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Fantastic

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ADVENTURES

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COVER

The BLUE TROPICS

ADVENTURE IN A WORLD
BENEATH ANTARCTICA
by JAMES NORMAN

AND STORIES BY
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ADVENTURES

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VOLUME 2
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APRIL
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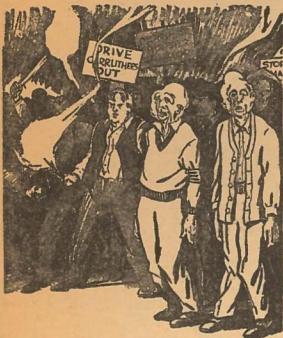
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Front cover painting by Frank R. Paul depicting a scene from *The Blue Tropics*
Back cover painting by Frank R. Paul

Illustrations by Julian S. Krupp, Frank R. Paul, Rod Ruth, Leo Morey, H. R. Hammond, Joe Sewall



A terrible thing happened when John Carruthers' experiment was complete. Twelve monstrous men stood before him, hopeless idiots. Whose was the crime? Read this significant story next month.



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The Editor's Notebook

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

EVER since FANTASTIC ADVENTURES' first issue appeared, you readers have been deluging the editorial desk with requests—yes, you guessed it—with requests for artist Frank R. Paul on the front cover. Well, you have him, this month, not only on the front cover, but on the back as well, and just to make it a Paul issue, he's inside too, with one of his famous black-and-whites. This isn't the last of Paul front covers and illustrations either. He'll be back—and how! So score another request fulfilled.

RECENTLY it was announced in the public prints that an electronic microscope had been invented, and was in successful use. Might we rather egotistically point out that our editorial columns of the past did a little prophetic theorizing on this invention? Also, a fellow by the name of Lyle D. Gunn beat the invention by many months. Talk about the old Bible prophets . . . !

MANY science fiction and fantasy stories have been written about the end of the world, and even the end of the solar system. The sun has died numberless times. Eando Binder once took it to the point of dull, sullen red. H. G. Wells got it to an insipid glow in his "Time Machine." But so far as we know, no writer has cooled it down to the point where it would be possible for a human being to live on it. Allowing for some means of overcoming the tremendous gravity pull of a world as large as the sun, why couldn't that body be the last outpost of man? It's an idea, but don't write it up, you authors, until you quiz the editor with a plot outline. Otherwise we'll have a hundred manuscripts based on one of our screwy ideas, and we'll be sorry we mentioned it!

IN connection with the latest Robert Bloch story in this issue, your editors trekked up to South Milwaukee in a little matter of 22 below zero to sit in on a meeting of a unique group of writers, some dozen in number, including Ralph Milne Farley (who was host), Robert Bloch, Arthur R. Tofte, and Jack West. All these latter are science fiction authors, and we expect some real yarns from their typewriters as a result. The first evidence of this meeting is the current Bloch story, turned out as a rush order.

COSMIC rays are always news and so is Caltech's Millikan, who has been tramping the world for eighteen years studying the variations in the mysterious radiation bombarding us from somewhere in outer space. Now in Tasmania, Dr. Millikan has recently gone into the broadcasting business, hooking up his cosmic ray counters with short-wave radio.

The trouble before has been that balloons carrying aloft the Geiger counters, (ionization tubes which detect the arrival of cosmic radiations) kept rising until they burst—and usually the recording apparatus was destroyed. But no one cares if that happens now, because each balloon also carries a streamlined short-wave radio transmitter which sends the clicks of the counter to a receiver on the ground, where they are automatically recorded on a tape.

Sort of like the stock market—or maybe a broadcast of the closing quotations from the Andromeda Nebula Exchange! Do you think we ought to buy Cosmic Tincan today, Mr. Millikan?

WHAT color are you? New discoveries in color pigments in human skin seem quite fantastic, but we assure you they are true. Formerly it was thought that Negroes and Orientals were darker than the white races because of some special pigment in their skin. Now scientists have found not one but two new skin pigments. But *all*, new and old, are present in the skins of all races the whole world over!

The first new pigment is *carotene*—the same chemical which is a component of carrots, corn, sweet potatoes and butter! This is what is responsible for the yellowish soles of white people. But it's not what gives the Oriental his characteristic color (so you vegetarians and raw carrot eaters can't claim to be Confucius!).

The darker races are dark because of a larger *proportion* of microscopic granules of *black melanin*. This pigment is found in the upper skin layers of all mankind, and it is only different amounts of it that make blondes lighter than brunettes, all women lighter than men, and Japanese, Hindus, Mulattoes, and Negroes each another shade darker than the white races. In short, we're all brothers—and sisters—under the skin! So be careful next time you classify yourself.



"These future men are bad bargainers. Imagine this toga for only 30 pieces of Caesar's gold!"

NEXT time you stand in front of a glass tank, looking at a fish, don't be fooled by his "cold-eyed stare." He's really a charming, amiable fellow, just dying to be friends!

That is the latest discovery to be made concerning the creatures which gape back at us from the damp side of the aquarium window. They're really just like people—when at home in native waters. There they get to know each other personally, *actually recognizing individual differences* (we would have trouble telling even a pike from a pickerel), and get quite chummy about the whole thing. But also like people, they have their social distinctions, too—based on how long one has been living, or should we say swimming, in a neighborhood!

Having found that these characteristics of behavior are controlled by the fore-brain of the fish, ever-curious scientists proceeded to remove that seat of sociability. True to expectations, the partly de-brained fish shoved off to become lonely hermits. But not on the schedule was their quickened response to food, an increased vigor in all reactions!

In short, the operation raised their intelligence at the same time that it made them lovers of solitude.

REMEMBER when we hinted that Nelson S. Bond would be a good man to watch? Well, we certainly were right. But we didn't quite expect another name to come up just as fast. That name is the already famous Lancelot Biggs, screwball officer on the space freighter, *Saturn*. Here is a character that has taken the hearts of readers of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES. He's the kind of a guy we all know, and all have met. Maybe he's gotten in your hair too—he's gotten in mine! But even so, you can't help liking him, and by heaven, he *does* know his stuff! And so, Lancelot Biggs will be with us often, we're sure.

DROPPING into the art department the other day, we saw Julian S. Krupa, who seems to be the fair-haired boy with you readers
(Continued on page 68)

The BLUE TROPICS

By JAMES NORMAN

I HAD just stalled the snowship out there somewhere in the bleak Antarctic and was heading aft to our two by four galley where Jimmie Greaseball was throwing together a mess of bully beef—when suddenly the Base radio CQ'ed frantically.

"It's Pot Belly after Trim," hollered Jimmie as I dashed back to the control cockpit, switching the sounder to band eleven.

"Snowship Number 4, ACPS," I stuttered into the radio mike. "Okay, come through."

My set gurgled. "Base calling Snowship 4. Stand in. Here is your connection with Commodore Davis."

I gritted my teeth as Old Man Davis' voice barked through the speaker. "Dooley! If you know what's good for you, turn that ship around. But don't come back without Lieutenant Trim in irons. You three men are under arrest wherever you are . . .?"

I threw a quick glance out of the window, my eye lighting on nothing but bleak Antarctic snowfields. We were as good as lost in them. For a moment I saw an outlandish penguin standing on an ice block. Then a sharp pistol report cracked from the snowship's upper deck; the penguin jumped as if a needle had stuck him and ran off.

"Dooley, where in the blazes are you?" the Old Man's voice crashed in my ear.

"I don't know," I called back, making my voice as soft and meek as possible. "We've been zigzagging across this forsaken icemap two days. Trim's idea."

Squaaak! The loudspeaker rattled like a dishpan. I could just imagine the Old Man on the other end. It never failed when someone reminded him of Lieutenant Trim.

"You tell Lieutenant Trim that Antarctica isn't so big that I can't find him!" blasted the Commodore. The tubes in my receiving set fairly crackled. "I'll settle him! There's such a thing as discipline in the Antarctica Colonization Police Service. Tell him we're not living in the age of individualism. This is 1960."

Afraid my cathode tube would break, I quickly signed off with Base, hoping my last remark, "Yeah, I can just imagine, you pot bellied old Englishman," didn't get through.

Then I headed aft along the narrow ten foot passage to the galley where the savory sizzle of frying corned beef tickled my nostrils.

The crazy redhead! Lieutenant Steve Trim's latest escapade was a whizzer and I was dumb enough to get hooked in it. I could just see my mechanic, Jimmie Greaseball, and myself getting thrown in the Antarctic klink for a couple of years because of Trim. As for Trim—he'd get two years for swiping the American

It was a world of weird menace the snowship broke into under Antarctic ice; menace that its crew combatted in a very unusual manner indeed...!

colony snowship that I was in charge of; six months for hijacking four cases of hospital Scotch and God only knows what for blacking the Old Man's eye.

WAS it worth it? Well, the fight was.

After breaking into the storeroom where Old Man Davis kept the Scotch under lock and key, Trim stood there, gulping up for lost time. He had an open fifth in each hand when I found him. Then the Old Man blew in like a cyclone.

"Trim, you're a disgrace to the Service!" he started off, putting it mildly. But the Old Man was shaking like a tuning fork hitting high C.

Now Trim had a healthy Gaelic dislike for Englishmen and Commodore Davis happened to be one of that tribe, even if only by extraction.

"Discipline!" the Commodore roared. "I'll drum discipline in you. I'll bring you dry, Trim!"

Lieutenant Trim danced around in high glee. "Sez who?" he shouted at the Old Man.

Suddenly his empty fist started from somewhere behind Ross Bay, swooped up and ended with a smack on the Old Man's spade beard. "Up the rebels!" Trim shouted jubilantly.

No great damage was done, but somehow, a couple of fists flew and then the Old Man merely slumped to the floor for a spell. Lieutenant Trim cooled off quickly and pinned his gaze on the sprawling officer. He sniffed the perfume of Scotch saturating the old man and shook his head, cracking, "Tsk! Tsk! Moderation, old chap."

I grabbed Trim, shaking him. "You'll get the klink for this!" I ranted.

"Have no worry, Dooley old boy," grinned Trim. "We're going places. Gimme a hand."

I helped him carry the cases of Scotch to the snowship before the other officers got wind of what had happened. But, I'm not responsible for Trim's subsequent actions. That includes the borrowing of a sixty



"Shoot that thing!" I shouted at Trim. "It's the brains of the creature!"

ton snowship and the discovery of the Blue Tropics only two days' distance from the American Antarctic colony at Ross Bay.

You'd understand better if you knew about Trim's two talents. Any bartender will vouch that he was born thirty years too late. He would have made a good Texas Ranger in the old days.

Trim has a positively psychic talent for smelling out good Scotch. He isn't human without it. And after a bottle or so, his second talent sprouts. Then he's the deadliest pistol shot on five continents. It's perfectly harmless, however, for he sticks to targets and small game, like penguins, which he keeps in a healthy state of consternation by just creasing them. One year, on the strength of some really good fourteen year old blend, he chalked up a clean hundred bull's-eyes in the International Pistol Meet.

You can imagine how he felt after signing a two year lease with the A.C.P.S., then finding there were no bars in New America, Antarctica. We had prohibition. The Commodore's stock of liquor was used for purely medicinal purposes.

Lieutenant Trim was fit to be tied. Day after day he sloshed around in the deep snows, barefooted. No. He wasn't cracked. He was doing his darndest to catch pneumonia and get stuck in the Base infirmary. But no luck, so he pulled this whizzer.

When he "borrowed" the snowship, Jimmie Greaseball was asleep inside, and I trailed along because I was personally responsible for the care and treatment of that duraluminum hulk.

Well, for two days we'd been zig-zagging across the snow fields, going nowhere in particular, Trim setting a new course every time he thought of it. He had himself fixed up outside on the top deck. He had one of those tubular steel deck chairs and a case of Scotch, and he was taking pot shots at stray penguins—just to scare 'em a little and keep his eye fine—which pastime, by the way, is also worth six months in the klink. Trim just didn't notice the temperature was forty below zero.

