

THE FUTUREMEN

COMPANIONS OF CAPTAIN FUTURE

A Complete Collection of the Original Pulp Department

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MEET THE FUTUREMEN!

In this department, which is a regular feature of CAPTAIN FUTURE, we acquaint you further with the companions of CAPTAIN FUTURE whom you have met in our complete book-length novel. Here you are told the off-the-record stories of their lives and anecdotes plucked from their careers. Follow this department closely, for it contains many interesting and fascinating facts to supplement those you read in our featured novels.



No. 1 THE METAL ROBOT

GRAG the robot is the largest and strongest of Captain Future's three strange comrades. He is probably the strongest being in the whole Solar System.

He towers over seven feet in height, a massive, man-like figure of gleaming "inert" metal.

This metal, being impervious to most forces and weapons, has protected Grag from destruction many times. Yet old scars show where his body-plates have been broken and rewelded in the past.

IMBUED WITH INTELLIGENCE

Grag was built in the cavern-laboratory on the moon by Roger Newton, Captain Future's father, and Simon Wright, the Brain, according to an intricate design.

The robot was not designed to be merely an automaton, but to have an intelligence and individuality of his own.

His creators endowed him with a brain consisting of metal neurones roughly corresponding to the neurone-pattern of a human brain, though more simple. The thought-impulses set up inside this metal brain are electrical. Electrical and magnetic "nerves" control the robot's great limbs.

ATOMIC POWER

Grag's source of energy is atomic power. A compact, super-powerful plant is located deep within his metal torso for safety. A small amount of metal fuel inserted into this power-plant inside his body is sufficient to keep his strength for many months.

The metal robot can hear better than any human being, because his microphonic ears are super-sensitive.

They enable him to hear sounds which are above or below the range of human audibility, and Captain Future has sometimes made use of this fact to communi-

cate through Grag with planetary creatures who talk in tones beyond the range of human hearing.

Grag has an immense and unshakable loyalty to Captain Future, which is his chief emotion.

The robot tended Curt Newton through his infancy, and because Curt needed constant watching then, Grag thinks that his master still needs watching over.

THE BRAIN'S HANDS

Toward Simon Wright, Grag feels respect and some awe. For he knows that Simon helped create him.

Also he has long been accustomed to acting as the Brain's hands, performing experiments and researches under the Brain's direction.

But toward Otho, the android, Grag is deeply jealous. For the robot's great desire is to be thought of as human or near-human. Grag has always been angry when anyone has referred to him as a machine, or automaton. He feels that he is just like other humans, except that his body is made of metal instead of flesh.

But Otho, who was also created by Captain Future's father and the Brain, likes to taunt the big robot on that point. Long ago Otho found out that the great, simple-minded robot was most sensitive about his unhuman appearance, and ever since then Otho has gibed about it.

CAMARADERIE

Grag invariably becomes furious at these taunts. Yet the bickering between these two comrades of Captain Future is at bottom one of mischievous camaraderie. Each of them has saved the life of the other, more than once, in a tight spot.

Grag has been able to extricate his comrades from more than one perilous situation, through his great strength or through his special capabilities. One of the

most valuable of the robot's abilities is that he requires no breathing apparatus.

This has enabled him to go where neither Captain Future nor Otho could venture.

One time on Venus, when Curt and Otho and Simon Wright were all trapped in deadly peril, and could not be reached in any other way, Grag had walked days under an ocean, over the sea-floor, to reach the island where they were imprisoned. The robot was nearly lost many times in that perilous traverse, in constant danger of sinking into the ooze at the bottom of the sea, but he finally made it and brought help to his trapped comrades.

CAST ADRIFT

Another time, Grag was cast adrift in space when outlaws destroyed the little space-flier in which he was trying to reach his master on Saturn.

The great robot floated in space for many days, helpless and yet still living, needing no food or a air, and finally was picked up by Curt Newton. Only the robot could have survived such an experience.

There is a great weld-scar down the back of Grag's metal back, which tells a tale of an adventure that neither he nor his master will ever forget.

Captain Future had penetrated into one of the cav-

erns of Uranus' chasmed abysses, with Grag. The outlaws Curt was after blew up the tunnel entrance to that cave.

Captain Future would have been crushed beneath falling rock had not Grag, with his superhuman strength, held up the masses of falling stone until his master could jump clear. Grag himself was crushed beneath the rock, but Captain Future dug him out later, and the great weld-scar on his back is his memento of the adventure.

NO SENSE OF HUMOR

Grag has no sense of humor, as humans know it. He is puzzled sometimes by Curt's jokes or the sly drollery of Otho. And that makes him uneasy, for the robot's great ambition is to be human in everything.

His happiest moments have been when Captain Future has told him, "Grag, you are more human than most humans I know."

Huge, incredible in strength, his great metal head towering high, his photoelectric eyes gleaming and his mighty metal arms raised, Grag is a terrible figure to evildoers when he goes into battle at the side of Captain Future and Otho.

And woe betide the person whom Grag suspects of trying to harm his master!



No. 2 THE SYNTHETIC MAN

OTHO, the android or synthetic man, is the only being of his kind in the Solar System. He is a man who was never born, but was artificially made!

In his natural form no one would mistake him for a human being. For the android's arms and legs have a rubbery, boneless look. His artificially created flesh is pure white, not pink like human flesh. Otho's dead-white face has no eyebrows or eyelashes, and there is no hair whatever upon his well-shaped white head. In a beltlike harness he carries his ray-pistols, make-up pouch and other belongings.

Otho's face was carefully molded by his maker, Captain Future's father, before the final "setting" of his flesh. The man-made features are regular, yet there is something unusual about Otho's expression.

Like a cat's eyes, his jade-green orbs can see in darkness. And there is a queer, alien humor, a gay, mocking devilry in the cool way in which they stare.

THE WORLD'S FASTEST BEING

When Roger Newton and the Brain planned Otho's Creation, they modeled the synthetic man after the human body, but simplified the pattern. Otho has no appendix or other such superfluous organs which in the human body are atrophied and useless. The android's physical make-up is streamlined for efficiency. To more than one Earthman, he has seemed almost diabolic – for his ironic, twisted mental outlook occasionally leads to strange results.

The skeleton around which the synthetic man's flesh was molded is composed, not of rigid bones, but of artificial bones that are many times stronger and so flexible that they can be bent double without breaking.

This fact, and the great strength of his artificial muscle-tissues, gives Otho his wonderful agility and speed. The fact that he is a superman has alienated him from normal beings, and at times, through sheer loneliness, the android will assume a human disguise and visit Earth incognito.

The android can run faster, jump higher, and move more quickly in an emergency than almost any other creature in the System. It was Otho who taught Captain Future speed and skill in the days when Curt Newton was a boy upon the moon.

It was he who taught Curt the method of super ju-jitsu which he had evolved, and which enables him to overpower an ordinary man in a twinkling. But, though Captain Future is capable of faster action than any other human in the System, he can't quite match the unhuman Otho.

Otho's body requires both air and food to maintain its metabolism. He must breathe – but his lungs are capable of breathing air that is so poisonous it would kill the average human.

While he can eat ordinary human food, the android prefers to take his nutrition in the elementary form of simple chemical elements. It saves time, and Otho is always in a hurry about something.

POWERS OF DISGUISE

Most famous of Otho's accomplishments is his power of disguise. By softening and re-setting his synthetic flesh, and changing the stature and posture of his flexible-skeletoned body, Otho can make himself up to be an exact double of anyone in the System, no matter what planetary race he belongs to.

Otho's power of assuming disguises has been of vital

aid to Captain Future many times. Perhaps Otho's greatest feat of make-up was disguising himself as one of the Mind Men of Saturn.

That strange race who inhabit a legendary land hidden far in the endless Great Plains of Saturn are mere immobile and featureless balls of flesh outwardly, though they possess minds of incalculable power and can use mental force as a powerful weapon.

Otho, by his wizardry of make-up, succeeded in the incredible feat of passing himself off as one of the Mind Men for a whole day, in a desperate emergency.

The unhuman Otho loves danger for its own sake. He is soon bored when there is a lack of excitement. For the android has neither the superhuman patience of Grag, the robot, nor the cold, austere detachment of the Brain.

LOYALTY TO CAPTAIN FUTURE

Otho would go through fire and water for Captain Future. To him, as to the other two Futuremen, the chief purpose of life is loyalty to the young wizard of science whom they three reared from a helpless infant.

But while he would carry out any mission that Curt Newton ordered, Otho will generally, through sheer boredom and recklessness try to stir up a little excitement on the way, and that often gets him into trouble.

Once, while on a mission for Captain Future, Otho went too far off his course to pursue a fleeing enemy, and got himself wrecked and marooned on an asteroid with a poisonous atmosphere. A human would have been asphyxiated there, but Otho's impervious lungs breathed the lethal air without great harm. But he had tramped the little world for a month before Grag finally found him. Otho had passed the time by constructing an underground hide-out which later proved invaluable.

The unhuman android's queer, mocking humor is one of his strongest characteristics. He never tries chaffing the Brain – Otho has too vast a respect for that brooding, icy-minded being. But Grag is the great butt of his gibes. He long ago found out that Grag has no sense of humor, and he has been deviling the great, simple-minded robot ever since.

OTHO'S FEUD WITH GRAG

The chief subject of his taunts is Grag's unhumanity. The big, naive robot would like more than anything else to be thought human. Nothing so pleases

Grag as the idea that he is almost as human as other people.

But Otho denies that Grag is human with sly, deceptive casualness, he keeps pointing out that humans breathe, and eat, and have flesh instead of metal bodies, and that Grag has none of these abilities. This invariably excites the indignation of the robot, and makes him deny vociferously that Otho is human, either.

And that always provokes an argument, for Otho loses his temper easily. Grag's customary retort is that humans can't remold their bodies and faces as Otho does, and that therefore Otho isn't human. The two have disputed the question all over the System from Mercury to Pluto – usually they get so bitter about it that Captain Future or the Brain has to interfere.

Yet neither Grag nor Otho are as serious in their quarreling as they seem. They may be shouting at the tops of their voices, but let any danger suddenly come up, and robot and android will instantly stop their dispute and work side by side in perfect co-operation. Each knows that the other has special abilities which cannot be matched, and that are often needed in the dangerous adventures into which Captain Future leads them.

SEEKS EXCITEMENT AND DANGER

It is when they are outward bound in space with peril and new scenes ahead that Otho is happiest. On the other hand, when they spend a long period in Captain Future's laboratory-home on the moon, Otho finds it boring. While Curt and the Brain are engaged in their abstruse scientific researches, and while Grag busies himself in the simpler work of the cavern-dwelling, Otho will saunter discontentedly among the lunar craters in his space-suit, and look up disconsolately at the starry spaces and wish something would happen.

High-tempered and impatient, fierce and gay by turns, excitement-craving and utterly fearless and absolutely loyal, Otho the android is one of the most striking of the three Futuremen who companion Captain Future in his perilous quests through solar spaces.

One very human attribute of the android is that he can dream, and in his dreams he is always on Earth, for which he has a fierce loyalty, outwardly he can scorn or mock anything in the Universe – but inside his shell of impervious irony is a mind more sensitive and sometimes more unhappy than any Earthman could possess.



No. 3 THE LIVING BRAIN

SIMON WRIGHT, known by repute to all the peoples of the System as the Brain, is the oldest and perhaps the strangest of the Futuremen. His queer history goes back many years in the past.

In that past time, he was a normal man, Doctor Simon Wright of a great Earth university. Acclaimed as the greatest biologist who had ever lived, Simon had as his goal the creation of intelligent life by artificial means. He worked on it for decades, with all the brilliant power of his intellect.

Simon was already old when he discerned at the university a young student who gave great promise of a biological career. This young man was named Roger Newton – he was to be the father of Captain Future.

The aging Simon Wright took the young student as his assistant, then as his colleague in the researches to create artificial life. Newton had already made some brilliant discoveries. The old scientist and the young one now prepared to attack this supreme problem.

Then tragedy struck the elderly scientist. Simon Wright discovered he was the victim of an ailment that would definitely cause his death within a few months – a blight contracted by a too reckless experiment with microscopic creatures. He would die, and his mind would perish without ever completing his great attempt to create life.

THE BRAIN IS REBORN

Simon Wright decided that even though his body must die, his mind, his brain, must not die. He proposed to Roger Newton that his brain be transferred into a special serum-case in which it could live and think and work.

Newton recoiled from the idea at first. "To live as a brain in a box, without any body? It would be too un-

canny!"

"No, Roger," the dying scientist told him. "I have lived a full life already, as a normal man. My only interest now is in keeping up my work, my researches. And I could do that, as a living brain, without being hampered by this dying body of mine. I would be happy so!"

Roger Newton finally saw the force of the old scientist's reasoning, and agreed to perform the remarkable operation.

All the biological genius of both men went into the preparation of the case in which Simon's brain was henceforth to live. It was made of transparent, indestructible metal, so that the interior mechanisms could be inspected at a glance.

In it were placed tiny, compact atomic pumps which would pump the serum that would nourish the isolated brain and carry away fatigue-poisons. Repurifiers were installed to keep the serum always pure. An atomic heating apparatus with thermostatic control automatically would maintain a constant body temperature inside the case.

When all was ready, Roger Newton performed the operation. Working rapidly, he lifted Simon's brain from his skull and placed it in the serum-case. Quickly, he connected to its optic nerves the electric connections of the artificial lens-eyes in the front of the case, and to other nerves the connections from the microphone-ears and the resonator by which the Brain speaks.

Ever since, Simon Wright has lived as the Brain, in the serum-case. He has many limitations, of course. He can speak, through the power-operated resonator whose control is connected to one of his motor-nerve centers. Another motor-nerve control allows him to turn his eyes in any direction, and focus them. But he cannot do

anything else. He can't move himself about – Grag, or Otho, or Captain Future himself has to carry the serum-case by its attached handle.

But mentally, Simon is completely free. He can read, or study, or observe, or think, without ever needing rest or sleep. He never needs food. The only refreshment he ever takes is a certain stimulating vibration, which he has played upon him.

THE MASTER OF THE TRIO

When Simon wishes to make records, he dictates them into a special recording-device. And when he wishes to conduct one of his many scientific experiments, he uses Grag or Otho to carry out the physical work. Usually it is Grag who is his helper, for the great robot can be trusted upon to obey orders with implicit fidelity, whereas Otho will often get restless and try to hurry things along.

Both Grag and Otho regard their fellow-Futureman, the Brain, with profound respect. For it was Simon and Roger Newton who created the robot and the android, in the lunar laboratory to which they and Newton's bride had fled for refuge. Neither Grag nor Otho ever try chaffing the Brain – they know that he can silence them with a few well-chosen words in his cold, rasping metallic voice.

In fact, though he was once a human man, Simon often seems more unhuman than either Grag or Otho. That is because to the Brain, the pursuit of knowledge is almost the most important end of existence. He is prone to lose himself in scientific abstractions and overlook the practical necessities of the situation, until awakened to realization by Captain Future.

All Simon's human feelings, indeed, seem wrapped up in Captain Future. To him, Curt Newton is not only the daring interplanetary adventurer famed all over the System, he is also the child whom the three Futuremen reared to manhood. No father could watch over Curt more anxiously than does the Brain, yet Simon would scoff at the idea that he could be sentimental about anything.

CAPTAIN FUTURE'S MENTOR

Simon's great aid to Captain Future and the other Futuremen is in his encyclopedic scientific memory and wonderful ability in research. Only the young wizard of science whom he himself taught has ever excelled him in scientific ability. For many decades the Brain has been learning and has forgotten nothing – and there is hardly a fact known to human science which he cannot recall accurately and instantly from memory.

Simon has had some strange adventures during the course of some of the Futuremen's exploits. Once, on an asteroid whose people were inimical to Captain Future, these hostile asteroidans raided Curt's camp when only Simon was there. The asteroidans found the Brain, but did not realize he was a living individual. They thought him only a small scientific apparatus of some kind, and Simon had the wit to keep silent and not enlighten them. They took the Brain back with them as a puzzling curio, and, for many weeks, Simon's serum-case rested on a shelf in a dingy shop, no one dreaming he was alive. Finally Captain Future found him and rescued him from the strange situation.

Another time, on Venus, the Brain was vitally helpful to Curt in a precarious situation. Curt needed the aid of a remote tribe of the ignorant swamp-men, but could not prevail on them to follow him. These swamp-men worshipped a small idol of an octopus-god. Captain Future secretly put the Brain's case inside the idol, and then Simon spoke to the people and ordered them to obey the red-haired Earthman, which they hastily did.

Simon is most often to be found in the elaborate laboratory in the *Comet*, his square case resting on the special pedestal which Curt designed for him, his strange eyes perusing a scientific micro-film book or observing the course of an experiment which Grag patiently conducts under his direction. And more than one ambitious interplanetary criminal has come to grief because of the scientific magic wielded by the Brain in that laboratory! For the Brain's great powers are one of the Chief reasons why Curt Newton and his band of Futuremen are feared by evil-doers from Mercury to Pluto.



No. 4 MARSHAL EZRA GURNEY

STRICTLY speaking, Ezra Gurney is not one of Curt Newton's famous Futuremen – the famous trio composed of Otho the android; Grag, the robot; and Simon Wright, the Living Brain. Gurney is technically a member of the Planet Police, that far-flung organization which maintains order throughout the Solar System.

But actually, Ezra Gurney, like Joan Randall, is always listed in Police Headquarters as on "special detached service," for he and Joan always hold themselves in readiness to aid Captain Future and his band whenever occasion requires.

Ezra is a valuable addition to Curt Newton's loyal band. For the veteran of the Police, in his long years of service, came to know the System's space-lanes and ships and the ways of its evildoers better than anyone except the Futuremen themselves. He was one of the first officers in the Patrol, the space-branch of Police.

For four decades Ezra sailed in space as an officer of the Patrol. When he first joined it, the laws of the System Government were unknown on all the worlds. The planetary boom towns opened up by interplanetary travel were sinks of violence and crime. Space was infested with swarms of space pirates who made merchant traffic between the worlds a precarious business.

Ezra Gurney helped smash the great bands of the pirates, winning promotion from cruiser-captain to squadron-commander in the process. He was in the thick of the terrific fighting that broke the fleet of Ju Jimos, the Uranian corsair. He was squadron-commander when the asteroid base of the notorious Rok Olor, the Martian, was destroyed forever. And it was Ezra Gurney who brought to an end the greatest of all the old pirates, an exploit which will be described presently.

That last exploit, which ended the activities of the

great organized pirate bands on a big scale, caused Ezra Gurney to ask for transference from space-duty to frontier-duty. He was promoted to the rank of marshal, second highest in the Police, and sent to maintain the law in Kha Khalu, wild new radium-mining boom town deep in the great mountains of northern Uranus.

GURNEY VS. ZORZO

Kha Khalu was famous at that time as the wildest place in the System, thronged with interplanetary criminals, the scene of incessant bloodshed and robbery. One Zorzo, a brutal, cunning Jovian criminal, was the undisputed tyrant of the evil place.

"I keep a graveyard here especially for Planet Policemen – and there's plenty of graves in it," was Zorzo's boast.

Ezra Gurney knew that. And he acted with the grim ruthlessness characteristic of him. He gave Zorzo no time to set traps for him, but landed secretly and strode into Zorzo's "Palace of Happiness" unexpectedly.

"Hear you've been planning a grave for me," drawled the veteran Police officer. "I'm ready to fill it. All you got to do is beat me to it with your atom-pistol – if you've got the nerve."

Thus challenged, without time to call his men or use his cunning Zorzo was forced to draw. He was too slow, and, after that, Ezra Gurney's word was law in Kha Khalu.

THE LAW OF THE PLANET POLICE

Yet, soon after, Ezra characteristically applied for transfer on the ground that Kha Khalu was too tame.

From one boom town to another, from one savage world to another, Ezra Gurney carried the law of the Police. He came to be known as the most famous mar-

shal in the System, and was offered the highest rank in the Police, the post of commander.

"Think I'm goin' to sit in a shiny office on Earth and watch other men go out and have fun?" he demanded. "Give somebody else the commandership – I don't want it."

Ezra Gurney was already a gray, grim veteran of the service, when he first met Curt Newton and the Futuremen.

That was when Captain Future and his three unhuman comrades were first bursting dramatically upon the System, blazing a crusade against the most dangerous interplanetary criminals.

Curt Newton and Ezra Gurney were drawn to each other at first meeting. The brilliant red-haired youth and the grim, aging veteran had two things in common – unrelenting courage and unrelenting hate of evil. They came to know each other well.

GURNEY JOINS THE FUTUREMEN

It was the famous "Space Emperor" case on Jupiter, that amazing plot which almost smashed the System law on its greatest world, which brought Curt and Ezra into work together. Since then, Ezra has participated in most of Curt's exploits.

Beside his deep affection for Curt, Ezra admires the Wizard of Science tremendously as a fighting-man. He swears by Curt's ability as a space-fighter. But he sometimes gets impatient with Curt's deep scientific researches. Ezra is a fighting-man, not a scientist, and inclines to think science can be a nuisance.

"Didn't go in for all these researches and laboratories in my day," he will grumble. "We just unhitched

our atom-guns and hunted 'em out and blazed away."

He knows, quite well, that only the unparalleled scientific ability of Curt and the Futuremen has brought retribution to the super-scientific criminals Captain Future quelled. But he likes to pretend he thinks it all a waste of time.

THE COUP THAT GURNEY WON – AND LOST

Ezra can tell great yarns of his unrivaled experiences in the old wild days, though the crusty veteran seldom thaws enough to tell them to strangers. But there is one story of his past that Ezra never told to anyone but Curt Newton.

That is the story of how he destroyed the third of those great space-pirates of past years. That pirate leader, known as The Falcon, was considered the deadliest corsair in space. He was known to be an Earthman, but that was all. After one squadron-leader after another of the Patrol had met defeat trying to destroy him, Ezra Gurney was sent out against him.

The saga of Ezra Gurney's fight against the Falcon is still told in the System wherever space-men meet. Ezra brought the Falcon to bay off Saturn, and destroyed him in one of the most terrific cruiser-action battles ever seen. Immediately after, Ezra requested to be transferred from space-duty. Everyone wondered why, but he never told the reason to anyone but Curt.

No one in the System but Curt knows that the Falcon was Ezra's own younger brother, gone wild in their early space-days and drifting into piracy as his brother entered the Patrol. And no one but Curt can quite appreciate the grim, bleak strain in the crusty old veteran's make-up, and the reason for it.



No. 5

JOAN RANDALL OF THE PLANET POLICE

JOAN RANDALL, like Marshal Ezra Gurney, is not strictly one of the Futuremen. For the Futuremen, Captain Future's trio of unhuman friends, are composed of the Brain, Grag the robot, and Otho the android. Yet Joan has been involved in many of Captain Future's cases, as an agent of the Planet Police, and has come to be identified with the Futuremen throughout the System.

