer of The Colorado Fantasy Society, at 1228 Main Street, Denver, Colorado.

—Olaf F. Wittkem

News from Our Branches

A new branch of the Science Fiction Society has been chartered in Columbus, Georgia. Its name is The Columbus Con, and it becomes Branch No. Twenty of The Science Fiction Society. The organization met once a week at the house of the Director, Joseph Gilbert, 391 1/2 Park Street, Columbus, South Carolina, Director Gilbert writes: "We are just starting our branch of the most active and best known in science fiction. We are writing our letters to the fun and professional organizations in this group, working on fan articles and illustrations, and planning our circle in everything we do. Watch for Southern fandom to become the center of Southern fandom in the near future, as far as activity is concerned."

The membership of the new club is four: Gilbert, Harry Jenkins, Lee B. Evans, and W. R. McQueen.

The Victorian Society of Melbourne has been chartered as Branch No. Twenty-One of The Science Fiction Society. Its membership is four: Besides the Director, Walter L. Hickey, 183 Dorcas Road, South Yarra, S.E. 1, Melbourne,Victoria, Australia, the members are Keith Taylor, Marshall L. MacLean, and Peter Macbridge.

The Toronto, Ontario, branch of The Science Fiction Society has been suspended for the duration, due to several of its key members being called into military service. Director Ted White reports.

Other branches of The Science Fiction Society exist in New York City; Los Angeles, California; Chicago; Illinois; Westwood, New Jersey; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Baltimore, Maryland; Denver, Colorado; Chelan, Washington; Detroit, Michigan; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Elkhart, Indiana; Long Beach, New York; Oakland, California; Dayton, Ohio; Sydney, Australia, and many others.

THE SCIENCE FICTION SOCIETY

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

The Science Fiction Society, 212 East 69th Street, New York City.

Name: ____________________________
Address: __________________________
City & State: _______________________
Occupation: _______________________
Date Born: _______________________

Send a copy of this to the nearest regional director and you may be invited to join the Science Fiction Society. Your regional director will send information on membership.

Note: E. F. Bleiler, who is the director of The Science Fiction Society, will be glad to help you. Write him at the above address.
ECLIPSE, published by Richard J. Kahn, 11626 Charlotte Avenue, Dearborn, Michi- 
gan. Bi-monthly; 3s. A new magazine, but a good one. The first issue contains an
entertaining article on "Impressions in the Pulpit" by Henry W. lemon, Jr., plus
interestin features, departments, and columns.

FANATIC, published by Charles Beig, Harrington Park, New Jersey. Bi-
monthly; 2s. The second issue of this pleasing little journal contains a seven-year-old
article by Forrest J. Ackerman, now printed for the first time, and other articles
and columns by Art Wilbert, Jr., D. B. Thompson, etc. While the appearance
of this is not as good as that of some other fan magazines, its contents reflect the
light touch typical of the new fanmagazines in general.

SPACEWAYS, published by Harry Warner, Jr., 324 Bryan Place, Silver-
town, Maryland. Occasional; 5c. The latest issue of this top-ranking periodical
contains material by H. A. Ackerman, Tom Wright, Walter Sullivan, James-
Blish, Bob Turner, Earl Kinghorn, and other leading science fictionists. As always,
the articles are of the best.

SPECULA, published by Arthur Louis Joppet, 1124 West 38th Street, Los
Angeles, California. Bi-monthly; 10c. This newcomer is an all-fiction magazine. Its
appearance is unique, at least equal to that of any other fan periodical. The con-
tents do not entirely come up to the stan-
dard set by its excellent make-up, but im-
provement in this regard seems very possible.

ULTRA, published by Eric F. Russell, 276 Epping Road, Woolnahr, Sydney,
N.S.W., Australia. Bi-monthly; 10c. The latest issue of this Australian fan
magazine contains articles on science, a
fantasy crossword puzzle, some fiction, etc.
Newly micrographed in several colors.

VOICE OF THE IMAGINATION, published by Forrest J. Ackerman and
Mary, P.O. Box 1647, Main Station, Los
Angeles, California. Bi-monthly; 5c. As
usual, the contents are almost exclusively
composed of letters on every imaginable
subject, written by a score of fans from
all over the country and abroad. One of
the letters in the current issue complains
that the quality of the letters presented
has gone down. This may be true, but the
magazine is still a good bet.

ZEUG, published by Ronald H. Levy, 38 Dudley Street, Cooper, N.S.W., Aus-
tralia. Occasional; 3s. This is the semi-
official publication of The Pedestrian Society of Sydney. Among its excellent articles is
a digest of the minutes of recent meetings
of the club. Like the other Australian fan
magazines mentioned above, this is micro-
graphed in three colors.

New Members
Carl Schepel, Jr., 436 West 10th Street, Ty-
rone, Pennsylvania; Carol Holmes, Lebanon, Nebraska; GilbertJarmon, Jr., 11631 Halsey Street, Bethesda, Maryland; John Konicki,
4392 Pine, Kansas City, Missouri; Dietrich L.
Gies, Cancas Gardens, Buffalo, N.Y.;
Robert H. Fink, University Hospital, Fort-
land, Omaha; Frank Baker, Jr., Mount
Amerina Institute, Plattsburgh, New York;
and A. E. Lang, Hotel Adolphus, Pittsburgh,
Pennsylvania.

Barr Negus, R.F.D. 
30 East 41st, East Akron,
Ohio; A. L. Roberts, 11951 Washington Street,
Los Angeles, California.

Debates
20 Golf Street, Auburn, Maine; Fred Jurin, 1628 West 38th Place, Los Angeles, California;

Karl Simmer, 1225 Park Apartments,
54 Montgomery Avenue, Philadelphia, Pennsyl-
avia; Bob Maslow, 624 Long Drive,
Jersey City, New Jersey; Jake E. Pilip, 321
Willow Street, Roselle, Pennsylvania; and
Gerard King, 154 South Miro Park Avenues,
Chicago, Illinois.

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Allen, Box 148, Pilot, South Carolina; Donald DeCora, 436 Delaware Road, St. Louis, Missouri; R. B. Moragnier, 501 South Main Street, Elgin, Illinois; Philip Martin, 515 South Main Street, Blackfoot, Idaho; and Warner, Box 246, West Los Angeles, California; Francis Pits, Keystone, Kansas; and Richard Herkert, 656 Howard Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Tom Odellman, 133 Coit Avenue, Westfield, Massachusetts; Robert Coburn, 45 North Beacon Street, New York, A. T. S. (Formerly: 313 North Beacon Street, New York, A. T. S.), 333 North Main Street, Westfield, New Jersey; Harry A. Kaiser, 333 North Main Street, Westfield, New Jersey; Harry G. M. Jaffe, 333 North Main Street, Westfield, New Jersey; and George Craft, 333 North Main Street, Westfield, New Jersey.

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Take a look at the lineup for the September issue. There’s "Mars Tail" a complete novel by S. D. Gottman, "Farewell to Fanatics" by Henry Hayne, "Super-Neutral" by Isaac Asimov, "Radiation Trap" by Harry Walton, and six more complete stories by Paul Edwards, Frank Belknap Long, James MacGregor, and others. And every story new, never before published. We use no reprints!

Don’t miss the NEW Astounding Stories!
STRANGER FROM SMALLNESS

Ralph Blake's surprise kidnapping flung him into fierce adventure in the torrid Sahara. Then a strange creature from Mercury stepped in—and even Ralph's death couldn't prevent him from unravelling the network of intrigue!

By OTIS ADELBERT KLINE

CHAPTER ONE
Hugo Nielsen

FOR some time now, as he passed from stall to stall in the street sellers' seething bazaar at Amissa, the streets of the Quarter in the Arba quarter of Cairo, Ralph Blake, American murder hunter, had been conscious that he was being followed. The young bacteriologist, a tall, slender, sun-browned chap, with dark brown hair that was bleached at the temples by exposure to the sun, had received a week's furlough from his grueling labors. He was trying to find the cause of a disease in a mysterious melody that was decimating the native population of lower Egypt.

He had hurried through tiffs after his late arrival at Shepheard's hotel, anxious to make the most of the brief time allotted him for diversion in the Modern metropolis, and had decided to tour the bazaars. The afternoon and evening had passed with many of the bazaars still unexplored, and now it was near closing time.

Observing the two who had been following him, from the corners of his eyes, he saw that one was short and slight, with a patch over one eye beneath his left eyebrow. The other was as tall as Blake himself, but fully twice as wide, and walked with a rolling gait. His raw hide appeared thick, and he was the most ferocious-looking type Blake had ever seen. He had been the most familiar of his name, but filled with unavailing hatred because Blake had once exposed a murderer whom he had made.

Twice before, Blake's life had been attempted by obviously paid assassins, once in China and once in New Granada, and both times he had escaped. But he had been unable to prove anything because he had been compelled to kill his attackers in order to save his own life. He began to think that he had brought his favorite weapon—a Colt forty-five. But, as he still exposed in the buttoned-down holster of his waistcoat, he could only rely on nature's weapons.

He could, of course, call a policeman. But he had not been attacked, and could not even prove that he was being followed. Besides, every native policeman now seemed suddenly and mysteriously
to have disappeared. There were only a few struggling shopkeepers and their em-
ployees about.