IT was a nice fantastic vacation until a few minutes after Commodore Davis radioed through, mentioning various things, from solitary to the guillotine. Jimmie and I had a war council in the galley. Trim, who seemed to get along without eating, wasn't there.

"We gotta get back," I insisted to Jimmie. "The Old Man is gonna send planes searching for us."

"Trim will shoot 'em down."

"Not when he finds that we've dumped the rest of the Scotch overboard," I said. "And that's what I'm going to do. Come on."

Had Jimmie and I fully considered Lieutenant Trim's boomerang of an answer, we would have thought twice about dumping that Scotch. We never did get rid of it, but it gave Trim an idea.

* * *

WHEN Steve Trim slid through the deck hold and down the iron ladder, we were just about to dump the

first case. Trim slid off his fur parka and gave Jimmie and me a suspicious once-over.

"Sabotage!" he roared. "And my best friend!"

"Come on, Trim," I coaxed. "We gotta get back to Base. They're sending an army out. I'm responsible for the ship."

"Back to that dried out oasis?" yelled Trim.

I bit my lips. "Okay, Trim, but I'm gonna get tough."

"Fine. But don't bother me until I'm through thinking," Trim grunted. He frowned a moment and suddenly he snapped his fingers. "Adelie Land! Bistros, bars, wine and cognac by the barrel!"

"You're crazy," I gasped. "That French colony's way over on the other side of the ice cap. We'd have to push through the Shackleton Inlet to pick up gas at the settlement there. And that's seventy miles."

Trim grinned beatifically and twirled his service pistol on his index finger, like a seniorita whirling a Spanish fan. "Dooley," he said, "I am with you to the very consummation of the world."

Back in my mind I figured that if Trim ever went to sleep we could do something like clonging him with a hammer and locking him in the galley, while we returned to Base. But—

"I'm staying below," announced Trim. "I'm going to figure out a fancy way to hop us over the King Haakon Plateau to the other side of the Pole. We won't have to jog back through the Shackleton Inlet. We're not far from the Pole now. Why go back?"

The way Trim figured out was certainly fancy. In a couple of hours we were running flush into the Beardmore Glacier.

"That's pretty, Dooley," said Trim. "Look at that solid river of ice. Aren't you glad you came?"

"Steve," I said, getting the worry off my mind. "It ain't solid. This ship is no good on glaciers. We'll flop in a snow-covered crevasse. The cards are stacked against these busses in—"

Through my window in the control cockpit, I suddenly saw the whole area of crystalline snow buckle under the ship. Glacial spray spouted up in powdery clouds, picking the spectrum out of the sunlight.

"Look out!" I shouted. I wasn't afraid, but I was paralyzed.

Trim grabbed the ship controls as we nosed over painfully and started downward. The next minute I figured we'd be buried in a blackout of tons of ice.

INSTEAD, the strangest part of it was that we didn't stop. The old bus ran along, picking up speed on a twenty degree slant. It was dark as Hades, but I could make out what seemed to be an enlarged tunnel, and we were in it.

"Brakes don't work," Trim said.

"Reverse gears!" I yelled.

"And rip 'em out!" hissed Trim. He was hanging grimly to the wheel as we plunged through the darkness. Sweat burst in beads on his brow. His features had a weird slant under the small control cockpit lamp.

"Maybe this is a short cut," he shouted.

I heard the grating of ice or rock against the hull exterior. The ship gave an awful bump. I prayed the eight foot tires would hold out.

"There's a light!" cried Trim.

We raced into the frame of light like an old time amusement park roller coaster. Suddenly the light hit me between the eyes like a Dry Martini, because it was blue daylight.

Trim maneuvered the snowship as we burst out of the tunnel. The ship bounced and heaved and went plunging headlong.

Trim's hands twisted among the controls, darting here and there. He yanked the wheel and sent the ship on a wide curve, braking the speed, until he geared it down. We stopped against a pile of jagged rocks.

Then all three of us gaped for a minute. We saw a smooth, yet solid blue sky hanging a thousand feet overhead. There was no sun. When we climbed out of the snowship, a blast of moist tropical air hit us.

Jimmie started stretching the kinks out of him, when suddenly he turned green with fright under the blue haze. "Flying crocodiles!" he yammered.

Then I saw the amazing things. Two gigantic, scaly crocodiles with wings fore and aft flopping down through the air at us! Their bat-like wings thrashed the air.

"Get down!"

The ugly creatures swooped over the ship, wheeling clumsily past us in a rush of air and flew away, croaking through their crocodile mouths.

We picked ourselves off the ground shakily. Trim's face was as colorless as an iceberg, but it was covered with sweat. His sharp eyes watched the weird creatures disappear in the distance. "Now I didn't . . . drink that much," Trim whispered.

"Let's get out of here . . . quick!" said Jimmie.

Trim dropped a reassuring hand on the lad's shoulder. Then he rubbed his own short-cropped, red hair, "By Gar! It's the first time I've had my eyes open all the time I'm going someplace, and still don't know where I am."

"Maybe we're dead," I said.

"No," said Trim, suddenly. "It's a Pink Tropics."

"Hey, there's the hole we came out of," yelled Jimmie, pointing at a cavern yawning in the side of a solid icy escarpment on which our end of the blue sky rested.

All I could figure by this time was that we were at the beginning of a queer land which no geography on earth had ever dreamed of. About five hundred feet up the cliff the blue sky started. It was dome-shaped and covered the entire land.

"That sky is ice," Trim muttered. "It's the polar ice-cap. This place is just a bubble underneath it. That's why everything is blue."

"What do you mean?"

"DON'T you understand?" grinned Trim. "The ice-cap is composed of millions of fractured

planes and crystals. The sunlight from Antarctica reflects down here. The ice withholds the normal color rays, letting only the blue or ultra light come through. . . . Don't ask me why it's so warm here though. Maybe that's reflected."

I could see vaguely where the dome curved down in the distance. From where I stood the ground sloped toward a shallow valley filled with vivid blue vegetation. I could barely make out the enormous outlines of blue trees or tropical plants.

I took one look down there, thought of the flying crocodiles and grabbed Trim. "Steve," I pleaded. "Let's go back up the hole. I'm responsible for the ship. The Old Man will give me hell if I don't bring it back. We can navigate the incline."

Trim, however, was already slipping off his snow furs and rolling up his sleeves.

Then I tried another tack. "I think it's too hot here," I grumbled. "I'm from Montreal. I like cold weather."

Trim swung an arm around my shoulder. His long face broke into a boyish smile. "Dooley, my lad, I've got it all fixed. The only way we can even things with the Old Man is by discovering new territory. We're going to explore."

I'VE heard of fellows being at home with pink elephants so it didn't surprise me at all the way Trim took to the Blue Tropics. He was as cool as a cucumber—and about as reassuring.

"Dooley," he repeated. "We're explorers. Now get in the ship and radio the Commodore, if it still works, and tell him we're down here. We'll be back after we stake a claim."

"I don't like it much," I grumbled. "I'm responsible for the ship. How can I leave it?"

Trim's fingers snapped. "Who's going to steal it? The flying crocodiles?"

I shivered at the thought of them.

"Go ahead, Dooley," he said. "Hey, Jimmie! Get the duty kits ready. And take all the Scotch!"

There was nothing for me to do but climb into the ship while Jimmie packed. The radio worked all right but reception was weak and I CQ-ed for a long time for contact. I guess we shouldn't have radioed back to Base. When I asked the Old Man if he knew anything about a Blue Tropics and flying crocodiles under the ice-cap he exploded.

"Dooley!" he raved. "You're drunk! You'll get the same as Lieutenant Trim when I find you."

"I wish to heaven you could," I radioed back.

"Where in the tarnation are you?" the Old Man blasted.

"Well, we started for Adelle Land . . ."

"What!"

"Adelle Land," I followed up. "We got to the Beardmore and now we're in the Blue Tropics. That's what Trim calls them."

Yowie! . . . A yellow flash crossed my eyes. Fine glass blew in all directions. The Old Man had done

it at last—shattered the cathode tube in my receiver. It served him right. Englishmen think talking into a mike is like hog calling.

I left the ship and caught up with Trim and Jimmie. "The Old Man doesn't seem to think we're where we are," I said.

"No imagination," Trim answered.

We marched a good three hours true South, which was about right angles to the magnetic South registered on my compass. From all calculations Trim was right about us being under the Haakon ice-cap. We were heading for the bottom side of the South Pole itself.

Jimmie ran ahead, full of kid inquisitiveness. We followed the moderate incline of the land until we came to a point where the valley levelled off somewhat. Suddenly I saw Jimmie bounce about fourteen feet vertically, come down, hit the ground feet first and bounce again.

A moment later I stepped on the thick spongy substance, the color of blue coral, that made up the floor of the valley. I shot in the air twenty feet, going up and down frantically. "What the hell is this?" I yelled when I finally came to a stop.

"Look at me!" cried Jimmie.

I THREW a startled glance at the boy. He bounced twenty feet off the ground, doing a fancy double somersault with a half twist. Down he came, feet first and went up again in a perfect half gainer.

"Cut it, Jimmie!" roared Trim. "You'll bust that Scotch." He made a frantic dive at Jimmie just as the lad was about to come down on his head. He grabbed Jimmie's right leg, giving a sudden twist so Jimmie landed on his feet.

"That was too damn close," breathed Trim.

"What's happened to me?" cried Jimmie. "I feel like I'm on a spring board."

Trim dropped to his hands and knees, examining the earth. "Resilient!" he grinned. "It's not dirt at all but plant life that reacts to our weight pressure.* We've gotta learn to walk all over. Whatever lives here must be terribly light so as not to cause pressure, or extremely heavy to be able to counteract the moss upthrust."

"How do you know so much?" said Jimmie, not without sarcasm.

"When you're old enough," Trim answered, good-naturedly, "I'll tell you all about books and things."

"I think we ought to get back to Base." I decided then and there. "How am I to know that my next step isn't going to land me on my noggin?"

"Why Dooley, this is fun," laughed Trim. "Come on."

After we got the hang of things, going wasn't bad at all. I bounced around like a kangaroo. I covered forty feet at a time. But Trim was expert. He leaped

sixty feet at one shot. We traveled faster than the snowship in high gear.

When I got over my first elation at being able to navigate like a human pogo stick I became uneasy again. If you think a blue sky and Blue Tropics are anything, just get a load of this. In about an hour we hit what Trim called, "the regimented jungles." Instead of being tightly twisted and matted, the vegetation was cultivated in even rows that extended for miles. Everything was very neat, like a model orchard, but what a clash of blue colors!

There were only two types of vegetation: tall spidery blue ferns with saw-toothed leaves and gigantic windmill plants. The plants upset me. They stood about twenty feet high, with smooth, thick trunks that were a transparent blue save for red veins. At the very top of each plant there were six long, flat leaves resembling the windmill blades on the old fashioned autogyro planes.

The roots of the Gyroplants were *above* ground. The ends were shaped in little knob-like cushioned feet. The plants were apparently very light to be supported on such flimsy roots.

"We've got some fancy farmers," Trim observed.

"Yeah, too fancy." I was positive we shouldn't have left the ship. I was on the verge of grumbling again when all at once I heard the wildest outcry—

We turned in time to see a Gyroplant wrap a long leathery blade around Jimmie's leg. It pulled for all it was worth. Immediately another plant reached out, grabbing the kid's arm, yanking him in the opposite direction.

"They're tearing me apart!" screamed Jimmie.

Trim whipped out his service pistol and blazed away.

"Hurry!" Jimmie screamed again, hopelessly. He looked like a rabbit tangled in a mess of gigantic conveyor belts.

"Use your axe," Trim snapped at me.

I don't know what happened to my own fears in that instant. I tore the axe out of my duty kit and edged in under the tentacle blades of the Gyroplants. I lopped off one plant blade after another. Then I slashed through the transparent trunks as if they were butter, until they were heaped at my feet.

Trim grabbed Jimmie, pulling him out of the tangle.

"WHOOEE!" shivered Jimmie. "I wanna go back. These things are alive!"