Perhaps there should be inserted here a prefatory word of explanation concerning the Planet Police. Everyone knows, of course, that the jurisdiction of the Planet Police extends to every planet, asteroid, moon and other celestial body in the Solar System. When the Solar System Government was first organized, provision was made in its Constitution for such a police organization to enforce its laws.

Headquarters of the Planet Police are on Earth. It has main planetary offices on every world, and besides these nine main offices, it maintains a post in every city, town or village of any importance in the whole System.

THE FRONTIER POLICE

There are four chief divisions, or Sections as they are called, of the Planet Police. Section One is the one covering all police activities and posts in ordinary civilized regions of the nine planets. The Planet Police officers you see striding along the streets of New York, or Venusopolis, or Syrtis on Mars, or Tartarus on far Pluto, all belong to Section One. Their duties are essentially local law enforcement.

Section Two is known as the "Frontier Police." This takes in law-enforcement in wild, uncivilized planetary regions where there is no structure of local government. Boom towns like Jungletown on Jupiter and Karies on

Saturn are ruled by officers of Section Two of the Planet Police.

Such officers must be picked with great care, for they are legislature, judge, jury and police all in one. Their verdicts are final. And since all such boom towns and uncivilized regions swarm with hard-bitten characters, the job is no sinecure.

THE SPACE PATROL

Section Three of the Police organization is by far the least known of all. It is the Secret Service of the Planet Police. The number of its men and women operatives is unknown. They embrace natives of every world, many of them people of importance, who serve in this most thankless and difficult branch of the service. Joan Randall is technically still a member of Section Three.

Section Four is far and away the most famous and glamorous branch of the Planet Police. It is the renowned Space Patrol whose armed cruisers keep the law of the Solar System Government from Pluto to Mercury. The men who staff those ships are some of the finest space-men in the System.

They have a great tradition of the glories of their service, of countless battles against pirates, rebels and bandits in space. To become an officer in this service requires a ten-year course in the famous Patrol Academy, a course in every branch of space-navigation, piloting and gunnery.

Technically, the correct name of Section Four is "The Space Patrol of the Planet Police." But popular usage has shortened this to "Planet Patrol."

There is an old rivalry between the officers of the Patrol and the Rocketeers. The Rocketeers, the ace civilian pilots of the System, are inclined to sniff scorn-

fully at the Patrol men as a "lot of mechanical calculating-machines who couldn't fly a mile without a slide-rule and do everything in space by the book." The Patrol officers, in turn, generally refer to the Rocketeers as "that crazy bunch of space-struck racing and test pilots, who never heard of discipline."

As has been noted, Joan Randall technically belongs to Section Three of the Planet Police. Joan entered that dangerous secret service division as the result of family tradition. Her father had been a captain in the Patrol, and had been killed in an encounter with the famous Falcon, the greatest space-pirate of the old days.

Joan lived her childhood on nearly every world in the System, because of the constant shifts of her father's post in the service. Thus she learned an extraordinary number of the different planetary languages and gained a wide knowledge of planetary customs.

Steeped in the tradition of the Planet Police, and possessing excellent capabilities, it was natural for Joan to enter the service. The one branch of it open to a woman was, of course, Section Three. So she went into the secret service and spent the next few years in dangerous assignments that took her from one end of the System to the other. On one case she would be impersonating a rich young woman of fashion, on another she would play the part of a dancing girl in a roaring Martian boom town. And so on.

RANDALL JOINS THE FUTUREMEN

It was on Jupiter that Joan first met Captain Future. Posing there as a nurse, in an effort to help solve the hideous Space Emperor mystery which had unloosed an atavism blight on the hapless Jovians, Joan gave valuable help to Curt Newton and the Futuremen. Together,

they defeated the menace.

Captain Future remembered the girl well, and soon met her again when Joan and Kansu Kane were kidnapped by Doctor Zarro's Legion of Doom. Her aid in the Futuremen's struggle on distant Pluto was again timely.

So Joan, with Ezra Gurney, was detached from her regular section for special service. She and Ezra had proved they could work so well with Captain Future that they were assigned to cooperate with the wizard of science and the Futuremen whenever required.

Curt Newton likes to chaff Joan by pretending that she is merely a thrill-hunter who is more trouble than help.

"You only joined the Police for excitement," he accuses her. "And you got put on special service with us Futuremen simply because you thought you'd be able to dabble in more trouble that way."

Joan has a standard retort for that.

"That's what I get for running after you all over space, and helping you," she complains. "If you weren't such an unromantic idiot, you wouldn't make a girl chase you all the way from Mercury to Pluto."

Beneath her jesting complaints, Joan's feelings toward the famous planeteer are very real. And she suspects that Curt Newton reciprocates, but can't get him to admit it, which sometimes exasperates her.

But she knows that Captain Future feels that he cannot let any other consideration interfere with his chosen career of championing the cause of law and order in the System. Until there's no further need for him to blast the spaceways, he'll have no time for romance. And until then, Joan Randall is glad to be one of the few co-workers of Curt and his famous Futuremen.



No. 6 THE COMET

NO account of the Futuremen would be complete without a description of their famous space ship, the *Comet*.

This craft is the fastest ship in space. It can go where no other vessel would dare go, and contains within its compact interior full equipment for almost any emergency. It is, in fact, the flying laboratory of Captain Future and his comrades.

The *Comet* was built on the Moon by Curt Newton and the Futuremen. Into it, they put all their unparalleled scientific knowledge and skill. As a result, no ship in the System can out rival the *Comet*.

The hull is of an odd shape, like that of an elongated tear drop. This streamlined design was adopted because it combats air-resistance perfectly. Of course, there is no air-resistance in empty space. But streamlined construction makes for efficiency when cleaving through the atmosphere of a planet.

The hull is made with triple-sealed walls, each wall composed of a secret alloy devised by Curt and the Brain for special lightness and strength. The space between the walls is packed with a super-insulation. Thus the *Comet* can resist temperatures that would destroy an ordinary ship. Of course, when it ventures into extreme heat like that of the solar corona, it has to be protected by its "halo" of screening radiation.

The power-plant of the *Comet* consists of nine cyclotrons of unusual design. The cyclotrons are the heart of any space ship. They convert powdered mineral fuel into raving energy, by atomic disintegration. The process is started by a switch which releases a powerful flash of force from a condenser into the cycs. After that, it is self-continuous, a small fraction of the generated power being constantly "fed back" into the cycs to keep up the process of atomic disintegration.

The main flood of terrific atomic energy flows through the control valves into the various rocket-tubes of the ship, as directed by the pilot. If the energy is blasted out of the tail rocket-tubes, it hurls the ship straight forward. If directed into the bow or braking tubes, it slows down the craft. If turned into the lateral tubes along the aide of the ship, or the top tubes in the upper side or the keel tubes in the lower, it pushes the ship up or down or to one side.

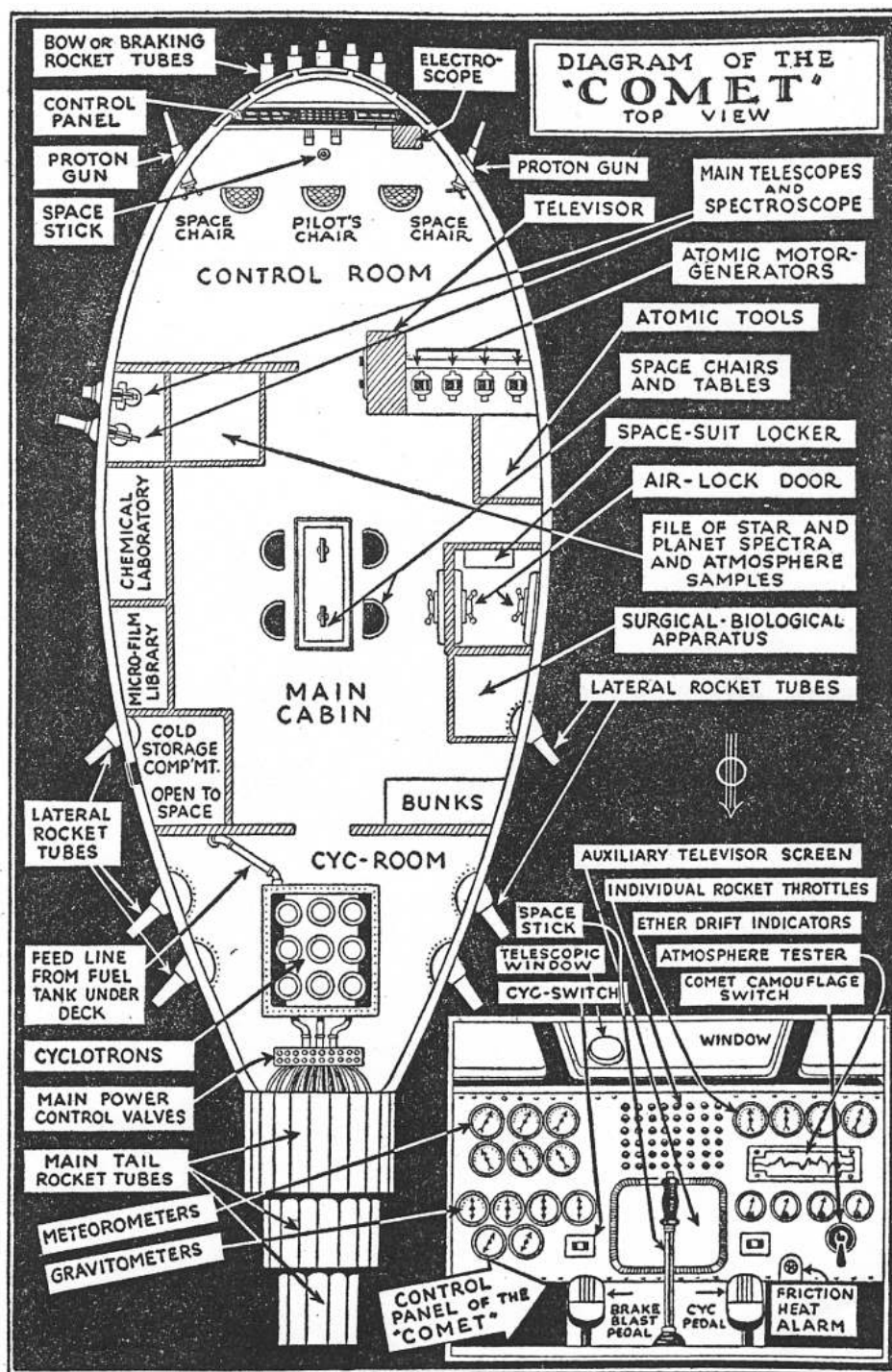
THE SPACE-STICK

The *Comet* owes its unrivaled speed to the fact that its massive cyclotrons are of such radical design that they can produce an unprecedented output of atomic power. These cycs are one of the greatest inventive achievements of Captain Future.

The control of the *Comet* is essentially much like that of any space ship. The pilot sits in his chair, the main control panel in front of him. Above, easily in view, is the broad space window. Between the pilot's knees is the space-stick and under his feet are two pedals.

The space-stick is important. It is a device to control the flow of the atomic power into the various rocket-tubes at will, without the necessity of opening or closing the individual throttle of each tube. Such individual throttles are on the control panel for delicate maneuvering and special uses, but the space-stick is in use most of the time.

When the space-stick is in upright position, all the power of the cyclotrons is directed out of the tail-tubes, flinging the ship straight ahead. But when you pull the space-stick back toward you, it cuts some of the power into the rear keel tubes, with the result that the ship zooms upward in space. Similarly, when you push the



space-stick forward, some of the power is cut into the rear top rocket-tubes, which sends the ship diving downward. The farther forward you push the stick, the more power goes into the top tubes, and the steeper is your dive. Moving the stick sideward cuts power into the right or left lateral tubes and turns your ship to right or left.

Under the pilot's right foot is the "cyc-pedal." This controls the amount of energy produced by the cyclotrons by regulating the flow of powdered mineral fuel into the cys. When you want their full output, you

push the cyc-pedal to the floor. When you want to cut the power off, you let the cyc-pedal come clear back.

Thus, when you get warning of a meteor close ahead and want to zoom up sharply, you do two things simultaneously - you pull the space-stick sharply back, so that the power flows to the tail and rear keel rocket-tubes, and you push in hard on the cyc-pedal.

The pilot has beneath his left foot the brake-blast pedal. When this is pushed inward, it instantly directs the atomic energy of the cyclotrons into the bow or brake-tubes which project from the ship's bow for a few

inches, just beneath the fore window. Pushing in on the brake-blast pedal automatically cuts out all other tubes. To make a quick stop, you simply jam both brake-blast and cyc-pedals to the floor, which pours all the power of the cycs into a blast ahead.

These standard principles of space ship control are used by Captain Future and his companions in the *Comet*. They are all such consummate pilots, however, that they often ignore the convenience of the space-stick and use the individual rocket-throttles, to cut a course as close as possible.

INSTRUMENTS OF SPACE NAVIGATION

The control panel of any space ship is a bewildering sight. But that of the *Comet* would baffle any ordinary pilot, even if he were of Rocketeer rating. All the ordinary instruments of space navigation are on the *Comet's* panel – the meteorometers that warn of distance and direction of nearby meteors, the gravitometers that indicate the pull of all bodies in space, the ether-drift indicators and main cyc-switch and auxiliary television screen and microphone. But also, the *Comet* has on its panel a variety of unusual instruments.

There's the atmosphere-tester, an ingenious device of Captain Future which automatically takes in and analyzes a sample of any air, and shows the percentage of all elements in it. There's the comet-camouflage switch. When turned on, it actuates a mechanism which ejects a cloud of shining ions from all rocket-tubes, concealing the *Comet* and making it look like a small real comet with long, glowing tail.

There's the electroscope, one of the Brain's pet instruments, and which has done sterling service in tracking criminals in space. It's a device that can detect a recent rocket-trail of a ship in space, by the faint trail of ions always left in a rocket-discharge.

The two space chairs that flank the pilot's chair in the control room of the *Comet* are so mounted that their occupants can handle the two proton guns of heavy caliber which project through the walls of the ship. These weapons fire a flash of energy of unequalled range and intensity.

The main cabin of the *Comet* is not built for comfort. Two folding bunks in one corner are the only sleeping provisions. For neither the Brain nor Grag require any sleep, and Otho doesn't need much. Food and other perishable articles are carried in a cold-storage compartment sealed off from the rest of the cabin, and open to the bitter cold of space.

Everything in the cabin is subordinated to scientific requirements. In one corner is the powerful main television set, the compact atomic motor generators which can furnish auxiliary power for any undertaking, and the locker of atomic tools of all descriptions.

In an opposite corner is the compact astronomical observatory of the ship. There is a battery of electro-telescopes and electrospectroscopes of high power. These instruments have their light-gathering lenses mounted outside the hull of the ship, and are controllable from inside so that they can be directed at any celestial object.

Light that falls on the lenses is transformed into electricity by a unique photoelectric cell, led in through a cable inside, and amplified and transformed back into a vastly magnified image. Adjacent to these instruments is a file of spectra of every planet, star and other body of importance, and there is also a collection of atmosphere samples from every world and moon in the System.

The chemical laboratory of the *Comet* is a concentrated mass of apparatus whose application has enabled the scientific wizard and his companions to perform those alchemical feats which have astounded the System. Beside it is the reference library, composed of every important reference and scientific book, reduced to micro-film form.

There is also a botanical cabinet, with specimens of rare plants and vegetable drugs from faraway planets; a surgical and biological corner with a folding operating-table and instruments that have often worked strange magic. There are other cabinets of instruments and specimens and materials too numerous to list.

QUEEN OF THE SPACEWAYS

In one side of the ship is the air-lock entrance. It is automatic. When the outer door is opened, the inner door automatically closes, if it is not already closed. Inside the little lock-chamber is a cabinet containing space-suits, impellers, and similar equipment.

The *Comet* has many other unique features. Its rocket-tubes, for instance, have special check-valves which make it possible for them to operate efficiently under water. Thus the *Comet* can be used as a submarine in case of emergency. Its cyclotrons are so designed that they use infinitely less powdered mineral fuel than is usual, and the mineral tanks beneath the deck which hold the supply are sufficient for extraordinarily long continuous operation.

The *Comet* has been in almost every corner of the Solar System. Strange beings in unknown depths of remote worlds have seen the tear-drop ship plunging across the sky, and people of the greatest civilized cities on the nine worlds have cried out in excitement as they glimpsed it zooming toward the stars. For, all over the System, the *Comet* is known and recognized, and those who see it know always that the Futuremen are out on the space-trail.



No. 7 THE MOON LABORATORY

DOWN from the black vault of space, a small space-ship cautiously sank upon blazing keel rocket-tubes toward the barren airless surface of the Moon. It was a ship that would look ludicrously clumsy and obsolete now, but it was the last word in design at that time.

It landed in Tycho crater, a vast circular plain of rock glaring in the Sun, surrounded by titanic, jagged peaks. From the ship emerged a man and a woman in space-suits. The man carried a square, transparent case of metal.

"This looks like a good place," the man said eagerly. "The rock is soft, and it won't be hard to excavate an artificial cavern."

His serious, studious face was alive with keen interest and anticipation as he looked around. But the face of his young wife paled inside her helmet as her wide gray eyes took in the savage, wild scene.

"It seems a terrible place to live, Roger," she murmured to him over the connecting phone. "A terrible place for our child to be born."

A voice came from the square case carried by the man, a metallic, alien voice. "You will become accustomed to it, Elaine," it encouraged. "And we can work here in complete concealment and safety."

THE FLIGHT

The man was Roger Newton, the girl was his young wife, and the voice from the square case had come from Simon Wright, the Brain. It had been Newton, with his scientific genius, who had on Earth not long before removed Simon Wright's living brain from his aged, dying body and implanted it in that serum-case.

They three, fleeing from enemies who coveted Newton's scientific secrets, had fled here to the uninhabited,

airless satellite of Earth to work in peace upon Newton's great ambition of creating artificial life. They had brought with them in their ship every tool, instrument and device that they would need to make life possible here.

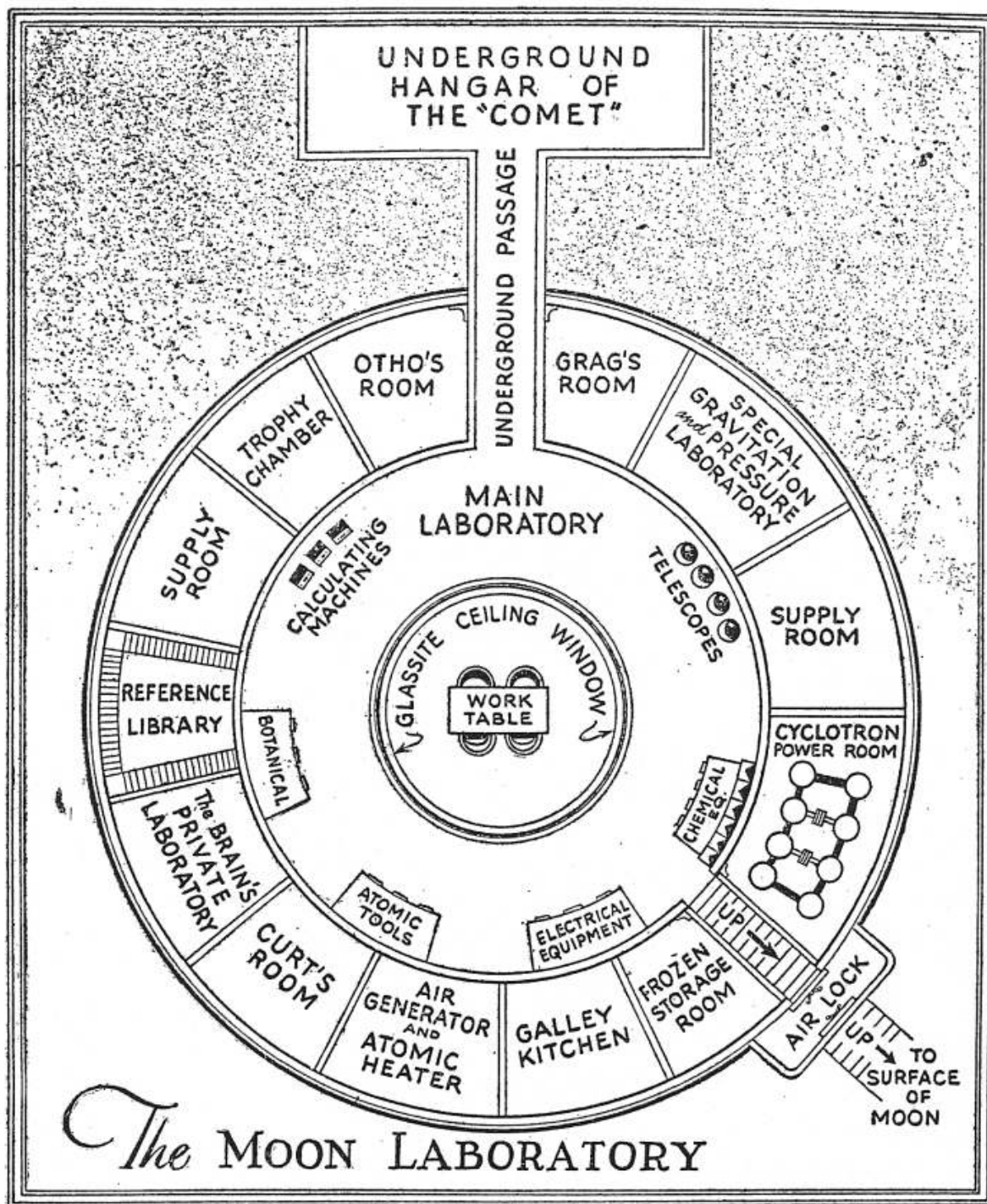
Among these tools were several powerful atom-blasts. With these, Roger Newton went to work on the soft Moon-rock of the crater floor. The terrific energy of the blasts ate away the rock like butter, and within a comparatively short time, he had hollowed out a great circular chamber under the surface of the crater. His next work was to fuse certain lunar minerals into liquid glassite which he cast into a great round window that he set in the ceiling of the underground room.

He had left a small passage down into the strange chamber. In this passage he installed an efficient air-lock. Then he set up in the chamber a powerful apparatus for chemical conversion of lunar mineral elements into the elements of air and water.

SUB-LUNAR LIFE

Until then, they had lived in the spaceship. Now they moved into the sub-lunar dwelling. Newton toiled to bring all the equipment crammed in the ship down into their new home. He excavated adjoining caverns to serve as sleeping rooms, supply rooms, and the like. The big main chamber was to be their laboratory, and in it he and the Brain arranged the complex scientific equipment they had brought.

In this unique dwelling beneath the surface of the Moon, the scientific genius of Roger Newton and the Brain created Grag, the robot, and Otho, the android. And in this wild place was born to Roger Newton and his wife the infant son whose name was one day to be blazoned across the whole Solar System – Curtis New-



ton.

