

Miracle in Three Dimensions

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Photography and Sound Recording Are Bound by a Man-made Limit—and Beyond that Lies Madness!

An A\NN/A Preservation Edition.

Notes

"I'VE got it, Abe! It's as near to life itself as the movies will ever come. I've done it!" Blair O'Byrne's haunted black eyes were bright with triumph.

Abe Silvers, gaunt and dark and weary-eyed, shifted the cigar to the other side of his mouth and stepped in under the doorway that made sharp division between the glare of California sunlight outside and the lofty shadows of O'Byrne's long, dim studio.

"I hope you're right," he said around the cigar. "I've waited a long time for it. And God knows you've spent more years than you ought, and more money than even you could afford. Why have you done it, Blair? A man with your money, your background, shutting yourself up here in the dark, sweating over shadows?"

"I haven't been shut up away from life—I've been shut in with it!" O'Byrne's smile spread across the pallor of his delicate face. "It's life itself I've been groping after all these years, and I've found it, Abe. I've got it!"

"Got the illusion of it, maybe. A little better than Metro-Cosmic has been filming for the last few years. And if it's as good as you say we'll buy it—and so what?"

O'Byrne turned to him fiercely, his dream-haunted eyes suddenly blazing.

"I tell you this is life! As near as shadows can come—too near, perhaps. 'Moving pictures'! They'll have to find a new name for what I've got. It isn't pictures—it's breathing, living reality. I've worked over it until nothing else seemed to matter, nothing else seemed real. I've got it, Abe. It's—life."

ABE SILVERS shifted the cigar back across his mouth, and if his eyes were understanding, his voice was only patient. He had heard such words before, from many fiercely sincere inventors. That he had known O'Byrne for many years did not alter his accustomed attitude toward such things.

"All right," he murmured. "Show me. Where's the projection room, Blair?"

"Here." O'Byrne waved a thin, unsteady hand toward the center of the big studio where under a battery of high-hung lights a U-shaped bar of dull silver rose from a low platform to the height of a man's waist. Beyond it against the wall bulked a big rectangular arrangement of chromium and glass, behind whose face bulbs were dimly visible. Silvers snorted.

"There? That thing looks like a radio—that doubled-over pipe? But the screen, man—the seats—the—"

"I'm telling you this is utterly new, Abe. You'll have to clear your mind of all your preconceived ideas of what a moving picture should be. All that is obsolete, from this minute on. The 'moving picture' is as dead as the magic lantern. This is the new thing. These batteries of lights, that 'radio' as you call it, the platform and bar, one for each individual spectator—"

"But what is it? What happens?"

"I can't explain it to you now," said O'Byrne impatiently. "For one thing, you wouldn't believe me until after you've seen it. And it would take weeks to give you enough ground-work to understand the principles. The thing's too complex for anyone to explain in words. I can't even explain the appearance except in metaphors—there's never been anything like it before.

"Roughly, though, it's the projection of the illusion of life on a three-dimensional screen composed of fogged light. Other men are just beginning to fumble around with the principles of three-dimensional movies projected on a flat screen, giving the appearance of a stage with depth. That's going at it clumsily. I've approached the problem from a much newer angle. My screen itself is three-dimensional—the light that bathes you when the batteries of arcs are on. You're in the midst of it, the action is projected on the light all around you from double films taken from slightly different angles, on the stereoscopic principle. I'll show you later.

"And there is in that bar you're to hold on to, sufficient current to stimulate very selectively the nerves which carry tactile impression to the brain. You'll feel, as well as hear and see. You'll even smell. On occasion you may actually taste—it's close enough to the sensations of smelling to work out. Only that doesn't figure so much in this case, for you as a spectator will not enter into the action. You'll simply witness it from closer quarters than any audience has ever dreamed of doing before.

"Here, step up on the platform and take hold of the rod there, at the curve. That's it. Now hold tight, and don't be surprised. Remember, nothing like this has ever been done before. Ready?"

