

SCIENCE ISLAND

*A Cold-Blooded Scientific Napoleon with the Brain of a Genius
and a Body of Metal Threatens to Dominate Mankind!*

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BATHED in the soft glow of a tropic moon, the island looked peaceful and quiet to Don Mason. There was certainly no inkling in his mind of the incredible menace lurking beneath its slumbering surface. He was standing beside Helen Montry at the rail of her uncle's yacht, drinking in the cool night breezes. It had been a long, hot cruise of three thousand miles from San Francisco, with a single stop at Honolulu.

Helen Montry stiffened suddenly and leaned forward over the rail, straining her eyes toward shore.

"Look, Don," she said pointing. "Isn't that some sort of glow at the center of the island, behind the cliff? This island is supposed to be uninhabited, yet it looks like a light, or group of lights."

"Probably just the moon's reflection on smooth rock formations," Don Mason returned casually. He slipped an arm around the girl. "There is a much lovelier reflection in your eyes," he added softly.

Helen Montry squeezed his arm but continued to stare at the island bulking mysteriously against the backdrop of star-stippled sky.

"I've noticed that glow, too," another voice broke in behind them. "Very odd—"

They started. Dr. Raoul Montry, Helen's uncle, had approached silently. Don Mason straightened, though he was off duty and out of uniform, and saluted.

The luxury of a comfortable inheritance at birth had not prevented Raoul Montry from becoming a hardworking scientist, and his private researches in biology had gained him great professional distinction.

His deep-set eyes now held a queer look of anticipation.

"Perhaps *this* is the place!" he murmured. He turned to the young first mate. "I've informed the captain that you'll take me ashore in the launch, first thing in the morning."

"Aye, aye, sir!" said Mason crisply. He hesitated, then went on. "But may I ask, sir, what you expect to find on a deserted island halfway between the Philippines and Hawaii?"

HE was wondering, too, why they had practically scoured this region of the Pacific near the Phoenix Islands. They had stopped at a half dozen bits of land, as though on an intensive search for something of which only Dr. Montry was aware. Mason hardly expected an illuminative answer. Men of the crew were not supposed to ask the yacht's owner his business.

But Dr. Montry surprised him.

"I think I'll tell you, Mason," he said slowly. "You're an intelligent young man, and I like you. I think Helen agrees with me on that." He smiled at the girl's quick blush and went on with a serious note in his voice.

"I'm looking for Dr. Arndt Knurd, formerly my collaborator in biological research. He vanished five years ago from our laboratory, taking with him all our notes and formulae on a new discovery. And, incidentally, a hundred thousand dollars of my money. I've had private investigators trying to pick up his trail since the disappearance. Just last month they traced him. Or rather, got wind of huge shipments of apparatus sent from Melbourne to some unnamed island in the Phoenix group. That's why we're here; to find which island—and Dr. Knurd."

"But why, sir, after five years?" Mason asked. He knew it wasn't the money. "That discovery—it was an important one?"

The scientist nodded.

"Vital," he said. "We developed a method of transplanting living brains—we used dogs—into an artificial medium of life, disconnected entirely from the rest of the body. We made electrically-motivated robot bodies, with living canine brains operating them almost as deftly as their natural bodies. We had devised a way of transmitting nerve-impulses along wires."

Mason felt the girl shudder against him. He knew his skin was crawling a little too at the rather gruesome account.

"And you think," he said, "that Dr. Knurd came to this island, or some island, to—well, to do what?"

"That's what I wonder!" Dr. Mon-try's kindly eyes looked deeply worried. "My agents also found out that he had contacted four other scientists. They have disappeared from public life. Professor Harkman, the famous metallurgist, was one. Dr. Yorsky, well-known Russian surgeon, another. And Walsh and Hapgood, engineer and physicist respectively. For five years these scientific minds have been together, on some island. What does it mean? Dr. Knurd himself is the—well, unscrupulous sort. He may—"

A sharp intake of breath from Helen interrupted.