It was here in the Moon-laboratory, after the tragic death of his parents, that Curt Newton spent his strange boyhood and youth under the tutorship of this three un-human guardians. To him, the place was home, and he knew and loved every corner of it as he knew and loved the wild, sun-scorched lunar wastes around it.

A CITADEL OF SCIENCE

When he had reached manhood and had attained the full stature of his scientific genius, Curt enlarged and

improved the Moon-laboratory. He made it into that marvellous citadel of science that is now so famous throughout the System, but which few visitors have ever entered.

Captain Future's Moon-Laboratory is the only dwelling of any kind upon the Moon, and the Futuremen are the only inhabitants. Few others in the whole System could or would live on that wild, airless world, but the four greatest planetees of all time regard it as a cherished home.

The Moon-Laboratory is built upon a circular plan.

The inner circle is the large main laboratory originally excavated by Curt's father. Its great glassite ceiling window gives a marvellous view of the starry sky, and of the bulky green globe of Earth that always hangs almost directly overhead. When the lunar "day" dawns, an ingenious photoelectric cell comes into action which turns on a device that makes the big window glare-proof against the unsoftened blaze of the Sun.

It is in this great main room that the Futuremen are most often to be found at home, for it is alike their workshop and favorite lounging quarters. The work table of Captain Future, upon which so many miraculous scientific achievements have been accomplished, is directly beneath the window.

Ranged around the walls of the room are the bewildering masses of scientific equipment – massive telescopes and spectrosopes that are connected photoelectrically with lenses on the lunar surface, racks of atomic tools, chemical, electrical and other equipment.

In a concentric circle around the main laboratory are the separate chambers that open off it. Starting at the entrance and working clockwise around the circle, these separate chambers are as follows:

First, the frozen storage room in which perishable specimens are preserved, the room being refrigerated by an efficient atomic device. The next room is the compact kitchen, used only by Curt and Otho since neither Grag nor the Brain eat ordinary food.

FRESH OXYGEN

The room beyond this contains the air generator that assures a ceaseless supply of fresh oxygen derived by chemical conversion of mineral oxides. It also contains the atomic heater which automatically warms the air when the lunar "night" has come and the temperature inside the dwelling begins to fall.

The next room is Captain Future's own sleeping room, an almost austere chamber that contains only his bunk, clothing, and a few treasured mementoes of his dead parents.

The room beyond Curt's is the private laboratory of the Brain. It is soundproofed, and into it the Brain will often retire for long periods in which he will rest utterly motionless, brooding in strange reverie. Here are Simon's data on pet experiments, and here too is kept the small apparatus which emits stimulating vibrations that are the Brain's occasional "food."

Next is the reference library, which contains tens of

thousands of scientific reference works in every planetary field, reduced to microfilm.

There is next a large supply room, and then the chamber that the Futuremen call the "trophy room." That is perhaps the most interesting part of the whole Moon-laboratory. In that room, Captain Future keeps the most dangerous and most valuable objects and instruments that he has acquired in the course of his crusading adventures on other worlds.

There are powers here, such as the atavism-apparatus of the Space Emperor, the "illusion-machine" of the famous Doctor Zarro, and the legendary Water of Life from Saturn, which are beyond all price.

This room of secrets is guarded by an invulnerable metal door that is always securely locked.

Beyond the trophy room is Otho's chamber. Then comes the underground passage that leads to the underground hangar of the *Comet*, the space-ship of the Futuremen. This hangar is so equipped that when the *Comet* begins to rise from its floor, the doors overhead automatically fold back to allow the ship to emerge. When it re-enters the hangar, the doors automatically close and at the same time a fresh air-supply is automatically pumped into the hangar.

The doors themselves are camouflaged on their upper surface to resemble lunar rock.

GRAG NEVER SLEEPS

Beyond this passage is Grag's room. There is not much real reason for Grag to have a sleeping-room, since he never sleeps. But the fact that Otho had a room made him jealous, and he demanded one also. The two pets, Oog and Eek, usually are to be found sleeping there.

There is, next to this, a special sealed laboratory in which any condition of gravitation, atmosphere pressure and atmosphere content can be reproduced. This enables Captain Future to test out an instrument or experiment under the theoretical conditions of any planet.

Beyond this is another large supply-room, and then the cyc-room which contains a great battery of powerful cyclotrons and motor-generators capable of delivering almost unlimited power. And, finally, there is the stair leading up through an air-lock to the lunar surface.

Such are the wonders of the Moon-laboratory, citadel of the Futuremen and home of the greatest of planetees.



No. 8 CAPTAIN FUTURE'S BOYHOOD

GRAG, the robot, was angry. He stood in one of the big supply-rooms of the Moon-laboratory, looking indignantly up at a redheaded boy who peered down impishly from atop a pile of metal cases.

"Come down, Curtis – have I not told you it is time for Simon Wright to give you your lesson?" boomed the angry robot.

"I'm tired of lessons," announced fourteen-year old Curtis Newton with exasperating calmness. "Every day, one lesson after another. I want to go outside and explore."

"If you won't come down, I'll come up after you." Grag menaced.

He started clambering up the pile of cases. But the huge weight of his great metal figure brought the stack down, and the robot fell to the floor amid a shower of boxes with a reverberating clangor.

OTHO IS FAST

Young Curt Newton rocked with laughter atop his perch. But into the supply-room, like a flying white shadow, came the lithe figure of Otho, the android. He surveyed big Grag's predicament with disdain.

"Of course, you couldn't catch him," Otho snapped. "Watch me."

Curt Newton saw what was coming. The boy darted across the stacks of cases to escape. But, fast as he was, Otho was too fast for him and he was ignominiously hauled down and marched into the laboratory.

Simon Wright, the Brain, turned his glittering lens-eyes toward the boy.

"It is past time for your lesson in planetary botany, Curtis," he reproved.

"He would not come," boomed Grag indignantly. "He wanted to go outside."

Curt hung his red head. "It's fun to explore the craters and plains," he muttered, half-ashamedly. "I'd like to go out by myself."

Then the boy cried eagerly, "And I want to go farther, to the Earth, to Mars, to Venus, to all the planets you've taught me about! I want to know all space, not to live here on the dead Moon all my life. I want to meet other men!"

"You shall meet other men, when the time comes," promised the Brain. "You shall see every one of these worlds of which we have been teaching you. But it is not yet time. Grag and Otho and I have reared you here, since your parents were killed here years ago, and have educated you in preparation. In a few years, your education will be complete, you will reach manhood, and then you can meet other men. But until then, it is too dangerous. Your dead father had many enemies."

There was a little silence, the red-haired boy staring puzzledly into the lens-eyes of the Brain. Then Simon spoke again.

"We will begin your lesson on planetary botany. Define the phyla and subphyla of plant life on Venus."

In his clear high voice young Curt Newton began reciting. "Phylum One – decalciate plants –"

SUPER-EDUCATION

For minutes he spoke, systematically cataloguing the flora of Venus. Only super-education could have produced that knowledge – the education that for fourteen years had been carried on by the three unhuman beings who had made themselves the guardians of Curt Newton.

Yet when Curt had finished the long catalogue, the Brain's rasping voice spoke no word of commendation.

"You made four mistakes," the Brain declared. "You

must restudy your Venusian botany until you discover them for yourself."

Silently, Curt took the book and retired with it into his own small chamber at the side of the Moon-laboratory. He sat down and dutifully tried to locate his errors. But he could not concentrate today. His thoughts kept wandering to what lay outside the laboratory, the lonely, luring surface of the Moon. He loved that, the wild lunar landscape where no one lived, the stupendous peaks and blazing sunlight and deep shadows. He was always happiest when outside there in his space-suit, exploring.

LURE OF THE OUTSIDE

He laid down the book. His gray eyes were snapping with excitement and resolution. He was not going to study Venusian botany any longer today. He was going to do what he had long wanted to do – go outside, all by himself!

Silently, Curt slipped out of his little chamber. The Brain was reading absorbedly and did not see him. Otho and Grag could be heard arguing loudly back in the supply room as they restacked the fallen cases.

Curt's small, lithe figure flew up the stairs into the airlock chamber. He got into his space-suit and screwed on the glassite helmet, then touched the stud that opened the outer door of the lock.

He emerged on the rock surface of Tycho crater, into blinding sunlight. Then he hurried in long strides across the crater, toward the cunningly concealed underground shelter nearby.

ROCKET FLYERS

In that camouflaged hangar rested the two small, swift rocket-fliers which Grag and Otho had built. Curt knew their operation thoroughly from Otho's instructions. The boy entered one, switched on the compact cyclotrons. The craft rose rapidly up above the lunar surface.

Curt steered up in a steep slant to cross Tycho's stupendous ring of peaks and then headed northeastward. Over the wild, lifeless lunar plains and mountains he flew at high speed, through the blazing sunlight. In the black vault overhead loomed the great green bulk of Earth.

A high-pitched, ringing laugh of utter happiness broke from the boy's lips as he flew on. For the first time he was adventuring by himself, and he tasted his freedom like a young eagle spreading its wings for the initial flight. The wild pulse of long-repressed adventure throbbed strongly in his veins.

He flew over the southern foothills of the looming Rhiphaean Mountains and then glimpsed a long, torpedo-like metal shape on the plain.

"A ship!" young Curt Newton exclaimed wondering-ly to himself.

MEN LIKE HIMSELF

Near the ship a little knot of figures wearing space-suits and glassite helmets were engaged in hurried activity.

"Why, they're men!" Curt told himself excitedly. "Men like myself – the first I've ever seen!"

Immense excitement gripped him. He had never known anyone but Grag and Otho and the Brain, had never seen or talked with men like himself. They had seen him, were pointing up at his rushing little flier.

He swooped down toward them, without the slightest thought of danger. At last, the boy thought eagerly, he was to have his first meeting with other men like himself!

He landed near the ship and strode eagerly toward the men, his grey eyes shining in anticipation. There were eight of the men. They had been digging ores out of the lunar rock, to be used as fuel in the cyclotrons of their ship. The ship itself was a small twelve-man cruiser that looked like a private yacht, but the men were a hard-bitten, evil-faced lot.

Their leader was a burly, beady-eyed giant who kept his hand on the hilt of his atom-pistol as he watched Curt Newton approach. Curt heard the giant's voice speaking to his men on the universal space-suit phone.

"It's only a boy, men. But where in the devil's name did a boy come from in this cursed Moon-desert?"

"Maybe he lives here somewhere," suggested one of the men.

"Maybe you're a fool!" retorted the giant. "Nobody lives on the Moon – nobody ever visits it unless they run out of fuel as we did."

SAVAGE FACES

Curt Newton had stopped a few feet from the men and was looking at them eagerly. The first men he had ever seen! He felt a little disappointed as he surveyed their brutal faces. Somehow, he had not expected them to look so coarse, so savage.

"Who are you, lad, and what are you doing here?" rapped the giant leader suspiciously. "Spying on us?"

"Spying on you?" Curt repeated bewilderedly. "Why should I spy on you? Are you running away from someone?"

One of the group snickered. "Well, Earth isn't exactly a healthy place when you've mutinied and murdered –"

"Shut up, you!" roared the giant. His savage eyes swept Curt's small figure. "Where'd you come from, boy – and who are you?"

"I'm Curtis Newton and I live here – over in Tycho crater," he answered frankly.

The big man's eyes slitted and he stepped forward and grabbed Curt's wrist. "You live here? Don't lie to me, you little space-rat!"

Curt's wrist hurt and his surprise and amazement at

being so received by the fellow-men he had been eager to see made him react swiftly.

JU-JITSU

He ducked and spun around with a lightning movement and thrust of shoulder muscles that Otho had taught. The super-ju-jitsu trick sent the giant flying back to sprawl on his back ten feet away.

Curt could have escaped, then. But he was still too startled and bewildered by the unfriendly reception to think of himself. He was grabbed by the other men before he could retreat.

The giant leader was livid with fury. "You cocky brat, I'll –"

"Boss, wait!" cried one of his men excitedly. "This boy said his name was Newton, didn't he? And he looks just like that famous scientist who disappeared fifteen years ago in space. His name was Newton, too."

"What of it?" roared the furious giant.

"The Newton who disappeared had scientific secrets supposed to be worth billions!" cried the other. "If this brat is his son –"

"By heaven!" swore the giant, his eyes lighting with avarice. He demanded of Curt, "Where's this place in Tycho crater you live at?"

Curt had had time to get over his amazement. The boy had never seen men before. But he knew instinctively that these men were evil.

CURT SENSES PERIL

He sensed peril to the Brain and Grag and Otho, if he told these men where the Moon-laboratory lay. He decided swiftly to tell nothing. With calm gray eyes, he stared at his captors through his helmet.

"Won't tell, eh?" said the big leader. His lips twisted in an ugly smile. "I've made tougher men than a stripling kid talk. Hold him tight, men – this won't take long."

He reached and turned the tap on the oxygen-tank of Curt's space-suit, shutting off the flow of air into the boy's suit.

"When you want bad enough to breathe, you can start talking," he told the boy complacently.

Curt made no answer. The boy, held by a dozen hands, knew an attempt to break free was useless.

He remained silent, looking with level eyes into the brutal, helmeted faces of his captors.

His head began to spin dizzily as the air inside his helmet became hot and foul. There was a roaring in his ears –

Yet Curt Newton's purpling face did not change a line in its expression, his glazing eyes still stared levelly at his captors. Even though his body was sagging limp, the boy's stony face moved no muscle.

The men holding him stirred uneasily, their brutal pleasure in cruelty changing gradually to an uneasy

wonder.

"The kid ain't human!" muttered one of them. "He's dyin' – and he keeps looking at us the same way –"

A SOUL OF STEEL

Curt Newton felt that he was, indeed, dying. He could only dimly see, the roar in his ears was deafening. But he would not show weakness or cry out, even now. The rigid training of the Brain and the robot and the android had put steel into his soul.

Then dimly, Curt heard a startled cry from one of his captors. He felt himself released, saw the men clawing out their atom-pistols and whirling frantically to meet two charging figures.

The two were Grag and Otho. The android in his space-suit and the robot, who needed none held heavy metal bars raised aloft and their eyes were blazing with deadly purpose.

The bars crashed down on one glassite helmet after another as Otho moved with incredible speed and Grag stalked like an avenging metal giant.

Men, suddenly suffocated by the shattering of their helmets, fell clawing at their throats.

Curt Newton saw this much – and then for the first time in his life lost consciousness. When he came to, he found himself supported in Grag's mighty metal arms. The robot had turned on his oxygen supply.

Beyond him and Otho, the boy saw the still figures of the men.

"They are dead," came Otho's fierce, hissing voice. "It is too bad there were no more of them to kill."

"You have been very bad," Grag boomed to Curt. "Had not Simon Wright used the view-scope to locate you, when we missed you, you might now be dead. You go back now to Simon for punishment."

A very silent and chastened boy entered the Moon-laboratory with his two guardians.

"I am ready to be punished, Simon," he said in a subdued voice.

"There will be no punishment," the Brain said metallically. "Sit down, Curtis."

THE REVELATION

Astonished, the boy seated himself. "The time has come," said the Brain slowly, "when you must be told who you are and how you came here on this lonely Moon with us three."

"Those men said something about a Newton who had discovered great scientific secrets!" Curt interrupted eagerly. "Was that my father?"

"That was your father," answered Simon solemnly. "He and your mother died long ago – soon after you were born. Listen, and you shall hear how they died."

The metallic voice rasped on, telling the story of that long-dead day when Roger Newton and his young wife had met their deaths at the hands of covetous men.

THE FUTUREMEN: No. 8 – Captain Future's Boyhood

And as the tale went on, young Curt Newton's boyish face became strained and strange.

"So you see," concluded the Brain. "that there are many evil men in the System who still would kill you for the secrets in this laboratory. That is why we have not let you go forth yet among other men. You are not yet able to cope with the deadly enemies you would meet."

The boy slowly nodded his red head. "I understand,

Simon. But I still want to go, out there among the other worlds. I can go some day, can't I?"

"Yes, lad," answered the Brain thoughtfully. "Some day you can go, someday you will know all those worlds. And I think that all the world will know you someday –"

That was the first meeting with other men of the boy whom the System was one day to know as Captain Future.



No. 9

HOW CURT NEWTON BECAME CAPTAIN FUTURE

The World's Greatest Space-Farer Begins His Trail of Adventure When He Battles for Justice on Pluto!

UPON the icy surface of the Arctic planet Pluto, there gleamed a big glassite dome like a bubble of warm light. This was the small Earthman trading-town that was the one outpost of Earth on the frontier planet. For this was in the wild, early years before the bigger domed cities to come had yet been built.

Across the blizzard-swept ice-fields of the bitter planet, a small group of native Plutonians trudged toward the Earthman trading town.

These natives of Pluto, towering men whose bodies were completely covered with long black hair and whose eyes were huge-pupiled ones of odd expression, hauled with them several sledges piled high with the furs they regularly brought to exchange with the Earthman traders.

THE YOUNG EARTHMEN

With the Plutonians marched an oddly dissimilar figure – a young Earthman, hardly more than a youth.

He wore a heavy felt cold-suit that could not keep out all the bitter chill of the screaming wind and snow. Yet his youthful, handsome face and clear gray eyes were vivid with excited interest.

"What do you get in exchange for the furs, Oraq?" he asked the towering Plutonian leader beside him, speaking the latter's tongue fluently.

Oraq answered gloomily. "We get little enough, these days. The first Earthman traders were fair, but now they cheat us."

Curt Newton – for the Earth youth was he – looked incredulous. "You must be wrong, Oraq. Earthmen wouldn't cheat you."

FIRST TO VISIT PLUTO

Curt Newton was eighteen years old. And this was his first visit to Pluto.

This was the last stop upon a voyage that had taken him and his three stranger tutors and guardians out through the whole System. This exhaustive tour of the System had been designed by the Brain as the conclusion of Curt's unparalleled education.

Unparalleled had been Curt's education, indeed! For eighteen years, he had lived upon Earth's Moon where he had been born.

There his three guardians – Simon Wright, the Brain, Otho, the android, and Grag, the robot – had reared him and given him a training in scientific wizardry and in physical and mental skill which no other tutors could have given.

The growing youth had chafed to leave the Moon, to see the rest of the great System that pioneering Earthmen had explored and colonized. But not until now had the Brain deemed him ready.

PLANET TO PLANET

Now, for months, they had been making their way from planet to planet in their small space-ship. Young Curt Newton had learned the secrets of Martian deserts, the depths of Jovian jungles, the great plains of Saturn and the sky-storming mountains of Uranus, all at first hand.

They had been for weeks here on Pluto. They had been dwelling with the Plutonian natives, in their strange ice-city of Qulun, north of the Avernus Sea. Curt had already evinced his unique knack of making

friends with non-terrestrial planetary peoples.

He had become a comrade of the simple, primitive Plutonians – sailing the stormy ocean with them, hunting the *korlats* and other great fur-bearing beasts, and now he came with them to trade their furs with the Earthmen.

The little party reached the double-doored entrance of the small domed trading-town and entered. The interior was warm and light. Great atomic generators that throbbed in a guarded building poured forth a flood of power to heat and illuminate this domed enclosure.

Oraq, the Plutonian tribesman, grunted in discomfort. "It is too hot in here. Let us trade the furs and leave before we grow sick."

But young Curt Newton had thrown back the felt helmet from his red head and was breathing in the warm air with relief.

"There is where we trade the furs," Oraq said, pointing to the biggest of the metalloy buildings crowded inside the dome.

THE TRADING POST

The building had a cavernous interior, piled with great bundles of valuable Plutonian furs and with cases of cheap trade-goods. There were a few other Plutonians hanging about, and a crowd of rough Earthman hunters and trappers who stared at Curt as he entered with the Plutonians.

"First time I ever saw an Earth youngster trail with the Hairies," remarked a burly Earthman. "Look, he can even talk their lingo."

Curt Newton felt uncomfortable. He didn't know much about Earthmen. He'd had small contact with them during his eighteen years.

The two proprietors of the trading post had come forward – a gross-faced, stocky man of middle age and a thin-lipped older man. They looked appraisingly at the bundles of furs Oraq's men had hauled in.

"We trade," Oraq mumbled, speaking his few words of the Earth language with difficulty. "We want knives, spearheads."

The older man nodded and brought out six cheap steel knives and as many spearheads, which he laid down.

Oraq's face fell. "Not enough," the Plutonian articulated.

"It's all you'll get," retorted the thin-lipped trader calmly.

Curt Newton burst forth. He had been watching indignantly. "Why, that's robbery!" he declared. "Those furs are worth a thousand times what you're offering. Take them someplace else, Oraq."

LORDS OF POWER

The men in the room burst into a guffaw. And the thin-lipped older trader told Curt sourly, "You must be

new to Pluto, boy. There are no other traders on this planet. Wilson and Kincaid – that's me and my partner – have the only trading post here. For we have the only atomic power plant here, to keep a post going with heat and light."

"That's right, sonny," smirked Kincaid, his gross-faced partner. "That's why these Hairies call us the Lords of Power."

Curt looked incredulous. "But the Planet Patrol of the System Government –"

Kincaid chuckled. "Sonny, the Patrol's got enough to handle these days in the inner planets without coming away out here. The only law out here is the law of the Lords of Power, and don't you forget it."

Curt's eyes flashed. "I'll see that System law comes here!" he flamed. "I'll see that the Government hears of your cheating, thieving monopoly!"

The thin lips of Wilson, the older partner, became thinner and he looked dangerously at the redhaired youth.

"Boy, you've got things to learn," he said calmly. "You've got to learn who the Lords of Power are." And Wilson spoke to the burly men behind Curt in sharp command. "Teach him who we are, men."

Curt tried to spin around, but a stunning blow from a clenched fist caught him before he completed the movement. He reeled and felt another blow split his lips, and his head rang with the shock.

He was only dimly aware then of further smashing blows, of falling strengthlessly to the floor, of heavy boots kicking him. He slipped into a merciful unconsciousness.

THE QUEST FOR JUSTICE

When he awoke, sore and bruised and cold, he found himself being carried over the ice-fields by Oraq's Plutonians. Oraq helped him as he unsteadily tried to stand erect.

"They beat you and threw you out of the dome!" raged Oraq. "They held us off with their atom-guns, and would have slain us where we stood if we tried to stop them."

The Plutonian added fiercely, "We shall gather all the tribes and attack these evil Lords of Power, and destroy them."

"No!" Curt said through puffed lips. "It's for me to see that justice is done, Oraq. Take me back now to your city."

When they reached the ice-city of Qulun, and Otho and Grag and the Brain learned what had occurred, the android and robot exploded with rage. Hands had been laid upon their beloved ward and pupil!

"We'll go back there and blast them!" snarled Otho. "We'll make these so-called Lords of Power sorry they ever saw you before they die."

