

High-Frequency War

Harl Vincent

Harl Vincent was the pen name of Harold Vincent Schoepflin (born New York City, 19 October 1893; died Los Angeles, 5 May 1968), a mechanical engineer employed by Westinghouse. Vincent was one of the most prolific writers of the Gernsback Era of science fiction, publishing 56 stories between 1928 and 1935. However, he had dropped out of the field by the time science fiction began to move out of the pulp magazines after World War 2, and his work has been largely forgotten. With the rise of the internet, though, everything old is new again. Vincent's fiction is starting to see the light of day once more. His story "Creatures of Vibration" from the January 1932 issue of *Astounding Stories* was uploaded into Project Gutenberg on July 26, 2007, and can be found [here](#). Meanwhile, I've taken it upon myself to resurrect as many of his stories as possible here on this blog, starting with "Terrors Unseen" from the March 1931 issue of *Astounding*, which begins [here](#). I've also started a Harl Vincent Facebook group, of which I am currently the sole member.

Next up on my revival list is the story "High-Frequency War" from the February 1940 issue of *Astounding Science-Fiction*. By 1940 the Campbell Revolution was in full flight in the pages of *Astounding*, and Vincent's story shared the magazine with such science fiction luminaries as Robert A. Heinlein, L. Ron Hubbard, and Leigh Brackett. I now present, for the first time since its initial publication 69 years ago, "High-Frequency War", presented in a blog-friendly multipart format.

High-Frequency War
by Harl Vincent

You could see that the fellow at the recruiting officer's desk was doing his level best to stand erect in his baggy clothing. He turned a battered felt hat over and over, in nervous, clawed fingers. In his pale eyes was a far-away look and almost servile pleading. His nondescript, rose-hued whiskers were something to remember.

"But listen," he was insisting mildly, "there must be something a guy like me can do. Even if I am a little lame. I just got to help."

Sergeant Hurley screwed up his scarred features in a grin that was meant to be kindly. "Sorry, Pinky," he said. "Not in this man's army. Looks like you've seen enough of this rotten war, anyway."

"Not even in a ground kitchen?" the mild one wheedled.

"Not even anywhere. Hell, man, we got physical exams. Take a walk now, like a good guy." The hard-boiled sergeant shook his head sadly at the nearby noncom as the man shuffled away. "Poor old geezer," he muttered.

Pinky wasn't old. He wasn't forty yet, but might have been anything up to sixty. To look at him, you'd think he wasn't quite all there. He wasn't. In the early days of the war, in 1974 or maybe 1973, something had happened to him. He'd been gassed, or perhaps caught up in one of those invisible wave eddies from a frequency bomb -- something, anyway.

He didn't remember. Nobody did. Pinky didn't even know where he came from, or who he was. There were thousands like him. But Pinky was different. Most of those other poor devils, who'd been through

the first awful days when the combined air fleets of the Quadruple Alliance had swept over the eastern seaboard and inland, were all washed up. Pinky wasn't; at least, he wouldn't admit it. He drifted from one half-ruined city to another, to the small towns, even, always trying to enlist. Of course, they wouldn't let him.

He earned the sobriquet Pinky by the color of his beard, which had not been removed in he didn't know how long. He was broke, of course, and had to depend on canteens or relief stores for occasional shelter, or a meal, or a too-big pair of shoes. Most of the time he spent on the road. He was too sick even to be a good hobo; he was bent and twisted and lame from whatever had happened to him. But he kept going and he kept trying to enlist.

It was cold tonight. Pinky held the collar of his threadbare coat up around his neck with skinny fingers. He dragged himself along the State road that led out of town. He didn't know how far it might be to the next one. All he knew was that, wherever he was, it was way back of the lines. You couldn't even hear gunfire back here, or see a flash in the sky. He was hungry and wished now he'd remembered to stop in the canteen back in that burg. It's hell to be cold and hungry.