"What's that?" Her trembling arm pointed toward the sheer cliff back of the island's broad beach. "Something is moving there—"

The men stared. A formless shadow, pierced by what seemed to be greenly gleaming eyes, moved across the cliff's unlighted background. They could not make out its shape or size. The glow of the mysterious eyes deepened and its twin beams seemed to stab out toward them and focus on the boat.

Don Mason sensed danger. A strange feeling of lassitude had stolen through his body. In a flash he knew that the twin-beam was bringing them paralysis! But even as his hand darted for the automatic in his pocket, he felt his fingers go limp.

Helen gave a choked scream and folded up on the deck floor. Dr. Mon-try, panting, was trying to drag himself along the rail with muscles that had turned to water. Hoarse shouts came from below, from the crew's quarters.

Cursing and trying to fight the gripping paralysis, Mason felt his legs turn to rubber. The deck came up into his face, like a club. He did not feel the blow. His whole body was numb. And the numbness was creeping insidiously into his brain.

He made one last effort, with a groan, and then gave up as a blot of inkiness crushed his mind. . . .

Don Mason lay still for a while when he came back to dreamy consciousness. He still felt numb, and wasn't quite sure that he was wide awake yet. He was even more uncertain when he moved his eyes and started to look around.

His first blurred glance left him with a sinking sensation of unnatural smallness which Mason vaguely attributed to the dizzy reaction of consciousness. He closed his eyes for a moment and then cautiously opened them again. His eyes focused on a shelf diagonally across from where he lay, a shelf which held laboratory flasks that appeared to be several feet high!

Mason blinked. Were his eyes deceiving him? Those flasks shouldn't normally be more than about a half a foot in size.

His eyes moved slightly downward, and they grew wide with astonishment as they fastened on an instrument. The instrument was simply and unmistakably a microscope—but a microscope which appeared to be as large as himself!

Still feeling hazy and numb, Mason started to think, slowly and ponderously. Something was obviously wrong, totally illogical. It was crazy. A microscope was a microscope and should be only a foot or so long. Yet, unless his eyes were deceiving him, here was a microscope that appeared to be as large as himself. Ah, that was it! *Appeared* to be. Then his eyes *were* deceiving him! But what was causing the illusion?

Suddenly and startlingly, his brain flashed to full consciousness. Relativity! Of course! With a terrified feeling of helplessness, Mason realized that the reason the microscope was so large was

because *he* was somehow so small! The microscope was as large as he was, all right, he told himself wryly—but *he* was only a foot high!

Mason forced himself to look further, and everything he saw seemed to verify his conclusions. He appeared to be in a gigantic chamber of rock without windows. He was lying on the cold stone floor, with Helen beside him. The girl, too, he observed, was his subnormal size. Bright electric lights unnaturally far ahead shone down, revealing a long huge table on which lay various implements of gross size, among them the microscope. It was a laboratory, Mason realized, a normal laboratory with everything in it looking colossal to his reduced self.

His gaze turned further, toward the end of the great table, and what he saw there made him draw his breath in sharply. Two figures were standing near the table—two monstrous-looking forms of copper-red metal!

Robots! Mechanized travesties of the human shape, with elongated cylindrical heads and bodies, jointed legs and arms. Both of them towered incredibly high from Mason's supine view.

Robots and a laboratory! The mystery of it brought a sharp unease, almost a hysterical terror, to Mason's dizzied mind. It was obviously some of Dr. Knurd's work, from what Dr. Montry had told him about Knurd. The scientist had stolen the secret of robot brain-control. He had come to this remote island, evidently to apply the method to human-sized robots.

Mason had already taken it as a matter of course that the two robots he saw were controlled by human brains. There was no other possibility. His mind raced on, almost without his volition. What was Knurd's purpose behind such a coldly scientific act? What was his reason for reducing his captives—or at least Mason himself and Helen so far—to such insignificant proportions? Just *how* he had accomplished it was relatively unimportant.

THERE had been deep rumbling in Mason's ears since he had awakened. He listened closely now, realizing they were the mechanical voices of the robot-men.

"I think you are close to success, Professor Harkman," boomed one robot's voice. He straightened up from the instrument over which he had been bending. "Those metallo-organisms you've created are unquestionably alive."