Abruptly the great banks of lights blazed into radiance that closed the dazzled Silvers about in soft, pouring brightness. There was a quality of mistiness about it that made even his own hands invisible before him on the bar. It was as if the light poured upon innumerable motes in the air, so refracting from their infinitesimal surfaces that nothing was visible but that shimmer of bright blindness. Silvers gripped the bar and waited.

Through the bright fog a voice as smooth as cream spoke in vast, clear echoes, rolling in from all around him at once, filling the little artificial world of mist wherein he stood lost. Mellowly the deep tones said:

"You are about to enter an enchanted wood outside Athens on a midsummer night, to share in a dream that Shakespeare dreamed over three hundred years ago. Titania, Queen of Faeryland, will be played by Anne Acton. Oberon, the King, is Philip Graves—"

Abe Silvers clutched the bar in amazement as that unctuous voice rolled on. Anne Acton and Philip Graves were under contract to his own Metro-Cosmic, and every one of the other names were stars of the first magnitude. The

greatest actors of the day were playing in this incredible fragment of a Midsummer Night's Dream. What it had cost O'Byrne he shuddered to think.

The creamy voice died away. The mist began to clear. Silvers' hands closed hard on the bar and he stared in blankest incredulity about the dim blue glades of forest stretching around him, silvery in the light of a high-riding moon. A breeze whispered through the leaves, blowing cool on his face. Save that it did not stir a hair of his head he could have believed it an actual breeze sighing through the moonlit dark.

He looked down. He was himself invisible, disembodied, no longer standing on a bare floor but in the midst of a flowering meadow whose grasses were faintly fragrant at his feet. There was no flicker, no visible light-and-shadow composition of the projection upon this incredible three-dimensional screen that surrounded him. The glade stretched away into actual distances much deeper than the studio's walls could possibly contain; the illusion of deep, starry sky overhead was perfect; the flowers in the grass were so real he thought he could have knelt and gathered them in his hands.

Then, under the trees, the mists parted like a curtain and the Queen of Faeryland came splendidly into the moonlit glade. Anne Acton had never looked so lovely. The long veil of her silver-pale hair streamed like gossamer behind her, and every curve and shadowy roundness was as real as life itself. Yet there hovered about her a hint of unreality, so that she blended perfectly the illusion of fantasy and reality as she moved over the unbending grass, the bright wings streaming from her shoulders.

THERE was a blast of silvery challenge from elfin horns and into the moonlight strode Oberon, his lean features wrathful. The famous deep tones of Philip Graves resounded angrily through the moonlight. Titania answered in silvery defiance.

Then came full, rich human voices ringing through the wood. Phoebe Templeton in Hermia's rustling satin came radiantly into the glade, brushing so close by the watching Silvers that he caught a whiff of her perfume, felt the touch of her satin skirts. And he knew—almost he knew—that he could put out a hand and stop her, so warmly real was she at that close range. Her lovely throaty voice called to Lysander behind her.

And then somehow the forest was slipping away past Abe Silvers' face—somehow he had the illusion of walking as if in a dream down an enchanted forest aisle, the dim air quivering with starlight, and Helena came running and weeping through the trees, stumbling, sobbing the name of Demetrius.

She passed. Silvers started involuntarily as from a swaying branch above him pealed the wild, half-human laughter of Puck, delicate as the chatter of a squirrel, and down through the air over his very shoulder, the breeze of his passing fanning Silvers' face, the lithe little goblin sprang.

The scene clouded over as if a mist had been drawn across the moon. Silvers blinked involuntarily, and when he looked again Titania lay exquisitely asleep on the dew-spangled bank where the wild thyme grew.

Then through the magic-haunted wood suddenly shrilled a bell. Insistently, metallicly it rang. Silvers glanced about the glades of the forest, trying to locate among the dew-shimmering leaves the source of that irritating noise. And suddenly the Athenian woods melted like smoke about him. Incredulously he stared around a big bare studio. It was like waking in bewilderment from a dream so vivid that reality itself paled beside its memory.

"The studio wants you on the telephone, Abe," said O'Byrne's voice. "Here, wake up! Didn't you hear the bell?"