No traffic on this road and no lights at all. Must be a blackout around this part of the country. Dimly against the brooding sky ahead, Pinky caught the outlines of a group of fairly large buildings on a low hill. Not a light there, either. He limped on up the hill, hungrier and colder than ever.

There was a high iron fence, a gravel drive leading to an open gate. Pinky went into the grounds. It would be warmer sleeping alongside one of those buildings than in the open. Then he saw a closely shuttered light shining from a basement window. He moved cautiously toward it. There was the faint hum of machinery that throbbed in that basement. The window was partly open and a grateful warmth from inside enveloped Pinky as he moved next to it. He could see the glittering machines and a lot of clocklike gadgets and lights on the wall. There were steps leading down to a sort of hall, It would be warm down there. Perhaps he could curl up out of sight.

He was halfway down the steps when a door opened and a glare of light and damp heat swept over him. There was a chunky young fellow in greasy dungarees coming toward him with a wrench in his hand. With the light at his back, you couldn't see his face. Pinky threw up his arm to ward off the blow he expected. Then something went wrong inside of him. He couldn't breath at all and his muscles went limp. He slumped down and just forgot everything.

* * *

When Pinky came to, he was in where it was warm and light. The chunky fellow was holding up his head and pouring something down his throat. Whiskey. The heat of it in his stomach revived him and he sat up and blinked owlishly. The young chap in the dungarees laughed relievedly.

"Gee!" he exclaimed. "You scared the devil outta me. I thought it was a corpse falling down the stairs."

Pinky waggled the whiskers in an apologetic grin. "Guess I was just about all in," he admitted.

"I'll say you were! You are yet." Bright brown eyes narrowed in their inspection of Pinky. "How long since you've eaten?"

"Oh, I don't know" -- negligently. "Couple of days, I guess."

"I thought so. Here, can you walk, Pinky?"

Everybody called him that without being told. One look at the odd foliage was enough. Pinky said, "Sure, I can walk," and let the young fellow take his arm.

They walked through the aisle of the shiny, humming machines and into a sort of locker room where there was a table and a few padded, board chairs.

"Sit down," directed the young chap, "and I'll get you a bowl of soup. What's your name?"

"You named me, already."

The dungareed one, opening a can he took from a locker, grinned appreciatively. "What? Pinky?" He laughed.

Pinky nodded and his pale eyes twinkled. "Suits, doesn't it?"

"Sure does. Well, mine's Slim -- 'cause I'm so short and wide. Slim Harvey." He was busy with a pan and the soup, and an electric grill. "All you get is soup, Pinky. At first. In an hour or so you can have some sandwiches and stuff. Your belly's too flat for more, right away."

Pinky nodded again. This Slim Harvey knew what he was doing. "What is this place, Slim?"

The university. Doc Buckley's you know." Young Harvey had out a bowl and the thick soup steamed in. "This is the power plant for the whole place down here and I'm supposed to be engineer. Doc's lab is up above, in the same building."

The soup smelled great and Pinky began ladling it in. "Let's see," he said, "Buckley's the one's been working on a new weapon or something, isn't he?"

"Yeah, that's why the blackout around here. Been working for a year, year and a half, and nothing doing yet." Slim Harvey sat across the board table, eyeing his guest curiously.

"Must be swell, said Pinky, between swallows of hot soup, "to be working here. Government subsidy, isn't it?"

Harvey's eyes narrowed, though the friendly gleam did not die out. "Say!" he exclaimed. "What're you doing around here, really?"

His guest looked into nothingness. "Just been trying to enlist."

"Where'd you come from? Where'd you try and enlist?"

Pinky waved the soup spoon in a vague arc. "Around," he said. "Just about everywhere. I don't remember."

A light seemed to burst on Slim Harvey. "Let's look at your arm," he demanded.

Pinky laid down the spoon and pulled up a ragged sleeve. The soup was finished anyway, and he felt better. Harvey peered at the skinny forearm and noted the droop of the hand at the wrist.