Don Mason listened with a beating heart. Professor Harkman, one of the four Dr. Montry had mentioned! Harkman was, or had been, the world's foremost metallurgist. He had long been an advocate of the theory of metallic life. How did he and this discovery fit into the puzzle of this underground cavern of science?

"Yes, Dr. Knurd," replied the other robot. "They are alive."

Mason caught his breath. So the first robot was the thieving Dr. Knurd himself! He had had himself made into a robot. His own scheming, clever brain lay within the metal body, controlling it as though it were his nature-given body. That made the whole situation still more perplexing and Mason wondered just how astounding the answer to it all was.

He listened further, not making the slightest move as yet.

The second robot, whose controlling brain had been that of Professor Harkman, continued.

"Yes, alive. Micro-organisms composed mainly of iron! As far back as 1927, Dr. Molisha of Japan described the 'toxothrix,' a germ, found in air, whose weight was fifty percent iron. Before that, only the red corpuscles of animal blood were known to carry iron. Stanford University confirmed Molisha's report in 1928. I was one of the men who followed his interesting research. I went further. I thought of mutating the toxothrix into a virulent metal-germ. I've succeeded here! This is a great thrill to me—"

"Yes, yes," cut in Dr. Knurd. His uninflected robot-voice could not express impatience, but it was implied. "Go on with your work, Professor. The germs must breed faster—as fast as pneumococci, for instance. When you produce that germ-culture, we will have the great force with which to conquer the world! Then, as practically eternal metal supermen, we will rule mankind for ages!"

Mason's brain reeled a little. Incredible as it sounded, that was the aim Dr. Knurd had had in mind with his theft of the robot secret. Rule of mankind! The man was a monomaniac—a coldblooded,

scientific Napoleon.

The robot-form of the metallurgist hesitated, with a stoppered culture tube in its hand.

"It may be dangerous to go on," he said warningly. "If it multiplies as fast as most organic germs, no metal it 'diseased' could stand up against it. It would eat into the strongest, toughest steel. If it were dispersed throughout the world, in a few months all metals would rot to powder and collapse. And don't forget, Dr. Knurd, *we* are made of metal!"

"Don't worry about such details," retorted the other robot. "I'm a biologist. I'll know how to handle the germs. I'll find a way to send them into opposing armies without danger to ourselves. Think of it, Professor, a bomb bursting in their midst. A cloud of germs dispelling through their air. All their metallic implements of warfare turning to 'diseased' dust as the metal-germs voraciously attack all metals within reach. Their cannon crumpling and their aircraft rising a few feet, then diving earthward like broken toys!"

Don Mason, hearing this prophetic recital, shuddered to the core of his being. Had the brain of Dr. Knurd, divorced from its true body, also renounced all claim to human feeling? The robot-master's voice droned on. "Those cannon could defeat us, you know. And those stinging aircraft with their powerful guns, if we were so rash as to attack unprepared. All mankind will unite against us. They have great armies and tremendous combined forces. The paralysis-ray that Walsh and Hapgood developed is useless except at short range. Also their heat-beam. Without your metal-germ culture, we would not be able to defeat mankind, in the long run. On with your work, Professor."

HARKMAN'S jointed arm clinked against his cylindrical head in a salute. Then he left, through a door that seemed like the opening of half the wall, to Don Mason. The robot of Dr. Knurd bent over charts on the table.

Mason tried to clarify his thoughts in the silence. It was starkly simple, though almost unbelievable. Dr. Knurd and his group were out to conquer humanity, in the shortest possible time. They had not only enduring metal bodies and two powerful weapons, but would soon have the Jovian offensive force of the metallic germ-culture.

The door opened again and another coppery-red robot stalked in, saluting Knurd. Following was a third robot, which came up with slow, almost faltering steps.

"Here is the new menial," announced the first robot.

"Oh, yes," grated Knurd's microphonic voice. "You have worked fast, Yorsky. Good."

The famous Russian surgeon, Dr. Yorsky—the third of Knurd's clique of five great minds! Mason grew bitter at the thought of such sparkling intellects pooling their genius in this unworthy cause.