"No!" Curt Newton contradicted. His young eyes

had a strange, cold new light. "We'll mete out justice to them – not mere vengeance. We'll force Wilson and Kincaid to go back to Earth and surrender themselves to the justice of the Government."

"But how can we do that?" Grag objected. "They'll never leave Pluto of their own accord."

THE SONIC-SILENT BEAM

"I think they will," Curt declared. "The atomic generators are all that make their domed trading-town habitable. And we can 'kill' those generators, by using the inhibiting damping-ray that you showed me how to produce. That, and the Brain's 'sonic-silent' beam, will force them out."

"The 'sonic-silent' beam?" cried Otho. "Say, I begin to understand your plan now! You're figuring to use it to –"

"Yes," Curt nodded. "That's what we're going to do."

Curt's youthful, bruised face suddenly changed from its coldly grim expression. A look of dismay appeared in his eyes as he met the oddly intent gaze of the Brain.

"I forgot myself for a moment," Curt said uncertainly. "I was giving you orders. I didn't mean to do that."

The Brain broke a long silence. "Curtis, you need not apologize. We shall do as you suggest."

THE DAWN OF MANHOOD

That moment, all four of them knew, marked a change forever in their relations. It meant that Curt Newton was no longer their pupil, their ward. It meant that he had suddenly become their leader – that new, grim purpose had suddenly brought manhood.

That night, the big atomic generators in the domed trading-town suddenly went dead. The puzzled engineers, after working for a time in vain, summoned Wilson and Kincaid.

"We can't understand it," they told the two self-styled Lords of Power. "The generators *should* work, but they just don't."

"You mean, you don't know your business!" raged Kincaid. "You get them working, before we all freeze."

But though the engineers labored frantically, the great cyclotrons remained dead. The toiling men never dreamed of the little ship that was hovering far up in the dusky sky, playing upon the dome the invisible inhibiting force that "killed" all atomic activity.

CHILL IN THE AIR

The air in the dome began to grow cold as the powerful atomic heaters ceased functioning. It had been dark for hours except for make-shift lights. More and more chill grew the air, frost gathering on the dome. The shivering Earthmen watched anxiously as the sweating engineers labored at their fruitless task under the lashing words of their employers.

Then Kincaid and Wilson and all their men sudden-

ly started. A clear voice had suddenly spoken loudly from the air around them.

"Go to Earth and surrender yourselves to System law!" it commanded.

"Who said that?" snarled Kincaid, drawing his atom-pistol.

"It's nobody – it just came out of the air!" gasped a man.

Again the voice spoke, from the empty air around them, repeating its command. It was loud, louder than any ordinary voice.

The men could not dream that it was the "sonic-silent" beam of the Brain that produced the effect – a beam of sound vibrations pitched *below* the limits of audibility but focused so as to become suddenly audible vibrations at a selected distance from the transmitter.

Over and over it repeated its eerie command. The darkness and increasing cold and the grim voice from empty air began to crack nerves.

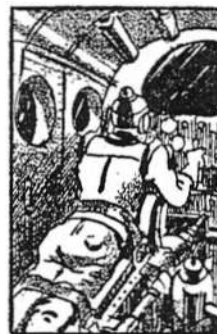
"We can't fix these cyscs," the engineers finally confessed.

"Let's get out o' here!" begged one of the men. "We'll freeze if we don't. An' that voice means trouble."

"It's just a trick," hissed Kincaid. "But we'll go. We'll head for Uranus and wait there a while, and come back with new generators."

THE UNSEEN VOICE

They hastily loaded their great bales of valuable furs into their space-ship, and took off for Uranus. They established a camp among the Black Mountains of that planet's equatorial region, near the Canyon of the Endless River. But on their second day there, the unseen voice spoke again.



"Go to Earth and surrender yourselves to System law!"

For two days, the voice spoke, hour after hour, repeating that relentless command. The raging Wilson and Kincaid searched furiously for its source without success. In desperation, they turned their atom-guns at random on the mist-hidden cliffs overhead. The only result was to start an avalanche from which they and their ship barely escaped.

The Lords of Power and their men flew to Saturn.

They made new camp near the Valley of the Silicae near the southern pole of that world. But again the voice remorselessly prodded them. There seemed no source of it. Curt and his comrades were projecting the "sonic-silent" beam from miles away.

The Silicae came crawling upon the camp of Wilson and Kincaid, attracted by their indiscriminate firing at nothing. The great gray inorganic monsters made them hastily remove camp northward. But in their new camp by the Wandering Lakes, deadly puff-balls from the Fungus Forest came upon the wind. And the grim, cold voice was still with them.

NO ESCAPE!

More than a little fearful, the Lords of Power essayed another attempt to escape their maddening tormentors. They fled to Jupiter and endeavored to hide in the vast fern-jungles south of the Fire Sea. But though they had pitched their camp in the ancient Jovian ruins which were shunned by all Jovians as the Place of the Dead, the cold voice reached them.

"Go to Earth and surrender yourselves to System law!"

In panic, the followers of Wilson and Kincaid deserted them, stumbling away through the fern-jungles in mad flight from the unknown. And at last utterly broken in nerve, Wilson and Kincaid steered toward Earth.

Curt Newton's ship followed at a distance, still prodding the fugitives with the "sonic-silent" beam as they landed near Government Tower.

"Surrender yourselves to System law!" came the inexorable order.

At that a bewildered Planet Police chief and equally bewildered System President listened as two broken, haunted-looking men babbled a confession of having

defrauded Plutonian natives by means of an illegal monopoly.

Later that night, the System President sat in his office high in Government Tower reflecting on the strange occurrence. His thin, aging face expressed sudden startled wonder as he heard a space-ship landing on the truncated top of the tower. No ship but his own ever landed there.

FOUR STRANGE FIGURES

He rose to his feet to call officers. Then he froze. In his office door had appeared four figures that seemed unreal. They were a tall Earth youngster, with red hair and clear, purposeful gray eyes; a lithe, green-eyed android; a giant metal robot; and a Brain brooding in a square transparent serum-case, watching with lens-like artificial eyes.

"It was we who drove Wilson and Kincaid to confess," Curt Newton told the President quietly. "And I wanted to tell you this: the furs in their ship were stolen by fraud from the native Plutonians. The value of those furs, in needed goods, should be given to the Plutonians."

The President stared, and then as the four strange visitants turned to leave, he asked a dazed question. "Who – who are you?"

The redheaded youngster turned, for a moment. "Just someone who didn't want to see the whole future of Pluto's people wrecked for profits."

Then a quick, humorous smile lit his gray eyes and he added, "If you want a name to call me by, why, you can call me Captain Future!"

It was thus that Curt Newton became Captain Future!



No. 10

CAPTAIN FUTURE TRAILS THE CHAMELEON

*How the World's Greatest Space-Farer Met Defeat
in His Battle of Wits With a Wily Space Thief!*

WHENEVER men of the System talk of Captain Future's brilliant exploits, someone sooner or later is sure to say:

"Well, after all. Captain Future met his match once. The Chameleon beat him."

The whole System knows that as the one major defeat on the record of the Futuremen. But the System does not know all the story of that famous occasion when Captain Future was bested by the Chameleon.

AN INTERPLANETARY ROBBER

The Chameleon was the most daring and notorious interplanetary robber in the System. He was not one of the space-pirates who infested the wild moons of the outer worlds. He preferred almost always to work alone, and his depredations were carried out with a smoothness and skill and lack of bloodshed far removed from the vicious raids of the brutal corsairs.

He was not a killer – he was a thief of genius.

It was the Chameleon who single-handed held up a space-liner, by gaining mastery of its control-room and then forcing the passengers to deposit their valuables in a life-rocket in which he later vanished.

It was the Chameleon who stole the fire-emerald eyes of the Venusian swampmen's god, though that idol was at the center of a cage of ferocious marsh-tigers.

It was the Chameleon who impersonated an Earth official come to Mars to collect the Government revenues, and walked coolly off with the immense sum.

THE CHAMELEON LAUGHS

The Chameleon seemed to laugh at the attempts of

the Planet Patrol to catch him. Always, when they were hottest on his trail, his little, swift black cruiser would vanish as though space had swallowed it up.

It always vanished in a certain section – Sector 16 – of the asteroidal zone. The implication was clear that the Chameleon's base was somewhere in that sector, but the Patrol searched for it in vain. So great became the Chameleon's reputation, that merchant-ships plying through the zone made long detours to avoid that sector.

It was this development which caused Halk Anders, commander of the Patrol, to swallow his pride and ask for Captain Future's help in catching the arch-thief of the System.

"He's got us stumped!" swore the commander. "And ships are having to make that long detour around Sector 16, just because of one criminal. We're becoming the laughing-stock of the System."

A SUBTLE TRAP

Captain Future, who wanted to get back to his Moon home, was not interested in chasing slippery thieves and said so.

"It's your job, Halk," he grinned. "You'll have to search Sector 16 until you find out where the fellow has his hidden base."

"I tell you, we've been over every inch of that sector a hundred times!" exclaimed the frustrated commander. "There's some dangerous meteor-swarms in it, and there's Mazzatarra and Ferronia, a couple of small, airless asteroids. But there's no place where a man *could* have a base. Yet the Chameleon has one there, some-

where."

Curt Newton became more interested. "The fellow must be clever. But why waste more time hunting for his base. Why not make him walk right into your arms?"

"You mean, set a trap for him?" asked Halk Anders. "It wouldn't work. We've tried it, and the Chameleon's too smart for that."

"You haven't set a subtle enough trap," Captain Future told him. "The Chameleon would be clever enough to investigate before making his play. I'll set a trap for him that he can back-trail without having his suspicions aroused – and he'll come walking into it."

PROSPECTOR'S LUCK

A short time later, the telenews headlined the sensational discovery of an Earth prospector on Mercury. The prospector, John Willison, had found a dozen sun-stones, the most valuable gem in the System, near the edge of the Hot Side.

Captain Future was the lucky prospector, of course. He had gone to Mercury and, well-disguised, had actually unearthed the rare sun-stones from a deposit which the Futuremen had long known about.

As Willison, the lucky, newly-rich prospector, Curt came to Earth. He was televised by the news-services, showing his jewels to the System, bragging of his good fortune, playing his part to the hilt.

"Aren't you worried over the safety of your jewels, Mr. Willison?" the interviewer asked him smilingly.

"Not *me!*" Curt answered boastfully. "I'm an old hand on the interplanetary frontier, and I know how to look after what's mine. I've sold one of the stones, and the rest are safe with me, from any thief."

Curt had really sold one of the jewels. With the money thus derived, he set up as a newly-rich millionaire in an elaborate mansion near New York. Otho, in appropriate disguise, was his butler. The trap was now ready, and they waited for the Chameleon to enter it.

AT LAST – A VISITOR!

Weeks passed, but nothing happened. Curt was not impatient. He had known the Chameleon was clever, and he guessed that the notorious thief was carefully checking the trail of those jewels before acting.

Then one night, Otho came gravely into the library and told Curt, "A caller to see you, Mr. Willison. It is a Mr. Norman Thaine."

Under his breath, Otho hissed, "It's him! The X-Ray alarm at the door showed that he's carrying an atom-pistol."

"All right, show him in," Curt said loudly to his "butler."

Mr. Norman Thaine was a well-dressed, studious looking young Earthman of quite ordinary appearance. He came to the point at once.

"Mr. Willison, like everyone else I've heard of your sun-stones. I'm very much interested in them."

"What do you mean – interested?" barked the disguised Captain Future, pretending to scowl suspiciously.

"Let me explain," said Norman Thaine earnestly. "I am a jewel-collector. I can afford to pay a good price for your stones, since a space-ship invention of mine a few years ago made me fairly wealthy. You can check my references, if you wish. I'd like to see the jewels."

Curt looked over the documents Thaine handed him. They seemed authentic. Yet he was certain that this man was the Chameleon.

A SURPRISE ATTACK

He nevertheless went to a secret cupboard and took from it the little casket in which were the eleven blazing yellow sun-stones.

"There they are, Mr. Thaine," he drawled. "Beauties, aren't they? You sure you can afford to buy one?"

"Yes, of course," said Thaine. As he stepped forward, his hand went into his jacket-pocket.

"No you don't, Chameleon!" exclaimed Curt, and plunged forward before the man could draw the gun in his pocket.

Captain Future's surprise attack caught the other before he could resist. Curt's swift ju-jitsu onslaught had the man overpowered in a moment.

Ten minutes later, Commander Halk Anders of the Patrol came in answer to Curt's call.

"There's your Chameleon, Halk," grinned Curt, pointing to the prisoner.

"You must be crazy!" said Norman Thaine. "I'm not the Chameleon."

"Then why," Curt asked him dryly, "were you reaching for the atom-pistol in your pocket?"

"I wasn't reaching for that – I was reaching to show you the money in my pocket, to convince you I could buy one of the jewels." Thaine retorted. "I carried the gun, for protection of my money."

"He did have a big sum of money in that pocket," Otho reported.

"Sure stolen money," grunted Halk Anders. "He's the Chameleon all right."

"But I'm not!" Thaine insisted. "Those identity-papers –"

"All forged, without doubt," the Commander snorted. "Captain Future, you've done the Patrol a big service getting this fellow. I'm glad that I can tell those scary shipping companies now that it's safe to go through Sector 16, since the Chameleon's caught now."

THAINE PROVES HIS IDENTITY!

The telenews blazoned the news to the whole System in the following hour. The Chameleon captured at last – by Captain Future!

People remarked, "Well, he was slick enough to fool the Patrol a long while, but the Futuremen were a different matter."

But, up in headquarters of the Patrol in Government Tower, Commander Anders was not feeling as triumphant as he had felt at first.

"I can't understand this!" the commander told Captain Future. "We checked that fellow's papers, just as a matter of routine – never doubting they were forged. But they're *not* forged. Apparently, this man has a solidly-established identity as Norman Thaine, Earth inventor."

"Of course, I'm Norman Thaine!" insisted the prisoner. "This is all nonsense about me being the Chameleon."

Curt was unconvinced. "You're the Chameleon, and we both know it," he asserted. "And I'm going to prove it."

But, in the following days, Curt found that he could not shake the identity of Norman Thaine. Thaine was identified by several people, in particular, by the president of the space-ship factory to whom he had sold an invention a few years before.

"Yet he is the Chameleon, beyond doubt!" Captain Future declared. "I see it all now. He's been clever enough to establish two or three different identities, through the past years, in preparation for just such a situation as this."

RELEASE!

"But we can't prove he's the Chameleon," Halk Anders said helplessly. "None of the Chameleon's former victims can positively identify him. Yet he's not using make-up or disguise – apparently the only disguise he uses is cunning alterations of expression, and posture. We can't prove he's the Chameleon, or even that he intended to rob you of the sun-stones that night. And he can prove he's Norman Thaine."

"And he's hired a lawyer who's demanding his release under the habeas corpus clause of interplanetary law," put in an official.

"We'll have to release him, then," groaned Halk Anders. "By law, we can't hold him longer when we have no proof of his guilt."

"But we *know* he's the Chameleon!" Curt Newton exclaimed.

"Sure we do, but we'll have to let him go anyway, and admit to the System that we didn't catch him after all," Halk said unhappily.

Norman Thaine was brought into the Commander's office, and handed his release. Not by an iota, did he display any exultation.

"I'm going to charge you all with false arrest," he declared indignantly.

THE DOOMED SPACE-LINER

Curt Newton knew that even as he spoke, the master-thief was laughing to himself behind that indignant mask.

"Get out of here, before I lose control of myself!" Halk Anders blazed at Thaine. "If there was just one shadow of proof –"

At that moment, there came an interruption. The captain of the Mars station of the Patrol appeared, in the television-screen nearby.

"Calling GHQ!" he was exclaiming. Then as Halk Anders snapped a switch, the officer continued hastily, "Just picked up SOS from the liner *Starmaid*! She was running through Sector 16 of the asteroid zone when an uncharted meteor-swarm caught her."

"The devil!" groaned Halk Anders. "I told the shipping companies not to start going through Sector 16 again until it had been freshly charted!"

"The *Starmaid* was hard hit, sir," the other reported tautly. "She teleaudioed information that the ship was completely crippled, that its passengers and crew were abandoning her in the life-rockets, but that they had only four life-rockets – the rest were smashed. Crowded in like that, they haven't air enough for more than twenty hours."

"Good God!" muttered the Commander, appalled. "They're doomed, then. We can't get a relief cruiser from Mars station to that sector in less than ninety hours."

"Isn't there any habitable 'toid in that sector where they can land?" asked the Martian officer tensely. "I could advise them –"

"You know there isn't – nothing but those meteors and a couple of airless asteroids," groaned Anders. "Not a place in that whole sector with air enough to keep them alive that long –"

THE SECRET BASE

He stopped suddenly, as he saw that Captain Future was looking at Norman Thaine, quietly and steadily.

"You have a secret base in that sector, Chameleon," Curt was saying. "There'd be air enough there to keep those people alive. They could get to it – if you told us where the base is."

"How can I tell you that?" Thaine retorted. "I'm not the Chameleon – I don't know where his base is."

"There'll be women and children in those life-rockets," Curt went on quietly. "Women and children who will die of suffocation twenty hours from now, unless they reach a place with air."

Sweat stood out on Norman Thaine's forehead. His face took on a gray pallor, and he clenched his fists.

When he spoke, his voice was hoarse. "All right, Captain Future. Tell those life-rockets to make for the asteroid Ferronia. There's a crater-peak near its northern pole. Down in that crater they'll find an airlock, and

beneath it is my cavern-base. It has oxygen-generators enough to keep them all alive until help comes."

When Halk Anders had repeated that information to be relayed by telaudio to the life-rockets, Captain Future looked fixedly, at their prisoner.

"You realize, of course," Curt said to Norman Thaine, "that you have just convicted yourself of being the Chameleon?"

The Chameleon laughed harshly. "Sure, I know. And just when I was free to walk out of here. I'm the prize idiot of all time, eh?"

PLUTO PRISON FOR LIFE!

Anders said, movedly, "I wish I could tell you that this would cancel out your record, Chameleon. But it won't – the courts will have to send you out to Pluto Prison for life in spite of what you did."

"Well, I was bound to go there sooner or later," shrugged the Chameleon.

Curt told the Commander. "I'll watch him while you call the guards back to take him, Halk."

Looking at Curt a little puzzledly, Halk Anders went out. Left alone, with the prisoner, Curt sat quietly balancing his proton-pistol on his knee. He spoke casually.

"The little rocket-flier I came here in tonight is up on the landing-deck atop this Tower, Chameleon," he remarked.

"What about it? I'm not going anywhere, said the Chameleon half-bitterly.

"I don't know," drawled Captain Future. "A smart, active fellow like you might be able to duck out of this office before I had time to shoot, and make it to the top-deck and get away in that flier."

A STRAIGHT SPACE-TRAIL

The Chameleon became rigid, staring at Captain Future.

Curt spoke on casually, looking absently he ceiling.

"A fellow as smart as that," he said, "ought to be

smart enough to stop all this business of robbery and blaze a straight space-trail from now on."

The Chameleon's eyes shone. "Thanks. Captain Future," he whispered.

"Thanks for what?" Curt repeated. "I don't know what you're talking about. I—"

He grinned, then. For the Chameleon was already gone, like a shadow. Curt waited a moment, then fired a crashing blast from his gun into a blank wall. He heard a rocket-flier roaring away, overhead.

Halk Anders and other Patrol officers came running in a moment later. They found Curt Newton the picture of chagrin.

"He tricked me and got away!" Curt swore. "He was gone before I even fired in his direction!"

CAPTAIN FUTURE CAN TAKE IT!

A few minutes later, when the Commander was alone with Curt, he favored Captain Future with an understanding grin.

"I knew why you sent me out on that fool's errand, Future. And I'm glad you did. A fellow who did what the Chameleon did tonight deserves to have a few rules broken for him."

Curt nodded. "Somehow, I think we've heard the last of the Chameleon, Halk. I don't think he'll ever bother the Patrol again."

Halk Anders pointed out, "You realize this is going to make you look awful foolish? I'll have to admit that the Chameleon tricked Captain Future to get away."

Curt shrugged. "Go ahead and admit it, Halk. I can take it."

* * * * *

The Chameleon never resumed depredations again. But he has never been forgotten by the System.

For he was, as everybody knows, the one outlaw who was smart enough to beat Captain Future!



No. 11

THE PUZZLING CASE OF THE SPACE QUEEN

An Interplanetary Pirate Impersonates Captain Future in Order to Commit Acts of Robbery on an Incredibly Vast Scale!

ONE of the most astounding episodes in the career of the Futuremen began with the puzzling case of the *Space Queen*.

The *Space Queen*, a big, fast liner in the outer planet trade, was on its way from Saturn to Earth when it happened. The ship was twelve million miles inside the orbit of Jupiter when its instruments warned that another craft was cutting across its course.

The other ship soon came into view. And the officers of the liner exclaimed in astonishment as they recognized that small, teardrop-shaped craft.

That ship was known to every rocketeer in the System.

"It's Captain Future's ship, the *Comet*! And he's signaling us to slow down."

"Do so at once," ordered the captain promptly.

THE RADIUM CASES

As the liner slackened speed, the smaller ship came almost close enough to touch it. Across the gulf between the two craft came hurtling three figures, only two of whom wore space-suits.

They entered the *Space Queen* through its airlock and were greeted by a somewhat anxious captain and officers. The three visitors were a tall red-haired young Earthman, a lithe, rubbery-looking man, and a huge metal robot. Everyone recognized the famous trio instantly.

"What's up, Captain Future?" asked the liner captain worriedly.

"You have a cargo of radium aboard?" asked the red-haired young Earthman crisply.

The captain nodded. "Yes, ten million dollars' worth of the pure element."

A THIEVING PLOT

"There's a plot afoot to steal it from, you," the other told him rapidly. "It would involve the wrecking of your ship. I'm going to take that radium aboard the *Comet*. I'll deliver it later to Earth."

Any other man in the System would have been met by a burst of laughter had he made that suggestion. But confidence in the integrity of the Futuremen was universal and absolute. The captain did not hesitate a moment.

"Very well, I'll help you transfer the radium cases. And thanks a lot for stepping in to help us, Captain Future!"

The small lead cases were soon transferred to the little teardrop ship. With a final flash of its signals, it drove away into the void. Vastly relieved, the captain ordered the *Space Queen* to proceed to Earth.

Upon arrival at Earth, the officer reported to his company officials what had happened. They took the same view of it as he had done.

"We're lucky the Futuremen took a hand in the thing – otherwise we might have lost radium and ship, too! They'll probably bring the radium in before long."

A NEW METHOD OF PIRACY?

A few days later, a space-freighter came into Mars with a tale of a similar experience. The Futuremen had halted it in space, and had taken from it a shipment of platinum whose safety Captain Future had declared to

be imperiled. In rapid succession half a dozen other ships reported that the Futuremen had taken similar valuable cargoes from them.