SILVERS shook himself, laughed sheepishly. "I'm still in Athens," he admitted, blinking. "That's the damnedest thing I ever—studio, did you say? Where's the phone?"

Thinly over the wire came a worried voice.

"Hate to bother you, chief, but I think you ought to know. Anne Acton's been mumbling around in a sort of daze for half an hour. The doctor can't do a thing with her. And Philip Graves passed out on set and is just kind of whispering to himself—poetry, it sounds like."

Silvers blinked. "D-don't let the papers get it. I'll be right over."

He slammed the telephone back on its cradle and turned blankly to O'Byrne.

"Something's gone wrong with a couple of our actors you stole," he said. "I've got to get back right away. But listen, Blair—you've got something! How long will it take you to have some more of these bar and platform arrangements rigged up? Say a dozen for a starter. I'd like to have our board see it as soon as possible. This is going to be the most tremendous thing that ever happened in motion pictures. When can you have things ready to show the board?"

"I—I don't know, Abe. Somehow—I'm a little afraid of it."

"Afraid? Good God, man, what do you mean?"

"I don't know, exactly—but did you have a feeling, as you watched the action, that somehow it came—too near—to life?"

"Blair—I'm afraid you've been working too hard on this. Let me handle it from now on, will you? And stop thinking about it. I've got to get back to the studio now and see what's happened to my actors—attack of temperament, probably—but I'll see you tonight about quantity production. Until then, you won't let anyone else in on this, will you?"

"You know I won't, Abe. It's yours if you want it."

All the way back to the studio Silvers' mind was spinning with the magnitude of what lay before him. He had dared to let the inventor know how enormously impressed he was, how anxious to have the new process, because he knew O'Byrne so well. The man was wealthy in his own right, indifferent to fame, to everything but the deep need to create which had driven him so hard for so many years toward the completion of his miracle. Miracle in three dimension! It seemed like a dream, what he had just seen,

but behind it lay the prospect for a fortune vaster than any movie magnate had ever dared to hope for. To control this was to control the whole world. Silvers clenched his cigar tighter and dreamed magnificent dreams.

Anne Acton lay on a low couch in her lavish little dressing bungalow, staring up with conscious pathos into the doctor's face as Silvers came into the room. Somehow, illogically, it was a shock to him to see her here when he had so short a time before left that perfect illusion of herself in the enchanted wood outside Athens, asleep on the bank of wild thyme.

"How are you, Anne?" he demanded anxiously, for she represented a fabulous sum to the company and an illness now, in the midst of her latest picture, would be ruinous. "Is she all right, Doc? When did she come out of it?"

"While they were phoning you, Abe," said Acton herself in a faint, pathetic voice, moving her head uneasily so that the great slipping rope of silver-pale hair moved across the brocade. "It—it was all so queer. Suddenly I felt too tired to move, as if all the strength had drained right out of me. And I must have fainted, but I wasn't really out. Kept having sort of dreams—I don't remember now—woods, somewhere, and music. And suddenly it all ended and I opened my eyes here. I'm all right now, only I feel as weak as a kitten. Look." She held up an exquisite hand to show it quivering.

"What is it, Doc?" demanded Silvers anxiously.

"Um-m-ra—overwork, perhaps, general exhaustion—it's impossible to say definitely without further examination."

"Will she be okay now?"

"I see no reason why, with rest and care, she shouldn't be."

"I'll send for your car, Anne," said Silvers authoritatively. "You're going home to bed. I'll see you later."

Philip Graves, in the braid-bedecked finery of a movie caballero, was sitting up on his couch and holding a cigarette in unsteady fingers when Silvers pushed through the little knot of attendants that surrounded him.

"Feeling better, Phil?" he demanded. "What was it?"

"Nothing—nothing," said the actor impatiently. "I'm okay now. Just passed out for a few minutes. I'll be all right."

Abe Silvers lost no time in calling a meeting of the board. The twelve members of Metro-Cosmic stood about in twos and threes, murmuring incredulously in the shadows of the O'Byrne studio on the night when the first dozen bar-platforms were erected. Silvers had not dared to describe fully this modern miracle.