"Cannibal plants, maybe," said Trim, slowly. He smiled wryly. "Better uncork another fifth. My aim was bad."

I wiped the reddish sap from the plants off the blade of my axe. Then I saw Trim staring at the Gyroplants. I followed his gaze. The two plants had wilted; they were shriveled into a mess of slimy pulp.

"Listen, Trim," I said. "This is no place for us. I like cold weather where things don't rot in a minute."

"Now, Dooley, what kind of an explorer are you? Do you think Saint Patrick turned back because he

* Certain types of moss or byrophytic plants of wiry nature have decided resilient characteristics, particularly Iceland lichens. Tropic mosses react almost like rubber.—Ed.

saw a few snakes?"

"But these ain't snakes. Not even blue ones."

Those Gyroplants had me scared, although I gradually got over it as we continued Southward. Jimmie stuck pretty close. He was too frightened to do somersaults on his own. I also noticed Trim was pretty careful in choosing the places where we landed and after every second bounce he oiled up with Scotch.

By and by we weren't going true South. We zig-zagged. Sometimes crocodile birds would fly overhead, croaking and swinging away. I wondered if it ever got dark. It felt like suppertime but I didn't want to be among the Gyroplants at night.

"I don't think there's any night down here for another couple of months," said Trim. "It's the same as up in Antarctica; half a year day, half a year night."

"But it's bluer," I growled. "Yeah, it gets bluer as we go South."

"Sure. The ice dome concentrates the light in one center like a magnifying glass."

Then we noticed the temperature. It was Jimmie's discovery. He carried a pocket thermopile for measuring fractional changes in temperature.

"At the ship it showed 75.1 Fahrenheit. Now it's 85," he suddenly blurted out. "And when the Gyroplant grabbed me I looked at the thermopile to see if it was busted. It was 80.3 then."

"Gimme that," snapped Trim.

He began bouncing around, a couple of hundred feet back, a few hundred feet ahead, then to the side. Each time he landed he read the thermopile. Jimmie and I thought he had gone off his nut.

"Exactly like latitudes," Trim finally announced. "The temperature goes up a tenth every hundred meters South. It goes down in the opposite direction. Another eight or ten miles and it'll be 95 degrees in the shade."

"That's too darned hot for me, a soul from Montreal," I spilled.

But all my grumbling didn't help. As long as Trim had Scotch left we went South, even if he didn't lead us in an exactly straight line.

Meanwhile the ferns and giant Gyroplants thinned out. Now there were fruit plants in alternate rows with the Gyroplants. They bore an odd melon-shaped fruit. Trim sliced one open. He tried it and passed half on to me. It was mealy, yet it had a strange exotic saffron flavor.

Now I was sure we'd run into something more alive than plants. I didn't know exactly what, but I couldn't help feeling that they'd have mouths.

"You're right," said Trim. "Someone who can *think*. Haven't you noticed, except for the flying crocodiles, we haven't seen an animal in the Blue Tropics? You don't see wild animals in cornfields either."

I didn't ask why. I didn't have time. Suddenly I saw Trim bouncing away, sixty feet at a time. I bounced after him while farther ahead I heard what startled him. Someone screamed—a human voice.

"I'M going nuts!" I shouted. "The Gyroplant is running!"

It was *actually running*. I felt my blood suddenly turn cold. The plant streaked by on padded roots. Its gyro blades flopped up and down, propelling it along the earth. As I neared it I saw something else wrapped in one of its tentacle blades. "A girl!" I gasped.

She was putting up a furious struggle against the Gyroplant. She jabbed at it with a short knife. Then I saw what she was aiming at! It was an oval, plasmic thing that rode on a golden saddle hooked to the trunk of the monster plant.

"Shoot that thing," I shouted at Trim.

Trim's pistol barked . . . Once . . . The object on the saddle rolled and tumbled to the ground, hardly bouncing. The pink Gyroplant stopped instantly.

"It's still got the girl," cried Trim, running at the plant. Tentacle blades reached for Trim, coiling around his body. He fired again.

"The axe!" Jimmie yelled.

I charged in, hacking wildly with the axe. I cut through the trunk of the plant and the coiling blades immediately relaxed their hold upon Trim and the girl. Then the plant wilted like the one that had grabbed Jimmie.

"They're immune to bullets," gasped Trim. "But this thing isn't. . . ." He poked the plasmic object that had fallen from the saddle.

My eyes gaped at the horrible, incipient blob of jelly that quivered in death throes. It was an oversized human brain with fissures and lobes; but it was covered with a bright blue transparent gelatin envelope. From the underside, a mass of tenuous nerve ends protruded.

The girl was staring at it too, and then she looked at Trim and me, her glance packed with frightened wonder.

"Not bad," I breathed, gulping in the curve of her slim body. It looked doubly lovely as a result of the short pink fiber tunic covering her from below her tanned shoulders to just above the knees. I wondered how the Blue Tropics had stayed undiscovered so long with women like her in it.

Trim pointed at the dying brain. "What is it? Cerebral?"

The girl was bewildered and frightened. "Porpe! she cried excitedly.

Trim nodded. "Cerebral," he repeated.

"Cerebl," the girl repeated, wonderingly.

"She's got her own language, I guess," I told Trim.

"Hey, look here!" yelled Jimmie. He messed around in the slime that was left of the pink Gyroplant and pulled out the saddle. "It's pure gold!"

JIMMIE uncovered the pure gold saddle and the girl excitedly pointed South, crying, "Porpe! Porpe!" It didn't make sense until Trim explained that it meant danger or was the local name for the Cerebrals.

We knocked off exploring to break open another

fifth of Scotch and slit a tin of bully beef. It was a lot of fun watching the girl's unusual interest in the bully beef. Trim was disappointed. He spent a good twenty minutes explaining the superior merits of Scotch in English but the girl didn't take to it.

That is where I came in. I took up the problem of her education. I got her to agree that her name was Lulu and mine was Dudu. I half explained where we had come from by shivering and pointing at the ice sky. Lulu immediately shivered sympathetically. She glanced at the hideous remains of the blue Cerebral, crying, "Porpe." Finally I put a ban on that word. It meant about everything under the sun in her language.

Half an hour later we'd packed up again, and turned South, but Lulu got very stubborn—she just wouldn't go! She repeatedly pointed at the remains of the Gyroplant and then toward the South. I fully agreed with her, but Trim didn't.

"Nonsense," he snapped. "Lulu's people probably have a barnful of these ambulating plants and she doesn't want us to go around shooting and slicing them up. They ride on these things."

"She's afraid, I tell you."

"Trim's right," cut in Jimmie. "Lulu probably belongs to a harem. She doesn't want to be caught with us."

"We're going South," decided Trim. "And we're taking Lulu. I'm going to find out where that gold comes from."

Perhaps I wasn't stubborn enough about turning back because Lulu was hanging on my arm. Nevertheless I was danged worried; I had begun to nurse up a great respect for Gyroplants and ambulating brains.

But since I am the kind of a guy who would follow Trim anywhere as long as he has enough Scotch and his pistol, I gave in.

We bounced on, me clasping Lulu's hand, until we banged into a temperature of 95 in the shade. Lulu was awfully upset. Suddenly the ground slanted downward sharply and we broke from the Blue Tropics into full view of the first solidly blue city I've ever seen.

"Just like I said. Lulu's town," Trim rapped out calmly.

He was by no means a cautious explorer. He walked us right into the city despite Lulu's violent protests. As we set foot on the first street Lulu whimpered, "Porpe, Porpe," but was too scared to leave us.

The city buildings were all squat. They had low domes and curving translucent quartz walls. I could barely see through them. From a central square, an enormous dome with thousands of facets resembling the compound eye of an insect frowned upon the rest of the city.

I suddenly felt heat and noticed blue light radiating from the huge dome which threw off a luster like the flash of a large prismatic fire-opal.

"Wow—the South Pole!" shouted Jimmie, hopping around.

"Your crazy sister," I snapped.

"Well, it's the power plant," said Trim, slowly. "I'll bet they get heat out of that from somewhere underneath. It probably controls and refracts volcanic power."

"Let's get a closer look," said Jimmie.

A few hundred yards in the city, we crossed a broad plaza. Then we began seeing people.

Man! Talk about fantastic Blue Tropics—this went one better. Five men and women, dressed like Lulu, buzzed by us, one after another . . . And they ignored us. They wore gold saddles strapped to the small of their backs and different colored Cerebrals rode in the saddles.

A WOMAN, plus the extra brain, bumped into me. Then she straightened out her course without saying a word and streaked across the square. The jade green gelatin-incased Cerebral on her back twisted slightly as the woman passed me. The eyeless plasm stared at me, questioningly.

"I'm getting out," I raved.

Trim grabbed my arm in time to keep me from running plumb into a great Gyroplant that swung across the square holding a squirming man aloft. The Cerebral riding on the saddle hooked to the plant also stared at me.

"Quick! Follow me," Trim shouted, running after the Gyroplant as it turned a corner. Suddenly he crashed head on with an old man. A blue Cerebral tumbled from the man's back, rolling on the ground. In amazement, I watched the old man lay on his side in the street until the Cerebral crawled back into the saddle on its nerve-like legs.

"What's the matter with you?" Trim barked at the man.

The old man stared blankly. Suddenly he opened his mouth, shrieking, "Porpe!"

In an instant the plaza filled with others like himself. They surrounded us and stood sideways so the Cerebrals on their backs could stare at us.

Trim whirled toward Lulu. "You tell me. What is it? A joke?"

I looked at Lulu. Then I noticed that something had happened to her. She was completely changed. She stared at us without recognition, her eyes dulled by the same blank stupor I saw in the eyes of the other humans surrounding us.

"Talk, Lulu!" I cried, shaking her arm.

She looked at me as if I were a complete stranger.

"Oh, nuts," hollered Trim.

We were entirely hemmed in by the mechanical men and women carrying Cerebrals. They flocked into the plaza. The colored Cerebrals glared at us in an eyeless fashion. The blue Cerebral on the old man Trim had crashed into seemed to be trying to think something into us. The eyeless gaze settled on each of us while the blue plasm shuddered.

"I guess it's me they're worried about," said Trim. "They've never seen red hair and freckles. That's something."

Finally the old man with the blue Cerebral signalled Trim to follow him.

"They're peaceful," grunted Trim. "Come on. We'll see the chief brain and I'll put over a deal. I can furnish 'em ice from upper Antarctica in exchange for gold."

I didn't know what to make of it. Lulu followed us very meekly and we followed the old man through a number of blue streets, finally coming to the edge of the city. Before I knew what had occurred, we walked right into a big blue walled corral. We met some other men with blue Cerebrals.

They took us to an inner corral and left us there.

"They locked the door," yelled Jimmie, battering his weight against the quartz portal. "We're prisoners."

"We'll bounce out," said Trim, slowly.

But we couldn't bounce. The ground was still pink. Only it was quartz; not the resilient plant sponge we found in the Pink Tropics. "Now, look what you walked us into," I growled at Trim.

Trim scratched his red hair thoughtfully. Then he fumbled in his pockets. "We're all right," he said. "Lucky I remembered to bring my deck of Casino cards."

BEING a prisoner in a blue quartz corral with Trim is an expensive proposition. Before a week was up he had me on the cuff for twenty-five thousand dollars. We played plenty of cards and we wondered a lot about the Cerebrals. They brought us food regularly, but didn't bother us otherwise. We worried some about what they were planning to do with us. Trim, of course, showed no particular interest in getting out because he still had seven or eight bottles of Scotch.

We weren't alone in the corral. There were about twenty abject creatures, men and women, penned in with us. I discovered they were Lulu's folks who lived in a city Northwest of the Pink Tropics. They seldom talked and they wore the golden saddles all the time. Their faces were set with a pitiful, stupefied expression.

Lulu was like that also. Once I thought she'd come out of the stupor when she drank a thimble full of Trim's Scotch. I kept an eagle eye on her so the Cerebrals wouldn't harness a gold saddle on her.