"Hell's bells, man," he sympathized. "They freaked you; and that's let you out. Gee for a minute, I thought you was a spy. But a freak bomb can do anything. Don't you remember about it?"

"No."

"Don't know your real name or where you come from?"

Pinky's cheeks flushed to match his beard. "No," he admitted.

"Holy smoke! Amnesia and --" A bell rang faintly out where the machines hummed and Slim jumped up. "Come along," he said, "while I see who that is. You can have more eats later and bunk here tonight."

Pinky followed. He felt warm all over inside. It wasn't just the grub. He knew he'd found a friend.

2

This is the second installment of "High-Frequency War", a 1940 science fiction story by Harl Vincent, a prolific writer of the 1930s who has since fallen into obscurity. I have taken it upon myself to introduce Vincent's work to the (potentially) vast audience of the internet. The first installment can be found [here](#). And now, we return to "High-Frequency War" . . .

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He didn't know until a minute later, that Slim had saved his life.

"It's Doc Buckley," the engineer explained after he had answered the audio call. "He's up in the lab and wants me for a while. So you wait right here in the engine room. And whatever you do, don't try to go outside the building."

"Why?" asked Pinky, innocently. Then hastily: "Of course, I wouldn't."

"There's a frequency barrier all around the building, Pinky. It's what dropped you on the stair. You'd be dead by now, if I hadn't hauled you in."

Slim was gone then through a narrow hall and Pinky sat on a bench near one of the machines to mull this over. Of course, with government research going on here, that's what they'd do. A lot of guards outside the fence would be a dead give-away to any enemy detectoscopes that might scan the area. But they couldn't see through a freak barrier, and it was a sure defense against spies. Pinky whistled at the thought of his own narrow escape. If Slim hadn't been coming to the door just at that time, he'd have been shriveled up to a cinder by now. Lying in the frequency swirl for only a few minutes, would do it. You were helpless once they'd put you to sleep -- unless someone like Slim was there.

The soup was taking effect. Pinky dozed off where he sat, lulled by the drone of the machines. He dreamed blissfully of signing enlistment papers and getting a uniform. Then suddenly he was awake with a start. Something had awakened him, something not right with one of the machines. It was groaning loudly, as if in pain or something. Pinky looked at the clock and saw he had slept for two hours. Slim wasn't back yet. Something was wrong, somewhere.

Pinky went near the groaning machine and saw a curl of smoke arise from a gadget at its end. Slim ought

to know about this. Hobbling to the audiophone, Pinky tried to put through a call to Buckley's lab. No use; the thing seemed to be dead. He'd have to find Slim, himself.

He found him by instinct and by feel, at last. The halls and the stairs were in utter darkness, so it was a slow job. And when he did find Slim it was in a rubbish-cluttered corner, huddled in with a pile of junk, bound and gagged. Pinky went to work on the gag and had it off swiftly. He was worried about that sick machine.

"Slim," he said frantically, "I had to find you. One of those machines of yours is making a terrible noise. And now, you're like this. Who did it?"

"Never mind that machine," Slim whispered. "It's only an overloaded generator. It won't burn out. Get the knife out of my hip pocket and set me loose."

"Who did it?" repeated Pinky, getting the knife and sawing at the cord that held Slim.

"Buckley. He's a traitor, the skunk."

"A traitor!" Pinky had the engineer's legs free and was working on the cords that held his arms behind his back.

"Yeah. Don't talk so loud or they'll be hearing us. There's a couple of guys with him I know are Allied agents. They're up to something. That's why Doc got me up here. To have me out of the way when they loaded up the generators downstairs. What they're up to, I don't know, but it's bad business. And we've got to stop it -- somehow." Slim was free now and Pinky helped him limber up his arms.

"What can we do?" he whispered. A thrill, such as Pinky could not remember having ever experienced, ran through him. He'd managed to serve the United States, somehow, whether they wanted him or not!