KEEPING close to the nearest of these, Blake, with an effort to appear non-
chalant, followed them out of the side at Albarie, and turned right on the Sukran Nahidin. He kept a wary eye on the two
talluous looking constables who were following him. It was during one of his
quick glances backward that the group he had taken to be harmless shopkeepers
suddenly jumped on him. A clack was thrown over his head, and he was borne
to the ground by the sheer weight of numbers.
Blake instantly dived out from the
ground with fists and feet, flinging them in all directions, then tore the stifling
cloak of the clack from his head and leaped erect. They were on him again in an in-
mense, like a pack of wolves around a stag,
and he saw that the monocular and the
scar-faced ruffian who had been following him, had joined them—were apparently
the ringleaders. He clipped the former on
the jaw, sending him reeling against a
wall, then punched the latter in the belly,
debilting him up in agony.
Yet the odds would have been far too
heavy had it not been for the sudden ap-
pearance of the newcomer. He was stri-
der, of medium height, and wore a cheer-
fully-cropped, jet black beard. Save for his
grain turban, his clothing was Homogeneous. He sprang into the fray, leaping about him
on the sides and shoulders of the ringleader with a thick Malacca cane, and shouting in Arabic: "Dogs and sons of dogs! Scum of the soil! I'll teach you to at-
tack a friendly stranger!"

At this, Blake's assailants quickly took
to their heels, bearing with them the still
unconscious monocular, and helping his
grunting, star-faced companion.
The newcomer helped Blake to brush
his clothing and put it in order.

"Pahh!—" began Blake gratefully,
what the other interrupted.

"Don't thank me. It was the least I
could do alter this unwarranted attack
by my countrymen. I am devastated. I
am ashamed that such a thing could oc-
cur on the public streets. And not one
of my police officers to sight."

"Your police officers?" wondered
Blake.

" Permit me to introduce myself, of-

"I am Hagg Nadone."

Hagg Nadone! The same was legend-
ary. Blake had often heard tales of the
mysterious head of Cain's secret police,
reputed not only to be an all-power, a Modern
budy man learned in ad al, the faith of Al
Islam, and a dray who had made the holy
pilgrimage, but an Oxford graduate, well
versed in the arts and sciences of the oc-
cident, and a descendant of an ancient
line of Egyptian magicians who had com-
manded their erudite knowledge from
father to son since before the days of
Moses, the first pharaoh.
He had regarded many of the tales of this man's sagacity as pure fabrication
---utterly preposterous---and the main him-
self as a myth. Now he stood before him in
the flesh, grave and smiling.

Blake returned his deferential salute.

"I've heard of you, Hagg Na-
done," he said. "I'm Ralph Blake, bag
hunter."

"And I've heard of your brilliant work
as a microscopologist, doctor," replied the
Hagg. " Will you go in on it a spot of en-
croachment? There is a tale merely."

"I'll be delighted," Blake replied.

They rounded the corner of the next
side street, and the Egyptian led the way
into a crowded, smoke-filled café, where a
Mohrani dancing girl swayed and wig-
gled her well-rounded curves to the walk-
ing of banquets, and streaming odors, the ruled of tabuns, and the throbbing
of small drums.
CHAPTER TWO

Mythematic House

Blake awoke with a splitting headache, and a thirst which he knew could not have been engendered by four fingers of soda. He opened his eyes and squinted around him. He was lying on a low divan, clad in embroidered silk pajamas that must have cost a small fortune. Silken coverlets and pillows spoke also of opulence. Antique rugs, every one a collector’s piece, Bukhara, Kashan, Tabriz, Kerman, shahs, Parisian, Dushevino, and many others, completely covered the walls as well as the floor.

The room was lighted by an antique oil lamp suspended from the ceiling by four golden chains, the oil containing a perfumant which scented the room with heavy fragrance. The ceiling was decorated with ornate scrollwork.

Blake sat up. His head seemed dizzy and a feeling of nausea attacked him. But this gradually subsided, and he got to his feet. No door or window was visible, so he began systematically drawing back one rug after another. The first two revealed only bare expanses of wall. The third showed the outline of what was obviously an air-conditioning system, which accounted for the comfortable temperature of the room as compared to the terrific heat of the outside.

Behind the fourth rug was a heavy sliding door. He tried the handle and found it locked. Just as he was about to

The patrons of the place, Blake noticed, were mostly natives, many of them smoking little leaf-shaped sheaves and sipping small cups of black, syrupy coffee.

“A tale for two, Ah!” Hagg Nadesan told the ubiquitous bawd waiter. “And send Henry.”

All seated them on a cushioned divan behind a small circular table, and hurried to reposition the gourds, which lost no time in coming.

“My poor place is honored, ye lads,” he said. “What is your pleasure?”

“Coffee for me. For my friend, perhaps, something stronger?”

He tossed impulsively at Blake.

“A doublo cuk, mister!” Blake replied. Hagg Nadesan preferred a curiously carved ivory cigarette case, yellow with age and obviously a valuable antique.

Blake took a cigarette. Hagg Nadesan followed his example, and a watchful waiter quickly held a light to both.

A moment later, the proprietor himself came up followed by two more waiters, one bringing the coffee, the other the spirit.

Blake poured four fingers of the powerful orange-flavored date brandy, and tossed it off neat. A pleasant glow went through him as he splashed more of the clear, colourless liquor into the tall glass.

“I wasn’t that out,” he told the hagg.

“Now I’m ready to dance over the next in the approved fashion.”

“I quite understand,” smiled Hagg Nadesan. “A brave man faces danger without flinching, but once it is past there is a reaction.”

While the hagg talked, Blake suddenly felt a peculiar sensation come over him. At first he felt as if he were shrinking to infinite smallness, while the smiling, bearded face beside him assumed gigantic proportions. The next instant, it seemed that his body was swelling to incredible size, that the hagg was scarcely larger than a mosquito, and had reached very far away.

Blake was not a toxicologist, but he knew the symptoms. Through the subtle Oriental drug that changes and distorts the senses! He had been deloped either by the cigarette or the drink.

He clutched the table, tried to rise. But the cloth came away in his hands, spilling coffee and liquor. He sank back, inert, as consciousness left him.
pointed on the door to attract attention, the lock clicked and the door swung outward.

A giant arm, naked save for turban and his cloth, held the door open. A light-skinned Abyssinian girl held a tray on which was a steaming copper pot, a small cup, and a package of cigarettes.

"Your coffee, sahib," she said.

Placing the tray on a small uncarved table set inlaid with mother of pearl, she filled the cup with steaming, spiced coffee, and withdrew.

Baker heard the door softly closed and locked.

After a second cup of coffee and half a cigarette, the American began to feel a bit better. He was about to go and pound on the door once more, when he heard it open.

This time a young Arab entered.

"Salam alaykum," he said with a polite bow.

"Your bath is ready, sahib," Baker followed the bath boy along a slightly laden hallway, with inlaid walls, mosaic tiled floors, and flickering abalone oil lamps which hung from the ceiling at intervals of about ten feet.

The hall room again reflected the wealth and magnificence of his host, with its walls of black marble and sumptuous tub of julep green tile. All metal fixtures were gold plated.

After a bath, shave, and massage, Baker's facial hair had practically disappeared, and he was surprisingly hungry.

The bath boy then opened the door of a connecting dressing room.

Here another young Arab had laid out his clothes, neatly pressed. Obviously, his ablutions must have obtained his bathing at Shepheard's, perhaps by taking his signature on a note and paying his hotel bill. He found his wallet and small change intact, and the boy who had brought his clothing produced his wrist watch.

At once door, opening into the hallway, swung wide, and the Abyssinian girl announced: "Breakfast awaits in the antechamber, sahib."
ally an” which echoed coldly. After
they had boarded their boat, they had
froze from the thin sheet of ice on the
water; the men wore scuba suits, but
they were nightmares. Blake
placed the silver mouthpiece be-
tween his lips and inhaled the water-
cooled smoke while waiting for his host to
speak. He still did not feel the
small creature swarming in his chest.

“Tell me about this place, I said.
“Albion, the moon and stars of my
night are fluttered by clouds.”
Blake meant it to mean that his boat was
alarmed by a great roar, and that, perhaps, there
was something he could do about it.

“Albion means you the power of peace,”
he replied, “but other, it may be that,
realities, I can be of some small assis-
tances.”
Blake felt that this was his best course.
No (alas), questions as to why he had
been abducted, no: Marjani was about his
rights as an American citizen, but a frank
and friendly offer to try to help this man
who had professed undeserving friendship and
protection according to the custom of his
race.

“May your strength be a thousand fold,” said the
shaykh. “I deeply regret that I was compelled to use the
only means left to bring you here. But, as you
are aware, I had no choice left after your
three violations.”

“My three refusals!” interrupted Blake.
“I don’t quite understand.”

“I will give your written answers to my
three letters, which were signed ‘Shaykh
Sultan,” though that is not my name, re-
questing your assistance,” said his host.

“But I never received or answered any
requests for assistance,” said Blake. “I’d
like to see those letters.”

The dark eyes of the shaykh regarded
him, slowly for a moment above the
covering of gray.

“There is much in this that puzzles me,
old man,” he said. “Despite the letters, I be-
lieve you. And you shall be shown them in
due course. But, at present, we have before
us a far more important matter—a matter of
life and death.”

“Suppose you tell me about it,” Blake
suggested.