Each day the Cerebrals rode into the corral on the stupefied humans. They dismounted, turned the humans loose and crawled into another saddle, like weird horsemen choosing fresh mounts.

"They're like livestock," I told Trim.

Trim shuffled his deck of cards. "It's not the Scotch, really," he gravely announced. "It all makes sense."

"Maybe," I rasped. "But why did Lulu get like them? I kind of like the gal."

"I know why," said Trim, calmly.

"You!"

"Yeah. Her mind is blanked by the Cerebrals.

They've got a hypnotic control over the humans like her. Maybe the electric spasm in the Cerebral is greater than in the human brain. Anyway, once they get into the saddles, they put pressure on the spinal nerves of the humans and use them like we'd operate a machine."

My hair stood up on ends. "Why don't they get us?"

Trim shrugged indifferently. "Don't know," he said. "They're interesting though. My guess is that they're the logical development of the amoeba or some other protoplasmic rhizopod. Perhaps a queer trick in evolution down here fixed it so that they never developed bodies, only brains. That's why they've dominated the Gyroplants and humans. They use them for tools and slaves, for transportation and labor."

"What about the tutti-frutti colors?" I demanded.

"Protection," said Trim. "The gelatin acts like bone around our brain. I figure the colors are their caste system of intelligence. Blue is most common. The lowest brain. Orange is next. The jade ones are specialists, probably technical. The pink are hunters. The purple are probably the highest class; they have best control over their human mounts. . . . What color do you think the Commodore would be if he was down here where brains really counted?"

I wondered, since the Cerebrals were so intelligent, why they didn't pick on us. They hadn't even bothered to look at our guns and supplies. Sometimes they stood at the corral gate and fastened a queer eyeless stare on one of the concentrated humans inside, until the poor creature came to them, meek as a lamb. Maybe they were afraid of us? But then. . . .

I suddenly saw Lulu get up from where she was sleeping and walk across the corral toward one of the Cerebrals. She automatically picked up a gold saddle, fastening it to her slim back.

"Lulu!" I screamed, scrambling after her.

She was deaf. She didn't notice when I grabbed her. Instead, she bit and clawed, scratching my face wildly. She wanted to get away from me—to serve that jade colored Cerebral! I just couldn't understand it.

"Lulu, look at me!" I cried. Then I pinned her arms and dragged her back.

"Sit on her," snapped Trim. "They're going to saddle her."

OUT of the corner of my eyes I saw the jade Cerebral at the gate set up a horrible plasmic vibration. It sent a tingling chill down my spine. Other Cerebrals came to the gate. They peered in at us, I felt them trying to think something into me. I'll never forget that moment, the feeling, the being looked at by a brain without eyes.

And then, after a minute, they went away.

Trim's lean face was creased with worry. "Give Lulu a shot," he said.

I practically poured the Scotch down Lulu's pretty throat. In fact we all helped ourselves. We'd been

using the stuff all along instead of water.

Strangely, the Scotch instantly brought Lulu back to her right senses. She shuddered and wept. Then she recognized me and threw her arms around my neck.

"By Gar! I've got it," Trim suddenly yelled. "It's the Scotch!"

"Cut it out," I snapped. "This is serious."

"So am I. Listen—they couldn't hypnotize us because we've been drinking. Their brains couldn't connect with ours. . . . Get it? If we had enough Scotch we could liberate all the concentrated humans here."

He jumped among the bottles of Scotch that were left, counting them. There were six full fifths. "We gotta get out of here," he rasped. "It's getting so I don't like it."

"The Cerebrals!" yelled Jimmie.

I glanced up and saw three purple Cerebrals ride into the corral. They ignored Trim, Jimmie and me; but they put the evil eye on Lulu. Trim held me back or I would have butted them over.

"Hold it," snapped Trim. "Look at Lulu. She's not obeying them."

It was true. The evil eye didn't work on her. She stuck by my side.

The Cerebrals got terribly excited. Their purple gelatin puffed and quivered. Then they took a passing look at our guns. I saw Trim's face turn pale when they examined a bottle of Scotch. They seemed worried about it. Then they had one of their mounts pick up the bottle, and off they went with it.

"The thieves!" ranted Trim. He jumped up and down like a mad hornet. "Swipe my bottle of Scotch, will they!"

"Let's get out before they return and take it all," I shouted.

"That bottle of Scotch and the gold," roared Trim.

"Damn the gold," I raved. "We're going."

"All right, but I'll come back . . . thieves," continued Trim. At the same instant he went into motion. He grabbed the human guard at the corral gate. He tried to bowl the blue Cerebral from the saddle on his back. The Cerebral hung on, making its human mount battle back with mechanical fury.

I dived and pinned the guard's legs. Then Trim's versatile knuckles finished the fellow with a single sharp crack on the chin. Lulu used her ivory handled knife on the Cerebral.

Jimmie blasted the gate lock with his pistol. "Quick, the stuff!" he shouted.

WE grabbed our supplies and shot out of the corral and headed for the Blue Tropics like the proverbial bats out of hell. In a moment we were on that good old resilient ground, bouncing away faster than a fleet of kangaroos. Lulu led the way.

"My people city," she explained breathlessly.

I put in a running kick. "To the snowship," I yelled. "We're going to Base."

"We're going with Lulu," cut in Trim. "But we'll

get the snowship and ride to her town. I haven't got the gold yet."

We got about sixteen degrees Fahrenheit of bouncing between us and the Cerebral city when Jimmie accidentally bounced down on a pink Gyroplant. It was stationary because there was no Cerebral around. Nevertheless, a half a dozen creepy tentacles coiled around the lad, squeezing the daylight out of him before we heard a sound.

Jimmie had the axe. It looked like curtains for him until Trim snatched Lulu's knife. He charged the monstrous plant, slashing and ripping at the spidery blades. He was drenched in the reddish sap spurting from the gashes his knife made.

Suddenly Jimmie's axe fell loose. I cut in beside Trim, grabbed the axe and hacked through the trunk of the plant. Jimmie dropped to the ground as the plant withered. I was afraid he was dead—crushed.

"Jimmie!" I gasped. "You okay?"

Jimmie stirred painfully and finally sat up. He was as white as a ghost.

"He's okay," said Trim, slowly. "Had the wind knocked out of him."

Suddenly Trim let out a low whistle. I looked up and saw him wiping the red juice from the plant off his face and arms. Then he abruptly stuck his finger in the pinkish mass of withered Gyroplant. He took it back, licking it. His face quickly lit up.

"Dooley," he cried jubilantly. "It tastes like port!"

WE were given such a tremendous ovation when we arrived at Lulu's city that Trim got over his disappointment that the port from the Gyroplants wasn't alcoholic enough to suit him. The people turned out in droves when we brought the snowship to the city's edge after having picked it up some seven miles to the East.

The Urians, that's the moniker they used, were more than friendly. They paraded us to beautiful quarters and handed us the keys to the city. Lulu's story of the Cerebrals, Trim's red hair and the snowship had them thinking we were incarnate gods.

Trim, of course, was the most god-like. His poker face had them guessing. Every time they saw him consulting a bunch of strange, fifth-size glass bottles they thought it was some fancy magic, maybe an oracle.

After a few days we were left pretty much on our own. I spent a lot of time with Lulu, learning the ins and outs of the city. It was a small place, modeled after the Cerebral city. But the Urians were a free and intelligent people. They had libraries, workshops and extensive farms up along the 76 degree in the shade slopes. They were ruled, not by a single chief, but by an elected council of City Fathers who didn't mind at all that we were gods.

I grew uneasy about this god business when Lulu told me the Cerebrals made periodic raids on her city for new slaves. The Urians had no defense against the Cerebral hypnotic power. They were pulled out of

their houses into the waiting coils of the Gyroplants. Now they expected us to save them! Then I heard the Cerebrals were expected in another week and I couldn't find Trim.

Finally he showed up with one of the eighty-year-old City Fathers he had gotten pretty thick with. He called the old fellow Captain Fritz, which pleased everyone.

Right then and there Trim asked me if there was any wood in the Urian territory. Fritz didn't know what wood was.

"Wood!" I rasped. "What for? . . . We'd better be thinking about getting out, instead of lumber."

"Nuts," snapped Trim, "I want oak planks."

"Well, there's none," I growled. The Urians, by the way, did plenty of mining of copper and iron and had developed minor types of machinery. But they didn't have oak plants.

"That's going to make it tough," mumbled Trim. Then he faced me again, announcing, "Dooley, you are getting a promotion, nevertheless."

I stared at him kind of dazed.

"You're going to be a Major," Trim beamed.

"Major what?" I gagged.

Trim patted Captain Fritz on the back. The old gent blushed proudly as Trim explained. "Yeah, a Major. Old Cap Fritz has twenty boys waiting behind the town. You're gonna teach them to shoot."

I practically choked over this.

"The foundry just turned out twenty blunderbusses designed by Lieutenant Trim," grinned Trim. "They're not so hot, but they'll shoot."

"Say," I blustered. "How about Antarctica? It's hot here. My blood gets thin."

"And Lulu?" demanded Trim.

"I'll take her along," I answered. I had already made up my mind about hitching up with Lulu soon as we got back to Base. "And anyway, I want to get Lulu out of here before those Cerebrals raid. We haven't any Scotch . . ."

TRIM flashed me a mysterious, amused smile. "Have no worry, my lad," he grinned. "No worry. Be a good boy and I'll let you in on a secret pretty soon."

Then I didn't see Trim around the quarters which had been allotted us until Jimmie informed me that Trim had the city forge grind out ten axes and had disappeared toward the Pink Tropics with ten very frightened Urian men.

While I trained Captain Fritz and his twenty youngsters to shoot with crudely built percussion guns that knocked each guy back six feet every time he fired, Trim returned. His men were dragging copper buckets filled with reddish liquid.

"Port," stated Trim. "Good stuff from the Gyroplants. We massacred 'em." He disappeared in a windowless building near the edge of the town and wouldn't let me in.

I wished the Commodore could see how industrious

Trim had become. And how sober. He actually walked into that building without a whisper of Scotch on his breath. We were out of the stuff. It worried me to no end because without Scotch Trim couldn't hit the outside ring on a target. I couldn't imagine anything as mild as port getting him inside the second ring.

"I guess Lieutenant Trim isn't thinking much about Cerebrals," I told Jimmie the next day. "He's becoming an industrialist."

"You've got another guess coming," laughed Jimmie.

"Cut the mystery!"

Suddenly old Captain Fritz crashed into my rooms. His face was alive with greenish terror and excitement.

"Call army!" he shouted hastily, and dashed out.

I grabbed my pistol holster on the run. I knew it. The Cerebrals! Outside, I was buffeted about by frantic Urians. I saw a few people tying themselves to posts; others ran screaming through the streets, or hid in houses.

Captain Fritz rushed by with his twenty riflemen. They were frightened to death, yet they had a simple courageous faith that moved them forward. I knew it was faith in Trim. I trailed them down to the edge of the city.

"Get prepar—fia!" Captain Fritz's high falsetto pierced the pink air.

"Line your men up!" I yelled at him.

A hundred yards beyond the city limits six ambulating Gyroplants came thrashing out of the Blue Tropics. Their gyro-blades whirled clumsily. Then they stopped. I saw the gold saddles, hooked to their trunks, glisten in the blue light. Suddenly I felt that creepy Cerebral gaze pass over me.

Captain Fritz's men leveled their guns. Poor guns they were at best, but they gave me a feeling of elation. That was Trim's army. Men I had trained. At last these people were ready to put up a fight. Now I looked toward Captain Fritz.

"Fia!" ordered the Captain.

Silence.

"Fire! You lugheads," I screamed, pulling my own pistol.

My finger numbed on the trigger when I saw the blunderbusses slip from the hands of the young men. One by one they broke ranks and walked stupidly toward the Cerebrals, drawn by that irresistible eyeless gaze. Even Captain Fritz tottered after them, looking like a broken man.

Abruptly, without rhyme or reason, Captain Fritz returned to the rifles, gathered them up, stacked them neatly. Then he hurried off after the others.