"I don't know." Slim sounded sort of hopeless. "We can audio the military, for one thing, only that might be too late."

"Audio's cut off," Pinky told him.

"They *would* do that. Well, come along -- let's see what we can do ourselves." Slim grabbed his hand in the darkness and they felt their way along to another stair.

At the head of this flight was a door under which a slit of light appeared. Behind the door was the sound of voices in monotone and the sudden keening scream of some mechanism coming swiftly up to speed. The scream held its high note for a second and broke off abruptly. A chorus of guttural exclamations followed.

Slim opened the door a crack and peered inside. "We'll sneak in," he breathed. "There's a transformer that'll hide us."

Pinky followed him and softly closed the door. From their vantage point behind the bulky transformer case he could see three men absorbedly regarding a large videoscreen. Its news audio was off.

"The tall guy's Buckley," whispered Slim.

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This was the main laboratory, a huge room with a great dome overhead and with all sorts of apparatus along the walls, in the center, and scattered here and there. Pinky looked around it and was amazed by the number and size of the queer-looking machines and by the gadgets that clustered around some, making them look like Christmas trees. His gaze returned to the man Slim had said was Buckley. Something tenuously obscure stirred in his memory as the man turned his head slightly. There was a certain familiarity to that aquiline profile. Buckley was talking to the two squat men with the close-cropped hair, in that thick, foreign tongue. That, too, was vaguely reminiscent of something.

"What're they doing?" breathed Pinky.

"Watch."

Pinky gave some attention to the large videoscreen and gasped at what he saw. The far-off pickup was sweeping a blasted, mountainous region. The Alleghenies! The front-line pill-boxes were here, the main strongholds which had held back the Allied advance for more than a year. The view shifted to the skies where a hundred V's of tiny light points could be seen approaching. A Q.A. fleet in battle formation! The view swept down again to the front lines and a dozen fans of pale-blue light lanced skyward. The men at the videoscreen were silent, tense; so were the two men behind the transformer. The war was here, with them!

Buckley moved his hand to a lever and the silence was blasted by the blare of the news audio. Pinky jumped a foot and Slim hung on to him.

"-- out 22Z and 23Y!" roared the military announcer. "Blackout sections 22Z and 23Y. Allied air forces advancing in this sector. American fleet and fan barriers rising to defense. But a few minutes ago there was a mysterious interruption to the fan barriers. Either something went wrong or the Allies have a new weapon. To prepare, orders are to blackout sections 22Z and 23Y. Blackout --"

Buckley grinned satanically as he flipped off the sound. The video continued. The American defense fleet was up with feeler-rays, springing toward the enemy. Cross-rays darted down. A burst of white flame enveloped an entire enemy squadron. Three American squadrons flared into sudden incandescence and were gone. But the enemy was almost at the fan barrier. They could not pass that. Unless--

There was suddenly, here beside them, that shrilling crescendo they had heard in the hall. If Pinky had jumped a foot before, he jumped six now. Every roseate whisker stood on end. His skin tingled from the electrification of the air. Blue flame lashed from a huge helix high in the dome. And when the screech of the frequency generator had risen to its peak and held it a second, those far-off fan barriers flicked into blackness. The enemy fleet was inside! The second line of defense would have to take up the battle.

"Gee!" husked Slim. "That was done from *here*. What'll we do?"

Pinky felt a strange stirring within him. He was thinking in a new and unaccustomed way. Things long forgotten were surging up from his subconscious. Not clearly at all, but pricking into the conscious.

"Wait," he told Slim. "Listen to what they're saying." The three at the videoscreen were jabbering excitedly.

"Huh, who can understand that?" grated Slim.

"I can." Suddenly Pinky found he could understand the jargon. A little. Some words. Enough. It was amazing.

"You see!" Buckley was exulting. "I told you. We now have them inside. We will do the same with the second and third barriers and on every front. In a week, the war will end -- with our victory."

"Suppose we are discovered before then?" one of the squat ones retorted.