“My daughter has been like one dead for
more than three months. Yet the feared
shaykhs, the doctors of your race and mine,
say she is not dead. She is my only child,
the jewel of my home and the salt of my life.
She does not speak or move or even
breathe. She takes no food or water, yet
does not waste away, nor does her body
temperature change. One of our Arab
shaykhs said she had been bewitched by a
devil, but, as every one knows, there are
no jinn in these days.”

“The Paragon faulkens are condemned,
and can do nothing, but recommended
your services. That is why, when I re-
ceived these three refusals, I had you
brought here through the courtesy of my
friend, Haji Nadir.”

“I’ll examine your daughter. But first,
where am I? And what about laboratory
equipment?”

“You are in my humble house on a cer-
tain oasis in the Arabian desert, brought
bitter in my amnesia. I cannot reveal
more, as I do not wish you to know this
location, or my name. But if you succeed
in healing my daughter, I promise to make
you wealthy beyond your most extravagant
dreams. I had a complete laboratory in-
 stalled here two months ago.”
He clapped his hands, and a servant
appeared in the doorway.
“Sayed Marjani,” he commanded.
The servant withdrew silently, and a
few moments later, a pretty, capable lov-
ing Sowkness woman appeared in white
uniform.

“This is my daughter’s nurse,” said the
shaykh, “who has cared for her since birth.
She will conduct you to her.”
The old nurse led him up a winding stairway to the hallway that circled the top of the large subbasement and was screened from the observation of any one below by wood-paneled letter work.

"Divide!"

She showed the warning to all females within hearing to tell their fans, as a rain order than their master approached. An instant later the door facing them was swung open by a heavy black man, armed with a circular and pistol, and as tall and muscular as the one who had been on guard at Blake's door that morning.

Marjana walked past the man into the hallway and Blake followed. They passed several curtained doorways which sealed the scent of exotic perfumes and from which came the subdued murmur of female voices. At the end of the corridor, a slave girl drove back a curtain, and Blake followed Marjana into the richly furnished boudoir of the sheik's daughter.

Wedding up to the bed, the old nurse exclaimed: "Oh, my little white dove, the great doctor has come at last to heal you. Awake, my little pigeon."

Suddenly, Blake recognized the same amaranthine as he stepped forward. Not at eye—Light of the Eyes. And, as he saw the slender, youthful figure that lay on the bed, he realized that the same was well preserved. The thin sliver of eyelid did not hide the lovely curve of budding young womanhood. Nor did the porcelain of face and thin strings which the man had placed over the girl's face, covering all but the eyes and prehensum of wavy, light-blonde hair which lay on the pillow, conceal her exotic beauty.

"Light of the Eyes! She's a knockout!" thought Blake. Then he realized that his visitor was poorly professional, and tried to recover from his surprise sufficiently to act the part.

He was well enough acquainted with Modern decorum to refrain from hitting the push; however, he drew back a corner of the sliver curtain, picked up the strip of raw that lay next to him, and felt for the pulse. No pulse! They were invisible.

"Tell your master I'll need a stethoscope," he informed Marjana.

"Right here, doctor."

He turned at the sound of a new voice behind him, and saw a white clad nurse, her features concealed by a surgeon's mask. She had wheeled in a small table, on which surgical instruments lay in a porcelain tray. She was proffering the stethoscope.

Blake listened for heartbeats and sounds of breathing. Both were invisible. He raised an eyelid, and marveled at the beauty of the long, curling lashes. Then he raised the other. The eyes were turned upward and inward, as in deep hypnosis. Catalepsy, he thought. But what can have caused it?

"Well take a blood specimen," he said.

His capable assistant handed him a full of cotton and a bottle of alcohol. When he had sponged the white skin just above the crown of the shore, she handed him the needle and plunger set. As it slowly deeped into the glass barrel of the instrument, Blake saw that the blood was rich, red, and healthy looking as that of a normal individual.

"Where's the laboratory?" he asked.

"I'll show you immediately, doctor."

Marjana held back the door curtain as the nurse wheeled out the table. Blake following. They passed the curtained doorways of the boudoir and the big room, then circled the hallway, presently entering a room on the far side. It was a clean, white-laid laboratory with the latest and best equipment, lighted by a row of large windows that let in the sunlight. Looking out, he saw a rolling expanse of desert sand dunes, with the faint devils peering above them in the hot sunshine.

Blake set to work at once, making the routine tests and examinations, but could...
BLAKE was-dumbfounded. A tinyhuman
figure smaller than a blood corpuscle, less than
one-twelfth-thousandth of an inch in height! And one which perfectly re-
produced the form of the girl from whom it had been taken. What could it mean?
He hesitated, and looked again. Perhaps this was a hallucination induced by the
 twórcie with which he had been doped.
Now the figure was moving. It was
raising its tiny arms toward him. One
hand pointed to its mouth. The other
rubbed its stomach.
"Good God!" he exclaimed. "It's
she's hungry!"
"I beg your pardon, doctor."
His assistant, still stupefied, was standing
at his elbow.
"Eh? Oh, nothing. I mean—our patient is
hungry. She must be after three months
without food. Blood shows starvation
symptoms—diaper teas."
He didn't quite know why he had said
that. Something inside him, it seemed,
was warning him not to tell this masked
assistant of his who he had seen. A tale-
spiteful message, perhaps? The tiny figure
in the water droplet had now laid its finger
on its scaring lips.
He turned to his assistant. "Go and
awake the patient. Let me know at once
if she should show any sign of returning
consciousness."
"Yes, doctor."
After Blake turned his attention even
more to the tiny figure in the drop of
water. It was still signalling for food. But
how could he feed this minute being?
He hesitated, found some sterile
water, and filling a small quantity with
a little distilled water, added it to the drop-
let on the slide. As he removed the drop-
per, he thought he saw a tiny creature
smaller than a nudge, circle upward from
the slide and fly toward the sink.
Once more he applied his eye to the
microscope. The little figure had disap-
naped! Had he killed or dissolved it? Or
had it wound wings and flown away?
He went over the slide very carefully,
moving it to bring the field of the micro-
scope around the edges of the drop and
gradually spiraling to the center. But
there was no sign of the tiny individual
he had seen before. He then made an
examination with the polariscope, but
could discern no trace of the glaucous
bead had dropped.
As he walked, he was increasingly
aware of a slight rustling sound behind
him. However, he was so absorbed by
what he was doing that he paid no atten-
tion, until he suddenly heard a deep bass
voice say:
"Thanks for the lift, doctor."
He turned and saw, not a man, but a
plant! At least, it resembled a plant. It
was a bright green in color, though quite
unlike any plant he had ever seen. Its
proportions, instead, barbed, barbed body was
supported by six. sixacross shaped sen-
tiles, each about three feet in length. An-
other fringe of minute roots grew around
the upper rim, like the tassels of an ecle-
poys. One of them, he discovered, was
attached to the opening of the water faucet.
A second was twisted about the handle. All
others ended in large, spade-shaped leaves
which were swaying gently in the bright
sunlight, making the rustling sound which
he had heard.
Up from the center spiraled another
tendril about an inch in thickness. It was
suspended by a pear-shaped head, with
grotesque features that looked marvelously
human. The head was crossed withリンク-
like leaves that curled upward and out-
ward.

The creature was growing swiftly, the
body swelling like an inflated balloon, while
the head expanded in proportion, and the
leaves and tendrils lengthened.

**SPEECHLESS** with amusement, Blake
watched it grow until the leaf crown
reached the ceiling. Then the tendril be-
neath the water faucet was withdrawn, and
the one which gripped the handle
turned off the water.

The head, now larger than a bushel
basket, spoke.

"You seem startled, doctor. But I ob-
serve that you are not afraid."

"Why should I be?" Blake replied.

"You are only a hallucination like the
little figure I saw on the slide. It disap-
peared, and so will you."

"You are exaggerating a hope rather than
a conviction," grinned the large head.

"You don't like my looks, and so you hope
I'll disappear. But tell me, why did you
drop that glance onto the slider?"

"I, er, there was an appeal for food. I
didn't know what else to do for a micro-
scopic creature."

"You did wisely," nodded the giant.

"I was that microscopic creature. You
responded to my appeal for food, and I
will forget it. In fact, I am going to
help you."

"Just who and what are you?" asked
Blake. "And how could you change from
a genetically engineered plant?"

"Simple enough when you know how to
counter artificial means," was the reply. "As
to who and what I am—all in good time.
For the present you may consider me a
friend. That's what the Arabians have
always called my people. No doubt you've
read 'The Thousand Nights and a Night'."

"I regard those stories purely as works
of the imagination," said Blake. "And
frankly, I consider you a figure of the
imagination. You have no real existence,
but are the result of suggestion, perhaps
by that wise magician, Hagg Nothem, bubbling
about through hypnosis or drugs.
You are a hallucination; your voice is tele-
pathic.""

"Even for a scientist, you are unusually
narrow and dogmatic," wrinkled the deep
voice. "If I weren't obliged to grant you
three wishes by the elders of my people, I
might refrain from doing so on that score,
even though you now blindly stand in
deadly danger, urging me about whether or not I exist."

"If you are not a hallucination in a hypo-
notic suggestion, you might tell me who
and what you are."

"A complete explanation would be be-
yond your power to grasp," was the reply.