"Fritz!" I blasted at the top of my voice. He suddenly turned, staring at me stupidly.

He pursed his lips and in a strange falsetto uttered, "*Glurp!*" and then went on.

Lulu ran past me. Suddenly my vision blurred; she was running toward the weaving tentacles of the Gyroplants.

"LULU! Stop!" I screamed. My service pistol barked. Hot slugs of lead whistled around the Gyroplants, but none hit the blue Cerebrals. Instantly I knew that I must save Lulu. I reloaded wildly.

"Trim! Trim!" I shouted hoarsely. For a moment my nerves jarred. My eyes were torn from Lulu by the creeping hypnosis of a single quivering blug plasm. Giddiness swept me. I was walking toward the Thing, powerless to stop. Then the leathery tentacles lifted me from the ground, twisting me overhead, squeezing. The nerves in my head throbbled maddeningly. I felt seared by an electric charge. The breath was gone from my lungs.

I vaguely saw other plants lift the Urians into the air. For an instant I saw Trim charging from the windowless house. He was trapped. His gun still flapped in its holster. The thoughts reeled and ground in my agonized brain.

Six rapid shots shattered the hideous air. The pain in my head stopped abruptly.

I saw the blue Cerebrals quiver violently and roll from their golden saddles. A hundred yards away, Trim calmly blew the smoke from his pistol barrel. He had fired from the hip.

Other Urians staggered and poured out of the windowless house behind Trim. It was the reserve army with axes. They slashed victoriously at the transfixed Gyroplants, cutting them to pulp.

Lulu flung herself into my arms when I was freed.

Trim cut in, throwing his arms around Captain Fritz and myself. He smelled like a brewery. "You will all get medals," he shouted happily. "Captain Fritz, I pin a medal on your scraggy chest and award you the rank of Major on the field of battle!"

"You're drunk, Trim," I gasped.

"Why Dooley, you don't mean that, do you?"

"How about it? Explain!"

Trim waved haphazardly toward the windowless house.

I couldn't hear him talk anymore. The Urian population poured out of the city and literally went mad. They held four separate parades which lasted six hours and they threw a banquet in for good measure. They made Trim Number One god. Jimmie, I and Captain Fritz's army were satellite saints.

When I finally got Trim aside again, I told him Jimmie had collected the six pure gold saddles from the Gyroplants and we were ready to shoot back to the New America Base.

"Fine, Dooley. Major Dooley," he grinned absent-mindedly.

The Urians hadn't let up on their festivities by the time I was packed to leave. The crowd threw another parade. They wound through the streets, trying to

imitate Trim's zig-zagging course to the snowship at the edge of the town. Major Fritz's army marched behind him regally while the axemen's reserve seemed to zig-zag a little on their own hook.

Trim sent his axemen off while I warmed up the ship motor. They came back a little later, lugging an enormous copper vat which they put down beside the snowship.

"So long, Major Dooley," Trim yelled as he patted the copper vat in a fatherly manner.

"So long, what?" I shouted above the excited hubbub of the crowd.

"Give the Commodore my regards. I'm staying until you come back," he grinned.

"You're what?" I yelled, amazed.

"SURE," Trim grinned happily. "Dooley, my lad, I've built a *still* here. We built a bona-fide home-made still in the windowless house."

Now I saw how Trim had clipped the six Cerebrals off with six shots from the hip.

"Gyro-brandyl!" yelled Trim. "I'm distilling the port. It's swell. Here, have a shot." He slammed the spigot on the copper vat and filled a cup of tawny liquor for me.

"Trim, listen," I said. "One man can get the ship back. Jimmie can do it. I'm staying."

Trim pursed his lips. "Oh, now, Dooley, I'm staying alone. You'll be coming back in a week. I'm staying. I'm a General now. I've got an army and one Major." He slapped Major Fritz on the back so hard the old fellow almost caved in.

"But what can I tell the Commodore?" I cried in exasperation. "What?"

Trim's freckled face lit up. "Tell him you gotta come back. Tell him all is forgiven. Tell him we've got a place to colonize soon as I get enough Gyro-brandyl to fortify my army and wipe out the Cerebrals. But don't say anything about the Gyro-brandyl. Just say that I'm arranging diplomatic relations that will be friendly toward Washington. . . . But mind you, Dooley! On the return trip bring some soda and ice. Bring oak barrels too. I want to age some Gyro-brandyl."


His face was wreathed in smiles. He took Lulu away from me and showed me into the snowship. Then he ticked his freckled brow in salute. "I'll keep Lulu until I find some more like her around here."

"The hell you say!" I roared. "I'm coming back just as soon as I can—and don't you forget it!"


And there was Lulu, smiling at me and nodding her head. The ship began to move. I turned to Trim, and the last I saw of him, he was pouring himself a cup of Gyro-brandyl with one hand and waving to me with the other.



ROMANCE OF THE ELEMENTS Boron


ALTHOUGH DAVY OF ENGLAND CLAIMED LATER THAT HE HAD OBTAINED BORON, ELECTROLYTICALLY, AS EARLY AS OCTOBER, 1807, IT WAS JUNE 30TH, 1808 WHEN HE ANNOUNCED ISOLATION OF THE ELEMENT BY HEATING BORIC ACID WITH POTASSIUM IN A COPPER TUBE. . . . CURIOUSLY ENOUGH, NINE DAYS EARLIER, A NOTE SENT TO THE INSTITUTE BY THE FRENCH CHEMISTS, GAY-LUSSAC AND THENARD, TOLD OF RESULTS THEY HAD OBTAINED BY TREATING BORIC ACID WITH POTASSIUM. FIVE MONTHS LATER THE TWO FRENCHMEN DECOMPOSED AND RECOMPOSED BORIC ACID AT WILL.



NEXT TO THE DIAMOND IN HARDNESS IS BORON CARBIDE (NORBIDE)—SAID TO BE THE HARDEST SUBSTANCE EVER DEVELOPED BY MAN. BEFORE BORON CARBIDE WAS USED, THE NOZZLES OF SAND BLASTS USED FOR CLEANING BUILDINGS AND METAL SURFACES, LASTED FROM ONE TO TWO HOURS. INSERTS OF BORON CARBIDE MADE THEM STAND UP FOR WEEKS!

THE PRESENCE IN THE SOIL OF BORON, IN MINUTE QUANTITIES, IS ESSENTIAL TO THE HEALTH OF PLANT LIFE. WITHOUT IT, PLANTS ARE SICKLY, DWINDLE, AND EVEN DIE.

BORON is number 5 in the International Table of Atomic Weights. Its symbol is B and its atomic weight is 10.82. It is a non-metallic element, and appears as a chestnut-colored powder. It occurs in nature in the form of boric acid, and in various borates such as borax, tincal, and boracite. It is isolated by heating boron trioxide with potassium in an iron tube.



A HINT ON HOW TO TEST FOR BORAX, DROPPED BY A WANDERING PROSPECTOR IN 1880, LED THE POOR SQUATTER AARON WINTERS TO A REWARD OF \$20,000 FOR DETECTING THE MATERIAL IN DEATH VALLEY AND FOR RELINQUISHING HIS RIGHTS. FOR YEARS, DEATH VALLEY BORAX WAS HAULED TO THE RAILROAD BY GIGANTIC WAGONS PULLED BY 18 MULES AND 2 HORSES. QUANTITIES OF BORON-BEARING MATERIALS COME FROM CALIFORNIA; ONE SOURCE IS THE BRINE PUMPED UP FROM SEARLES LAKE.

BEFORE DAVY AND GAY-LUSSAC, LITTLE WAS KNOWN OF THE CHEMICAL COMPOSITION OF BORIC ACID, ALTHOUGH ONE OF THE MOST EXACT OF 18TH CENTURY CHEMISTS, LAVOISIER, BELIEVED THAT IT CONTAINED OXYGEN.

It may also be obtained by reducing the chloride by sodium or hydrogen, or a number of similar processes, and extracting by hydrochloric acid. It can be then melted to a metallic form. It has a density of 2.5 in this form; of 2.45 in the powder form. It is manufactured in many commercial forms, most important, borax, and boric acid. The melting point of Boron is 2000 degrees F.

THE MAN THE WORLD FORGOT

By JOHN YORK CABOT

Lucius Beem had never been very strong on personality, but this particular morning something was definitely wrong. Everyone he met seemed to have forgotten him

NONE of the passengers on the eight-twenty paid the slightest attention to Lucius Beem when he climbed aboard the city-bound express. However, Mr. Beem, clad in his usual unassuming gray suit, hat, and topcoat, didn't deem it unusual. Few people ever paid any attention to him.

"It is," remarked the drab Mr. Beem as he took a seat, "a fine morning. A very fine morning, indeed."

The occupant of the seat in which Mr. Beem had deposited himself gazed vaguely at the little man.

"Oh, ah, yes, it's a nice morning, Mr.—er—Mr.—"

Mr. Beem sighed resignedly. So few people remembered his name. "Mr. Beem," he told his fellow passenger. "My name is Mr. Beem." He decided regretfully it would be no good to remind the man that this was the sixteenth time in the past month that he had forgotten his name; that for ten years they both had been riding to the city on the same train almost always seated together.

"Ah, yes, of course," commented the passenger. "Mr. Dream. How silly of me to forget."

Mr. Beem buried his plain face in his newspaper and gave himself up to a summary of the day's news. Fifteen minutes later he looked up from his paper and once more spoke to the passenger sitting beside him.

"Isn't it strange," commented Mr. Beem, pointing to a column in the newspaper, "that the famous Professor Snell is unable to get anyone to offer himself for radium tests? You'd think there would be someone who was interested enough in the betterment of the world to offer his body to science."

"Uh?" The passenger gave Mr. Beem a vacuous glance. "Did you say something?"

"I said . . ." Mr. Beem sighed and gave it up. The man had already turned away.

MR. BEEM stepped off the train at his station and wended his drab way through the milling crowds of people to the tiny coffee shop in the corner of the depot. It was a ten year habit of his to breakfast here daily on rolls and coffee before going to the office.

Mr. Beem slid into a stool at the counter. When Cleo, the waitress, came over to take his order Mr. Beem's plain face broke into what he intended, to be an engaging smile. There was something solid about seeing Cleo every morning. As long as he could remember, the girl had been a waitress at that counter.

"Good morning, Cleo," said Mr. Beem warmly. "A fine morning, isn't it?"

The girl's face was blank. "Yeah," she nodded noncommittally. Then: "What'll it be?"

Mr. Beem's voice carried a reprimanding note. "The usual, if you please."

"And what," she inquired sharply, "is the usual?"

Mr. Beem sighed heavily. "Coffee and rolls." He suddenly felt a little lonely. People never noticed him particularly. Things like this had happened many times in his simple, unadorned existence. But this particular morning was worse than any other Mr. Beem had ever experienced. With a doleful eye on the wall clock, Mr. Beem sipped his coffee.

STEPPING into the elevator of his office building,

Mr. Beem nodded soberly to the operator. "Mornin', Tad," he muttered. After cheerfully greeting the other office arrivals by name, Tad favored his drab little passenger with a flat uninterested glance.