"I have arranged," said Buckley. "The stupid fools of the American government will not suspect the great Dr. Buckley. Already, I have the permission to isolate her for ten days to complete what they think is to be the great new weapon. By the time they suspect, it will be too late -- for them."

Pinky's wrath mounted. With each word he understood better. And other things besides the language he was remembering. Things -- well, maybe this fool would not be so smart, after all. Maybe Pinky could find a way at last to serve his country.

"What'd they say?" demanded Slim.

"Too much to tell, Slim. But they're planning to end the war from right here and have everything arranged. I think it is to be by what might be called a multiple frequency propagation--" Pinky's lower jaw dropped as he realized what he had said. Where had those words come from and what did they mean?

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Slim was equally incredulous. "Why, you . . . you seem to know something. Do you know what to do?"

Pinky passed a shaking hand across his brow to wipe away the sudden beads of perspiration that were dripping into his eyes. "Wait -- wait," he begged. "It hasn't come, yet. But I'll know in a minute, maybe."

A terrific struggle was going on within his brain. He knew there was something to be done, something that was within his consciousness, but hidden. Something that was fighting to be out. Meanwhile, thousands of his countrymen were dying. The flashes in the sky and on the terrain beneath told him that. Why didn't they turn off the video so he couldn't see? The three over there at the controls were jabbering anew, but Pinky didn't listen. He was sweating to listen to that small inner voice of his consciousness, trying to fish out something tremendously important.

"What can we do? What can anyone do?" Slim was whimpering now in horrified despair.

It was weird. Here everything was so calm and comparatively still. Out there, less than a hundred miles away, bloody warfare was raging. A country on its last legs was being wiped out of existence. And three men, only three, were doing it. Three against two, Pinky was thinking, and the three with many times those odds in their favor.

Fan barriers in the second line radiated upward. The American defense fleet was almost down in its entirety. Again Buckley reached for a control. The squeal of the generator keened toward the upper limit of audibility. Once more Pinky's whiskers bristled. And then he knew! He knew! He hugged the humming transformer case. It was the very transformer that had them, the one supplying this energy. Its radiations were restoring memories. Of course. He grabbed Slim's arm with fingers that were suddenly of steel.

Slim winced and his eyes widened, looking into those of his companion. "Why . . . why, what the hell?" he gasped. "You're a different guy."

Pinky *was* a different guy. "We'll lick them at their own game," he grated. "You and I, Slim. And I know how."

"You do? How?" gasped the engineer.

"You've got to take a big chance, Slim. So've I."

"But, do you *know*? Are you sure it'll work?"

"It's a fifty-fifty chance. But I think it will work. Are you game to risk your life with me?"

Slim gaped at the new Pinky. "Gee, if I'd have known what you had on the ball! You bet, I'm game."

Pinky gripped his hand and whispered, "Thanks. And trust me, Slim. Here's what I want. I'm going to sprint for those controls back there. They're bound to see me on the way unless their attention's distracted. It's up to you to do that."

"How?"

"By staying right here and yelling. Let them start this way and begin their shooting. But keep under cover as much as you can. Once I get to those unused controls, I'll have them stopped."

Slim's eyes bulged. "How'd you know what --"

"Never mind that now. Still trust me?"

The engineer looked long and hard at his erstwhile guest and what he saw convinced him. "Yes; say the word."

Pinky peered around the corner of the transformer, seeing that their three enemies were absorbed in the videoscreen. "I'm going to crawl," he whispered, "for ten feet. They probably won't notice at first, but when you see me out that far, it's time to start yelling. I'll do the rest."

"Go ahead. Shoot," husked Slim.

Pinky started crawling into full sight of the three, at right angles to their line of vision. Ten feet away was another transformer. Fate was against him; one of the squat aliens spied him before he reached it. Gutturals rolled forth and a hissing, stab-ray scorched across Pinky's neck just as Slim commenced yelling. Pinky leaped to his feet and scooted for his controls. Forgetting caution, Slim came out of hiding.