"You don't believe in the gods, and I didn't
tell you I was a jinni—only that my people
are so called by the Arabs, and surrounded
with superstitious legends. In other lands
they have been variously called demi-
humans, fiends, and a host of other names,
when they revealed themselves. I am a
visitor from another planet—the son you
call Mercury."

"That's preposterous," said Blake. "There
would be no life on Mercury, with its
permanently boiling gas on one side
and its changing terrifically hot right on
the other."

"Not like as youribelievers know it
here," was the patient explanation. "But
life, nevertheless, infinitely more intelli-
genous than anything on this planet. It has
had to be, from the beginning, because of
the difficulty of survival under such con-
ditions. You, as a microbiologist, are aware
that there are microorganisms on the earths
that can live and reproduce in boiling
water."

"Grant it," said Blake. "I've seen
them."
"My people, normally, are sub-microscopic. We are smaller than electrons—smaller, even, than protons."

"And I presume you traveled here from Mercury on an electron?"

"Your guess is closer than you realize, but not quite accurate. My space ship was towed here by a controlled photon, with the speed of light," came the stranger's deep voice.
"And where is your space ship now?"

"Moved to one of the molecules of this form which I have temporarily assumed. I am always get it when I want it, can go back instantly to subterranean."

"Why did you talk to me from the vein of that lovely creature whom you were investigating? It was smaller than a flyable virus. However, I swiftly built up a subcellular body the size of a microbe, physically, a protem. I know you would be interested in a strange protem—no, in fact, you were looking for and half expecting to find. But I knew, also, that you would be definitely more interested in a body of microscopic size shaped like the girl. So, as a single cell, unusual, I assumed the shape. Like an amoeba, it was easy for me swiftly to assume almost any shape."

"What did you want to get my attention and confer with me? And why were you investigating the girl?"

"I'll answer your last question first, since it forms the background for the other. I am here on a scientific expedition. It has been some time since any of my people visited your planet, and I was delegated to check up on the evolutionary progress here. Originally, I fell into the lily pond that surrounds the fountain in the courtyard. I investigated the proteme and took mines. Then I examined more complex creatures and the plants that grew around and in the water."

"I was investigating a luna flower when Nusaji came into the courtyard, sat on the rim of the fountain, and plucked the flower. Before placing it in her hair, she inhaled its fragrance, and me with it. I was, at the moment, smaller even than one of the microns capillaries of floral areas she drew in through her lovely mouth."

"After she had returned to her room, I put her in a state of suspended animation, so she wouldn't be moving about and disturbing me during the examination, which took quite a long while. You humans are tremendously complex organisms, as you know. And there was a lot of checking to be done in order to note what evolutionary changes, if any, had taken place since her ancestors were investigated."

"Reasonable enough," said Nusaji. "But that doesn't explain your subsequent actions. They seem entirely illogical."

"And so they are if you lack a sense of humor. I assure you that yours is not overdeveloped. However, we Phees, as the Ande call us, do have a highly developed sense of humor. We are fond of playing pranks, and frequently of assuming shapes which frighten and mystify men. I had been grabbing algae for many weeks and was ready for some relaxation when you happened along."

"I didn't have to have that grape. But it was tremendously useful to me, and I gave you the chance which many of my people have given you, so do me a favor, in return for which, if performed, you would be granted three favors or wishes. As a biologist, you should be able to guess what I did after that."

"As a proteme, you absorbed the glucose, a highly concentrated organic food compound. You expanded the single cell you inflated, or perhaps, multiplied the cell by fission, ending a more complex organism."

"Eight the last time."

"Then you sprouted wings, flew to the sink, and there began your present growth."

"By what process?"

"There is some which even begins to explain it, except for it."

"Photosynthesis it is. I required only carbonic acid gas, light, water and sunlight, in order to build up the various carbon and nitrogen compounds of which this experimental body is composed, and all were here in abundance. It is true that there were a number of elements lacking, which I might have utilized, had they been..."
BLAKE'S layer of unconsciousness, it seemed, had lasted for an instant. For he saw the man still standing in the doorway, smoking gun in hand, look- ing down at his body. The latter raised the white skirt, revealing a pair of man's trousers, rolled up above the knees, and thrust the gun into a holster.

Behind him stood a man wearing a red tunic—a big, bald-headed man who had shadowed Blake in the barn. He said in German: "Did you get him, Hamburger Fritz?"

"Between the eyes, Herr Kapitän," was the response of the white-skinned figure in the same tongue. "He won't cross my path again. But we must get away quickly. Hurry!"

Further vision of the two was cut off by the closing of the door. Presumably they had stood there and had not been able to see the milk or the photosynthetic creation of the Stranger.

So it was with moral ennui. Friedl, who had had him captured and brought here. Evidently, the Viennese bacteriologist had tried his best to determine the cause of the girl's coma, and had failed. As a last resort, he had advised her father to send for Blake. But he had seen in it that the requests had never reached the man he wanted and hated, and that forged letters of referral had come to the Aether. He wanted Blake to come as a prisoner, just as a friend, perform his task, then fall easy prey to his plans.

The recovery of Nada and Blake's preoccupation in the laboratory had given him the opportunity he sought. As for the other, evidently a Nazi officer, his name remained in the customary student duds. Blake knew his presence in Aether was disgrace meant that some secret plan directed against the Sun Canals or the Fink oil fields, or both, were being carried out.

As these thoughts raced through Blake's mind, he suddenly remembered that he was supposed to be dead. Yet, here he was, standing erect, and facing toward the door which had just closed. It didn't make sense. He turned around and saw the reason. His body still lay on the floor as if it had fallen; the head held near to one side. There was a round, blue hole in the forehead, and the back of the head was a bloody mess that made him shudder. He was dead! There could be no doubt of it. He tried to pick up a tumbler on the table beside him. His hand, though it seemed substantial enough to him, passed through it as if it had not been there at all.

So absorbed was he by the weird sequence of events, and the realization that he had
passed into another plane of existence—a place in which, as a practical scientist, he had never believed—he had forgotten the presence of the Stranger. But the deep, clear voice of the stranger made him look up.

"I intended to warn you," he said, "not your enemy would move faster than I anticipated. I am still alive, however, to grant you those wishes, whenever you choose to express them."

"What good are three wishes or any number of wishes to me, now?" asked Blake defiantly. "I'm dead. This is the end."

"It is true that you are dead according to the standards of the materialistic world into which you were born," said the Stranger, "but this is not the end."

"Just what and where am I?" asked Blake.

"You are now inhabiting your astral body, which accompanied your earthly astral body. It is just as material as the one on the floor, but in a different space, consistent with the one you just left. Ordinarily, in the new space, you would not be able to see your body, this room, or this phenomenon experiment I have built up—let alone hear its voice. However, I have bridged the gap for you between the spaces you are now in and the one I am at present inhabiting, by amplifying your undeveloped inner power which your science call ESP, or extra-sensory perception—a power of the subconscious mind, or magic."

"But that will be enough explaining for now. I perceive your fervent wish to return to the spatial existence you just left. Shall I grant that wish for you, as number one? I can build a new body for you, or repair the old one. What is your pleasure?"

"I'll prefer the one I had."

"Grateful. That makes my work a bit less complicated. While I do this repair job, I suggest that you go to the ashram. Something is about to take place there which will be of considerable interest to you."

Blake turned and walked to the door, tried to open it. But the handle was like this air to his touch.

"Walk through it, man," said the stranger. "Have I been talking to you for nothing?"

Blake went through the door as if it had not been there, traversed the balcony that circled the upper half of the ashram, and descended the stairs.

The big man known to him as the shakib was seated where he had last seen him. But now, his face was not visible. And Blake instantly recognized the hawk nose and flashing, bearded face of Sultan Ahmad Fate al Haurani, dour, dejected leader of the last of the desert tribes. His picture appeared frequently in papers all over the world, and by voice, he was regarded as more powerful than the king himself.

Besides him sat Nurakhsen. As there was no one else present, her lovely features were unmarred. The priscilla and turban lay on the unheated floor. As he had seen her before, he had felt attracted to her, and had taught if the feeling. Now, as he observed her, bright, even and vivacious, staring with her father, the feeling returned with overwhelming force, and he realized that there was a bond between them which no even death could sever.

The shakib said, "Can't you still see which man with Allah's aid, brought about your marvelous recovery?"

"I wish I might, father. I did not see the strange khis, yet, somehow I seemed to sense his presence. I sense it even now. I picture him as tall, slender and handsome, with dark brown hair that has been bleached at the temples by the sun. I dreamed of him as the there, extremities; I feel that he is here with us, now."

"Not that is impossible," said her father. "He is up in the laboratory."
"According to the learned hadith, my illness was impenetrable, when I knew that when I discovered Marjiah was with me. Hakim Friedl came in a few moments after, disguised as a nurse. He looked surprised when he saw me again, and so when I told him that he had misled me I did not believe him. He said Marjiah to bring me some bread, and then went not out instantly, so it he had just thought of some matter he must attend to at once.

"There is much to this affair that confuse the reason," said the sheik. "I am beginning to have doubts of the sincerity of my dear friend, Hakim Friedl. And it seems a strange coincidence that your baking should take place with the advent of the new chieftain, whereas, Friedl was here for two months, and could do nothing."