The gleaming lenses of Knurd's robot-body turned to survey the third robot.

"Can you hear me, Dr. Montry?" Knurd asked.

"Yes, I hear you," returned the other robot in a hoarse mutter, as though unused to its new organs of metal.

Blood ran down Don Mason's lips as he bit them to keep from crying aloud. *Dr. Montry!* But he was no longer the human Dr. Montry. His brain had been transplanted into a robot body! This man who had so lately been a living, breathing being at his side, was now another of the inhuman monsters of metal. Mason felt as if all the universe had turned upside down.

Then he began to wonder how long he had been unconscious, if the operation had been performed in the meantime. For days? Or more likely the transplanting process had been shortened to a few hours by Yorsky's technique. In Russia, he had performed brain operations in half the time any other surgeon

could. Mason turned his attention back to the robots.

"You hear me," continued Knurd, "and you will always obey me! I am the robot-master. You have been made a menial-robot, Dr. Montry, since I know you would never willingly serve me. I hated to have it done, since you have a wonderful mind. Your brain has been reduced, in capacity. It is a delicate operation that the skillful Dr. Yorsky performs so well. One little cerebral nerve twisted aside and the entire prefrontal cortex is short-circuited. You have no voluntary powers—only the ability to obey orders. The occupants of three other ships that foundered here—under the influence of our paralysis-ray—have been made menial-robots also. Only the original five of us are master-robots. We will rule the world, when the time comes!"

Knurd went on, tauntingly.

"You have had a great part in this venture, Dr. Montry, though unwittingly. Our first discovery—of a solution in which the naked brain could live and transmit nerve-impulses was the start of it all. I thought of a robot-race right away. Why have ailing, mortal bodies when you could have immortal metal ones? I contacted my four famous colleagues and they finally agreed. We pooled resources, came to this island, and carried out our plans.

"We became robots. We had perfected the robot mechanism elaborately. Powerful batteries supply power. We have far more strength and powers at the disposal of our controlling brains than we had with our normal bodies. We found our mental processes working better, too, unhindered by biological vagaries. We developed the paralysis-ray, the heat-beam, the brain-reducing method for menials, and a metallic germ-culture which will defeat mankind's armies. We will have complete control, for ages !"

DR. MONTRY made no denunciation. Don Mason realized he couldn't. His brain had been reduced and lacked voluntary powers. Dr. Montry could hear and understand, but he couldn't denounce or defy. He could only obey, as a virtual slave. It was a horrible fate that Mason realized might soon be his and Helen's, Was this why they had first been reduced in size?

"You may go, Dr. Montry," commanded Knurd. "Go to Harkman's laboratory and help him for the present."

The robot of Dr. Montry left without a word.

Knurd spoke to Yorsky. "Make the members of the yacht's crew into menials. We can use them."

"How about those two?" Yorsky pointed to Mason and Helen.

"No," returned Knurd. "I'm going to use them in a test. I've been trying to make an organic germ-culture more virulent than any known human disease. In case our other methods fail to subdue mankind, I'll loose this germ among them and bring them to terms."

The robot-body of Yorsky left.

Knurd glanced at Mason and Helen and then at several culture jars on his work table. Mason realized there wasn't much time. He had pretended unconsciousness up till now, but when Knurd's back was turned, he reached over and shook the girl. She had been sighing and twisting and he knew she was close to awakening.

Helen's eyes fluttered open. To be safe, Mason clapped his hand over her mouth and whispered rapidly in her ear, telling her to be quiet no matter how astonished she was at what she saw for the first time. The girl nodded, bravely checking her emotions as she looked around.

"We must get out of this room," Mason finished, "before Dr. Knurd decides to try some new culture on us. We'll try for the door."

He had already noticed, with beating pulses, that Yorsky had failed to close the wooden door tight

when he left. Knurd's back was still turned. Mason quietly and quickly rose to his feet and helped the girl up. They both felt stiff and sore, and heavy-limbed. Mason figured that this must be because their normal weight was concentrated in their smaller bulk, at the expense of their muscular power.