3

This is the third and final installment of "High-Frequency War", a 1940 science fiction story by Harl Vincent, a prolific writer of the 1930s who has since fallen into obscurity. I have taken it upon myself to introduce Vincent's work to the (potentially) vast audience of the internet. The first two installments can be found [here](#) and [here](#). And now, we return to "High-Frequency War" . . .

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"Buckley, you crook!" Slim screamed, plunging directly into the line of fire. "You traitor! You're finished!"

Momentarily confused, the enemy began blazing away wildly. A searing pain stabbed through Pinky's shoulder as he zigzagged toward his destination. From a corner of his eye he saw Slim fall with dungarees smoldering. Six more feet and he'd be at those controls. One of the squat ones was almost on him. Pinky lashed out with a suddenly strengthened right arm. The man sprawled, mouthing thick curses, his ray pistol clattering to the floor. Pinky grabbed the gun and a control knob in sweeping opposite motions of his two rejuvenated arms. A fluorescent green blazed eerily down from high in the dome as a bank of old, dusty vacuum tubes lighted. There were no further hisses of stab-rays.

Bellowing encouragement to Slim, Pinky brought down the pistol butt on the clipped head of the one who had dropped it. *Crack!* One of the three was out of the fight. Odds were even. And those radiations from the dome had neutralized the energies of the ray guns.

Pinky catapulted across the floor at Buckley. The renegade scientist was tripping the release of his gun frantically. Disgusted at its refusal to operate, he foolishly flung it away just as Pinky landed on him. That mistake cost him any chance he may have had, for this raging redbear wasn't fighting by any sporting rules. Not now. Not in this. Pinky was fighting for his country and no holds, or anything else, barred. He smashed down the pistol on Buckley's skull and the man sank down.

Slim had not been so fortunate. His opponent had him tied in a knot on the floor. Pinky went to help.

"Go 'way!" shouted the engineer. "I'll get this bird myself. I'll break his dirty neck."

Slim almost did just that, though he was bleeding and panting when he rose and swayed groggily over the prostrate foreigner.

Pinky chortled and said: "Good work."

"Think I'd let you do everything?" Young Harvey glared, wiping the blood from his mouth. "And now, dammit, you've got to tell me all about everything."

"When we fix them up for a while, Slim." Pinky pointed to one of the three who was stirring. "Where's some cord or wire?"

It didn't take them long to truss up the precious trio and lay them side by side on the floor. When they had finished, they examined one another's wounds. Pinky had a clean hole burned through his shoulder, missing the joint entirely. Slim's burn was horribly deep, a crinkled, white-lipped groove across his middle. Painful, both wounds, but self-cauterized. That was one good thing about the stab-rays; unless they reached a vital spot, there was little real danger.

"Well," said Slim, when they'd finished, "come clean now. All the way. You faked the amnesia, didn't you? And the paralysis?"

Pinky shook his head and Slim could see that his eyes had lost the far-away look and the pallid hue. "No, I didn't fake anything, Slim. The radiations from that transformer restored by memory and the use of my limbs. That's all."

"It isn't all. How about knowing about this?" He jerked a thumb upward toward the green flare that was still on.

Pinky laughed and went to switch it off.

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"All right," he agreed, when he came back. "I'll come clean."

Slim was goggling at the videoscreen. The enemy fleet, caught between the second and third barriers, was being blasted out of the skies by the reserve American fleet and by the scathing vibro-rays from the ground.

"Too bad their plans went wrong," chuckled Pinky. "Oh, the war'll be over in a week, all right, just as Vardos said. But the victory'll be ours, not theirs."

"Vardos?" asked Slim, blankly.