"It's like nothing you ever saw before," he warned them as rather sheepishly they allowed themselves to be herded forward to the platforms. When they were all at their stations and Silvers signaled O'Byrne to begin, he glanced once around the little company before the lights blazed on.

Doubtfully they returned his stare with a murmur or two of protest rising.

"Feel so damn' silly," an official said, "standing here. Mean to say there isn't any screen? What are we supposed to look at?"

AND then like a wall of brilliant blindness the foggy light closed down upon them and every man was cut off from his fellows so that he stood alone and disembodied in the heart of that soft, misty blaze. Startled exclamations sounded through the mist, murmurs that died away as Silvers heard for the second time the creamy smoothness of the announcer's voice rolling through the dimming brightness.

"You are now about to enter an enchanted wood outside Athens on a midsummer night, to share in a dream that Shakespeare dreamed—"

Somehow, as the play went on, Abe Silvers began to wonder a little uneasily at the violence of the quarrel between Titania and Oberon that flamed almost tangibly through the clear dim air. Had they fought before so fiercely? Had they—

A gibber of wild inhuman laughter, the long leap of Puck over his shoulder, broke the queer thought half-formed, just as a bell began to shrill through the forest. He knew a moment of unreality. He remembered that in the previous performance the bell had not rung until Titania lay down to sleep on the bank where the wild thyme grew. But with shocking completeness the forest vanished. Silvers stared blankly around the studio's reaches that had so suddenly replaced the glades of faeryland, blinking at the circle of dazed men in amazement.

"Telephone for you, Abe," O'Byrne's voice called through the fading mists of the dream that had so strongly gripped him. He grinned sheepishly and stepped down from the platform.

"Listen, chief," babbled a distressed voice over the wire, shrill above the rising babble of delight behind Silvers, "Acton's out like a light at the Grove!"

"Is she plastered?"

"I don't think so—but try to tell the papers that! She—wait—oh, she's just coming out of it. What'll we do?"

"Send her home," sighed Silvers. "I'll get onto the papers right away. What a life!"

HE turned back to O'Byrne with a shrug. "Acton's passed out again," he murmured unhappily. "I wonder if she—well, if she folds now in the middle of 'Never Tomorrow' we'll lose our shirts on it. I'm going to get a doctor to—"

"Abe," said O'Byrne in a voice so quiet that the other man turned to him in surprise, "Abe, do you realize that every time we run this picture Anne Acton faints? I wonder if the other actors feel the same reaction?"

"Why—what do you mean? Why should they? Blair, are you going crazy?"

Silvers' voice was stoutly confident, but despite himself an uneasy little flicker woke in his mind. Philip Graves, who played Oberon, had been dazed and out of his head too that other time. And—yes, hadn't he noticed an item in a gossip column saying that Phoebe Templeton had collapsed at a tea in New York? Was it the same day? Rather terrifyingly, he thought it was. But of course all this was the most flagrant nonsense. His job now was to keep Acton out of the papers. She had not endeared herself to reporters, and he knew they would make the story sound as bad as possible. They—the phone rang again.

"A wire from Philip Graves' man has just come in, Abe," his wife's voice told him worriedly. "Philip's, been taken terribly sick on shipboard. His man says it will be in all the papers tomorrow, and he wants your advice."

Silvers ran a hand distractedly through his hair. "Thanks," he said a little blankly. "I'll take care of it. Be home later."

He turned to the men still grouped around the bar-platforms in their babble of amazed delight. They had not heard his low-voiced conversations at the desk.

"We've got this fellow under contract, haven't we?" said someone anxiously at his elbow. "Ought to get going on production right away. This is the most tremendous thing that ever happened."

"Yes—he'll let us have it," Silvers told him abstractedly. "Blair, how's the production on the first hundred bar-platforms coming? We've got to give a larger showing right away."

"A hundred and fifty will be ready in about a week," O'Byrne admitted reluctantly. "But Abe—Abe, do you think we ought to do it?"