The officials of the shipping companies and the System Government speculated as to what was going on. It was believed that some big plot to rob interplanetary shipping by a cunning new method of piracy had been hatched, and that the Futuremen had intervened to baffle the plotters.

"They can't get ahead of Captain Future," remarked several officials, satisfied. "He got wind somehow of what was being planned, and is acting to prevent it. Look at the valuable cargoes he's saving."

But as days went by, a certain doubt began to arise. The Futuremen were still operating in a puzzling way, out among the planets. Curt Newton and his followers were relieving one ship after another of valuable shipments, but not one of those shipments of precious ores and metals had yet been delivered to their destinations.

That was brought to the attention of the System President.

"Oh, it's all right – Future will bring the stuff in when he has time," he said.

"Nobody doubts that, but the delay is embarrassing several companies," pointed out his secretary. "Won't you call him about it?"

The President acceded. He put through a televisor call-signal tuned to the secret wave which few people knew. He was calling the laboratory-home of the Futuremen, on Earth's Moon.

A SHOCK FOR CAPTAIN FUTURE

Captain Future answered. And Curt Newton listened with increasing bewilderment to what the President said.

"I don't know what you're talking about!" Curt exclaimed. "I never took any shipments off those ships. Grag and Otho and Simon and I have been right here on the Moon for weeks, working out a new invention."

"But that's impossible!" said the President. "Those ship officers all saw and talked with you, when they turned over the shipments to you."

In the televisor-screen. Curt's keen face showed alarm.

"There's something wrong. I'm coming to Earth at once."

When Curt and the three Futuremen reached the office of the president, the famous planeteer listened closely to the official's recital.

Then he asked, "Call in any of those ship officers who are on Earth now."

The captain of the *Space Queen* was one of them.

"You say you turned over that radium shipment to me?" Curt asked him sharply. "Are you quite sure it was me?"

"Of course I'm sure," replied the captain. "You were

as close to me as you are now – you and your two pals there." He pointed toward Grag and Otho.

"Why, you're cra –" Grag started to ejaculate, but Curt silenced him. He told the captain and other officers, "That's all I wanted to know. Just a routine acknowledgement for the Government."

A CRIMINAL IMPERSONATOR

Satisfied by that explanation, the ship officers withdrew. Captain Future looked steadily at the President.

"It's clear now what is going on," he declared. "Someone is impersonating me. Someone who is using my name, and the confidence of the System in me, to perpetrate robbery on a vast scale."

The President was dumbfounded. "But those ship-officers all swore it was you and your Futuremen they met! They saw Grag and Otho, as well as yourself. And there isn't another robot in the System like Grag!"

"I know that, and I can't understand it," Curt admitted. "But it's certain that I've got a criminal double, and that he and other pirates are impersonating me and the Futuremen."

"Good Lord, he's still taking millions away from ships and isolated planetary towns by this trick!" exclaimed the President, aghast. He reached for the televisor. "We'll broadcast warning to the whole System of what's going on."

"No, don't do that!" Curt intervened quickly. "It would throw all the companies into a panic. They'd storm your office, demanding that their shipments be recovered. The criminals behind this would know that we had already fathomed their plot."

"Also," Captain Future added grimly, "it would make things plenty hot for me. A lot of people wouldn't believe that we Futuremen could have doubles so perfect as to deceive everyone. A lot of people would think that we had actually robbed all those ships of their cargoes."

"Holy sun-imps, I never thought of that!" Otho exclaimed. "Say, our reputations are ruined forever unless we catch these doubles of ours!"

"More than that, our usefulness in the System will be permanently impaired," Curt warned. "Unless we capture and expose these plotters, there'll always be a lurking doubt as to our innocence."

THE FIRST FAINT CLUE

Their problem was complicated by the time factor. Already, the shipping companies were murmuring complaints because the Futuremen had not yet delivered the valuable cargoes they had taken. Those murmurs would soon grow into open expressions of doubt.

Curt Newton attacked the mystery with characteristic concentration. His first quest was to ascertain the identity of the criminal masquerading as himself.

"Only plastic surgery of the most advanced type

could make that criminal into such an exact double of myself," he pointed out. "But even super-surgery has its limitations. It can't alter height, weight or certain skull-measurements. Therefore, the criminal selected to be my double would have to coincide with me in those measurements."

That gave the first faint clue. They went through the voluminous criminal records of the Planet Patrol, each card of which gave data concerning one of the System's criminals. They searched the Earthman section.

The photo-electric scanning-machine, once it was set, went rapidly through the cards and threw out several scores of them which gave the descriptions of criminals who were of Captain Future's exact height.

Another scanning of these cards threw out a few dozen criminal descriptions, corresponding to Curt in weight. Continuing this cross-check against other unalterable factors of skull-measurement, the cards were finally narrowed down to one.

THE FATAL CARD

"Garis Crain, Earthman, aged 26," read Captain Future. "Black hair, brown eyes, scar on left cheek. Convicted first for robbery of a Venusian *kulga* warehouse –" He read off the long list of crimes, ending with, "– escaped Syrtis Prison on Mars, June eleventh, two thousand – unapprehended."

"Ten to one, this Garis Crain is my double," Curt said keenly. "Listen to this final notation, dated only a year ago."

He read, "Crain believed to have been leader of pirate band which raided the mining town of Noomat, on southern Saturn, August fourteenth. Pirates were pursued to the Zone, but escaped."

"Well, how does all that help us?" Otho demanded skeptically.

"It proves that Crain has been operating from within the Asteroid Zone," Curt affirmed. "You know where his base would be there."

"Pirates' Planet, of course," said the Brain.

Captain Future nodded. "No doubt of it. That old thieves' asteroid is still a hangout for the mid-System outlaw bands." He went on puzzledly, "But who could have made Crain into such an exact double of myself? Remember, it would take super-skill in plastic surgery. There aren't a hundred surgeons in the System who could use instruments well enough to do that, and who would know how to effect re-coloration of hair and eyes."

At once, they brought out the file cards on the surgeons of the System and scanned it.

"Crain may have kidnapped a surgeon for the purpose," Curt was saying. "If one is missing –"

CRIME'S BRAIN TRUST

They soon discovered that the only surgeon of suffi-

ciently high skill who was presently missing was one Thua Quar of Venusopolis.

"Listen to this!" Curt read. "'Thua Quar disappeared four years ago, after being sought by the Venus section of the police for having used his plastic surgical skill to give a new face to a criminal fugitive. Rumors of the System underworld name Thua Quar as one of the Four.'"

"The Four?" repeated the President perplexedly. "Who are the Four?"

Curt's eyes were gleaming. "They're a quartet we Futuremen have been after for a couple of years! They are, actually, a brain trust of crime. We believe they've been behind some of the biggest criminal coups in recent times. The vague information we've picked up is that they consist of four master scientists, an Earthman, a Venusian, a Martian and a Saturnian, who maintain a secret consulting service for criminals.

"Any pirate or criminal who needs a special scientific weapon for his purposes, goes to the Four. They usually can furnish what is needed, and they take a big percentage of the proceeds of the coup. They take none of the risks themselves, and so have never been caught. I'm sure that the Four are behind Crain's impersonation of myself."

"Say, you don't think the Four have their base somewhere on Pirates' Planet?" Otho cried. "Maybe that's why we've never been able to find it."

"It looks as though their base might be there," Curt admitted. "But it's sure to be cunningly hidden. Our best chance of finding it is through Crain. Catch him and we'll have a real lead to the Four."

"But how the devil are we going to catch these doubles of ours?" Grag wanted to know.

Captain Future grinned a little. "We're going to let them catch themselves, as we've done with lots of others. Listen, here's my idea . . ."

ON THE TRAIL OF THE FOUR

A few days later, a dumpy little freighter took off from New York spaceport. It was listed as the *Willings*, bound for Jupiter with a small but valuable cargo of refined platinum and tantalum.

The little old freighter plugged slowly out past the orbit of Mars. Actually, it was not a freighter at all. It was the swift little *Comet*, ingeniously disguised by a fake superstructure of light metal plates built around it to make it look bigger and dumpier. Its only crew were the Futuremen.

They were not far beyond the orbit of Mars when what Curt Newton had hoped for happened. A small ship came racing up toward them from the right quarter. It was an exact replica of their own *Comet* and it flashed an urgent signal.

"Captain Future, requesting you to stand by for us to come aboard!" came from the televisor, in a voice un-

cannily like Curt's own voice.

"Okay, Captain Future!" Curt answered in a deepened voice. "We're standing by!"

The fake *Comet* drove alongside the disguised real *Comet*. From the pretenders ship came three figures, two of them in space-suits. The third was a great robot exactly resembling Grag.

Grag himself was speechless.

"There isn't another intelligent metal man like me in the System!" he protested. "But that one *looks* like me!"

"The nerve of those crooks!" Otho was raging. "Look, one of them is a dead ringer for me!"

"Be ready now," Captain Future ordered. "Here they come."

The three pretenders came into the airlock of the disguised *Comet*. And as soon as the three doubles were inside, the Futuremen grabbed them.

FACING THEMSELVES

It was as simple as that. The imposters hadn't a chance to fight, because they had not been expecting the necessity. They found themselves facing a brace of deadly proton-guns, and stood speechless.

The Futuremen were speechless too, for the moment. These three were uncannily exact replicas of Curt and Otho and Grag. For a dramatic moment, the real Futuremen and the impostors faced each other. And no outsider could have told which was which.

Then Grag uttered a triumphant cry.

"I *knew* there wasn't another robot like me in the System! Look, Chief!"

And Grag advanced upon the pseudo-Grag and tore at his metal body. The fake Grag was revealed to be a huge, vicious-faced Jovian criminal disguised in a metal space-suit made to resemble Grag's metal body.

Captain Future spoke crisply to his own glaring double.

"A neat trick you've been using, Crain. Yes, I know who you are – Garis Crain, pirate and criminal, wanted by the Patrol for a dozen offenses."

Crain's face, a face so amazingly like Curt's own, became desperate and hunted in expression.

"It was the Four who made you into my double, wasn't it?" Curt pressed. "And their base is on Pirates' Planet somewhere, isn't it? Well, you're going to take us there. You know the secret pirate wave-code and you can navigate us safely through the swarms."

Crain assumed an attitude of sullen defiance. "I won't do it."

"Oh, yes, you will," Curt said relentlessly. "Because if you don't, we'll be wrecked in the swarms. And you don't want to die. You'd a lot rather go to Interplanetary Prison, than die."

The Futuremen securely bound their prisoners. They disabled the fake *Comet* and left it drifting. They shucked away the disguise from the real *Comet*, and

started into the Zone toward Pallas.

Curt steered right toward the dangerous meteor-swarms around Pallas. And when disaster seemed imminent what he had foreseen happened. Crain's nerve broke. The criminal hastily babbled the secret wave-code by means of which they could steer their way through the dangerous swarms.

PIRATES' PLANET

Thus the *Comet* came to Pirates' Planet. It descended toward the night side, and poised above the dark blot of Red Lake. Miles to the west, the lights of the pirate city, Freetown, threw a glow into the sky.

"Now take us to the hidden base of the Four," ordered Curt.

"Captain Future, I don't dare!" Crain cried. "You don't know what the Four are like. They're devils! It was they who thought up this whole imposture, and picked myself and two others to play it because we were the right height and so on. If you try to meddle with them, they'll kill you – and then kill me for bringing you here!"

Curt again applied pressure. "Crain, unless you take us to the Four, do you know what I'll do? I'll drop you over there in Freetown. The pirates over there don't know about your impersonation of me. You'd not be fool enough to tell them or anyone. So when you drop in on them, they'll think you're really Captain Future. You know how those outlaws hate me. You can guess what they'll do to you, thinking that you're me!"

Crain's ghastly face showed that he knew only too well what the bloodthirsty corsairs would do if they thought they had captured Captain Future.

"All right," he choked. "I'll take you to the base of the Four. But you'll never come out of it alive."

He directed Curt to steer the *Comet* toward a rocky hill on the eastern shore of Red Lake.

"The whole hill is hollowed out," he explained. "The secret laboratories of the Four are inside of it."

"Good – we'll land right by it," Curt declared. "The Four will think our ship is the fake *Comet* returning. And they'll think that Grag and Otho and I are Crain and the other doubles coming back from the trip!"

The audacity of the plan was typical of Captain Future. And it held good chance of success. His hopes were high as he landed the *Comet* in the darkness beside the rocky hill.

Crain shakily gave them directions. But before leaving the ship, Curt rapidly prepared three heavy little metal chests which he and Grag and Otho took with them. Simon remained to guard the prisoners.

"Why do we have to carry these things?" grumbled Grag.

"We're supposed to be bringing back platinum and tantalum, aren't we?" Curt countered. "Besides, they may be useful in other ways."

CRIMINALS' HIDE-OUT

Otho was chuckling as they made their way toward a cunningly disguised opening in the side of the hollow hill.

"The Four will get an awful shock when they find out the doubles are the real Futuremen."

They entered the cavernous opening in the hillside. A passage led through solid rock to a square rock chamber in which was a heavy door.

Curt touched the electrobell beside the door in the signal he had extorted from Crain. His hand rested on his proton-pistol as they waited.

"Be ready to jump them the minute we have all four together," he muttered to the others.

At that moment, a trap-door opened beneath them. They plummeted down through a vertical shaft into a space beneath. Curt struck a stone floor with a stunning shock. . . .

Curt woke to find himself tightly bound. Otho was bound also, sitting beside him, and Grag was secured by a heavy chain.

They were in a big, brightly lit laboratory somewhere inside the hollow hill. Four men faced them – a crafty looking, iron-haired Earthman, a suave young Venusian, an ancient, wrinkled-faced Martian, and a Saturnian dwarf with a freakishly huge head.

"The Four!" he muttered.

"Yes, we are the Four, Captain Future," coolly answered the crafty Earthman. "We have anticipated that sooner or later you would call upon us."

He laughed at Curt's expression of surprise. "We knew of your reputation for resourcefulness and audacity. We believed that sooner or later you might be able to locate our base here, and that if you did, you would attempt to enter by passing yourself off as your own doubles! So we took the precaution of inspecting Crain and the other doubles with X-Ray scanners, each time before we let them enter. The scanners would show whether the robot was really a robot, or a man in disguise."

"Devils of space, so that's what gave us away!" hissed Otho.

"It was not hard to disarm and bind you three while you lay stunned by your fall below," continued the Earthman. "I suppose you realize your helplessness. What did you do with Crain and the others?"

Curt pretended to be crushed. "They're out in our ship," he muttered. "I suppose you're going to murder us?"

"After we have extracted as much valuable information as possible from you – certainly."

THE MYSTERIOUS CHESTS

"Can't we make a bargain?" Curt asked desperately. "Those chests we brought really have a fortune in platinum in them. We wanted to carry out our whole

scheme just as though we were really Crain and the others, so there wouldn't be any slip-ups. Won't you take the platinum and let us go?"

The Earthman pondered. "Bring in the chests," he ordered.

The young Venusian member of the Four did so, one by one. Curt saw that there was suspicion on the face of the Earthman.

"Before we open the chests, use the X-Ray scanner on them," he directed.

The dwarfed Saturnian brought the instrument and peered through it at the chests.

"Nothing in the chests but bars of metal," he reported.

"So you were telling the truth?" the leader of the Four remarked to Curt. "Your devotion to realism was, carried too far, my dear Captain Future. You lose not only the platinum, but your lives, also."

He bent and unlocked one of the chests, and raised its lid. *Whoosh!* A cloud of invisible gas that had been stored in the chest of bars at high pressure suddenly burst out of it.

The Earthman fell in his tracks as the gas reached his nostrils. Almost in the same instant, the other three of the Four and also Captain Future and Otho lost consciousness as the potent gas expanded.

INVISIBLE "SLEEP-GAS"

Curt awoke, to find Grag bending over him. He scrambled to his feet.

"The Four are safe?"

"Sure, I've got 'em nicely trussed up," Grag boomed. "Chief, I sure was surprised when that gas knocked everybody out. Everybody but me, that is. It couldn't affect me, since I don't breathe."

"Yes, I figured on that." Curt grinned. "You see, I hoped we'd be able to nab the Four without trouble. But I thought that it was better to have a card up our sleeve in case Crain had tricked us and given us a wrong electrobell signal that would betray us. So when I put some metal bars in those chests, I also pumped the chests full of the invisible Uranian 'sleep-gas,' from that tank of it we carry for making 'sleep-bombs.'"

"I knew that the gas would get Otho and me, as well as the Four, if it were ever released," Curt added. "But it wouldn't affect you, and I counted on your being able to set things aright in the hour or so that we'd be unconscious."

"You didn't count in vain, Chief," boasted Grag proudly. "Though it took me nearly the whole time to cut that chain away from around me, by starting one of their atomic blasters and using its flame."

"Anyone could have done that, if he happened to be a creature too dumb to breathe," snapped Otho to the robot. "Come on and help me carry these four precious rascals out to the ship. They're going to keep Crain

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company out in Interplanetary Prison."

* * * * *

That is why, out in the great prison on Pluto's moon

Cerberus, a life sentence is being served by a man who is an uncanny double of Curt Newton. And his life is not easy there. Too many of his fellow prisoners persist in believing that he is the hated Captain Future!



No. 12 THE BIRTH OF GRAG

The Astonishing Facts in the Experiments of Roger Newton and Simon Wright Which Brought a Thinking Robot into Being!

THE tall red-haired man who stood in the center of the moon-laboratory stood back for a moment and surveyed the robot's body. In the laboratory itself, the humming of atomic motors could be heard, supplying light and heat, purifying the air, making the rockbound retreat livable.

But looking out through the plastex windows, he could see the barren airless landscape of Earth's satellite, covered with dark and gloomy shadows that offered almost perfect hiding places for the dangerous metal-eating moon-wolves. There, all was cold, silent, almost as empty of life and as dangerous as space itself.

Soon there would be five of them on the Moon, but at the moment there were only four – Roger Newton, the red-haired man himself; his wife, his infant son, Curtis; and Simon Wright, a grizzled old scientist who had been Roger's friend for years.

Simon was ailing, and already could see death approaching, but he had as yet no suspicion of the strange fate that would eventually be his – to live as a Brain without a body, to exist, and yet to be free of almost all human cares.

Now he was still human, with the thoughts and emotions of a man.

He was the most brilliant scientist that Earth had produced in generations, and at the moment the most excited one. For today was to see the climax of years of careful work.

A METAL BODY IS BUILT

Roger Newton moved toward a speaking tube.

"Well, Simon," he said, "it's time for our robot to be

born."

A moment later Simon entered the laboratory. The huge room was full of strange instruments and novel forms of apparatus, most of them constructed by Roger and Simon themselves, implements unknown anywhere else on the solar planets or their satellites.

But none was more wonderful than the metal body of the robot, and the matchless mechanism of hydrophilic colloid metal that was to be his brain.

The body lay upon a sturdy table, a suggestion of latent power in the motionless limbs that had been constructed so carefully of specially treated steel. No other robot possessed a body like it, but none the less it had taken the scientists little enough time to fabricate.

It was the making of the brain that had delayed the birth of Grag. The plans for it had first been drawn up ten years before by Simon. It had taken a long time for them to come to fruition, but now the task was done, with hundreds of thousands of brain paths carefully traced in the finely divided metal, each path so tiny and delicate as to be invisible, and yet possessed of sufficient strength to control the motions of the mighty monster that would soon come to life.

The brain had been placed in a temporary case of strong steel. Now Simon, with more caution than if he had been handling a new born babe, lifted it out and inserted it into the cavity prepared for it within the robot's head.

Here it would be protected by the strongest metal yet known – magnasteel, beside which ordinary steel had the strength of wet paper. There was one more task to do, the connecting of numerous brain endings with

the metal spinal cord.

CONNECTING THE BRAIN

Simon's skilled hands worked quickly, while Roger Newton handled the bank of electrical instruments that sent a pulsing current through the newly made joints.

It was necessary to fuse each joint thoroughly and at the same time avoid overheating. In a half hour Simon was finished, and stepped back to examine his handiwork.

The robot was ready. Simon and Roger exchanged glances, and Roger pushed a switch toward his elderly colleague.

"You bring him to life, Simon," he said. "He's really your baby."

He could see the veins throbbing in Simon's temple as the elderly scientist's hand moved toward the switch. Emotion was a thing that had for years seemed utterly alien to Simon's nature, but now a feeling of excitement, almost of fear, seemed to pervade his every fiber.

What if somewhere he had made a tiny mistake, if the robot did not come to life, or if he came to life, and failed to possess the qualities for which Simon had toiled so painfully? Simon's fingers pressed down on the tiny knob of plastic.

The robot's photo-electric eyes suddenly glowed with light.

"Stand up," ordered Simon, and Grag arose as readily as if he had been following orders for years.

"I obey. Master," he said in a deep mechanical voice.

There was a gleam of triumph in Simon's eyes. Years of effort had been crowned with success. The robot was alive, and acting exactly as he should act.

PERIL IN THE LUCENITE PIT

It required several days before he and Roger realized that something was wrong. Neither scientist could put his finger on the thing that aroused his uneasiness, but they both felt it. Grag obeyed orders well – perhaps even too well. But it seemed absurd to find a reason for complaint in that.

Then there came the day when Roger Newton discovered the rare mineral in one of the moon craters. Simon, working in the laboratory, heard his excited voice through the audiophone the two scientists always wore when one or both of them worked afield from the main home.

"Come quickly, Simon, I've discovered a large deposit of lucenite!"

Pausing only to slip on a space helmet and to bark a curt order to Grag to follow, Simon hastened out of the laboratory. He found Roger gazing in triumph at a deposit of pinkish-gray mineral that spread over a patch of several square yards.

Within the patch, Roger had been digging, and al-

though he was now a dozen feet beneath the surface, the end of the lucenite was not yet in sight.

"Here it is, Simon, enough to supply us for years! Now we'll no longer have to import rare metals from Earth!"

Simon's eyes showed his pleasure. "It'll save us valuable time," he said. And then he looked around quickly. A slight noise, transmitted through the ground, had reached his ears.

A pack of moon-wolves was approaching. The giant, long-fanged beasts, their grayish metallic bodies gleaming, had scented food. They preferred to eat metal, but in case of need would devour anything living that came their way. And neither Roger nor Simon had remembered to bring weapons.

Simon's lips tightened. "You run for it, Roger," he said. "I'll try to hold them off."

Roger shook his head as he hefted the pick he had been working with.

Simon persisted, "You've got your wife to live for – and Curt. I'm an old man. I'm going soon, anyhow."

"We'll run together – if Grag can hold them off," decided Newton.

GRAG'S FIRST TRIAL

Together they stared at the giant robot, who was regarding the approaching and snarling beasts with great interest. "We've made him strong enough," admitted Simon. "If only he has enough intelligence –"

Roger spoke directly to the robot. "Grag, we are returning to the laboratory. Do not let the moon-wolves follow us. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Master," boomed Grag. "I shall obey."