At this moment, one of the shawls giant negro guards appeared in the doorway and cried. "Drover!" Then he announced. "Hakim Friedl and his servants, Abdullah and Selim!"

As Narkayu hastily adjusted the yashmak and turban, concealing her hair and the lower part of her face, Blake turned and saw Friedl, now undignified and wearing a yellowish white, enter the room. He was followed by the huge, scar-faced man who had shadowed Blake in the car, and his companion, the little, wiry man whose Blake recalled that Friedl had addressed as his "captain," and judged that he must be a Nafi officer in disguise. What mischief could these two now be planning, here in the Arabian desert?

CHAPTER FIVE

Unmasked

FRIEDL, though slight in stature for a man, was quite good looking. His smooth-shaven features were regular in outline, and his manner was grave and polished. "Friedl," invited the sheik boldly, as they came up. "Please be seated.

Abdul Hafla replied. "Your congratulations I accept, and, Almamuballah, I thank God for the blessing He has seen fit to bestow upon his servant. But your mention of a reward puzzles me."

"Surely you have not forgotten that you promised me anything I might ask, in case I should heal your daughter," said Friedl.

"I have not forgotten," replied Abdul Hafla. "But I have no proof that you healed my daughter. It was only after Hakim Blake arrived that she recovered her health."

"Hakim Blake had nothing to do with her recovery," said Friedl. "He was not even in the room when she regained her senses."

"Why not send for Hakim Blake and ask him again for himself, before I suggested Narkayu."

"I have already done that," the sheik replied. "I said Muhammad to go and summon him as soon as he should return. Hakim Friedl. Here he comes, now." He raised his voice. "Addis Hakim Blake, Mahomed!"

He commanded. The big negro came in, and Blake saw that his hands were trembling and his eyes were big with fear. "There has been a most calamitous happening in your household, master," he said, his voice quavering. "Hakim Blake is dead, shot through the head and lying on the floor of the laboratory. And there is dragged over him a strange and worst horrible-looking figure, the like of which I have never seen before. It looks like a creation of the jinn, and it is a big head larger than a watermelon. It reached out at me..."
I believe it is almost to dress the body of Halim Biad.

Abdul Halim smiled. He sized up the black hulk, observed the expression of fear in his rolling eyes and the tremble of his huge hands.

""What is your name in this, Mohammed?" he asked curtly. "No member of my household would ever speak a word with whom I have eaten salt. And you know as well as I that there are no lies in these days."

"Only Allah is all-seeing and all-knowing," answered Mohammed. "Perhaps the master will look for himself."

As this, Halim saw a look of understanding pass between Friedrich and the two-faced Abdul Halim. Suddenly, the three men whipped outingers, covering Abdul Halim, his daughter, and the ranch.

"No need to fear, sheikah," said Friedrich. "Blaise is dead, and I killed him, as I will say, and all of your household if you don't do as I say. You have refused to pay me the reward so I'll take it by force."

Ignoring the leveled pistol, the sheikah looked at Friedrich, and Blaise saw that he was unafraid.

"I will die with resignation if it is the will of Allah," he said. "But I will die with crimson in my heart because I have entertained a false friend. You have blackened my face and disgraced me with my people by slaying a guest with whom I have eaten salt. Shoot me, then, and have it over with. But you and your servants will not escape this house alive. At the first sound of a shot, my people will turn you to bliss— you and your brethren."

"You are mistaken, sheikah," said Friedrich. "All other members of your household are now the prisoners of our men. If you need proof, look."

A man wearing the uniform of a Nazi corporal, carrying an automatic rifle, stood in the doorway. As a sign from Friedrich, he stepped aside and backed a graceful command, whereupon, a dozen soldiers carrying rifles with bayonets fixed, marched in.

FRIEDRICH'S companions threw off their Arab disguises. The black-armed men were the uniforms of a captain in the flying service; the small man, who also detached his eye patch, was a lieutenant.

"Captain Speyer and Lieutenant Hen," announced Friedrich. "I'll take over, now, Herr Doctor," said the captain. "Sheikah, we have finished with astutely. You, and all of your household are our prisoners. We will use your caravans and your camels as an air base and radio stations. Underground hangars will be built. The caravan from the coast, which was secretly funded several days ago, has just arrived with men, tools and supplies. Look out the window."

"The small government will not submit," said the sheikah. "You and your men will be shot or driven out."

"The new government of Dr. Schindler will not he in existence much longer," sneered thecaptain. "He is only a puppet of the British, anyway. As soon as this base is ready, five thousand of our planes will come. Parafranztroops will quickly capture all of the smaller cities. The larger will, if necessary, be subdued or destroyed by bombs. Egypt will be crushed between Italian Libya and German Arabia. Then we will develop this country as it should be developed. The Suez Canal will no longer be a British ditch."

Blaise saw the whole plan instantly. Arabia turned into a German colony, Italy holding Egypt. The British sphere of control—England cut off from India and Ceylon, saved by the long and hazardous route around the Cape, or the still longer one through the Panama Canal. The British册pshire partitioned among the dictatorships. Then there would be nothing left, save the Americas, and that would mean..."
a fearful struggle to death for his own countrymen. He must do something about it—must try to save his country from the frightful ordeal of such a war. But how?

"You will go to your home now, sjukab, where you will remain a prisoner," said the captain. "So long as you make no resistance or effort to escape, it will not be violated. I claim only the reward promised the Herr Doktor, which you declined to give—your daughter. Tomorrow will go with me to my quarters."

Aldai Haidr had been listening with patient resignation. But when this address to the honor of his daughter was mentioned, his face became a thundercloud of wrath, and the large eyes on his sun-burned which marked him as a descendant of the Prophet, stood out like diamonds.

He rose to his full height, and said:

"You lack formulae, my daugther is not for you."

With the speed of a striking serpent, surprising in a man of his size, his hand flew to his belt—came up with the keen, silver-curveted sjukab. Then he sprang straight at the captain, ignoring his leveled Luger.

The captain fired, point blank, just as Blake, who, in his excitement had forgotten that he was powerless to aid, leaped at the officer and attempted to wrench the pistol from his grasp. His arm carried him, not into the midst of the fray, but into a cold, whirling black void.

When he could see once more, he found that, instead of standing in the sjukab, he was lying on his back looking up at the ceiling of the laboratory.

CHAPTER SIX

Astonished at his sudden transition from the sjukab to the laboratory, Blake sprang to his feet. As he did so, he sketched at the edge of the parapet—supporting table for support. It tilted slightly, and the bottle of glass he had left some time before slipped off and fell to the floor.

For a moment, the significance of this accident did not impress itself on his consciousness, so filled was his mind with what had taken place in the sjukab. Then he suddenly realized that he had missed a portable object with his hand. He was back in his worldly body once more, and could give battle to Friedl and his companions.

He rushed to the door, and turning the latch, found it locked. He was about to charge it with his sjukab, when the deep voice of the Stranger behind him.

"I wouldn’t try that, doctor."

Blake wheeled around, and looked for the figure momentarily which the Stranger had created some time before. It had disappeared completely, and he could see no sign of this strange entity from Mercury in any other physical form. A few seconds, however, told the American that he was nearby.

"Why wouldn’t you try it—wherever you are?" he asked.

"Because," replied the voice of the Stranger, "you would only get yourself shot again, and I just get through repairing you. A splendid job, too, if I do say so, myself. That’s reason number one. And, reason number two: the events which you witnessed in the sjukab took place more than a half hour ago. The struggle is all over. I had to let you get accustomed to your body and the new rules I assembled and established, before waking you. And that took about half an hour."

"Then you locked the door so I couldn’t rush out?"

"Precisely."

"But what happened after I—er—left?"

"Captain Spore’s bullet passed through Aldai Haidr’s sjukab and grazed his ear, but did him no harm. Then Liestnut Hess struck the sjukab on the head with
the butt of his pistol, rendering him unconscious. Soldiers carried him up to his harem and left him there. And Nurakian, fighting her captors like a young wildcat, was taken to the quarters of Captain Spey-
er.

"Help! Help! Let me out of here!"

"What? Nurakian has not been harmed.
And Speyer will be busy for a while with military matters. The caravan which ur-
nered some time ago consisted of about two hundred Nazi soldiers disguised as desert Arabs. The men of the sheikh's household have been disarmed, and got to work, con-
structing underground hangars for the first few of planes that it is to be surrendered by the radio as soon as construction is completed. Captain Speyer, disguised in Arab headdress and cloak, in case British aerials should pass over, is superintending the work.

"And I suppose the harem is full of Speyer's armed guards."

"Right. Furthermore, Friedl, who is overseeing the installation of the new radio-sta-
nion, will remember about your body being here in the laboratory, and will bring soldiers to remove it soon, as he wants the laboratory for himself. You still have two wishes left, and I'll consider it a
personal favor if you'll make them and get it over with. I have important duties of my own to attend to."

A NUMBER of wishes flashed through Blake's mind. A gun. A suit of battle-good armor. A disguise. A regiment of soldiers. Then, he reflected, all of these things might or might not be in the Nurakian and his chief. Friedl had given me his conclusions and made me feel like a brand new man. I felt that one coming," said the Stranger. "But I don't blame you. It's a complex world, and not so easily grati-

ified, even by me. I could, of course, bring certain forces to bear, and instantly destroy Captain Speyer and his confederates. But that is not my way—it would be like a man ruthlessly shooting a harmless song

bird or a helpless domestic animal, unable to defend itself."