Silvers pulled him aside. "Look, Blair," he said gently, "you mustn't let your imagination run away with you. What possible connection can there be between the showing of this picture and the fact that a few overworked, nervous people have fainting spells? I'll admit it's a coincidence, but we've got to be sensible. We can't let the biggest thing that ever happened in pictures slip through our fingers just because some dizzy actress passes out once or twice."

O'Byrne shrugged a little. "I wonder," he murmured, as if thinking aloud, "how long people have been trying to create life? Something's always prevented it—no one's been allowed to succeed. This thing of mine isn't life, but it's too near it to leave me at peace with myself. I think there's a penalty for usurping the powers of godhead—for coming too close to success. I'm afraid, Abe."

"Blair, will you do me a favor?" demanded Silvers. "Will you go to bed and forget all about this until morning? I'll see you tomorrow. Right now I'm up to my neck in trouble."

O'Byrne smiled ghostily. "All right," he said...

TEMPLETON-FREDERICKS ELOPEMENT!

That was the headline the newsboys were yelling when Silvers stepped out of his car the next day. He looked twice at the headline to be sure, for the romance of Phoebe Templeton, not with Bill Fredericks but with Manfield Drake, had kept screen magazines in ecstasies for the past six months. The wedding was to have been this week, but—he bought a paper hastily, a wild thought flashing through his mind. Templeton and Fredericks had played the lovers in O’Byrne’s photoplay!

“Bill and I have known one another for about six months,” Phoebe Templeton was quoted as saying, “but we never realized until last night how much we meant to each other. It happened rather miraculously. I was on my way west and Bill was here in Hollywood. And suddenly in Denver it came over me that I simply must talk to him. I phoned long distance and—well, it’s all pretty hazy to look back on, but I chartered a plane and met him in Yuma, and we were married this morning. Of course I feel badly about Manfield, but really, this was too big to fight against. We’ve known since ten o’clock last night that we were meant for each other.”

Silvers tucked the paper under his arm and bit down hard on his cigar. It was at ten last night that they had watched *Hermia and Lysander*, in the actual, breathing presences of Templeton and Fredericks, murmuring passionate love under a high-floating moon. For a moment a fantastic wonder crossed his mind. “I must be going nuts,” he murmured to himself.

A week later an audience of a hundred and fifty people gathered for the real preview of O’Byrne’s “*Midsummer Night’s Dream*.” The bar-platforms had been set up in the big studio that had seen the first running of the miraculous illusion. It was crowded now with murmurous and skeptical people—officers and directors of Metro-Cosmic, a sprinkling of wives. Silvers conquered an inexplicable uneasiness as he sought O’Byrne in a corner near the controls. Blair was sitting on a heavy stool before the machine, and the face he turned to his friend was full of a queer, strained tension. He said, his voice a thread of sound:

“Abe—I’ve had the maddest notion that every time I show this the figures come back realer than before into the scenes they play. Maybe they don’t always hold to the action we photographed—maybe the plot carries them on beyond what Shakespeare wrote—more violently than—”

SILVERS’ fingers gripped the other man’s shoulders hard. Sharply he shook him, an absurd uneasiness darkening his memory of that impression of fiercer violence in the quarrel between Oberon and Titania the last time he saw the play, even as he said firmly:

“Snap out of it, Blair! You’ve been working too hard. Maybe someone else could run the picture tonight—you need rest.”

O’Byrne looked up at him apathetically, his alarm gone suddenly flat.

“No, I’ll do it. If you’re really determined to run the thing, maybe I’d better. Maybe I can control them better than an assistant could. After all, I created them...”

Silvers looked down at him for a moment in frowning silence. Then he shrugged and turned toward the last empty bar-platform where the

audience waited the beginning of the show. O'Byrne was dangerously overworked, he told himself. After this was over he must go to a sanatorium for a long rest. His mind was cracking. ; . .

Misty radiance closed down about him, veiling the hundred and fifty from his vision. There was a moment of murmurous wonder, punctuated by small, half-frightened screams from a few of the women as each spectator was shut off into a little world of silence and solitude.