Hugging the wall and tiptoeing, the two humans crept toward the door. The slight sounds they made were overshadowed by the low internal humming of the robot's electrical machinery.

When they were within a dozen yards of the door, almost at the heels of the gigantic-seeming robot, Knurd turned around and took a few steps toward where they had lain. He stopped suddenly, seeing they were gone, and his odd cylindrical head twisted in search.

"Run for it!" shouted Mason, pushing the girl ahead. They reached the door. There was only a slight crack, too narrow for even their small bodies to squeeze through. Mason grabbed the edge with his hands and strained to pull the huge thick oaken door open. It failed to give and Mason redoubled his efforts, with Helen helping desperately.

Knurd had now discovered them. He gave a tinny shout and strode toward them. At the same time from the gaping eye-sockets of his head, a greenish glow stabbed and began to focus in their direction. Mason remembered the green glow at the ship —the paralysis-ray! The robot bodies were equipped with them and with God knew what other horrible forces supplied by their enigmatic internal apparatus.

WITH a desperate wrench, Mason swung the door open a few more inches and Helen stumbled through. Mason sprang after her and felt the tail-end of a numbing sensation. Just in time, or the paralysis-ray would have focused.

A long hall was revealed, as immense to them as a cathedral. Mason ran down the passageway, with an arm around the girl. Back of them the door they had quitted opened widely and Knurd's robot came out. He broke into a ponderous run, after them.

Mason realized they would be caught unless they found a door open somewhere. The stone hall ended abruptly further ahead. The robot, shouting, gained on them rapidly, with its longer stride. Then twin beams of reddish iridescence shot from the robot's strange eye-sockets.

Where they first focused, several feet ahead, Mason saw the stone smoke and chip. The heat-beam! Its touch would spell a horrible death!

"Here!" gasped Helen, jerking aside. "In here!"

A door was slightly ajar. They squeezed through. The large chamber seemed to be a storeroom. A half dozen robots were picking up crated objects and piling them neatly. They were menials and paid no attention to the two humans who stood in plain sight. Their last command had been to stack the apparatus. No command had been given them about the humans.

But suddenly Knurd's roaring voice sounded as he came down the hall.

"Grab those two humans!" he was shouting. "Any menials who see them —catch them! If they try to escape, use the paralysis-ray or heat-beam."

Immediately, the menial-robots left their task and came for the two humans. The greenish glow of paralysis and the reddish of the heat-beam began to stab from all directions. Mason played a sudden hunch and ran straight for them, dragging the startled Helen along. All the beams focused over them safely. They darted between the clumsy legs of the slowwitted creatures and before they could turn around, had found temporary refuge behind the storeroom's piled up contents.

Knurd's robot charged in, cursing at the menials for letting their prey escape. For a while it was a cat and mouse game, up and down the long aisles of the stacked merchandise. Because of their small size and the dim lighting, Mason and Helen were able to elude cornering by the clumsy menials, as they

slipped around boxes and hugged shadows.

Mason had his automatic out, but realized it would be a puny weapon against the metal monsters. And now they were tiring rapidly. The robots could go on and on, tirelessly, but in this strenuous, game, Mason and Helen were reaching a limit of endurance.

They saw several doors, but all were tightly closed. Finally the inevitable happened and they were cornered. The menials and Dr. Knurd converged on them. The scientist's eyes radiated the paralysis-ray, and it began to focus in their direction. They were lost!

Mason made one futile shot with his automatic, aiming for one of Knurd's eyes. An instantaneous shutter clicked over the eye, and the bullet thudded harmlessly against metal. Knurd had developed the robot-bodies into remarkable engines of offense and defense.

Suddenly a door at their backs opened. A robot came out precipitately, shouting hoarsely. A large tube of something sailed over his head and smashed against the nearest wall. An oily solution splashed against the stone.

Mason did not stop to figure what it meant, but simply accepted fate's little finger and shoved the girl into the room beyond the door. He had seen there was only one menial-robot in there. Perhaps there was a chance of escaping him.