They watched Grag move slowly toward the approaching monsters. Then, without further delay, they turned and ran.

They were not followed. Evidently Grag was not finding it as difficult as they had feared to fight off the moon-wolves. Simon dashed into the moon-laboratory and immediately made for the cupboard where several atom-guns were stored.

They were weapons of especially large caliber, and projected beams that would drill through a moon-wolf as easily as an ordinary beam would drill through a man. They had been constructed especially for that purpose.

Each holding a pair of the guns, Simon and Roger retraced their steps. As they came within sight of the snarling beasts, Roger stared in bewilderment.

"Where is he?"

Grag was nowhere to be seen. Nevertheless, the beasts had remained in the same spot where the men had left them, and were quarreling over something that lay on the ground.

"It's Grag's brain-case," suddenly cried Simon hoarsely. "The magnasteel has resisted their teeth! But

they've eaten the rest of him!"

He plunged toward the animals with a shout of rage, both guns, blasting. A pair of moon-wolves fell, but another trio came leaping toward him. One howled soundlessly while still in the air, then fell motionless as an atom-ray blasted him. The others came on.

Roger fired quickly, and the leading beast fell just as his teeth closed over Simon's leg. The other moon-wolf hesitated, turned to run, and snarled one last time in defiance at the deadly beam which penetrated his body.

Of the entire pack, only one of the creatures succeeded in gaining the nearby shadows safely.

THE MYSTERY OF GRAG'S DEFEAT

Simon's leg was torn and bleeding, but he evidently felt no pain. He picked up Grag's brain-case, his own face white. As they were to discover later, Grag's brain was functioning inside it as well as ever. But of Grag's enormously powerful body there was not a trace. The beasts, in their lust for metal, had devoured it all.

"He didn't put up a struggle!" exclaimed Roger in amazement.

"He just let them eat his body." Simon's face was working with emotion. "Roger, I've made a terrible mistake. This robot is worthless. I may as well throw this brain away and start all over again ... except that I won't live long enough to complete another one."

"All you need do is make a slight change," suggested Roger.

"It'll require more than that. I made the mistake, Roger, of distrusting our robot, and therefore made him too obedient. It's impossible to go over each of those brain-paths again, and alter that. He'll be like this as long as he lives."

Roger was silent. Then he spoke as if to himself. "All we need do is supply him with a few reflexes that will take the place of an instinct of self-preservation. If we succeed in that, he'll continue to obey us just as he's done – and he'll resist the will of any one else."

Simon scowled. "It isn't so easy to supply only the reflexes we want, and nothing else."

"You are forgetting the lucenite," replied Roger.

There was a startled look on Simon's face. "The lucenite! Of course! We can immerse the brain in a suitable solution, subject it to lucenite radiations, and only those ions will penetrate that are sufficiently hydrophilic! And then, if we send a few telepathic currents through the solution –"

"It won't take long."

"A matter of weeks. To work," said Simon grimly. "My time is short."

THE NEW GRAG

Rebuilding Grag's body took just as long a time as making the alterations in his brain. Then, once more Simon pressed the life-giving switch, once more the inan-

imate metal became a living robot. Observing Grag casually, the two scientists could detect no change in him. Had the treatment of his brain produced any effect?

It was a day later that they had the answer. Simon barked out an order, received no reply, and looked around. Grag had disappeared. He was not in the moon-laboratory, and no one had seen him go.

"He *is* different," observed Simon. "In his previous existence he never went away without receiving a specific order to do so."

"I wonder where he is," said Roger.

"Someplace where those moon-wolves can get at him, I suppose. Did he take an atom-gun along?"

All the atom-guns were still in the laboratory. Simon and Roger exchanged gloomy glances. If the same thing happened this time that had happened before, they would know that the robot was not worth saving.

The hours passed slowly, and within the laboratory there grew a feeling of tenseness and of irritation. Grag had not only left without receiving orders to leave, but he had done worse than that. By omitting to perform the tasks that the two scientists had counted on his performing, he had disarranged the laboratory's work.

It was more than six hours before Grag returned. When he came, he was dragging the dead bodies of half a dozen moon-wolves behind him.

"Where have you been?" asked Simon coldly.

"Out killing these beasts," boomed Grag. "I heard you talking, Master, and I realized they were pests. So I figured I'd go hunting and get rid of a bunch of them. Just to make things safer around here."

Roger smiled. Grag might be a trifle difficult to control in the future, but there was no doubt about his intelligence.

"Did it take you all this time to kill a half dozen?" asked Simon.

"I killed about fifty," growled the robot. "I just didn't want to take the trouble to bring them all back. First it was easy, because they scented me, and came running. After a time, when the others saw what happened to the first batch, I had to go look for them."

"How did you find them in the shadows?" demanded Roger.

"That was easy. Master," boasted Grag. "They're telepathic, and I could sense the mind-currents coming from them."

GRAG LEARNS TO BOAST

Roger nodded. The moon-wolves were slightly telepathic, and Grag, as a result of his own brain being subjected to telepathic currents, was more sensitive to their presence than a human being would have been.

"You're sure you killed about fifty?" asked Simon, his manner still cold.

"Well, maybe it was only thirty," admitted Grag, unabashed. "But I could have killed fifty if they had been

there. I could have killed a hundred, a thousand. It was easy, Master. I didn't need an atom-gun, I just pulled them apart."

He flexed his metallic muscles, while the two scientists stared.

"You don't realize, Master, just how strong I am. Why, there was never anybody like me. I'll show you what I can do –"

"Don't bother," interrupted Simon, smiling in spite of himself.

"Whatever you say, Master. But it was a cinch, pulling them apart. I can tear apart anything that exists. I can take a space ship, and throw it off the Moon. Why, with my atomic motors –"

"Get into the laboratory," commanded Simon. "Prepare that colloid solution for the android we're creat-

ing."

"Yes, Master," said Grag humbly, and obeyed.

Roger laughed. But Simon scowled. "He's going to be insufferable."

"At first. But he'll straighten out. After all, he's only a couple of days old," reminded Roger Newton. "I think we're going to enjoy Grag."

"I hope you're right, Because if you're not –" But the implied threat was never carried out. As Roger had predicted, Grag did improve. But never again did he display the touching confidence in others that he had shown in his first incarnation.

He was always to remain slightly vain, selfish, proud of his strength, eager to show it off – in a word, he was always to remain more human. He would get along.



No. 13

CAPTAIN FUTURE'S STRANGEST ADVENTURE

On a Mysterious "Rogue Planet" the Futuremen Encounter an Amazing Fantastic Experience While in Search of Fuel!

CAPTAIN FUTURE still isn't sure whether or not it really happened. Grag swears that it was all a dream. Otho believes that they were all temporarily out of their minds. But the Brain insists that the whole crazy adventure was scientifically possible.

It happened to the Futuremen on their way back from that long star-quest to the cosmic cloud near the galaxy's center. The *Comet* was droning back toward the System at tremendous speed when Otho came into the control-room to report.

"We're nearly out of fuel, Chief," he told Curt. "We'll have to stop somewhere for copper soon."

FUEL SHORTAGE

The atomic generators which powered the *Comet's* vibration-drive used powdered copper fuel. During this long voyage through the galaxy, they had been forced to stop at several star-systems to replenish the fuel.

Captain Future frowned. "The nearest star is a long way out of our course. I hate to lose time going there for copper."

The ship was traversing a rather empty region of the galaxy, and the nearest star with planets was several light-years on their left.

"Maybe there's a dark star somewhere nearer than that," suggested Simon Wright. "Take a look around with the spectro-telescope, Grag."

Grag went to the instrument and for some minutes carefully swept space with it. He suddenly uttered a satisfied exclamation.

"We're in luck! There's a 'rogue planet' only a few

billion miles away from us, and almost in our course."

ROGUE PLANET

A "rogue planet" was the name given to wandering planets of the void not attached to any star-system. The Futuremen had encountered many such solitary, wandering worlds which unguessable cosmic disasters had torn loose from their parent suns and set raving alone.

Curt at once shifted the course of the *Comet* toward the unseen "rogue" world. It soon bulked up ahead of them in the blaze of the galaxy's stars, a planet of medium size. It had atmosphere, and there was an odd pearly glow of light about it.

They landed in that soft, dawn-like glow upon a rolling, grassy plain. Their instruments showed that the atmosphere was oxygenated and had a warmth as surprising as the sourceless light.

"Queer looking planet," Curt commented, puzzledly. "Well, we've no time for exploring. We'll just scout around until we find some copper and then get on our way."

They emerged into the soft, warm air. They needed no space-suits, but Curt carried an instrument capable of locating copper deposits by means of a principle of atomic resonance.

The instrument showed nothing. He looked around at the silent landscape and then pointed to some low hills westward.

"We'll try those hills. If there's copper there, the resonator will locate it."

WISH FULFILLMENT

The Futuremen started forward, striding across the grassy plain in the soft glow.

"I was hoping we'd find something edible here – I'm tired of synthetic rations," complained Otho. "I could go for a juicy Jovian marsh-apple right now."

The words were no sooner out of his mouth, than an incredible thing happened. There was a swirl of mist close by them, and suddenly a squat, many-branched tree came magically into existence.

It was an unmistakable Jovian marsh-apple tree. And it was loaded with pale, heavy fruit.

"Imps of Space!" yelled Otho, recoiling. "Do you others see it too?"

"It wasn't there a minute ago – it just appeared out of nothing!" stammered Grag.

Curt-Newton had swiftly drawn his proton-pistol. He was looking around in sharp alarm.

"That tree can't be real!" he exclaimed. "It's an illusion of our minds. That means that we're being somehow hypnotically attacked."

"Hang it, the thing looks real enough," Otho protested. He stepped forward, jerked one of the big marsh-apples off a twig, and sank his teeth into it. He looked up, stupefied. "It *is* real! And it's good."

He reached to pick another of the fruits. But, as he made the motion, the tree abruptly dissolved into mist and was gone.

"It's gone again!" Grag shouted. "Chief, what does it mean?"

The Brain spoke sharply. "There's some fantastic power at work on this world. I think we'd better leave here at once."

CAPTAIN FUTURE PROVES STUBBORN

But Captain Future's stubborn streak was aroused. "I still think it was just a trick of illusion. And we're going to get copper here before we go."

"That marsh-apple was no illusion – it was real and solid," Otho insisted.

"Say, maybe this is a Wishing World, of some kind?" Grag suggested eagerly. "Maybe all you have to do is wish for something here and you get it?"

"Don't be childish," Curt said acidly.

"I'm going to try it, anyway," Grag persisted. "I wish – I wish I had a diamond as big as my fist."

With breathtaking rapidity, a brilliant, blazing something appeared on the ground at their feet. It was a pure white diamond, and it was as large as Grag's huge metal fist.

"Holy space-imps!" yelled Otho. "It really works! You can wish for anything here and get it."

He rubbed his hands together. "Here's where I get myself a lot of things I always wanted. First, though, I'm thirsty. I wish I had some water."

The word "water" had no sooner left his lips, than

all four of them found themselves struggling in a deep lake. Grag went down through the blue waters like a stone. The Brain darted up into the air, while Curt and Otho swam rapidly toward the nearest shore.

As they emerged dripping from the miraculously-formed lake, Grag came striding up out of the waters. The robot could not drown, and he had walked along the bottom as they swam.

Grag sputtered furiously. "Next time you wish for anything, Otho, you specify how much of it you want!"

THE STRANGER

Curt asked the Brain, stunned: "What do you make of it, Simon? I still believe it's all illusion."

"If so, it's a remarkably convincing one," rasped the Brain.

"Say, look – there's somebody coming!" exclaimed Otho.

They all swung around, drawing their weapons. A tall, dark, pleasant-faced young man in an ordinary zipper-suit was approaching them.

"Watch it!" Curt rasped. "If we've been undergoing some kind of hypnotic attack, this fellow may be responsible."

The stranger stopped, looking at them with interest. He spoke, in the interstellar *lingua franca* whose root is the ancient Denebian tongue.

"You're visitors from outside?" he said to Curt. "Welcome to our world. My name is Ptar."

"Will you tell us what kind of crazy world this is?" exploded Captain Future. "We landed here to get copper for fuel, and we've been wondering whether or not we've all lost our minds."

Ptar laughed. "I'll tell you all about it. But you must come along to my peoples' city. We have plenty of copper there."

Curt hesitated, then agreed. If this were a fantastic dream, it didn't matter whether or not he went. And if this were real, he wanted to learn what was at the bottom of it.

THE SCIENCE OF PTAR

"You see," said Ptar as they started westward toward the low hills, "this is a very peculiar planet. If you want anything, and concentrate your mind on it, you can create it."

"But *how*?" asked Curt exasperatedly.

Ptar shrugged. "We don't understand the scientific basis of it ourselves. It seems obvious that matter and energy do not follow the same natural laws here as in the rest of the universe."

He stopped, and said casually, "It's too far to walk to my city. We'd better have a car."

Instantly, beside Ptar appeared a low-slung rocket-car of shining metal. Ptar motioned them to enter, and took the driver's seat himself.

As the car scudded westward over the plain at a rapid rate, Curt first pinched himself and then hammered the metal side of the vehicle. He bruised his fist against its very real solidity.

"I can't understand it," he gasped. "There's a people on Neptune's moon, back in our own System, who can perform some weird feats of creation; but they really create only insubstantial phantoms. This car is real!"

"Well, it's made life easy for my people," Ptar said practically. "I suppose that's the reason we're not very advanced scientifically. We have no need of science, when we can get whatever we need by just wanting it."

A big glassite jug of Venusian brandy appeared suddenly in Otho's lap.

"None of that, Otho!" exclaimed Curt. "You can wish that stuff right back out of existence – things are upsetting enough, without you starting to drink."

Otho looked guilty, and the jug of brandy swirled into mist and vanished as rapidly as it had appeared.

"Can I help it if my mind wanders?" demanded the android.

The speeding car approached a city. It was like a great blue jewel, its sapphire domes resting upon the plain like shimmering iridescent bubbles.

Men and women thronged its streets. Children played in blossoming gardens. There was a noisy bustle of activity around big markets.

Ptar drove the rocket-car into the center of the sapphire city and there stopped it. He asked Curt, as they got out of the vehicle:

"How do you like our city?"

"It's beautiful," Captain Future declared. "One of the loveliest places I've seen in the universe."

Ptar shook his head doubtfully. "I'm not completely satisfied with the city. To tell the truth, I'm not satisfied with myself. I guess I'll just do away with it all."

And, incredibly, the whole thronged, busy city, with all its buildings and crowds, shivered into swirling mist and was *gone*. At the same moment, with a clear, mocking laugh, Ptar himself vanished.

The dazed Futuremen found themselves standing in the middle of the empty, grassy plain.

"That settles it!" shouted Grag. "We *are* dreaming. I knew it all the time."

"Illusion – all of it illusion, of some kind," muttered the Brain.

"It wasn't illusion – that rocket-car and that man were solid and real as ourselves!" insisted Captain Future, staggered.

He turned. "We're getting off this world, pronto. We can get copper somewhere else. I know when I've had enough!"

SYNTHETIC OBSTACLES

They started back toward the *Comet*, in a trot. Before they had gone more than a few steps, a wall of mist

swirled up in front of them.

The mist suddenly became a huge, towering mountain-range whose precipitous slopes loomed thousands of feet above them. The mighty escarpment ran north and south for miles, and was between them and the *Comet*.

"Who wished for those mountains?" bellowed Grag furiously. "Was it you, Otho?"

"Good Lord, no!" stammered the startled android.

"None of us did. There's a power on this planet that has been *playing* with us ever since we landed here!" Captain Future gritted. "Come on – we'll have to climb over this range."

The looming barrier was real enough, as they labored and sweated to scale its lofty slopes. They gained the ridge, and scrambled down the other side until they again stood upon the level plain.

But now a deep, broad river ran between them and their distant ship. It had not been there before.

"Nothing to do but swim it," Curt rasped. "Simon, you can fly over and Grag can walk it. Come on, Otho."

He and Otho, poised on the bank and dived into the river. Before they hit the water, the river instantaneously" swirled into mist and vanished.

Curt and the android found themselves colliding with the hard earth.

Otho scrambled up, sputtering with rage. "Jokes, is it! If I get my hands on whoever's behind all this –"

"Hey, look out!" yelled Grag wildly.

A herd of enormous reptilian monsters was bearing down on them from the north. The ground quaked to the rumbling tread of the scaled monstrosities.

They whipped out their weapons. Before they could fire, the menacing creatures melted into mist and were gone.

"There's the *Comet*!" Curt cried. "Run for it!"

PTAR EXPLAINS

They reached and tumbled into the ship. Then they froze. In the cabin, sitting and smiling pleasantly at them, was Ptar.

"Now I *know* we're all out of our heads!" Otho groaned.

Curt's proton-gun covered the pleasant-faced young stranger. "I don't know whether you're real or not, but I'm going to find out!" Captain Future gritted.

"Wait a moment, please," said Ptar unruffledly. "I owe you an explanation, before you leave my world. I give it to you, because you have afforded me a brief welcome relaxation by this little jest I have been playing on you.

"This planet has no other inhabitant than a single Intelligence. I, that Intelligence, am speaking to you. I am a mind, vast and ancient beyond your imagining. Long ago, I freed myself of physical body and took this whole uninhabited *planet* as my body. "I control every

atom and electron of this world, just as you control your fingers. I can thus instantly by effort of will shift electrons and atoms here into new combinations, into new substances and shapes, and can dissolve them as swiftly.

"When you landed here, I amused myself by mystifying you. Now that you are departing, I shall recompense you for the relaxation you have afforded me, by giving you not only this explanation but also the copper which you need."

As he spoke the last words, Ptar's figure shifted into swirling mists. The mists almost instantly resolidified in different form.

Where Ptar had stood, there was now a neat pile of copper ingots.

"Let's get out of here," begged Otho shakily. "I can't take much more of this."

REFUELED AND HEADED HOME

The *Comet* was soon arrowing up into space. Not until the incredible planet was far out of sight behind, did Captain Future dazedly examine the mass of copper ingots.

"It's pure copper, as far as I can make out," he declared. "We'll see whether it works in the cycs."

He used two of the ingots as fuel for the cyclotrons. The generators throbbled cheerfully loud.

"It works!" exclaimed Curt unbelievably. "And we've far more of it than we need to get back to the System."

When they had reached home, Curt and the Brain utilized every scientific instrument in the Moon-laboratory to test the remaining copper ingots. The tests showed only that the ingots were of absolutely pure but ordinary copper.

"I give up," Curt said finally. "Either that impossible explanation was true, or else we landed somewhere and mined and smelted copper and then forgot all about it. I don't know which solution is the more fantastic."

Grag still maintains that it was all a dream. But every now and then, the big robot secretly takes out that pile of copper ingots and sits staring fixedly at them for a long time. He has a sneaking idea that if he wishes hard enough, he can turn them into diamonds.



No. 14

THE METAMORPHOSIS OF SIMON WRIGHT

Roger Newton Preserves Simon Wright's Mind from Oblivion and, as The Brain, the Doughty Old Scientist Begins the Task of Turning Curt Newton into a Wonder-Being, Captain Future!

SIMON Wright was dying, and he knew it. He lay in his cot in the monastic little bedroom adjoining his beloved laboratory, and calmly estimated how many hours of life remained to him.

His silvery head was raised upon the pillow, and his austere, wrinkled face was unperturbed as he looked down at his thin, angular body and wasted hands. Yet the approach of death did not find the old scientist wholly without regret.

"If I'd only been able to live long enough to help Roger finish our experiments," he thought. "It's a pity that a man spends a lifetime learning how to do his work, and then has to die before he can use his knowledge."

The door opened, and a stalwart, red-haired young man whose spectacled face was pale and worried came into the little room.

"How are you now, Simon?" asked Roger Newton anxiously. "That last stimulant I gave you –"

"Wore off in an hour," Simon Wright answered calmly. "It's no use, Roger. You can't patch up a machine that's worn out with use. And that's what my body is – a worn-out machine."

He shrugged weakly and continued. "There's no reason to feel badly about it. I've had a long and fairly useful life. Now my time has come."

"But it's such a waste of genius for you to die when your knowledge could benefit humanity so much," burst out Roger Newton.

"Nature is wasteful," murmured the old scientist. "It's her way."

ROGER NEWTON HAS AN INSPIRATION

Newton was silent for a few minutes. A queer emotion seemed to possess him. His spectacled face had a breathless look on it when he finally spoke.

"Simon, maybe your mind could continue to live after your body dies."

He rushed on. "Remember all the advances we've made in tissue-culture recently? Isolated living hearts and other organs have been kept alive indefinitely in serum-cases. Even brains have been kept alive so."

Startled understanding showed in Simon Wright's old eyes.

"You're proposing to remove my brain into a serum-case and keep it alive there?" he said after a pause. "But what good would that do? I wouldn't be able to hear or see or do anything else but think."

"No, listen," continued the younger scientist earnestly. "I've always believed that it should be possible to connect artificial organs of speech, hearing and sight to an isolated human brain living in serum. I tried it with a rabbit's brain and was successful. And though the human brain is much more complex, I still believe it could be done."

Simon Wright brooded in silence upon the astounding proposal. Despite his deep wish to continue his researches, he felt a revulsion from the prospect that had been proposed to him.

He was a normal man. But he would not be one any longer, if he underwent this change. He would be something more, or less, than a man.

WRIGHT'S DUTY TO SCIENCE

"Think, Simon, of the work you could do, the years of research ahead of you," urged Roger Newton. "It's your duty to humanity to keep your vast scientific skill and knowledge alive."

"I wouldn't be able to do anything myself," muttered the old man, voicing the doubt that was deepest in his mind. "I'd have no hands, no body."

"I'd be your hands," Newton declared eagerly. "Together we could go on with our work, instead of leaving it half-finished as it must remain if you die."

That argument persuaded Simon Wright. He had long ago outlived most human emotions, but the flame of scientific passion still burned bright within him.

"All right, Roger," he said finally. "I'm willing to try it. But you will have to prepare the serum-case quickly, for I have not long to live."

The next few days were ones of frenziedly urgent preparation by the younger scientist. Only his powerful stimulants were keeping the dying old scientist alive.

Newton prepared the square serum-case of transparent metal. At its center was a shock-proofed chamber molded to receive a human brain. A maze of artificial arteries led to this chamber to supply the living brain with a constant flow of serum which would furnish its cells nutritional elements and carry away fatigue-poisons.

The serum was constantly circulated by a series of tiny, ingenious pumps inside the case. These forced the serum ceaselessly through purifying filters. The compact atomic motors of the pumps would run almost indefinitely without attention.