"I don't get the analogy," returned Blake. "This bunch is more like a nest of poisonous snakes than a flock of harmless birds or beasts."

"That is from your prejudiced viewpoint, only," said the Stranger. "I look on them more tolerantly. Moreover, they are your enemies and you have expressed your wish, which I am officially obligated to per-
form. But, I must tell you from the start that the outcome will be in doubt until the end. We Jews are peaceful, but not emi-

tion." Suddenly, at the point from which the voice had been coming, Blake saw a human figure appear. It was an exact replica of himself, even to his clothing and the streaked

blond hair at his temples.

"What the—?" began Blake in astonish-
ment.

"How do you like it?" asked the figure, in the deep voice of the Stranger, whispering around at the same time so he could get a complete view.

"What's the idea of mimicking my

looks?" Blake asked. "And how do you do it so quickly?"

"All part of my plan," the Stranger told him. "I can't bring myself to destroy these

conspirators, any more than you could bring yourself to about an unassuming man in the body. It wouldn't be sparing—

would be entirely too easy."

"As for contriving quickly, as a mat-
ter of fact, I didn't. But, while I was ini-
tializing this primary body, I remained invisible to you. It is not as complicated as you think. However, as it will serve as a parent body, it had to be endowed with a lot of extra cells."

"A parent body? What do you mean?"
"Watch."

While Blake looked on, dumbfounded, the body suddenly divided—became two identical bodies.

"Methuselah by fusion," said the Stranger. "Although you complicated organisms can’t do it, many predominates of your world do it right along. A parent becomes two daughters; or sons—it doesn’t matter which—for they are sisters. They, in turn, divide in two, and so on."

The body on the left had been speaking.

"Now, the body on the right interpreted."

"Why tell him all that? He’s a mere bystander," Blake’s astonishment increased, as he looked on in amazement.

"True. I’d forgotten that for the moment. I was too busy creating us. All right, let’s see what they can do!"

The body on the right walked over and stood in front of the door, facing the body on the left. The body on the left strode to the door, then whirled around, facing the other. In the right hand, it raised a silvery Luger. It coughed once, and the body in front of the window collapsed, killed between the eyes. It lay just as Blake had left it only a short time before, apparently dead.

"DON’T know whether to call that fratricide, patricide, infanticide, or just plain homicide," said Blake. "Why did you do it?"

It’s double suicide, I thought, he grumbled. So the bodies repledge through this life:

"But to have a body, didn’t we? The whole show would be given away, otherwise. This body, which will be carried off and buried by Spooner’s men, will make them think you are dead. Also, it will help me to carry out some initial plans I have in mind."

"But the other body—unless it was alive, and you killed it."

"It contained a part of my ego—or its essence," said the Stranger. "But I have taken that back. It is nothing, now, but a lifetime companion of matter, without mind."

"Where did you get that pistol?" Blake asked. "You didn’t split that off from you by fusion."

"True. I materialized it, as I did this primary body. But it is much simpler. A ferro compound interwoven with a carbon compound. The grip, also, are a carbon compound, the ammonia, carbon and nitrogen compounds, with some brass and lead. The water pipes in this place are a bit thinner because of the metals. The rest came from the air and the H2O and CO2 in suspension in it. I don’t need it any longer."

He hurled it away from him, straight at the window, and Blake waited for a crash of glass that would shatter the guards. But none came. The weapon vanished before it reached the window.

"That will add a bit to the thickness of the water pipes," said the Stranger.

To Blake, it seemed more incredible that an individual with such poise should be absent-minded, than the marvellous powers, themselves. But the Stranger certainly showed signs of absent-mindedness.

Evidently he was sometimes concentrated so deeply on what he was doing that insignificent details, for the moment, were blotted from his consciousness.

At this moment, the thump of heavily shod feet sounded on the tiled floor of the hallway outside.

"They are coming for the body," said the Stranger. "I’ll make us invisible. Say nothing and leave things to me."

CHAPTER SEVEN

First of the Five
Blake. He couldn't even see his hands held in front of his face, though he could see all other objects in the room clearly, now the Stranger.

The door latch jangled, there was a muffled exclamation and then some one turned the key, which was on the outside. The door swung open, and Friedl stepped in. His still wore his white suit, and on his head was a dark helmet, set in a black angle.

Behind him came four goose-stepping guards.

"Pick up that carcass," commanded Friedl. "And take it—"

His words were cut short as his boot was suddenly and violently jammed down over his ears by an invisible hand.

"Who did that?" he barked, looking accusingly at the four guards.

The scarecrow replied:

"We don't know. It was not one of us."

"It was a poltergeist," said the man next to him.

"It was a poltergeist," said Friedl, adjusting his helmet. "There is no such thing as a poltergeist. Pick up this carcass and throw it to the judahs. Don't bother to bury—"

Again his order was interrupted, this time by something which caused his ankles and jerked his legs out from under him. As he struck the floor, both of his shoes were violently pulled off, then thing out through the doorway into the hall. His helmet, which had fallen off, was picked up and also thrown into the hall.

"Pick it up yourself, Doctor Friedl," ordered the deep voice of the invisible Stranger. "You are the murderer."

For a moment, Friedl by there, stared. The four guards with cries of: "The poltergeist! It will get us next!" turned and fled.

Scrambling to his feet, Friedl attempted to follow them, but was caught by the scruff of the neck and jerked back.

Again the deep voice commanded:

"Pick up the body. Take it out and give it decent burial—or you'll hear from me again."

Friedl, with fear, Friedl shouted, flung the body to his shoulders, and staggered out through the door with it. The door slammed shut behind him, and the Stranger, holding the hatch, suddenly became visible once more, as did Blake.

"I don't like to destroy these creatures of puny intellect," mumbled the Stranger, grinning, "unless it is necessary, but sometimes it amuses me to whittle them a bit—what they deserve it."

"I kinda got a hang out at it, myself," admitted Blake. "What do you think he'll do, now?"

"Undoubtedly he'll blow up in poltergeist. He'll probably give the body decent burial, and try to exorcize the ghost which he believes attached him. And now, to make us livable once more, so we can clean up this job."

"By the way, how do you do it?" asked Blake, as both he and the Stranger seemed to dissolve into thin air once more.

"Always the curious scientist," visited the Stranger. "You want to know the how and why of everything. I do it by changing the collective angles of skin, hair and clothing, so that they will no longer reflect or absorb the visible light rays. Instead, they bend there. The single source of light rays visible to the human eye now passes entirely around this body and jowls, without being either reflected or absorbed. And now that we are both invisible once more, we'll go to Norkups. Come on."

The door swung open, and Blake started to walk through, but collided with the Stranger.

"Here, this won't do," said the latter. "You'll be getting in our way. I'll just make our little red rays evident by our bodies visible to see, so that won't happen again. Stand still for a minute."

Blake stood still, and in a moment, the outline of the Stranger's body grew a
dall red. Also, he could now see his own body with the same weird coloring.

"The human eye is sensitive, normally, to only one light source out of fifty-five," said the Stranger. "I’ve extended your vision a bit on the red end of the spectrum, so you can see rays which are invisible to other humans, though they could be seen by some beasts, or recorded by a properly sensitized camera plate."

They circled the balcony, pausing six grooms armed with rifles and posted at various intervals on the way, and, at its farther end, the Stranger paused before a door which stood open, and from which came the sound of a woman’s voice.

"From now on,” said the Stranger, "we’ll communicate by telepathy. Don’t speak. Just think your thoughts, and I’ll do the same. You will seem to hear me, and will understand, but it will not be perceptible to the minds of others."

He walked silently into the room, Blake at his heels.

Friedl, he usually immaculate clothing disheveled, and smeared with blood from the body he had been compelled to carry, was pouring himself a stiff brandy from one of the captain’s bottles, his fevered face indicating that this had not been the first.

Captain Spryer, his Arabic disguise discarded in favor of his uniform, was seated in an easy chair, smoking a cigar.

"Still and incessant," the captain was saying. "Poltergeist! And you call yourself a scientist and a practical man."

"But I tell you there is no other explanation," protested Friedl, after gripping the hipiper. "The four men who now have charge of the body and know what happened."

"And as you want me to get the chaplain to bury the body, and say the ghost. Alright, I’ll do it to honor you. Clear out, now, and send the chaplain to me. Then get busy and help expedite the digging. I’ll be otherwise and more pleasantly occupied for the next hour or so."

"The fair Nursan is impatient, awaiting my presence in the next room." He rose, and walked over to the table, where he helped himself to a brandy.

"Here another with you before you go, Herr Doktor," he said, pouring a neat four fingers for Friedl, and, with no joy.

"If I can use another," Friedl replied, picking it up.

The Stranger silently walked to the doorway which separated the two rooms of the captain’s apartment, and drew back the curtains for Blake to enter.
that drew him irresistibly. Suddenly, he took her in his arms, crushing her warm, red lips with his. She responded to his kiss with a passion that sent him into a seventh heaven of ecstasy, and for the moment, the peril which menaced them both was forgotten. Then she went limp, and he saw that she had fainted.