Pinky indicated the unconscious one Slim had known as Buckley. "He's not Buckley," he averred. "Name's Vardos. He was assistant to the real Buckley a couple of years ago. Started just before the war did. And he knew the real doctor had something that would make this country invincible in warfare. His job was to get the dope on Buckley's weapon. And he rayed Buckley with the same frequency radiated from the regular bombs. Left him to die in the swirl. Once Buckley was out of the way, he tried to discover the secret of the weapon. But there were a few things Buckley had kept in his head, so it took Vardos until only recently to learn the important activating tie-in. That's why he demanded and got the isolation. It took time -- for him. He doesn't know a thing about the rest of the apparatus here. That's why he didn't know what I was up to when I ran for those controls. None of the other stuff in here has been used since Buckley, himself, went out of the picture, only the main thing -- the multiple frequency propagation mechanisms."

"But how could --"

"There was enough similarity between Vardos and Buckley so he could get away with the impersonation. It was easy, with a little make-up -- even with the military. Also, on account of the reputation of the real Dr. Buckley, who was always a staunch patriot."

Slim's brown eyes seemed about to pop from their sockets. "But you -- then you --"

"Yes, I'm Francis Xavier Buckley, if that's what you're driving at. Naturally, I knew about the things here when I remembered. And, incidentally, Vardos rayed me right here and sneaked out, leaving me in the ray swirl. But I managed to crawl out of it and away before it could kill me and consume me, as it always does if given enough time. He thought that was what happened. But I was the wandering, mentally lost, partly crippled Pinky you first saw. You see, the frequency used by him and in what we call freak bombs, acts first on brain and nerve cells. Electric charges are built up in individual cells, first producing unconsciousness, then paralysis, by implantation in the nerve ganglia. A definite multiple wave harmonic will release those charges and cure the sufferer. That's what happened to me behind the transformer. It took two shots to do it. But it's done. It was sheer luck I stumbled into the old cottage. Luck, or a buried remnant of familiarity and memory."

Slim was dancing around him, trying to hug him. "Gee!" he kept repeating awedly.

"Ouch!" yelped the man who had been known as Pinky. "Keep away from that shoulder. And let me finish. Might as well get it off my chest now."

"I'm just a punk operating engineer. I wouldn't know," apologized Slim.

"Yes, you will. It's simple, the principle of the multiple frequency propagation. You know that all the modern weapons and defenses are dependent for their effectiveness on some sort of radio frequency projection. Various high frequencies produce various results. And for many years man tried to neutralize various destructive effects by superimposing frequency upon frequency. It was done in some cases -- like the stab-ray. But to bring stratoplanes down or to stop fan barriers or trench moles, complex radiations were required. That's how I developed the multiwave apparatus. It produces a great number of individual frequencies separated in definite multiples between which there are heterodyning effects which result in an almost infinite number of beat notes to cover any result desired. Vardos only found the one combination which could close down the fan barriers and permit the Q.A. fleet to drive through the space where formerly an electronic wall had been erected. It happens to be the same combination which will release the cell charges in a sufferer such as I had become. Simple enough, isn't it?"

"It isn't," Slim said decisively. "But it'll have to do. So now what?"

"So now we can produce any combination of harmonics we want. We can render powerless the enemy fleets and their ground forces and blank out their defensive barriers. We have them licked."

"You mean *you* have them licked." Slim looked his companion up and down with approval. "You sure are a different man, Dr. Buckley."

The real Buckley grabbed his arm. "Listen," he laughed, "until I get these whiskers off, you call me Pinky. You hear?"

"All right -- Pinky," chuckled Slim. "And what do we do next?"

"We go down to your bailiwick and feed me those sandwiches you told me about. I'm hungry. Then we audio Regional Headquarters and have these babies picked up for quick trial. I imagine they'll look nice under the cone swirls they use on spies."

Vardos was stirring, groaning, muttering curses. His eyes widened with horror as the rested on the man who was the real Buckley. Even with the pink disguise, he recognized him.

Pinky turned away and said to Slim: "Let's go downstairs. I want to juggle a pair of shears and your razor before we get the military on the job."

"O.K., Pinky," grinned the engineer. "And the eats."

THE END