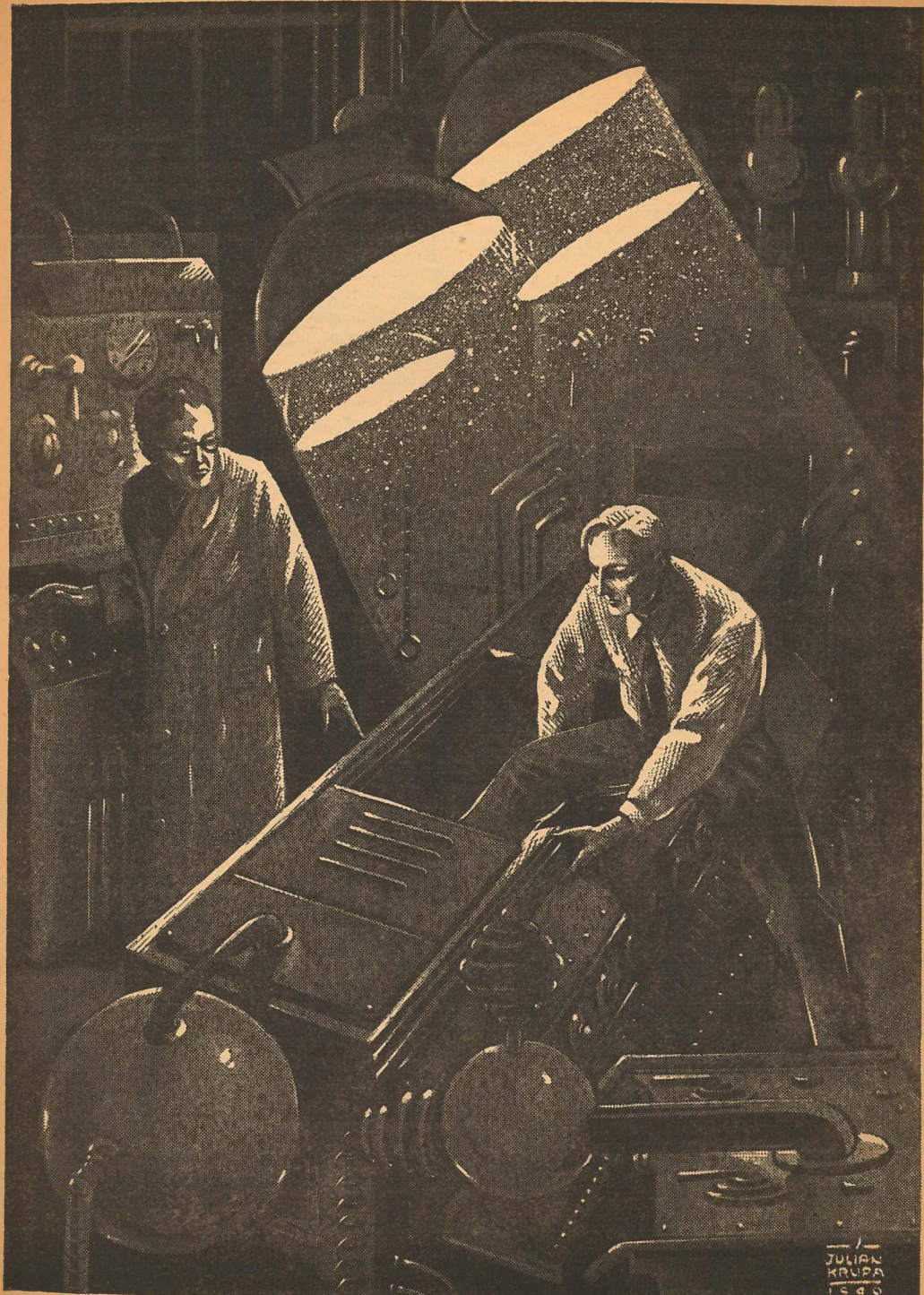
It was Tad's boast that he knew the floors, offices, and names of all the building regulars whom he carried throughout the day. Consequently, Mr. Beem eyed him dourly when, once the elevator was shooting upward, Tad turned toward him. "Floor, please?"

But when he stepped into the office of Sharpe and Sholt, where he'd held a small position for the past fifteen years, Mr. Beem completely forgot the other incidents of the morning.

For Lola, the switchboard operator, stopped him at the gate. "Is there someone you wish to see?"

Mr. Beem was not the type of person to be actually aghast. But for the first time in his life he came pretty close to the real emotion.

"Someone I want to see?" Mr. Beem was dazed.



JULIAN
KRAFA
1940

Mr. Beam climbed into the radium casket

"Are you joking, Lola?"

Lola's face was apologetic. "I'm sorry, sir. Evidently you've been here before. But have you an appointment with anyone?"

"I, that is, why, uh, I work here," stammered Mr. Beem.

"Work here?" The girl's voice was suddenly a mixture of suspicion and incredulity. "Work here?"

Suddenly she began shooting plugs in and out of the board. Lights flickered across its face. "Mr. Sharpe," she was speaking, "there's a man out here whom I've never seen in all my life. He claims he's an employee; wants to get into the office . . . What did you say?"

Lola turned to the stricken Mr. Beem. "Mr. Sharpe wants to know your name, sir. He says if it's work you want, please leave your name and we'll call you if anything turns up."

"Tell him," Mr. Beem was growing frantic, "my name is Beem. I don't know what's happened to you, Lola, but surely Mr. Sharpe will know . . ."

"He says his name is Team," Lola spoke into the phone, "or something like that . . . What? . . . Yes, sir, I'll tell him." She faced Mr. Beem again.

"Mr. Sharpe said he's never heard of you, but if you'll list your qualifications on this application blank," she held out a sheet of paper, "he'll be glad to get in touch with you if anything turns up . . ."

She stopped suddenly, jaw agape, for the gray, mousy little man was dashing out of the office, running pell-mell down the corridor as if a million devils pursued him . . .

FOR almost an hour after Mr. Beem left his office, he wandered bewilderedly through the streets, his mind a jumbled haze of half-formed questions, suspicions, answers. During the first part of this aimless wandering, the suspicion was gradually growing on Mr. Beem—the world had gone mad!

But at length he had been forced to discard that explanation, remembering that it is the trait of a lunatic to think everyone but himself insane. Then his mind turned to stories he had read, stories in which men wandered about unrecognized by anyone. Those stories invariably ended by the disclosure that the wanderer was really dead. Was he, Mr. Beem, dead? The thought was horrifying, and Mr. Beem drove it from his mind. No! He was certainly not dead.

Mr. Beem eventually found his footsteps leading him to the depot. Almost without realizing it, he bought his ticket on the suburban train, and sat down to wait for its arrival. His mind was now clear on one point. He was going back to his house. Martha, his wife, would be surprised to see him, since he hadn't come home so early from work since that time when his appendix burst.

It would take a great deal of explaining to Martha to make her realize what had happened, but she was his only chance of comfort, his only remaining stability. Maybe, when she got the doctor for him, it

would be decided that all Mr. Beem needed was a long rest from the office. That was it, nerve strain!

Turning up the street to his little suburban nest was a comforting feeling to Mr. Beem. The familiar line of poplar trees and white picket fences gave him a vague sense of assurance. As he opened his own white picket gate, and went up the walk, he actually whistled in relief. It was a tuneless whistle, dreary, flat, off-key.

Martha had never given him his own key, so Mr. Beem was forced to use the door knocker.

Mr. Beem strove to register a reassuring smile as his wife came to the door. He didn't want her to be shocked or frightened, thinking he was sick.

He could hear her heels clicking across the floor inside the house. The door swung open. Mr. Beem stepped forward.

"Hello, honey," said Mr. Beem, "don't be frightened. I just felt I'd like to come home today."

But he only progressed a few feet, for Mrs. Beem was looking at him with mingled astonishment and indignation on her face. Before he could step through the door she slammed it against his foot.

"Why, Martha, what's the matter? I'm all right. What's wrong?" Mr. Beem's voice almost lost its drabness and swift, sickening terror assailed his knees.

His wife's voice was high, shrill, carrying almost out into the street. "Whoever you are, salesman or masher, you have a nerve calling me honey and trying to force your way into this house. Get away from here immediately, or I'll call the police!"

Then she delivered a nasty kick on the shin of the leg Mr. Beem still had wedged in the doorway. He withdrew it swiftly, and instantly the door slammed shut. He heard his wife slide a safety bolt home, then her heels were clicking over the floor again.

For several dazed minutes Mr. Beem stood on the doorstep of his home, rubbing painfully at his injured shin. Panic was clutching with icy fingers at his brain.

Rubbing the back of his hand across his eyes, the bewildered Mr. Beem staggered down the steps of his home and once more wandered idly through the streets. Moment by moment desperation bubbled to a near explosive pitch beneath the drab exterior of the anguished little man.

Deep in a hidden corner of his brain a voice was persisting maddeningly, mockingly, "You're going crazy, Mr. Beem. That's what's wrong, Mr. Beem. You're going crazy."

Mr. Beem stood stock still in the middle of the sidewalk, bracing himself against the thought. "I'm not," he declared. "I'm not going crazy." He looked up and down the sidewalk but there was no one to contradict this statement. Brushing away a sudden tear, Mr. Beem set off in the direction of the train station . . .

TWO hours later a distraught Mr. Beem, dressed drably in gray, stood nervously before a frosted

door on the twelfth floor of a downtown office building. The inscription on the frosted glass read, "Dr. Clarence Q. Zale, Psychiatrist."

The plain-faced little fellow coughed nervously, threw back his sloping shoulders, took a deep breath, and entered the office.

He found himself standing in a sort of tiny reception room. Beyond it was another frosted glass door, bearing the simple inscription, "Dr. Zale."

The second frosted door opened and a tall, bearded, impressive looking man of about fifty stepped into the reception room to face Mr. Beem. He smoothed the lapels of his Prince Albert coat professionally, gave his ordinary visitor a casual glance, and spoke.

"I am Dr. Zale. Did you wish to see me?"

"Yes," said Mr. Beem, "I wanted to see you. I think I am losing my mind!"

"Tsk!" said Dr. Zale abstractedly, "how unfortunate. Step into my office, please."

It was perhaps fifteen minutes later when Mr. Beem concluded the story of his life, the record of the happenings of the morning.

Dr. Zale rose from his desk. "This," he pronounced, "is incredible."

Mr. Beem merely looked at the psychiatrist with a sort of dog-like trust and hope.

"If everything you tell me is true," Dr. Zale continued, "you are the most unique psychological case I have ever encountered. You, Mr. Beem, are the perfect example of the *Negative Personality!*"

Mr. Beem was frightened. "The *Negative Personality?*"

"Exactly. Personality, Mr. Beem, is in reality a sort of vibrant electric aura* that surrounds the individual. If the vibrancy of the aura is strong, then the individual has what is known as a *Positive Personality*. If the vibrancy is weak, then the individual has a *Negative Personality*."

The psychiatrist paused to give Mr. Beem time to absorb this, then continued. "From what you have told me of your life, Mr. Beem, you have always had an unusually weak personality wave. People have always had a difficult time remembering you, because of this. Lately, your positive vibrancy charge has been growing weaker and weaker."

Dr. Zale's pause, this time, was for the sake of drama. "Today, Mr. Beem, you stopped emanating your positive personality aura entirely, and instead began exuding negative personality currents!"

The horror stricken Mr. Beem was not too clear on the meaning of the psychiatrist's statement, but the tone of the man's voice was enough to turn him deathly pale. "No," gasped the unoriginal Mr. Beem.

"Yes," declared Dr. Zale. "With the result that the world has completely forgotten you. As far as people who have met you before are concerned, you've

never existed! You make an instant negative impression of great force!"

Mr. Beem sat limply on his straight chair, clasping and unclasping his hands in an agony of despair. There was mute appeal in his drab watery eyes as he fixed them on the psychiatrist.

"But don't fear for your identity, Mr. Beem," Dr. Zale was saying. "From this moment on you will go down in history. You are the greatest medical phenomenon of all time!" The doctor's voice was working up to a fever pitch of excitement. His eyes gleamed.

"Stay right where you are," said Dr. Zale. "Don't move an inch. I'm going down the hall to call in four other psychiatrists in the building. They must see you, Mr. Beem." He dashed to the door, stopped, then returned to Mr. Beem's chair. "Stay right where you are," he directed again, patting the little man on the shoulder. "Don't move out of this office. I'll be back with the others in an instant!"

Mr. Beem sank obediently into the chair.

Dr. Zale practically flew out of his office and into the long corridor. His steps rang along the marble floor for perhaps ten yards. Then they faltered, stopped abruptly.

They sounded again, returning slowly. The psychiatrist walked slowly into the office, crossed to the coat rack and took his hat and coat down. He donned them, muttering to himself, paid no attention to Mr. Beem, and walked out once more.