Two "ears" that were really sensitive microphones were fixed to the sides of the serum-case. From them, electric wires ran to the brain-chamber. Similarly, Roger Newton mounted on the front of the case two photoelectric eyes with artificial retinas. They were fixed upon the ends of movable metal stalks so that the direction of gaze could be changed. Wires ran also from these to the central brain-chamber.

The speech-apparatus was the most difficult. The production of intelligible speech by completely artificial means had been achieved in the so-called "voder," far back in 1939. But to build such a device into small space and articulate its controls stretched all Roger Newton's superb abilities.

AIDED BY WRIGHT'S GENIUS

The younger scientist could not have done all this, alone. It was the constant advice and aid of the dying Simon Wright that made possible completion of the serum-case, after four days and nights of toil.

Roger Newton stumbled to the side of his dying friend on that fourth night. "It's all ready, Simon – but I can't do it tonight," he husked. "My hands are too unsteady for the operation. I must sleep first."

Simon spoke as calmly as though of another person. "I will be dead before morning, if my self-diagnosis is correct. You must do it now."

"I can't – I won't!" cried Newton. "It would be murder."

He flung out of the room. But in a half-hour, he returned. His self-control had come back.

"You are right, Simon. It must be now."

Roger Newton's young wife served as his assistant as he prepared for the appalling task of lifting a man's living brain from his skull and transferring it undamaged to the serum-case.

Simon Wright lay upon the table in the laboratory and looked up at their pale faces with affection.

"If you fail, this is goodbye," he murmured. Then the anaesthetic hissed into his nostrils and he knew nothing more.

THE BRAIN AWAKES

He awakened slowly. His first sensation was of a curious lightness and buoyancy. Then he heard sounds, oddly echoing.

"Simon, can you hear me? Can you hear?" He tried to open his eyes. Light blinded him. His vision seemed to focus queerly.

Then he saw Roger and Elaine Newton bending over him. There was awe in their faces.

Simon realized the truth. The transformation had been accomplished. He was now a brain living in an artificial case. That accounted for his unusual feeling of lightness and buoyancy. He no longer had a dying, weakened body dragging at his mind.

He attempted to speak. The effort of will actuated the controls of the little voder-device in his case. He heard his voice as a metallic, rasping monotone. "I – hear, Roger. Hard – form words – correctly –"

And then, with a feeling of triumph, "My mind – clear, strong, now – we can go on with our – work."

He tested his new senses. He could hear with greater clarity than ever before. His eyes had perfect vision.

Weeks went by, and Simon Wright felt more at home in his strange new body. The absence of pain and weakness gave him a clarity of mind he had never attained before. He did not even need sleep.

His case rested usually on the laboratory table. There, he either advised and superintended Roger Newton in their joint researches, or studied volumes from their extensive scientific library.

They often asked him anxious questions. "Do you feel all right, Simon? You're not sorry you made the change?"

"No, I'm not sorry in the least," he replied truthfully. "I'm happy in the knowledge that I can continue my work."

That was true. But in Simon Wright's mind there was one doubt, one foreboding, that he never men-

tioned. It was the shadowing realization that he was unable to do anything himself.

He had never lived a life of physical action. But this realization that he would be unable to perform any physical act, no matter how dire the emergency, was the one flaw in his contentment. It bred in him a gnawing inferiority complex that he could not conquer.

CAPTAIN FUTURE IS BORN

Months passed. In the Moon-laboratory beneath Tycho crater, where they had taken refuge from Victor Corvo and the others who had sought to rob their scientific secrets, Elaine Newton's son was born.

The Brain looked down from his table at Grag and Otho playing with the crowing, red-haired infant. Secretly, he wished that he could join them. He, too, loved little Curtis Newton. But he could do nothing but look on. "If I weren't only so utterly helpless," he thought, brooding over his inferiority. "I never thought it would make any difference. But it does."

Grag and Otho went out to excavate certain metallic ores from a vein they had opened in the wall of Tycho crater, some miles away. Roger Newton and the Brain were planning a spaceship of new design, and were gathering materials for the purpose.

An hour later, the airlock door of the Moon-laboratory suddenly burst open. Four men in space-suits, carrying heavy atom-guns, strode into the room. The Brain looked up startledly from the table upon which he had been studying a formula. He instantly recognized, through the glassite helmet, the dark, hawklike face of the intruders' leader.

"Victor Corvo!" cried Simon. "Roger, call Grag and Otho."

Newton sprang toward the telaudio transmitter on the table. He never completed the movement.

A COWARDLY MURDER

Corvo's atom-gun blasted two crackling bolts of fiery energy. One cut down Roger Newton, killing him instantly. The other bolt drove into the side of his youthful wife as she sprang forward.

Simon Wright raved in his metallic voice, possessed by wild fury. The men behind Corvo stared at the Brain in uneasy wonder.

"What is that thing?" one of them demanded.

Corvo laughed. "It's Simon Wright, the old scientist – or what's left of him. I heard about it. Newton put his brain in that case. That's all he is – a harmless brain in a box."

His voice rose in triumph. "I told you we'd finally track Newton down. Now start going through this place. I want every scrap of paper, every formula and diagram in it. Newton and Wright worked out secrets worth billions. We're going to take them all, – and we'll take that Brain with us, to explain anything we can't un-

derstand."

Simon Wright writhed mentally in anguish. Roger Newton and his wife were dead. And now Corvo and his band were going to take all the dead man's scientific work and turn it to criminal purposes.

He must prevent that. But how could he? He was just what Corvo had taunted him with being, a helpless brain in a box. He could do nothing. If only Grag and Otho were here!

Simon Wright had a sudden wild idea. He was resting on the table only a few inches away from the telaudio transmitter which they used for communication with Otho and Grag when the two went out. He had no hands with which to turn on the transmitter. But maybe there was a way.

He glanced at Victor Corvo and his men. Ignoring the whimpering baby and the two still figures on the floor, the criminals were searching through the files and record-cabinets with feverish haste.

Simon made an effort of will, and extended his eyestalks toward the telaudio transmitter's switch-panel. His right eye touched the switch-button. It pressed, and there was a *click*. The instrument was on. The Brain at once spoke loudly, as though to Victor Corvo. "You are going to die for killing Roger Newton, Corvo."

Corvo turned, and laughed. "A bodiless brain, threatening me!"

"You are a dead man now," Simon Wright said coldly. "Vengeance is coming – terrible vengeance."

From the airlock, two figures burst into the Moon-laboratory. Otho's space-suit receiver had picked up the telaudio call, and he and Grag had come. They stood, incredible personifications of unhuman rage as they saw the bodies upon the floor.

"Grag! Otho! Kill!" yelled the Brain.

With a booming roar, Grag leapt forward. And the raging android was close behind the mighty robot.

Corvo and his men tried to raise their guns, but were battered down by Grag's huge metal fists and Otho's whirling blows. The four criminals lay dead in less than a minute.

They found then that Elaine Newton was not quite gone. She whispered a word, and Grag put the whimpering baby beside her. Then she looked up with fading eyes.

"Simon!" she whispered. "You prevented them from killing Curtis too, as they would have done."

She choked, then went on. "I leave him to the care of you three. You are the only ones I can trust to rear him safely. Keep him here upon the Moon, until he grows to manhood."

"We will," promised the Brain, wrung by tragic grief.

And with confidence and content in her eyes, Elaine Newton died.

THE BRAIN BECOMES CHIEF

Grag and Otho turned instinctively to Simon Wright, as though to a leader. He conquered his agonized grief and spoke to them.

"We will do what Elaine asked," said the Brain. "Together, we can protect little Curtis from his father's enemies who still live. And together, we can give him an education such as no man ever has had."

And as he spoke, Simon Wright realized that that feeling of inferiority that had so shadowed his new ex-

istence during the last months was now gone forever.

He had been unable to prevent the most saddening tragedy of his life. But he had revenged that tragedy. He had proved to himself that he was not utterly helpless, that he was no mere thinking brain.

Later, he promised himself, he would work until he had devised for himself a means of using magnetic beams as limbs to give him free powers of movement and action. But even without that, he would never again be haunted by that secret doubt of himself.



No. 15

THE AMAZING CREATION OF OTHO

From Bubbling Test-Tubes, Great Scientists Roger Newton and Simon Wright Create a New Being Who Attains Full Mental Growth Within an Astonishingly Short Time!

SIMON WRIGHT emitted a loud call. "Grag, here, quickly!" he cried.

In response, the giant robot ran as rapidly as his metal legs would take him. In all his brief span of life, he had never seen such excitement in the Moon-Laboratory. The aging scientist, his eyes shining, was warming a bubbling fluorescent mass of serum with a burner held in one hand, while with the other he measured a yellowish liquid into a graduate.

Beside him, his face flushed as with fever, Roger Newton was vigorously bending back and forth the lifeless rubbery arms of what appeared to be a great white doll that swam uncertainly in a huge tank in the center of the laboratory.

"Start the thermostat," yelled Simon Wright.

SERUM IS INJECTED

Grag hastened to obey. Moments later, when the tank had risen once more to the proper temperature, and the serum had been injected into the white doll's unresisting arms, the two men relaxed.

Simon Wright dropped wearily into a chair.

"That was close," he sighed. "Too close for comfort."

"A half year's work almost thrown away," agreed Roger Newton. He gestured toward the robot. "Grag's body was much less trouble. I sometimes wonder why we decided to make this android of colloid, instead of metal."

"Because it was a challenge to our skill," replied Simon thoughtfully. "The search for the proper sort of

plastic alone required months. ... Remember how we made the mistake of attempting to use protein-like condensation products?"

"Only to discover eventually that a simple hydro-silicane polymer was easier to make and more satisfactory."

BRAIN PROVES TROUBLESOME

"And then the brain." Simon Wright shook his head ruefully. "It took us another month to realize that a terrifically complicated system of synthetic cerebral paths, such as Grag has, not only wasn't necessary – it wouldn't do. A plastic android requires a much less differentiated mass of combined carbon-silicon condensation product. The cerebral paths must be formed after life has begun, and not before."

Grag interposed. "Does that mean, Master, that this new thing will be born with no more sense than a baby – like little Curt?" he inquired.

NO PROPHETS HERE!

No more sense than "little Curt." Years later, the robot was to recall this remark, and think of it in wonder. Neither he nor any of the others dreamed of the Curt Newton of the future – the tall, sturdy keen-eyed figure that would be the terror of criminals throughout the System, the brilliant scientist whose mind would absorb all that the Brain could impart, and even surpass his teacher in the magnificence of his achievements. "Little Curt" indeed!

"That's right," answered Simon Wright. "He'll be

born without knowledge of any kind."

"He'll make a nice pet," boomed the great robot.

Roger Newton smiled, and left the laboratory. Grag, it seemed, had delusions.

In the part of the Moon-home set aside for the daily routine of living, Roger Newton found his young wife. She was staring out of one of the glassite windows at the bleak lunar landscape. In the distance, a moon-wolf was snarling soundlessly at some unseen rival cowering in a crater.

MOONSCAPE IS FANTASTIC

No land on Earth, no matter how wild and craggy, could possess the fascinating horror of the fantastic hills and mountains of the Moon. It was a horror that, for strangers, was to persist even long after the Futuremen had built their improved laboratory, and come to regard the forbidding spot as their permanent home. For a young girl, accustomed to the comforts of Earth civilization, and forced to flee for life from powerful and evil enemies, its desolation was almost unendurable.

As Roger Newton joined her, the moon-wolf sprang with bared teeth into the crater. The girl shuddered.

"Now they're tearing each other apart, as happens every day. Oh, Roger, it's so frightening."

"I know." The scientist stroked her hair. "We've been here for more than a year now, and after the novelty wore off, it can't have been pleasant for you. The loneliness, the lack of amusements, the lack of companionship. ... Simon and I are so busy in the laboratory that for most of the day we might just as well not be here. But it's necessary to stay on the Moon, dear. We have no choice."

"I'm not complaining, Roger."

SEEK FOR COMPANIONS

"As a matter of fact," went on her husband thoughtfully, "I've felt the loneliness here almost as much as you have. Simon, of course, is so wrapped up in the work that it matters little to him where he is. But I had hoped, when he created Grag, that he might seem almost like a companion."

She shook her head.

"His appearance is too frightening. No matter how human he is inside, I can't accustom myself to him."

"I think you'll find the android looks human enough. And I believe that you'll like him."

A few days later, Otho was finally born. In contrast to the dramatic and almost terrifying awakening of the robot, Otho's entry into the world was placid, and almost unimpressive. At the proper time, Simon Wright's skillful hand injected a trace of piniferalone, a hormonal extract from the pineal gland, into the serum that circulated through the doll's body.

DOLL BEGINS TO MOVE

Some hours later, Grag, who was observing, noticed the white doll's arms and legs begin to kick spasmodically.

"He's alive, Master," boomed the robot. Roger Newton and Simon Wright hurried toward the android. They lifted his head out of the thermostat into the artificial air of the Moon-Laboratory. Otho gasped deeply for breath. The next moment his arms and legs flew about in a spasm of excitement.

Otho was already as well-grown physically as he would ever be, and it was only his mental powers that needed to develop. It was necessary for him to learn how to use his arms and legs, how to adjust himself to his environment. He picked this up with a speed that amazed the huge robot.

OTHO STANDS ERECT

The day after he was born, he stood up unsteadily.

"Say, he's doing better already than I expected," exclaimed the robot.

"Naturally," said Simon Wright dryly, "Otho is physically mature, and is growing mentally at the rate of a year a day."

"By all the Moon-devils!" gasped Grag. "How long will it take him to grow up?"

"He won't maintain the same pace for long. But I think that the end of a month should see him a mature android."

The next day, Otho exhibited his delight in the discovery of his own agility, bouncing around the laboratory like a great rubber ball until Grag finally secured him and put him out of harm's way. The day after found him mixing half a dozen chemicals and creating an explosion that blew away a section of the laboratory. The day after that found him holding out some of his own food to the robot and snatching it away in delight as Grag pretended to reach for it.

SHOWS LOVE OF MISCHIEF

"Why, the green-eyed little devil is trying to tease me," declared Grag.

Roger and Simon Wright smiled. Roger's wife laughed as Otho impishly snatched at one of her own hats and, putting it on his own head, strutted proudly about.

"He likes to dress up," she exclaimed. "From now on, none of our clothes will be safe around here!"

"I don't think we need worry," asserted Roger. "Otho's intelligent. And it won't take him long to learn discipline."

He was right. The android was mischievous, but entirely without malice, and he learned quickly what sort of actions were permitted him and which were forbidden. By the end of the month following his birth, Otho was as quick and alert mentally as the average man, de-

spite the great gaps in his knowledge. And when those were filled, predicted Simon, he would be a better laboratory assistant than Grag or any human being could possibly be.

OTHO'S FIRST BIG JOKE

It was then that there occurred the incident that Grag was ever after to think of as the "great double-cross."

It began one day when the robot returned to the laboratory after a short trip over the surface of the Moon, where he had been digging at a deposit of ore Simon had discovered. The grizzled figure of Simon Wright greeted him.

"You've been gone a long time, Grag. What have you brought back?"

Grag stared in bewilderment. "Why, nothing, Master. You asked me to loosen the ore so that –"

"I ordered you to bring it with you!" The voice that shrieked at Grag was shrill with indignation. "You stupid, clumsy metal imitation of a man, you haven't the brains of a moon-pup!"

"But I distinctly remember –" Grag began again helplessly.

"Don't tell me what I said, you imitation junk-heap. You go right back and bring a ton of that ore with you."

"Yes, Master."

"Just a moment," came the stern order. "I'm taking no more chances with that feeble brain of yours. I'm going to write everything down so that even you can't make a mistake."

ORDERS ARE CANCELED

The figure of Simon Wright disappeared into the next room. A moment later Grag heard other footsteps. "I'm waiting – oh, I thought you were Simon, Master."

"What's wrong, Grag?"

"Simon says he ordered me to get a ton of that ore. Now I have to go back for it."

"Nonsense. I distinctly heard him tell you to do nothing but dig it up. And you can't go back because I have something else for you to do."

"But he said –" began the robot.

"Never mind what he said," roared the figure of Roger Newton. "I'm the one that's giving you orders. I want you to take off your right arm and dissolve it in an acid mixture."

"What?"

TRUE SIMON WRIGHT APPEARS

It was at this moment that Simon Wright stepped into the room. Grag turned toward him pathetically.

"He wants me to dissolve my right arm in acid," he

complained. "But you told me to go back after that ore. What am I supposed to do?"

"Quite a problem, isn't it?" observed Simon Wright. And just then Roger Newton, accompanied by his wife, stepped into the room.

The dazed robot's eyes shifted from one Roger Newton to the other. The newcomer caught Simon Wright's glance, and smiled.

"So, Otho, you still retain your childhood passion for disguises?"

The false Roger Newton grinned in delight. "You should have heard the way I fooled him, Master – first as Simon, then as yourself. He didn't know what to do."

GRAG SEES BIG LIGHT

A light of understanding was dawning in the robot's photoelectric eyes.

"Why, it's that rubbery son of a test tube," he roared. "That mess of colloid, that white-faced imitation of a man!"

"Imitation yourself," returned Otho. "You're nothing but a collection of rusty rivets, a refugee from a scrap yard. You have a muddled brain to go with your metal body. You're –"

Otho's flow of insults was cut short as Grag roared and lunged at him. But almost as the robot's fingers reached him, the android had slipped aside and flashed into the next room. With a bellow of rage, Grag followed.

Roger Newton's wife was laughing so hard that tears were starting from her eyes.

STAY FRIENDS DESPITE JOKES

Suddenly she stopped short.

"But suppose Grag catches him?"

"He'll give Otho a wallop that he well deserves. But he won't harm him."

Simon Wright nodded. "They insult each other like deadly enemies, but in actuality, there's a great deal of affection between them. They're going to be the best comrades in the world."

"I'm so pleased." She smiled. "I don't think I'm going to be lonely from now on. Now that Otho's here, even Grag seems more human. And when they start to insult each other – it's as good as being back on Earth watching a show."

"I thought Otho would please you. I'm glad, for your sake, if for nothing else, that we decided to make him differently from Grag. And I think," he added, "that none of us will ever regret making either of them."

Years later, Simon Wright was to remember those prophetic words.



No. 16 OTHO FINDS A MASCOT

On the tiny asteroid of a hermit, the famous android discovers his moon-mimic, Oog, which after much goading, stages a Battle Of The Ages with Grag's Eek!

IT WAS one of the countless asteroids that whirl between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter. It was only a tiny worldlet, but it was green and forest-covered and parklike, with a thin atmosphere and gleaming little streams and lakes.

Flame-birds darted in shining trails above the forests. Asteroid-rats scurried beneath the flat fronds of the trees. The hum of insects, the sigh of the breeze through the foliage and flowers, these were the only sounds to break the silence. For this asteroid had but one human inhabitant.

He was an old man, this hermit of space – an Earthman, and something of a fanatic. For in the midst of an expanding scientific civilization, he was a bitter opponent of scientific progress. An eccentric rebel who had come to this lonely little asteroid, deliberately marooning himself here without tools or instruments, building his own cabin, cultivating his own food, and living completely out of the rush of Solar civilization.

FUTUREMEN VISIT HERMIT

The Futuremen were the only visitors to the hermit's little world. They had first chanced upon it in running down certain pirates. Since then, they had stopped here more than once.

Oddly enough, Curt Newton liked the old man. He the supreme wizard of modern Solar science, recognized a certain strain of bitter truth in the old Earthman's condemnation of that science.

"He's a corrective," Captain Future answered when the others wonderingly asked the reason for his liking.

"Whenever I get too vain about what we modern men are doing with science, I like to hear the old boy point out just how much we haven't done."

It was on the hermit's little asteroid that Otho finally found what he had been looking for – a pet that would outshine Grag's mascot.

OTHO SEEKS PET

Ever since Grag had adopted the moon-pup Eek as a pet, Otho had been secretly a little jealous. He had resolved to outdo Grag.

"I'm so blasted tired of hearing Grag drool about that confounded moon-pup's abilities, that I'm going to fix him for good," Otho told Curt Newton. "I mean to grab myself some kind of a little critter that will make Eek's life miserable for him."

"What are you going to do – get another moon-pup?" Newton asked.

"No, I'll find some kind of animal that will not only be smarter than Eek but will also be able to thrash the life out of Eek. Grag will go wild, then!"

On the asteroid of the hermit, Otho on this particular morning noticed a small beast gamboling near the *Comet*. It was short-legged, and fat and white, with a round head whose two incongruously big, solemn eyes gave it an irresistibly comic appearance.

Otho started toward it with casual interest. Spotting his approach, the little animal suddenly underwent an astounding transformation.

A STRANGE CREATURE

The fat, doughy-looking white body and head seemed to flow and twist and change color at the same time. In a second, the little beast had changed itself into a perfect replica of an ordinary asteroid-rabbit.

"What the devil! Am I seeing things?" yelled Otho.

He started toward the asteroid-rabbit. It hopped away among some gray stones. Again, its body changed with protean rapidity. Now it had become a perfect simulacrum of a gray stone.

Otho yelled for the others. When Captain Future came with the hermit, the android pointed excitedly at the thing.

"First it was a little fat white animal, then it changed into an asteroid-rabbit, now it's a stone! I must be going crazy."

The old eccentric stepped forward and uttered a shrill whistle. The gray stone suddenly changed back into a little white animal, looking solemnly up at them.

"It's a meteor-mimic," said the hermit. "There's a few of them on this asteroid and they've got tame because I never hurt them. And are they pests! They fool me a dozen times a day with their tricks."

METEOR-MIMICS ARE RARE

Captain Future was interested. "I've heard of meteor-mimics, but this is the first I've seen. They're a rare species, living only on a few of the smaller asteroids."

"How the devil does the critter accomplish those changes?" Otho wanted to know.

"They're one of the strangest species of System life known," Curt Newton said. "These meteor-mimics have all their vital organs in a compact core at the center of their bodies. The rest of the body is merely a mass of loosely organized cells whose structure the creature can almost instantly shift by an effort of will. Undoubtedly, they evolved this perfect camouflage-capacity as a method of defense."

Otho's enthusiasm kindled. "Say, this is just the mascot I've been looking for! One that will be able to give Eek the licking of his life."

Captain Future grinned. "It's certainly appropriate as a pet for a disguise-expert like yourself. But I'm not so sure it can thrash Eek."

"Of course it can – when it can change itself into any kind of creature it desires!" Otho pointed out. He chortled. "Is Grag going to get the shock of his life! This will kill him."

HERMIT COMPLAINS OF PESTS

The hermit made no objection to giving up the meteor-mimic. "Wish you could take them all," he growled. "Every time I turn around the little pests fool me by looking like something else."

Nor was it hard for Otho to make friends with the little animal. Oog, as he decided on the spot to name his

pet, was the friendliest beast alive. In ten minutes, he was snuggling contentedly in Otho's arm.