The door closed behind them. The menial-robot instantly came at them. It was a laboratory, but the benches behind which they might hide were at the other side of the room. They were cornered. The robot loomed up monstrously, and extended its steely hands.

Cursing, Mason fired his automatic wildly. The bullets spanged harmlessly against metal. Then the green paralysis-ray shot from the creature's eyes and Mason felt his limbs go rubbery. Helen collapsed on the floor at his side.

Caught at last! Mason's last thoughts were bitter as the paralysis bit into his brain.

SENSING that he had been out for many hours, Mason opened his eyes to find his vision obstructed by something shimmering. Puzzled, he looked out at a distorted view. Then he saw Helen a few feet away, standing upright in what was simply a bell-jar. Mason realized that he, too, was inclosed in one.

It suddenly struck Mason forcibly just how small they were. Here they were, two grown human beings, standing upright in ordinary laboratory bell-jars, and unable to reach the tops! But what did it mean? Was Knurd, perhaps, about to test his germ culture on them?

Blind fear of being thus inclosed like a guinea-pig struck Mason and he kicked at the prison wall of glasslike material. He could see Helen, just a few feet away, pounding with her little fists against her crystalline prison. Hysterical panic was in her face. Her mouth was open, as though she were screaming, but Mason couldn't hear a sound.

Rage now ripped Mason's tattered nerves. Rage that the girl he loved must suffer these cruelties at the hands of monsters of metal. He fired the last remaining shots of his automatic at the bell-jar wall. It was not glass. It did not break. The confined reverberations nearly threw him off his feet.

He looked up now to see the menial-robot who had captured them looming over the jars. The red heat-beam came in a twin stream from its cryptic eyes and focused on the glass. A line of flame traveled down the rounded surface and split the jar open like a pod. Metallic hands that did not know feeling grasped the molten material and shoved it aside.

Then Helen's transparent prison was similarly treated. Soon Mason and Helen were free and leaped for one another's arms. The menial robot seemed to stare down at them benignly. Then it sank to the

floor, with a peculiarly soft thud, as though the metal had turned to putty.

"Helen ... Don . . ." it called tinnily.

Mason and Helen stared down from the table-top at the fallen robot.

"Dr. Montry!" cried Mason in sudden realization.

"Yes, it's I!" came the metallic tones of the robot.

"But you're a menial, how could you—"

"I wasn't a menial," returned Dr. Montry. "The skillful Dr. Yorsky made the one mistake of his life. He was too hasty. He failed to short-circuit my cortex. I played dumb, waited my chance. You must escape—and quickly! Follow corridor past Knurd's laboratory, turn right—leads to open air. The yacht wasn't wrecked —beached there—hurry!"

"But you, Dr. Montry—" began Mason.

"I'm doomed," pronounced the robot. "But so are all the other robots in this cavern of evil. When I opened the door to let you in, I threw out Harkman's metallic germ-culture. They have spread through the caverns and attacked all metals, turning them into rotting oxides like a mold putrefies organic matter. I put you two under bell-jars as the germs attack human lungs too. But by now the air is fairly clear of them. Hurry and escape before the caverns collapse on your heads. All the steel beams and bracing rods have been attacked. They'll buckle any minute!"

"But our size!" stammered Mason. "We're little pygmies—"

"No, you aren't!" snapped back Dr. Montry's robot. "You're normal size, always have been. Relatively, you're small, yes, because everything in this place is over-sized. Dr. Knurd had to make his robots big in order to fit into them all the apparatus necessary. Therefore, all else, including the instruments, had to be in proportion."

The robot-body squirmed and parts of it sloughed away as though it were diseased flesh.

"Good-by — hurry — " Said the scientist. Then the cylindrical head cracked away from the torso. A moment later the metal fell in on itself to reveal something nakedly pinkish in a glass-like container.

Mason smashed the object with his pistol-butt, with closed eyes, knowing he was doing a good thing, and leaped away. Helen was sobbing as he relentlessly dragged her into a run . . .

An hour later from the height of the cliff in the bowels of which Dr. Knurd had dug his incredible headquarters, they watched as the massive rock roof fell in, burying its secret forever.