Puzzled, Mr. Beem stared after him, then sank back in his chair to wait. He waited a long time, fidgeting nervously. Once or twice he rose to his feet and began to walk up and down, then timidly returned to his chair.

But Dr. Zale did not return.

At length Mr. Beem realized the truth. He had been forgotten once more!

AS Mr. Beem sorrowfully departed from the psychiatrist's office, he choked back the lump that rose in his scrawny throat. Why, he wondered with a sort of anguished longing, couldn't he have been an amnesia victim instead of a *Negative Personality*—and a *Perfect* one at that? Then, instead of the world forgetting him, he could have forgotten the world.

But as the little man stepped out into the street once more he knew in his very ordinary heart that this would be slight consolation.

It was dinnertime and looking wistfully into the windows of the houses he passed, Mr. Beem thought poignantly of his own little green shuttered abode, and of the supper that Martha was eating. The thought of his wife, who no longer realized she had a husband, was more than Mr. Beem could stand. So he pushed it aside with desperate concentration on more bitter matters. There was the river, for example. It was only a scant few blocks away. It would be a short walk. The bridge rail wasn't high—

Mr. Beem shuddered at the thought. He wasn't

* Many psychologists hold that personality powers of otherwise unpossessing people are due to some indefinable magnetism, but there is no actual proof as yet that this is a fact. However there is no proof against it either.—Ed.

a coward. But deliberate suicide was too much like the last resort of a quitter, a beaten man.

"I'm not a quitter. I'm not beaten," Mr. Beam told himself savagely. But even as he did so, the pathetic futility of his situation flooded back on him. What was there to do? Where was there to go?

The world had no place for a man it had forgotten.

Mr. Beam dug his hands into his gray coat pockets and trudged onward. There was suddenly something determined, something fiercely combative in his chest. It was something he couldn't quite put into words. He merely knew that somehow, some way, he was going to make the world conscious of his identity. And not just as a man, but as a great man, an everlasting figure in the eyes of posterity.

Living or dying, both were unimportant in the face of this new determination that burned in the breast of the negative Mr. Beam. It no longer mattered to him what happened to the physical Mr. Beam, just so long as the immortal Lucius Beam, Hero, carried on in his wake.

"And there will be an immortal Beam!" the drab little man said aloud. Even as he spoke, a thought which had been hammering at the door of his subconscious for the past few minutes suddenly became crystal clear.

The news item of the morning. The one he had read to the passenger beside him. The piece about the scientist who sought a human guinea pig for his radium experiments! Surely this was Fortune smiling on Mr. Beam. Here was the chance he wanted, the opportunity to impress Lucius Beam upon the world in such a fashion that he would be remembered as long as time existed.

He would be the man of the hour. His name would forever be imprinted on the ledgers of science and progress! Then he would have identity. Being!

Tiny icicles of excitement ran up and down the little man's spine as he stood there under a streetlight, contemplating on the magnitude of such an act. Then a swift unpleasant thought jarred him from the rosy world he'd entered. Supposing the scientist had already gotten a subject?

No, it couldn't be. Fate couldn't play such a monstrous trick on Mr. Beam! But time was essential. One never could tell when someone else might decide to offer himself for the experiment.

THERE was a newsstand at the corner, and Mr. Beam drew up panting before it a moment later. Then, stepping under a street lamp, the little man paged frantically through the newspaper, searching for the item concerning the scientist's radium experiment. At last, he found it on the second page, buried in a small column on the bottom. It was a condensation of the morning item, merely stating that Professor Snell was still unable to find a volunteer for his experiment.

Clutching the newspaper in one hand, Mr. Beam wildly signaled a cab with the other. As the taxi

drew up before him, Mr. Beam glanced hastily at the address of Professor Snell as the paper gave it.

"Forty-nine, sixty-six Vine Street," he blurted to the driver, "and hurry!"

The cabby slammed the door behind his passenger and threw the hack into gear. Then they were shooting down the illuminated boulevards. It was fifteen minutes later when, with a screech of brakes, the taxi drew up before the address Mr. Beam had given the driver. The cabby didn't have a chance to open the door for his passenger, for Mr. Beam was out of the car like a shot, digging in his pocket for his wallet.

"What do I owe you?" he said breathlessly.

A frown of perplexity creased the cabby's brow. Swiftly he wheeled about to glance in the back seat. Then, jaw hanging open, he looked at Mr. Beam.

"Well," snapped the little man impatiently, "what do I owe you?"

"Look," the cabby blurted hoarsely, "is this a joke or sumpin?" Mr. Beam started to reply, but the driver continued. "Are youse the guy I picked up, or am I goin' nuts? I never seen youse before in all my life. Don't remember what the guy I picked up looked like, but I coitenly ain't never seen youse before!"

Mr. Beam could waste no more precious moments. He shoved a bill into the bewildered driver's paw, and ran up the steps of the home of Professor Snell.

A short, plump, energetic little man admitted Mr. Beam to the house. His bright, button eyes swept in every drab feature of the breathless visitor, then he spoke. "I am Professor Snell. Is there something I can do for you?"

"Professor," panted Mr. Beam, "I read about your need in the papers."

"Ah, yes," the plump scientist agreed sadly. "At the climax of my investigations into radium possibilities, I can find no volunteer to serve as final proof of my conclusions."

Mr. Beam took a deep breath. "Professor Snell—I am your man!"

A light flashed into the scientist's eyes. But as he spoke his voice was careful, calm. "Do you understand what it implies, this experiment in radium?" He went on before Mr. Beam could interrupt. "You might come out of it all unscathed. Then again—" he shrugged expressively—"you might never come out of it."

Mr. Beam heard his own voice answering hoarsely. "I understand that part of it. But it makes no difference to me. All I care for is my duty to posterity, and the fact that my slight contribution shall be remembered."

The Professor crossed to Mr. Beam, took his hand. "You are a brave man. No matter what comes of this, your part will always be remembered, never fear. I shall see to that."

There was mistiness in the drab little chap's eyes as he gripped the scientist's hand in his own. At last. Here was positive assurance that Mr. Beam would re-

turn to the minds of the world never to leave again!

"We might as well start immediately," he said huskily.

Professor Snell was suddenly the man of science. "Good. I'm glad you prefer it that way." He reached for a tablet of paper on the table beside them. "Please," he said, handing the tablet to Mr. Beem, "write your name there. And the names of people whom I can notify . . ." He broke off significantly.

"There are no other names besides my own," said Mr. Beem. Then, glowing with a deep, burning pride, he scrawled his signature on the pad . . .

THEY were in the laboratory of Professor Snell. Everything surrounding Mr. Beem was white and efficiently scientific. The plump little professor was busily arranging various instruments about a large, coffin-like box. Mr. Beem was gazing at the box when Snell explained. "You will be sealed into that radium cask," he declared. "Your stay inside the cask depends on split-second timing. That clock," he pointed to a delicate instrument beside the box, "is set going

the moment the cask is sealed. From it I can tell when the precise number of hours and seconds has arrived for you to be taken forth again."

Minutes later Mr. Beem, lying on his back in the radium casket, heard the terse "Luck" spoken by the professor, the lid sliding across the top of the casket. Then darkness surrounded him . . .

"Three hours and thirty-seven seconds should be correct," muttered Professor Snell, setting the time gadget on the side of the cask. There was a vibrant excitement in his voice. He looked for a moment at the cask, then turned and stepped swiftly out of the room. There were some telephone calls to be made to his associates.

EARLY the following morning, as Professor Snell tinkered with his radium cask, vaguely wishing that he could find a volunteer for his experiment, his sharp eyes noted the thin film of dust that lay inside the casket. "Hmmm," murmured the scientist. "I wonder how that got there?"

Mr. Beem had been forgotten again.

SPIES BEWARE!



UNCLE SAM CRACKS DOWN

A spy is not a guy with a set of trick whiskers, a black slouch hat, and a movie accent! Neither is a spy a languishing lady with curves like the Pike's Peak road and a lot of credit at the corner champagne emporium. Spies, as anybody who has ever chased them can tell you, are just people. The more they look like just people, the better they spy. There is nothing a spy would rather be taken for than just a plain American photographer!

And that is why the United States Government, alarmed by reports of increased espionage activities, is determined to protect our national defense secrets from cameras that pry! To get the complete, authentic account of the most sweeping set of restrictions ever imposed in peacetime upon American photographers, read "*Unwitting Spies Beware*" . . . on page 14! This is just one of the many outstanding and brilliantly illustrated features on photography in the March Issue of

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WHAT lay beyond the towering Zigfrid Wall? How could Teutonia exist for nearly a century without food? Andre Duval and Jeff Wilson face death when they learn the secret

OF WOODEN MEN

By John Broome

JEFF WILSON, the New York *Record's* ace war correspondent, committed what to any seasoned newshawk would be an unpardonable error.

His brown eyes grew wide with incredulity, his mouth gaped open and his face assumed the look of a man who can no longer believe his own ears.

"You're going into—*Teutonia!*!" he gasped.

Andre Duval, Gaul's most promising young scientist, nodded quite soberly.

Wilson went through all the motions of getting back to earth. Then his face reddened.

"Now see here, Andy!" he snorted. "Fun is fun and all that, but there's a limit to what a man can swallow!"

Andre Duval smiled a little grimly. The young scientist had recently been attached to Gaul's frontier army. But already he had learned that the age-old siege of Teutonia was a standing joke to all the foreign correspondents stationed at the Magno Line front.

By the same token, joke or no joke, the idea of getting into Teutonia through its impregnable Zigfrid Wall was so out of the question, no one had ever considered it for a moment. Duval, himself, had never taken the bloodless struggle between the two nations seriously—until today.

The young scientist's lean face tightened as he thought of what he had learned that morning.

"I'm not joking, Jeff," he said grimly. "I'm going into Teutonia—or, at least I'm going to try to get in."

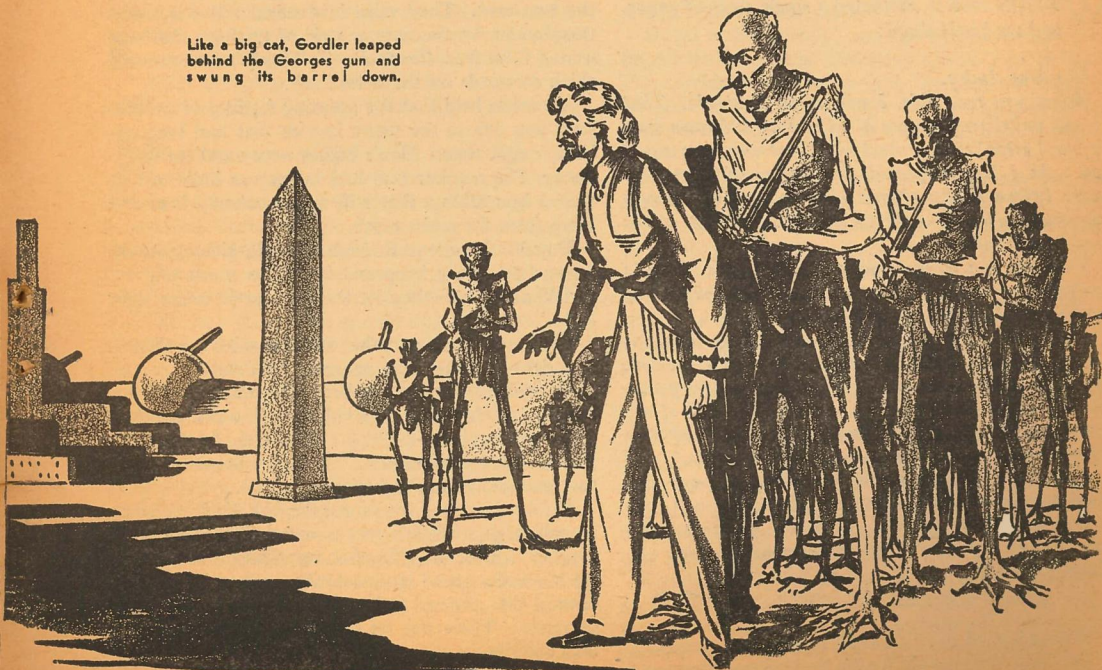
"But, Andy," Jeff Wilson gulped in excitement, "no one has gone into or come out of that godforsaken land for seventy-five, maybe a hundred years!"