Into the silvery mist that familiar rich voice rolled smoothly. For the third time Silvers saw the broad gray glades of faeryland, hedged with immemorial forest, opening magically up about him. For the third time Titania trailed her streaming wings into the moonlight. Oberon strode with a jingle of mail from among the trees, and they met in fury halfway down the glade, their feet pressing the bending grass with elfin lightness. But there was no lightness in their anger. That ancient quarrel flared up in violence between them, and the breezes shivered with their wrath.

Again Hermia and Lysander came half laughing, half fearful into the woods. Again Helena sobbed Demetrius' name among the unanswering trees. Puck flitted in goblin glee about his business of enchantment and Titania lay down to sleep on the spangled grass among the wild thyme.

THIS time no telephone bell broke into the magic of the dream. And again these were living people who moved so tangibly before the audience, the wind of their passing brushing them, the sound of their breathing in their ears when they stood near, going about their magic-haunted ways as obviously as if the spectators were the phantoms, not they. Their loves and hates and heartbreak were vividly real under that incredibly real moon.

Once or twice Silvers thought vaguely that here and there in the action things happened not exactly as he remembered them. Had Titania actually slapped Oberon's dark, angry face before she swept out of the glade? Had Hermia and Lysander kissed quite so lingeringly under that deep-shadowed oak? But as the play went on Silvers lost all thought of times that had gone before, and sank fathoms deep in the reality of the scene before him. Puck lured the spell-bewildered lovers into the fastnesses of the forest. They went stumbling through the fog, quarreling, blinded by mist and magic and their own troubled hearts. Swords flashed in the moonlight. Lysander and Demetrius were fighting among the veiled trees. Puck laughed, shrill and high and inhuman, and swept his brown arm down. And from Lysander came a choked gasp, the clatter of a fallen sword.

Demetrius bent fiercely above him. Silvers watched the bright blood bubbling from his side, saw the blade drip darkly, smelled the acrid sharpness of that spreading stain. The illusion was marvelous. Lysander's death was a miracle of artistry from the first choked gasp of pain to the last bubbling of blood in his throat, the last twist of handsome silk-sheathed limbs. Lysander's death—

Something troubled Silvers' memory, but before he could capture it a woman's voice cried hysterically somewhere in the misty forest, "He's dead—he's dead!" and suddenly, blankly, the forest was gone from about them and he was staring into dazed, half-dreaming faces where an instant

before faeryland had stretched depth upon depth of moonlit dimness, where Lysander had lain dying on the moss. Somewhere in the crowd a woman was sobbing hysterically.

"He's dead, I tell you! Lysander's dead, and he doesn't really die in the play! Someone's killed him! That was real blood—I smelled it! Oh, get me out of this awful place!"

Silvers brushed the fog of dreamland from his eyes and was halfway across the floor to the projection machine before the scream had ended, for he remembered now that tug of memory as Lysander fell. Shakespeare's play was romance, not tragedy. Lysander should not have died.

O'Byrne clung to his high stool, his fingers white-knuckled as he stared into Silvers' eyes.

"You see?" he said in a strained monotone. "You see what mass hypnotism will do? They couldn't help it—poor things—they must be half alive—wandering in the fog..."

"Blair!" Silvers' voice rang sharply.

"Blair, snap out of it! What are you raving about? Are you mad?"

The staring eyes turned to his almost apathetically.

"I was afraid," said O'Byrne, in that whispering monotone as if he spoke in a dream. "I was afraid to run it before this many people—I should have guessed what would happen when Acton and Graves and—"

"Are you still harping on that coincidence?" demanded Silvers in a fierce undertone. "Can't you see how foolish it is, Blair? What earthly connection can there be between pictures on a screen and living people, some of them half the world away? I'll admit what happened tonight was—"

"Did you ever hear—" broke in Blair softly, as if he were following some private train of thought and had not heeded a word of Silvers' harangue—"of savages covering their faces when explorers bring out their cameras? They think a photograph will steal their souls. It's an idea so widespread that it can't have originated in mere local superstition. Tribes all over the world have it. African savages, Tibetan nomads, Chinese peasants, South American Indians. Even the ancient Egyptians, highly civilized as they were, deliberately made their drawings angular and unlikelike. All of them declared and believed that too good a likeness would draw the soul out into the picture."