As they went to the ship to rejoin Grag and Simon Wright, Otho could not contain his elation.

"For all these months, I've been listening to Grag's boasting about that miserable moon-pup. Wait till he sees Oog clean up the floor with Eek."

"Eek has got wicked teeth and claws," Captain Future reminded Otho. "I wouldn't be too sure about how this scrap will turn out."

"Oog can grow teeth and claws better than Eek's," Otho retorted. "What's more, Eek is the biggest coward alive, scared of his own shadow. He won't have a chance."

When they rejoined the others in the *Comet*, Grag stared scornfully at Otho's new acquisition.

"That heap of dough for a pet?" scoffed Grag. "Why, it's the stupidest-looking beast I ever saw in my life."

"Stupid, is it?" said Otho. "Just watch this."

OOG PLAYS A TRICK

He put Oog down beside a mass of books on Simon's desk, and then clapped his hands sharply to startle the meteor-mimic. Instantly, Oog changed into another book, perfectly camouflaging himself.

Otho stroked him to reassure him, and he changed back to his normal shape. The android looked proudly at Grag.

"It's disgusting!" Grag said emphatically. "It gives me the creeps to see it twist and change like that. I hope you're not really going to take it along with us."

"Not only is it going along with me," Otho replied, "but I want to warn you to keep Eek out of its way. I'd sort of hate to see it make a punching-bag out of that poor, dim-witted little moon-pup."

Grag rose to the challenge as expected. "That thing make a punching-bag of Eek?" he boomed angrily. "Why, you're space-struck! Eek would tear that bag of dough wide open."

"We'll soon see," Otho affirmed. "Bring out your little pest, if you want to watch him take a thrashing."

THEY PREPARE FOR WAR

Grag wrathfully agreed. He went into the cyc-room and soon stalked back with the moon-pup in his grasp.

Eek was chewing a scrap of silver and looking very contented with the world. Then the moon-pup's beady eyes fell on Oog, and he stared fixedly.

They put the two small animals down on the floor, while Captain Future watched, grinning.

"Go in and mop him up, Oog," hissed Otho. "Change yourself into a moon-snake and squeeze him to death, or make like a Jovian junglecat and scare him right out of his skin."

Grag was similarly admonishing his mascot. He

spoke aloud, though it was his thought that he hoped the telepathic moon-pup was getting.

"Show that disgusting little creature who's boss on this ship, Eek! Give him the beating of his life."

They watched intently as Oog and Eek slowly approached each other. At last, Otho felt on the verge of his ambition. A moment more would see the end of Grag's boastings.

FRIENDLY WARRIORS

Then the totally unexpected happened. Oog sniffed at Eek in friendly fashion. Eek, in turn, eyed the meteor-mimic without hostility. They rubbed against each other affectionately. Finally they lay down together as if they were the best friends in the world.

"That's not the idea, Oog!" exclaimed Otho, dismayed. "You're supposed to be tough. Get up and tear into him."

Grag indignantly remonstrated with Eek in the same vein. But it was all without effect. The two just would not fight.

The truth was that Oog was too friendly a creature to start a fight without reason. And Eek was a confirmed pacifist, who regarded all fighting with distaste.

All the urging of Grag and Otho, in the weeks that followed, could not incite a battle. To the disgust of both masters, Oog and Eek loved each other like brothers.

"Eek is too big-hearted to pick on Oog," said Grag later. "But he'll turn on him some day, and that'll be the end of poor Oog. Better get rid of him, Otho. It's not as though the critter was any use."

"No use?" cried Otho. "I suppose it wasn't Oog that saved all our necks on Venus last month?"

OOG SAVES FUTUREMEN

He was referring to an episode in which Oog's strange ability of shape-shifting had given sterling service at a critical juncture.

The Futuremen had been imprisoned deep in the marshes of Venus by the hirelings of a certain interplanetary criminal whom they were trailing. They had been entirely without weapons.

But Oog was with them. By dint of much patient effort, Otho had finally succeeded in getting Oog to change himself into the perfect simulacrum of a high-powered atomic bomb. With the fake bomb that was Oog, they had bluffed their way out of their imprisonment.

"That was just a fluke," Grag retorted disdainfully. "And it doesn't make up for the nuisance of having Oog around. Every time I go to pick up anything, it's apt to change into Oog."

"Eek is the real pest on this ship," declared Otho. "Chewing up every bit of metal he can get his teeth into. Everytime I think of all the instruments and appara-

tus he's ruined, I get sore."

A CEASELESS DEBATE

The argument went on endlessly in the months that followed. Again and again, the two masters tried to get their two pets into a scrap, but always without success.

It was not that either wanted the other's mascot really hurt. Each simply wanted to see his own pet give the other a harmless thrashing, so as to be able to crow about it.

"You might as well give up egging them on," Captain Future advised finally. "The more you try to stir up bad-blood between them, the more they love each other."

It was true. Eek and Oog had become the very Damon and Pythias of the outfit. They slept curled up together in the same corner. They sought each other out on all occasions. They might have been long-lost brothers.

Otho tried all his ingenuity in stratagems to breakup this beautiful friendship. He and Grag by now had bet half their possessions on who would win a fight of the pets, but they couldn't get the fight started.

Then, at last, what they had been vainly trying for happened by pure accident. Oog and Eek, at long last, fell one day to fighting.

It was the first and last time that the two pets ever scrapped, and it was a scrap that had a totally unexpected outcome.

Otho, Grag and Captain Future were working in the main room of the Moon-laboratory, that day. Otho was using an atomic welder to fasten copper bars into the mechanism they were constructing.

Oog, playing around Otho's feet, amused himself by changing himself abruptly into a perfect replica of a big copper bar.

By ill fortune, at this particular moment, Eek came ambling into the room. He looked around. His beady eyes fixed on the big bar of copper on the floor.

Now if there was one metal that Eek loved to devour most of all, it was copper. He almost drooled as he sprang forward and fastened his sharp teeth in that luscious metal bar.

Next moment the Futuremen heard a startled yelp of pain and rage and a scuffle under their feet. They looked down.

Oog, who had changed back with the speed of light to his own doughy white shape, was standing stiff-legged and glaring at Eek. Then, growling, the meteor-mimic advanced toward the moon-pup.

"By space, they're at it at last!" Otho exclaimed excitedly. "Here's where we finally see Eek get his beating!"

"Stand up to him, Eek!" boomed Grag. "Knock the daylight out of him."

OOG OPENS ATTACK

Next moment, Oog had jumped. His fat white body and the gray, agile one of Eek whirled over and over.

Then Eek's strong paws, paws equipped with diamond-hard talons that could dig metal out of pure rock, came into play. With a rake of those powerful paws he sent Oog flying against the wall.

Grag cheered deafeningly. "That's the stuff, Eek!"

Oog shook himself, then came determinedly back toward his opponent. Eek was waiting, his paws raised for another blow.

Oog paused suddenly. His body twisted, flowed, changed shape and color. Suddenly, he was an exact replica of Eek himself.

It was as though two Eeks faced each other on the floor, advancing toward each other and then locking in battle.

"Holy space-imps!" exclaimed Otho, startled. "He figured Eek's paws were too strong for him, so he made himself just like Eek. But which of them is which?"

There was no possibility of distinguishing between the real and the fake Eek as they scrambled around on the floor in their struggle.

But soon it became evident that one Eek was giving the other a terrible whipping. In a few moments, one of the two identical antagonists deserted the struggle and retreated out of the room at top speed, with the other in pursuit.

"That was Oog doing the chasing!" Otho claimed, as he and the others started after them.

"You're crazy – it was Eek! Oog was running for his life!" retorted Grag.

GENTLEMEN, THE WINNAH!

The two pets had disappeared. They searched through one after another of the Moon-laboratory's branching chambers and corridors.

It was not until an hour later, in the underground hangar of the *Comet*, that they found Oog and Eek. Oog wore his own proper shape, now.

He and Eek, apparently little the worse for wear, were curled up together in a corner – asleep!

"The devil! They got over their scrapping and made friends again!" exclaimed Otho.

"But which one of them was it that won?" asked Captain Future slyly.

"Oog, of course – didn't you see?" Otho countered.

"If you had decent eyes, you'd know it was Eek!" stormed Grag.

They made attempts to start the scrap going again. But it was in vain. Oog and Eek were as good friends as ever, once more. They calmly refused to be incited to more battle.

Who had been victor, Grag's pet or Otho's? No one would ever know. But the argument has gone on ever since.



No. 17

GRAG'S PET, THE MOON-PUP

Captain Future is averse to adopting the fierce, untamed creature – until Grag's faith in it is fully justified!

WILD and forbidding in the harsh glare of unsoftened sunlight, stretched the lifeless surface of the Moon. This savage landscape was without vegetation, water or air. It was a rumpled expanse of giant mountain ranges, cruel craters, and vast rock plains seamed by deep, narrow canyons.

At the shadowy bottom of one of those canyons, Captain Future, Otho and the Brain were intent on the task of unearthing a mass of gleaming metal ore. Curt Newton and the android wore their spacesuits. The Brain, who needed no such protection, hovered beside them.

Curt finally dislodged the mass of ore, and then straightened, leaning on his steelite bar. He looked down the canyon.

"Where did Grag wander off to?" he demanded.

"Depend on that crazy robot to stray away when there's heavy work to do," complained Otho.

A MOON-HOUND PACK

They started down the canyon in search of Grag. Then, as they squeezed through a narrow part of the chasm, they saw a giant figure approaching them. It was the massive, metal robot.

Grag held a small gray animal that was struggling and squirming in his grasp. It was a moon-pup, a young individual of the fierce moon-hounds that are the Moon's strange, non-breathing species of life.

"Look, I picked up a maverick moon-pup!" Grag exclaimed. "I'm going to tame it and make a pet of it."

Captain Future interrupted sharply. "Where there's one of those creatures, there's more of them! We'd bet-

ter get out of – *listen!*"

There was no sound, of course, outside the short-range telaudio instruments by which they conversed. But Curt Newton had felt a faint vibration, a rushing murmur, from the rock beneath his feet.

"Moon-hounds – a pack!" yelled Otho. "Look there!"

IMPENETRABLE CREATURES

Down the canyon toward them was coming a raging horde of gray, terrible beasts – wolflike quadrupeds with enormous fangs and talons. Their small eyes glared red as they charged.

Moon-hounds could not be harmed by ordinary weapons. Their flesh was siliceous, its curious bodily metabolism maintained by their use of raw rock and metal elements as food. Atom-guns would not hurt them.

"Back up the canyon, quick!" yelled Curt. "If those beasts get us down, we're done for!"

Curt and the three Futuremen rapidly retreated along the chasm, firing a volley of brilliant atomic bolts to discourage their pursuers. But the moon-hounds, finding that the bolts of force did not harm them, rushed forward boldly.

Curt and his comrades squeezed back through the narrow part of the chasm. As they did so, Captain Future delayed a second to thrust something into a niche of the cliff. Then he darted hastily on.

CAPTURED PUP

Next moment, a soundless explosion rocked the

chasm around them. Its force tore away great masses of shattered rock that crashed down from the precipitous sides and completely blocked the narrow chasm. The block formed an impassible barrier between the moon-hounds and the Futuremen.

"That was too blamed close," panted Curt Newton. "If I hadn't brought along a couple of atomic blasting-cartridges to help us dig the ore, the pack would have been on our necks."

"And it was all Grag's fault, for picking up that miserable moon-pup," accused Otho.

"You'd better leave the little beast here, Grag," advised Captain Future. "You can't make a pet of it. Nobody's ever tamed a moon-hound yet."

"I'll tame this one," Grag insisted. "It likes me already. You can see that."

NEVER BEEN TAMED

The little gray moon-pup, squirming frantically in his grasp, chose that moment to get his head free. The animal instantly tried to sink its powerful, jewel-hard teeth into Grag's metal arm, actually scarring the steel-ite.

"Yes, we can see how much it likes you," jeered Otho. "Its affection is positively touching."

"It will learn better," Grag affirmed. "Let me keep it, chief. I always wanted a pet."

Curt Newton understood. Grag, mighty man of metal, knew himself to be irrevocably different from ordinary humanity. That knowledge had nursed a certain inferiority complex in the mind of the intelligent robot. He felt a dim apprehension that ordinary human people looked down on him because of his difference from them.

Grag craved to be looked up to, by somebody or something. That was why the robot so eagerly wanted this moon-pup as a pet. Curt understood this, and so against his better judgment he gave a conditional permission.

"All right, Grag, you can keep it, though I don't believe you'll ever tame it," he answered. "But if it starts making any trouble for us, it'll have to go."

STRANGE METABOLISM

When they returned to the moon-laboratory, Grag secured the moon-pup to the wall by means of a light steelite collar and chain.

The little gray animal was only two feet long. Its squat body was supported by four short legs whose paws ended in powerful, chisel-like digging-talons. Below its sharp little snout, were jaws set with equally powerful grinder-teeth. Its small black eyes were bright with hostility as it faced the Futuremen.

Curt Newton inspected it with considerable interest. He had never been able to make so close an examination of an individual of the moon-hound species, one of

the strangest forms of life in the System.

Once, long ago, the Moon had had an atmosphere and many forms of life had flourished on it. Then as the satellite slowly lost its air by molecular dispersion, most of its life had perished. But a few species had managed to adapt themselves even to the airless conditions.

The moon-hounds were such a species. They needed no air because they did not breathe. Their bodies were of strange inorganic flesh, in which silicon replaced carbon as the basic element. They ingested the elements they required to replenish their tissues, directly from the raw rock and ore they dug out and pulverized in their grinding teeth. This weird metabolism of their bodies was aided by photosynthetic processes.

A METAL JAG

"I'm going to call it Eek," Grag announced. He extended his hand coaxingly to the moon-pup. "Here, Eek!"

Eek, the moon-pup, responded by showing his teeth menacingly at the outstretched hand.

"It can't hear you, Grag," Captain Future said. "Moon-hounds have no auditory or vocal organs, since sound is impossible on the Moon."

"I'll tame it, anyway," Grag insisted. "First, I'll give it something to eat."

He brought some bits of metal-bearing rock and proffered them to Eek. The moon-pup, watching them suspiciously with its beady little eyes, champed the rock to dust between its teeth and swallowed it.

Grag tried it with a scrap of pure copper. Eek devoured that with amazing speed. He brought it more copper, which was greedily bolted.

"Copper and other pure metals, to them, must be like candy to a human being," Curt commented.

"You've given it too much – it's sick," Simon Wright told Grag.

Eek had begun to wobble on his legs. His head swayed to and fro and a glazed look came into his eyes.

"Sick, nothing – the little pest is drunk," Otho said disgustedly.

Captain Future broke into a shout of laughter. "Otho's right. So much pure copper stimulated its metabolism too fast."

Eek was staggering. The little moon-pup tried to take a step and fell down on his face. He stumbled up again and stood, his head wagging foolishly.

"Boy, has he got a bender on!" exclaimed Otho.

EEK UNDERSTANDS

Grag was dismayed. "It's not his fault," he defended. "I just gave him too much at one time. I'll cut down on his food."

Two days later, the Futuremen returned to the moon-laboratory to find that Grag's cut in the moon-

pup's rations had had its sequel.

Eek had, in their absence, eaten up his own steelite chain, had then devoured all the copper parts of one of Otho's best atom-pistols, and was now staggering around the room in a high state of intoxication.

Otho stormed that the moon-pup had to go at once. But Grag insisted that he would soon be able to tame and train the creature.

The next day, Grag's bellowing shout brought Curt and the other two Futuremen on the run from the underground hangar in which they were at work refitting the *Comet*.

"What's wrong?" Curt demanded sharply of the robot as they burst into the moon-laboratory.

"It's Eek," said Grag, proudly. "I've learned how to talk to him."

"You're dreaming!" scoffed Otho. "How can you talk to a beast that can't possibly hear a sound?"

"I talk to him telepathically," Grag declared. "He can hear my thoughts. I've made friends with him that way. Watch, and I'll tell him to come here to me."

Eek was chewing on a bit of rock in a far part of the room. Grag stared silently at the moon-pup. In a moment, Eek turned his head. Then he came trotting over to Grag and looked up inquiringly.

"You see?" Grag said. "I just gave him a mental command to come to me, and he did."

A DESTRUCTIVE PET

Captain Future was interested. "Then the moon-hounds must communicate with each other telepathically. I never thought of that, but it's quite logical, when you think of it, that they'd evolve such a faculty on a soundless world."

Grag's discovery enabled him to complete the taming of Eek in short order. The little moon-pup appeared able to sense Grag's mental commands, even at a comparatively great distance. And Grag was inordinately proud of his accomplishments, and of Eek's devotion to him.

Unfortunately, Eek still retained his worst vice, that of eating up any scrap of metal upon which he could fasten his teeth. He preferred silver and copper, but would take anything that was metallic. Time after time, he wreaked havoc by his uncontrollable appetite.

What was even more unfortunate, Eek always seemed to choose Otho's weapons, instruments and various other metal possessions for his depredations. The android reached a higher pitch of indignation with each new foray.

"Grag is doing it!" Otho accused. "He's putting the idea into that moon-pup's head to gnaw at my belongings."

"I've done nothing of the kind," Grag declared. "You're always picking on Eek."

Their arguments raged incessantly. And finally, Eek

capped the climax.

EEK'S LAST CHANCE

The Futuremen had to make a rush trip to Venus, and during their absence, Grag left his pet locked in a storeroom with an ample supply of ore-bearing rock for food. But apparently, it had not been ample enough for Eek.

When they returned, they discovered that during their absence Eek had gnawed through the cement wall of the room, got into the main laboratory, and eaten most of the copper parts of their biggest cyclotron. When they entered, the moon-pup was found sprawled beside the ruined cyc in an unparalleled state of intoxication.

"That settles it," Captain Future declared with finality. "Eek has got to go."

Grag made a desperate appeal.

"Give him one more chance, chief. I can break him of this habit, in a little more time."

Curt relented a little.

"Grag, I'll give you one more month. If by that time, Eek hasn't reformed, he's definitely leaving."

"I'll work every minute at that month, training him," Grag said earnestly.

HALL OF ENEMIES

But chance, and the machinations of a certain powerful interplanetary criminal, destined otherwise.

The criminal in question was Cole Romer, the Earthman whose amazing plot to bluff the System into a reign of terror broke that very day. The call for the Futuremen's aid came within the next two hours.

When they answered that urgent call for help, Grag took Eek with them in the *Comet*. But in the days of extreme hardship, danger and struggle that followed, he had no chance to give Eek any attention.

The course of that struggle of the Futuremen with Cole Romer has been described elsewhere. The climax of that great duel came on one of the moons of Pluto, where Cole Romer's forces captured the Futuremen.

Romer maintained upon that moon what he called his Hall of Enemies. It was a room of his stronghold in which were several dozens of hermetically-sealed glassite cases. In each case sat one of Cole Romer's captives – paralyzed in strange suspended animation by a subtle gas which froze the metabolism of every living cell, holding them in living death.

Into this dreaded Hall of Enemies, Cole Romer brought the captured Futuremen and Joan Randall. Each of them was thrust into one of the glassite cases. Each case was hermetically sealed, and then the freezing-gas was released in each.

A LIVING CORPSE

Curt Newton, Joan, Simon and Otho, became so

many living statues. Sitting there in the prisoning case, Captain Future was unable to move a muscle. Even his breathing was halted, his whole body's metabolism paralyzed. He could only stare straight ahead, like the others. And the most horrible feature was that, he was still fully conscious.

Cole Romer laughed as he left them.

"It's worse than death, isn't it, Future?" he taunted. "You will sit like that, unchanging, for years and years."

The misery of their fate was enough to bring madness to a lesser man. Never, in all his hazardous career, had Captain Future been caught in a predicament that seemed so hopeless.

He could not even turn his head. He could only stare fixedly across the shadowy, silent Hall of Enemies whose only other occupants were the other frozen, conscious captives, each in his own sealed case.

Nor was there hope from outside. Romer's forces ruled this moon. Grag had been disabled and left for dead by the criminal's men. He lay on the floor, his electrical "nerves" severed by an atom-blast.

Hours went by in which Captain Future fought off madness. Then, he saw a small, gray creature creep fearfully into the shadowy Hall.

SKEPTICAL MOON-DOG

It was Eek. The moon-pup, lonely for Grag, had followed them to this place. Eek now pawed distressedly at the unconscious robot.

Captain Future had a wild idea. "That moon-pup! It might help –"

Curt only had one power left – the power of thought. He used it now.

He knew that Grag could give Eek telepathic orders. He tried it now himself, projecting a concentrated thought at the moon-pup.

"Here, Eek!" he thought. "Come here!"

The moon-pup turned and looked at him. Then it came doubtfully over to the glassite case in which Captain Future sat rigidly frozen.

Curt hurled another thought at the strange little creature. "There is silver in the wall of this case, Eek. Silver!"

Now if there was one metal that Eek loved even better than copper as food, it was silver. The beady eyes of the moon-pup glistened, and he advanced and sank his teeth into the corner of the glassite case.

He retreated a moment later, and spat out a mouthful

of broken chips of glassite. He looked up at Captain Future reproachfully.

Curt redoubled his telepathic effort. "You did not bite deep enough to get the silver, Eek!" he thought. "Bite deeper! You will find luscious silver, all you can eat!"

A little distrustfully now, Eek again advanced and started chewing on the corner of the case. His jewel-hard teeth gnawed into the glassite.

Again, after a few moments, he turned away. And this time he turned his back on Captain Future, with the injured air of one who had been deceived.

TO THE RESCUE

But his teeth had penetrated the thick glassite wall of the case, this time! The freezing-gas started to escape singingly through the tiny aperture. And as it escaped, and was replaced by air, Captain Future felt life come back into his paralyzed limbs.

In a minute more, he was breaking out of the case and freeing the others. Swiftly, they repaired Grag's severed nerves and brought the robot back to life.

By the time their captors received the alarm, the Futuremen had freed all the other prisoners in the Hall of Enemies. And the battle that followed sealed the doom of Cole Romer.

Not until after that climactic struggle, did Curt Newton have time to relate to Grag how Eek had freed them. And Grag seemed to swell with pride when he heard.

APPLAUSE FOR EEK

"Didn't I tell you Eek was smart?" Grag cried. "You won't make me give him up now, will you, chief?"

Curt shook his head. "Grag, Eek is a pest. He's a thief, a drunk, and a good bit of a coward. But, for what he did today, Eek gets my okay for life."

Otho groaned. "Do you mean that I'll have to put up with that miserable little critter from now on? Life won't be worth living."

"Otho is merely jealous because he doesn't have a pet like Eek," Grag commented loftily.

Otho swore. "When I get myself a mascot, it'll be one that has a few brains – and one that will be able to beat Eek into a pulp!"

How Otho carried out that promise, and how the advent of his mascot Oog brought complications, is another story. That lay in the future. For the present, Grag was at last completely happy. Eek had justified himself.