"All right, break the clutch, and don’t try to revive her now," telegraphed the Stranger. "We’ll have to work fast." Blake put the girl down, then turned and gaped at the amazement. A being duplicated of Narkalea was looking at him, and the infra-red outline of the Stranger had disappeared. Swiftly, the new body divided into two which looked exactly alike. One spoke in a voice that exactly mimicked that of Narkalea.

"I am Narkalea," said the figure. "I will take the place of Narkalea.

"And while she does that," said the deep voice of the Stranger, having incongruously from the other female figure.

"We’ll take Narkalea to her father."

"Nec of eyes. Fire of the Eyes," Blake exploded at himself. "Oh, boy! I’ll bet this will be good!"

"It will," shouted the Stranger. "You had you can’t stay to witness it. Bring your beloved, and we’ll go.

As Blake picked up the unconscious Narkalea, the Stranger once more waved his hand in the infra-red which Blake could now see. The Stranger opened the door which led into the hallway, and they went out, just as the heavy weight of Captain Keyser seemed on the doorway which connected the two rooms.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Magician

OUT in the hallway the Stranger telegraphed:

"I’ll show you, now, as I have some matters to attend to. Go straight to the horizon, and when you have passed through the door, you and Narkalea will become visible once more.

With these words the Stranger disappeared.

Silently, Blake stood just guard as guard, carrying his precious burden, until he came to the door of the horizon, where two ominous black walls with boyants fixed. He walked between them without making a sound, then raised the curtain and stepped inside the hallway. As he did so, both he and Narkalea became visible once more, and Mahwood, the mullah, who had been doing on a bench on one side, sprang to his feet and cried: "Deeeet!" Then, suddenly recognizing the two who had just come in, and believing Blake to be an apparition, he sank down upon his knees, trembling violently with fright.

His first thought had brought a number of curious, roiled faces to the eavesdropped doorways. At sight of the two who had just entered, there were murmurs of surprise and incredulity.

"Get up and take me to your master," Blake ordered. "Can’t you see that I am alive? Could a spirit carry the daughter of Abel?"

Shamefully, the mullah got to his feet.

"Harkening and obedience, sir!" he said, then drew aside the curtain of the first doorway on the right for them to exit.

As Blake stepped through the doorway, he was met and welcomed by the ayatollah, himself, who had heard the commotion and was coming out to investigate. The folds of a white burial shroud on his brow beneath his forehead, but he appeared as vigorous as ever.

"Hallo, my friend!" he exclaimed. "Praise God for one true friend among so many deceitful enemies!" He looked
down at the shameless girl in Blake's arms.
"It is..." he began anxiously.
"She is unhurt, and has only fainted," Blake told him.
"Ya, harghah!" the sheikh shouted.
The big, enormous nurse came bustling out of Mr. Khayyam's suite, and at sight of Blake's dilemma, began abruptly prying Aliab and coxing over her little white dress.
Blake placed the girl tenderly in her bed, and then left her to the ministrations of her capable nurse, insisting that the sheikh unite with him.
"She has had a terrible shock," he told the old man. "Let her rest for a while. You can come in to see her after she has recovered consciousness. It would not be wise to awaken her now."
"I bow to your superior wisdom, Hajab..." Blake said, "Come to my apartment. We'll smoke a pipe and discuss the problem in which we find ourselves. Perhaps there will be some way out of the trap."

CAPTAIN SPENCER, about to enter the room where he believed Nurmolian to be lying, bound and helpless, was interrupted by a rap on the door of his apartment.
"Who's there?" he called.
"Sergeant Veda with a prisoner," the voice replied.
"The captain was annoyed by this interruption, yet certain as to who the prisoners might be. He decided on a swift investigation.
"Bring the prisoner in," he commanded.
The sergeant opened the door, and an old, gray-bearded dwarf was pushed roughly into the room by his two guards.
"What did you say, sergeant?" asked the captain.
"He just rode up to the gate on a white mule, and told the guard he wished to pay a visit to the sheikh."
"So. Who are you, old man?"
"Sheikh Yalda of the Alverndale Dar
weeh, excellency, at your service," the old man replied.
"Indeed. And pray, what service can you perform for me?"
"I can perform feats of jugglery and magic to amuse your household," said the old fellow. "Rekol!"

So saying, he plucked at the end of the sergeant's nose, and produced a silver coin. Take him to the throne room, and have a silver coin, give him to the captain with a bow.
Then he passed, as if waiting for the officer's appreciation.
The latter turned instantly at him for a moment—then suddenly stepped forward and grasping the long white beard, gave it a terrific jerk. It came away in his hand, and he followed up by knocking off the tall cravat hat, and stripping off a pair of false eyelashes, revealing a man who looked not much more than thirty-five, with a jet black beard.
"Hagg Nasher," he said. "So you thought you could fool me with that childish disguise?"
"I admit I was deceived," replied the hag, returning his stare gaze intently.
"However, I did not expect to be brought before you—did not, in fact, expect to find you in charge here so soon."
"No—my plans were known to you. Then why didn't you take action before?"
"You Fennereh have a saying: 'Give a dog enough rope and he'll hang himself.'" replied the hag.
"So better not argue, and come here in this ridiculous disguise to investigate."
"Perhaps."
"Ah. You wish to be erasive. Well, we have means of making you talk. However, I haven't time to lecture with you for the moment. Take him away, sergeant. Lock him up and set two guards to watch.
him. He is a magician, and a master of illusion, so see that he plays no tricks on you. I'll attend to him later. But first, to more pressing business."

As the bug was dragged out, he turned once more to the door which led to his bedroom.

Plunging through, he was amazed to see that his bar prisoner was unbound, and reclining on the dresser, smoking one of his cigarettes.

"You sorry to have kept you waiting, my dear," he said, advancing toward her.

"However, we can work out for this time—now, can't we?"

"Of course, captain, if you wish it," she responded, with a sweet, admiring glance that astonished him. "Here, sit beside me and let me make you comfortable."

Scarcely crediting the evidence of his senses, the captain set down on the dresser.

She took one of his cigarettes and placed it between his lips. Then, ignoring the lighter that stood on the dresser, she held a pinkie finger to the end of the cigarette, and it began to smolder and give off a grayish smoke.

"What the—"

But she interrupted: "You've been helping me out, haven't you? How about a drink?"

"Sorry, I didn't know you needed liqueur." He started to rise, but she pushed him back.

"Don't bother, I'll get it. Make yourself comfortable."

She went into the other room and returning with the heavy bottle and glasses, poured a drink for each of them.

The captain took the proffered glass, and they clinked the rims together.

"To our health," he said.

"To our burning love," she replied, and touched her red lips to the liquid, whereupon a blue flame sprang up on its surface. She palmed it, and the flame went out.

The captain was goggle-eyed.

"Pretty tricks you have with fire," he said. "Where did you learn them?"

"Plink. Those were nothing," she replied. "Watch."

She took the drink of brandy into her mouth, and a moment later, colored blue flames through her lips and nostrils.

"Good God, girl! You've burned yourself!"

"No, sir!" she replied. "Ninilag never burns herself."

"Ninilag? But I thought your name was Ninilana."

"A mistake," she replied. "And now that we have enjoyed a drink and a cigarette together, I'll run along."

"No you don't, young lady," he replied. "I see it all now. You and your father's friend, Hagg Nakenn, have cooked up some magical tricks to enliven me. But I am not easily frightened. You remain in this apartment with me. You are mine."

He sprang to his feet, seized her by the arm, and pressed his lips to hers. But in that instant, he drew back and released her with a howl of pain. It was as if he had kicked into a ball of white-hot metal. His uniform was charred and smoking; his hands and lips were blistered from the intense heat.

"You—devil!" he raved between blistered lips, as he bent out the spats.

"You have gone too far," he whispered into his lapels, but before he could utter it, fire too late become white hot, exploded in his face, and turned to a cloud of intensely hot gas.

As he recoiled, blaring with pain, from the terrible heat of that cloud of pungent metal, Ninilag suddenly disappeared—merged into nothingness before his eyes.

The captain snapped down the dresser, then reached for the heavily battle with his left hand; the other was useless. He took a huge pull at the bottle, but another and another, until he had drained it. Hurling it against the wall, he set to his feet and staggered into the after
CHAPTER NINE

The Colonel

BLAKE had drunk a cup of coffee, and was smoking and chatting with the Agha when Nuraliyan, accompanied by the bawling baby and the lady, entered the room, and ran to her father, threw her arms around his neck.

Both went with joy at this unexpected reunion and Blake, feeling a lump rising in his throat, pressed himself another cup of the blazing hot coffee and devoured it at a gulp. Then, while he puffed vigorously at his smoking shisha to hide his emotion, Nuraliyan told her father all she remembered about her res-
Flush Poisons From Kidneys and Stop Getting Up Nights

By H. Jackson, Medical

Super Science Novels Magazine

As the other three prisoners were ranged alongside the bauxite, Snepper glared at each in turn with equal malignancy. It was obvious that he had not only been cured of his infatuation for Nurelka, but that he hated her as thoroughly as the other.

"I am a man of few words," he said.

"All four of you have conspired to play tricks on me which no man could forgive, and which I have the power to punish. And, since you have it to heart me, why you'll all get a dose of the same medicine. I hereby pronounce you all to be hanged at the stake. That, regardless of the magical powers of Hagg Nurelka, will put a falling mud to your tricks."