"Well, yes—everybody's heard of such things—but you're not suggesting—"

"After the Templeton elopement—after Anne Acton's fainting-spells and Philip Graves' illness—yes, after what happened tonight, how can you deny it, Abe? No, the Egyptians, the modern savages, were closer to the truth than we. Only before now no likeness has been perfect enough to absorb sufficient personality so that people could notice it. But these illusions of mine—they're real, living, breathing. While you watch you can't believe the actual men and women aren't standing in front of you.

"It had an effect on Acton and Graves when only you were watching—enough of their personality was drained out of them into the illusion by your own temporary conviction that they were there, so that they went into vague dreams of woodland and music. I don't know how the other actors were affected—I do know that several of them were sick and dizzy that day. I haven't checked—maybe I've been afraid to..."

"When the twelve board-members were watching, the drain was stronger; so that Graves was really ill on shipboard and Acton couldn't be roused from her faint until the telephone call to you broke the illusion here. It affected Templeton and Bill Fredericks another way—hypnotized them into believing what the audience was believing, that they were really in love—"

RECOLLECTION flooded into Silvers' mind. He remembered what he had felt when he read the headlines of the elopement. He said: "Could it happen that way, Blair? How greatly could a mass mind affect the reactions of the people it concentrates on? I thought of it before—if twelve individuals, each convinced for a time that he saw two people desperately in love, might really work a sort of persuasion on those two—No, that's crazy! It couldn't happen!"

"You saw it happen," murmured Blair quietly. "You saw what happened when a hundred and fifty people joined in that fierce concentration—that utter conviction that they saw a man's sword poised, aimed, descending—mass hypnotism, it was! For a majority of them that sword really struck—their imagination outran the actual fact and they thought they saw Lysander spitted on Demetrius' blade. They thought they saw him die."

"Well, he didn't, did he? I mean, nothing happened this time or they'd have called me."

A thin smile twisted up O'Byrne's strained mouth. He reached behind him. Silvers heard a click and realized that the telephone had been lying out of its cradle on the desk ever since he reached Blair's side.

"I wanted you to understand before they broke the news to you," O'Byrne was explaining gently. "And I knew the telephone would interrupt me unless I—"

Shrill buzzing whirred from the desk. With a little spurt of terror for what he had yet to learn, Silvers snatched it up. A voice shouted thinly in his ear:

"Silvers? Is that you, chief? My God, I've been trying to get you all evening! Acton's been in a coma for over an hour—doctor can't rouse her. And a call just came in from London that Phil Graves is out too—can't be waked! And—what's that? What? Chief! Word's just come in that Templeton's passed out too, and Bill Fredericks has dropped dead! What's the matter with this town? It's like the end of the world—"

"Abe—" O'Byrne's voice behind him twisted Silvers around like a hand on his shoulder. The receiver shrilled unnoticed as their eyes met. O'Byrne's face was almost serene—knowledge of what the telephone was crying showed in his eyes. He said: "Do you believe me now? Do you understand? Do you realize how much of life itself I've woven into this damnable thing I've

made? Yes—it's like two-dimensional pictures that carry a shadow of the third—enough dark to give a feeling of depth. In my three-dimensional picture I've somehow got a shadow of the fourth—life, maybe, or something too near it. Maybe that's what the fourth dimension is—life itself. But it won't kill men again—not again!”

THE crash of glass shattered into the hysterical buzz of the crowd. Silence like death fell over the confusion of the murmurous throng among the bar-platforms as they turned white faces toward the corner. O'Byrne's frail arms swung his heavy stool with desperate strength, crunching and smashing and crashing among the delicate intricacies of his projector. Silvers clutched the still shrilling telephone and watched him, not moving.

The End.

Notes and proofing history

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