At a sign from him, four men came bearing a large pot from which strong chains dangled. Others brought deadwood and a cask of gasoline, and placing these in readiness, took up several flagstones and began excavating a hole for the pool.

Snepper was wondering, at the moment, what had become of the Stranger. The latter, after agreeing to fulfill his second wish, had completely disappeared. Could he be somewhere nearby, waiting to execute their avengements? Or had he left them to their fate?

The digging progressed rapidly, and the pot was soon tipped into place. The wood was hauled around it, and the four condemned prisoners were hoisted up on this and bound with the chains...

(Sergeant Wessle was opening one of the gauntlets when suddenly the roar of a huge motorplane became audible. A moment later, the radio operator hurried down from the station and handed a message to Captain Spanier."

"After perusing it, the captain called to the sergeant."

"Hold the execution," he said. "Call—"
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STRANGER FROM SMALLNESS
(Continued from page 129)

The colonel will be here in a few minutes, to take command of the garrison, and he desires to see it.

The place looked a few minutes later, as the smooth road outside the courtyard walls.

All officers and men stopped stiffly in attention as the colonel, followed by two aides, came pompously through the courtyard gate.

Colonel Grober was a short, stocky man, with a deep, hollowing voice and an unshaven jaw. A shabby-ruffled coat looked out of style black coat in his breast pocket. His hat was knocked back at the brim of a basket visor.

"What's this I hear about an execution, captain?" he asked. "Ah, four prisoners bound to the stake. And not a girl. Well, well. What damnable crimes have they committed, and what is the military necessity for this execution?"

"Conspiracy, and conspiracy to burn the commanding officer to death," replied the captain.

"You do me so if you've been pretty badly shot," said the colonel, raising the captain's handcuffs through his mouth.

"How did it happen?"

"It was done through the black magic of Hasz Naddens, after he came here to spy on the encampment. I can offer no logical explanation for the tricks that were played upon me and upon Doctor Pfeil. Only a magician could explain them. All I know is that their effects were unpleasant, and decidedly dangerous."

The colonel crinkled an eyebrow, fixed the colonel in his eye, and stood for a moment at the four chained prisoners.

"His Desperate-looking character," he said. "But I must warn you, Captain Speyer, that we don't burn prisoners..."
stranger from smallness

at the stake. A lurkous custom. We are a civilized race.

He let the muzzle fall from his eye and turned to the sergeant.

"Remove the chains," he ordered.

"Do you mean that you are going to let them go free?" asked the captain, amazed.

"Free! Of course not. We'll shoot them in the approved civilized fashion. And we'll let their would droops be a lesson to the rest of the natives, so there'll be no recurrence of such tricks against officers. Have every living soul in the castle brought into the courtyard to witness the execution."

Captain Spynes nodded, and gave the necessary orders, while the colored, once more facing his moment in his eyes, watched the unshielded of the prisoners with no more mention than if he had been watching an army publish his hosts.

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CHAPTER TEN

The Firing Squad

WITH everyone assembled in the courtyard the four prisoners were lined up against the wall. Every soldier with a rifle was pressed into the firing squad. They formed two lines of a hundred men each, one line kneeling in a semicircle, the other standing in a slightly wider semicircle behind them.

As he stood facing this double row of rifles, Blake's heart sick. Obviously, the stranger had desired him—left him to his fate. Now he must not only go through the unpleasant ordeal of dying once more—in addition, he must witness the violent death of the person he held most dear in all the world, as well as her father and Bagg Dinkes.

The colored, standing to one side, gave the order.

Cartridges clipped into the chambers at his command. Rifles were raised, and
wondered if he and his two aides had been hypnotized.

Then the scientists and his fellow prisoners suddenly saw another amazing transformation. The serpents, raised around their helpless victims began to turn to rope, and every soldier present lay on the ground, bound and helpless, save the colonel, his two aides, Dr. Fried and Lieutenant Hess. Every the colonel's aides had drawn their hands behind his back, where they were tightly bound to a hoop around his sides, and had turned in a snout rope.

Blair knew that this could not be the snake of Hagg Nachem. He knew that the Stranger must be somewhere nearby, and momentarily expected to hear his deep chuckle. Perhaps he was invisible. Or it might be that he was one of the people standing in the courtroom. In any event, he decided that it was about time to take some action, remembering the Stranger's injunction to help himself if he wished to be helped.

'Come on,' he shouted to the crowd, starting unruly. 'Join and help these others. Make them all prisoners.'

They needed an instant invitation. Mahomed, the camels, charged at Doctor Frankl from behind, seized his spurs, and pined his arms behind him. Other strait retainers of Abdul Hafiz quickly grabbed Lieutenant Hess. But, when, let by Blair, they charged the colonel and his aides, they suddenly were not there. In their place stood a tall, scrawny horseman between two large camels.

Blair stopped, facing the camel rider.

'Is, it was you?' he exclaimed. 'I thought you'd gone away and forgotten me.'

'You did not injure me,' replied the camel rider, in the deep voice of the Stranger. 'Entering the plane of the colonel, making him and his aides my prisoners, and impersonating all three a
we flew toward the castle that rose like a dream.
I have been quite busy on your behalf.

By this time, the shaykh, Numayran, and Hagg Nadiem had come up.

"Wafadak," exclaimed the shaykh, looking eagerly at the stranger. "I know you now. I am of the people who have known years for a thousand years.

A month ago, a month for more than a thousand generations," replied the stranger. "I recognize you, Hagg Nadiem, as a member of one of the families that have always intermarried with any people, and who have thereby earned the reputation of being black magicians."

"Al Futuh," exclaimed the shaykh. "I take refuge with Allah! A priest!"

"The same, 0 corsair of the Prophet," replied the stranger. "And fortunately for you and yours, a friend of your friend, Hakim Blake. I should have said, your future son-in-law, Hakim Blake."

"But that is impossible," 0 corsair said the shaykh. "Our lives."

"Need not be visited," interrupted the stranger. "With Allah all is possible. You object to him on religious grounds. Yet, if he were to testify to the truth of Allah—"

"If he were to testify, I could accept him into my family."

"Then it is simple—Blake, my friend, since you are a Unitarian, I am sure you can testify with accuracy, and show the Prophet without reproach."

"La illah ullah, Muhammad ullah, Zalika abula ayyah wa qalum," testified Blake.

"And that settles that," said the stranger. "Now, Hagg Nadiem, you have only to lead your prisoners on their ransom, with the help of the shaykh's men, and take them to Shica. You'll feel the coin and his two sides lying bound in their place."
"But, all these men and only two camels!" exclaimed Hagg Nader. Then he turned with a surprised, "Salama!" For, instead of two camels there were now sixty-four. While they talked, the two had been swiftly multiplying by Simon.

The Hagg turned and bowed to the Stranger.
"May Allah return your kindness a thousand fold, O prince of the Jews," he said.

"And after, what shall I do with the camels?"
"They will accompany you to the city gate—the door of silence," the Stranger told him. "After that, there will be no camels."

As Hagg Nader hurried off to give orders about loading his prisoners for the trek across the desert, the Stranger turned to Blake and smiled when he saw him standing with his arm about the slender waist of Nusayla.
"And now, friend Blake," he said, "what is your third wish? I've other matters to attend to, so think fast."

"And I," replied Blake, "thanks to you, have everything a man could wish for, and more that I could ever have hoped for. My third wish, then, is to wish you luck, and a safe and pleasant journey home when your investigation is ended."

The Stranger, without another word, faded from view. The sheikh hurried away to assist Hagg Nader in overruling the objections of his prisoners on the camel. Blake, looking at the nearest of them, was astonished to see it wink at him. The Stranger, he noted, or at least one of his decompositions, was still near him, carrying out his wishes—no, not one, sixty-four of them.
Together, he and Nusayla turned and entered the castle.

THE END.
THE PREVIEW

PHIL SUEKLEY completed the week against the odds. "Perfect!" he announced, with unbridled triumph.

Dr. Ben Cohen said, "Worse?" very expressively. "Tremendously, tremendous calculus, direct perception, maybe even a hint of telepathy. The essential point is...and you taught a perfectly normal subject to run his mind to do these things? It's—why, it's fantastic! Even though...obviously true."

Humbry nodded seriously. "And that's not all, Stonemere Valley—he lost his mind-reading power when a so-called 'burned' section of his brain was injured in an accident?"

"Yeah."

"That indicates, doesn't it, that these functions of the mind were organic, based in that section of the brain—just as the eye and sight centers in the brain are the basis for normal sight?"

"Yes, of course." Humbry was getting impatient. "Well, organs as complex as this develop only through use. In an evolutionary sense, functional organs organ. Don't you see what that implies?"

"Oh, it looked normal for a moment or two, then a host of computations spread over his face. Phil Sh прял out, "The conclusion is inescapable. There must have been a time when the entire human race and these functions so easily as they held or ever. Individuals couldn't do it any more than I could grow wings. It must have been done suddenly, over a long period of time. Somehow, some time, the powers were lost, until now they're only vestigial. But maybe we can restore the lost power of the mind to the whole race."

Lyle Hunter's book-length novel, "Lost Legacy," completes the strange story of the wild talents which lie hidden in the mind of every human. Besides this inpiring science fiction story, there is a complete short novel, "Tunthank at Kaynak" by Charles R. Gardner, the second story in the popular "Tunthank of the Territorial" series, and several other short stories and articles.
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