"I know it."

"And, Andy—this is desertion!"

Duval's jaw flexed. The young scientist had just removed his lieutenant's uniform and placed it carefully in the metal locker of his room. Now he turned. Technically, his leaving his post on the Magno Line

Like a big cat, Gordler leaped behind the Georges gun and swung its barrel down.



was desertion. Caught, it would mean a long prison term. But, caught or not, it would also mean dishonor—

"Jeff," Andre Duval spoke earnestly, "promise me that you won't publish what I'm going to tell you until after I'm gone."

"Of course, Andy!"

Duval hesitated briefly. "Do you remember, Jeff, all that talk a year ago about a new type of explosive discovered by a scientist here in Gaul?"

Wilson nodded. "Do I remember it!" he echoed. "Why, that was the only time I *nearly* sent in a story! But you couldn't buy details for love or money. Georges was the scientist's name, wasn't it?"

"Yes," Duval said. "His explosive was rejected by Gaul's War Ministry on the grounds that it would cause unnecessary bloodshed and thus turn neutral opinion against us. Georges, himself, was openly disgraced and soon disappeared from public view."

"I'll say he disappeared!" Wilson agreed wryly. "I spent six weeks of the *Record's* time looking for him."

"Well, Jeff," Duval said quietly, "I have reason to believe that Georges has gone into Teutonia—with his explosive!"

There was a brief silence. Jeff Wilson's moon face gradually took on an expression of amused disbelief.

"How?" he asked shortly.

"I don't know how he went in, Jeff," Duval said gravely. "But take a look at this." The young scientist was extending an opened envelope.

WILSON took it, extracted a single sheet of paper, and read half aloud:

My dear Andre,

When you read this, I will be in Teutonia. That sounds unbelievable, does it not? But, unknown even to you, I established contact with Teutonia some weeks ago. As I had suspected, Teutonian scientists had years before subtly altered their system of wireless communication, in order to shut out the rest of the world completely.

Teutonia has offered me a refuge and a place to continue my work. I have accepted. The means by which I shall effect entry are secret.

Andre, try to understand. I do not hate Gaul, although our country has abused me beyond all reason. My only desire is to end my days working in peace. There was no other country to which the evil of my name had not spread. Wherever I went I would have been sneered at as the war-mongering Georges.

I know that Teutonia is our traditional enemy. But I am convinced that whatever I give to her will soon belong to a world society. It is not easy to begin a new life at my age. That hope alone sustains me. Good-by, Andre.

G. D.

Wilson looked up. "G. D.?" he repeated puzzledly. "He was known only by his first name—Georges,"

Duval said. The young scientist's voice was bitter as he added: "His full name is Georges Duval—*my father!*"

Jeff Wilson's sole comment was a low rising whistle.

"There's your story, Jeff," Duval went on with a harsh laugh. "'Young Scientist Follows Notorious Father to Recover Family Honor!' It's all there—you couldn't ask for more!"

Wilson regarded his young friend soberly.

"When are you leaving, Andy?"

"Right now—when the guard changes below."

The American's face went comically glum.

"My first real break," he muttered, "in ten long years at this sanatorium that masquerades as a battlefront—and I can't write my scoop!"

"Why not, Jeff?"

The American raised his palms in a helpless gesture.

"How am I going to write the story, Andy—*when we're both leaving right now!*"

CHAPTER II

The Enemy Is Met

THE long-unused tunnel that led from the depths of Gaul's Magno Wall, rose steeply to the surface. The mouth of the tunnel was half filled with earth and dank vegetation. Andy Duval doubled his tall frame as he emerged into the open. Jeff Wilson was a step behind him.

It was midday, but all was in semi-darkness around the two men. They were in Omensland—the traditional name for the narrow strip of territory that separated Gaul from Teutonia. Tall leafy trees sprouted thick as weeds on the brown soil.

Botanists held that the amazing fertility of Omensland was due to the many battles that had long ago been fought here. Men's bodies were excellent fertilizers. The number that had fallen was indicated by rusted iron crosses that still rose crookedly here and there from the moist earth.

Duval led the way through the still, gloomy forest. At one point, the irrepressible Wilson muttered,

"What a war—they let the *trees* grow under their feet!"

But for the most part the two men walked in silence. The dense foliage made progress difficult.

Omensland, the geographers said, was hardly four hundred yards wide. In a half hour, the two men had traversed most of it. The trees began to thin, and Duval saw sunlight ahead. In a few moments, they had emerged from the forest.

Before them was the famed Zigfrid Wall. A quarter-mile high, of dullish gray concrete, Teutonia's great frontier fortification loomed far above their heads. Its impassive stone face, unbroken except by solitary cannon slits, seemed to ignore the two invaders' puny presence. There was no sound, no other sign of human activity.

Jeff Wilson whistled and blinked hard. "No wonder

they have never been able to dent this thing!" the American said in a low voice filled with awed appreciation.

Duval's eyes scanned the flat gray immensity. At the topmost reaches of the wall, huge anti-aircraft guns, unfired for almost a century, still pointed their steel mouths at the sky. Lower down the wall was sheer. The young scientist knew it was futile to look for a gateway. The last one had been filled in many years before.

The Zigfrid Wall was an unbroken necklace of steel-ribbed concrete, completely encircling Teutonia. Duval remembered that historians estimated it took twenty-five years of enforced night-and-day labor to complete it. With all the large nations of Europe nominally at war with her, Teutonia had thrown up the great fortification and settled down to endure the siege. No one on the outside knew how she fared. This great country had become an island of silence and mystery in the heart of Europe.

Duval and Wilson began to walk along the wall's base, looking for some way to get in. It began to look as if the two-man invasion of Teutonia was doomed to fail before it could start.

"This is what you might call running up against a stone wall!" Wilson muttered.

At last Duval's eye caught something ahead of them. They walked forward quickly, and stopped before a round opening in the wall, about four feet from the ground.

Wilson stared mistrustfully at the circular aperture. It might have been an outlet pipe, but to the American it looked much more like an old-fashioned howitzer. The rim and the inside were of smooth steel.

"You're not going to climb into *that*, Andy!"

"Don't see any other way, Jeff. I'll go first."

THE young scientist placed his hands before him like a diver, and projected the upper part of his body into the opening. From behind, Wilson gave him a powerful shove that sent him altogether into the howitzer. Duval worked his way slowly along the smooth surface, using his toes and fingers for leverage.

The gun widened as he crawled along. The young scientist sent up a mute prayer that the howitzer's breech could be opened from the inside. As he reached the end, he heard Wilson groaning and muttering behind him. Despite the gravity of the situation, Duval grinned to himself at the colorful string of epithets the American was letting loose. Then his hand found a catch on the smooth inner surface of the breech and he breathed a sigh of relief. He opened the mechanism cautiously and peered out.

He was in a large square room walled with concrete, not unlike the underground pillboxes of the Magno Wall. There was no one in sight. A deep silence filled the room. Duval climbed out of the gun, and helped Wilson down.

The doughty news correspondent was sweating despite the damp, chill air of the chamber.

"Whew!" he whispered. "I never thought I'd actually have to crawl into a cannon's mouth to get a story!"

As their eyes became accustomed to the dim light of the room, the two men made out racks of light machine guns and rifles on the walls. The guns were thickly covered with dust. Dust also carpeted the floor an inch thick, and covered the two stone benches and a long table in the center of the room.

In one corner lay a pile of what looked like curved, rust-colored sticks. The shape in which they lay oddly resembled a human skeleton. Duval bent closer. After a moment, he straightened up.

"Jeff," he said slowly, these *are* skeletons!"

"No!" Jeff Wilson's round face grimaced. "What of?"

The young scientist shook his head. Each separate bone in the pile was strangely warped. In some cases, contraction had pulled the bone from its joint. As a result, here and there a rust-colored femur or tibia lay unattached on the gruesome pile.

The two men made their way in silence out of the ghostly arsenal. A dimly lit corridor led them into a larger passageway at right angles to the arms storage. A few yards of progress along this corridor brought them to the entrance of a room identical with the one they had just left. From the doorway, they could see the neat pile of warped, odd-colored bones that lay in a corner.

"Well," Wilson murmured, "whoever the caretaker is here, he certainly is careful not to let his skeletons scamper all over the place."

Duval smiled grimly, and the two cautiously continued their unofficial inventory of the Zigfrid Wall. The corridors and chambers in the great fortification seemed endless. Pillbox after pillbox appeared before them, each with its stock of munitions and its pile of bones.

There was no sign of human activity, other than the meticulous order in which everything was kept. Duval recalled that Teutonians always had a high reputation for orderliness. Apparently, a hundred years had not changed them much.

Suddenly the rather lengthy corridor they were in led into a circular vestibule. At the other end of the vestibule was an open archway through which daylight poured. Duval and Wilson crossed the stone floor, passed under the arch and emerged into the open.

BEFORE them was a small square, roughly fifty feet across, that seemed to be cut out of the heart of the Zigfrid Wall. It was lined with the same gray concrete, and in the center of each of the four sides was an arched doorway. The middle part of the square was covered with black earth.

Looking at it, Duval was certain that this was an area of cultivated soil. But, strangely enough, there was no sign of vegetation—outside of a few bare gnarled trees clustered together in one corner.

Duval's gaze took in the trees with interest. The

young scientist had never come across trees of this type in the outside world. Each slender brown trunk was split symmetrically into two parts near the base. From near the top of the trunk, two short sinewy branches stuck out at right angles. The trunk itself, instead of tapering upward, ended in a large round knob.

Duval frowned and turned to Wilson. The American newshawk was staring at the trees, his ruddy face almost comical in its bewilderment. Duval was about to comment on the strange growths, when suddenly he saw Wilson's mouth fall open. The American's puzzled expression swiftly altered into one of horrified amazement.

"Look, Andy!" Wilson gasped out. "Those trees—!"

The young scientist turned quickly. The sight that met his eyes constricted the muscles of his heart like an icy hand.

The trees were moving toward them!

The gnarled growths had pulled their twin roots from the black earth, and were marching with increasing cadence toward the two men. They were scarcely ten feet away when Duval recovered use of his limbs. As he moved, the young scientist made out human features on the browned knobs atop the trunks. Small, narrowed eyes were fixed on them from hard, expressionless faces.

"To the right, Jeff—fast!" Duval whipped out the command, and gave the stupefied correspondent a shove in the direction of the nearest archway. With a muffled bellow, Wilson recovered his presence of mind and leaped after the young scientist.

They reached the archway three steps before the nearest of the weird creatures. Duval swerved into the stone vestibule, Wilson hard on his heels. As he plunged into the semi-darkness of the nearby corridor, the young scientist felt himself come up against something as hard and unyielding as a wall. He tried to back away, but whiplike arms fastened around him and held him powerless. He had run into more of the tree-creatures. Two of them held him fast in their tentacular clasp.

Behind him came sounds of struggle. Duval managed to turn his head. Wilson was fighting off three of the gaunt creatures who were making an effort to seize him in their crushing embrace.

The American's great fists were beating like trip-hammers on the hard brown bodies. The blows resounded like the splitting of fresh timber, but they seemed to leave the creatures unhurt. Without any sounds, they advanced inexorably upon the bull-like news correspondent, until two of them finally got their arms around him.

Wilson kept struggling until one of the tree-creatures suddenly raised a black object and brought it down sharply on the correspondent's unprotected head. The American's eyes rolled whitely and he slumped in the tree-creatures' embrace, his body limp and his brain unconscious.

CHAPTER III

The Leader's Threat

ANDY DUVAL, still helpless in the grip of the wiry arms, was led back into the square. About a dozen of the creatures surrounded him, staring at him curiously. At length, one of them began to speak in low guttural tones. His lips and jaw barely moved as he uttered something that Duval could not understand. The young scientist caught only one word—"Auslanders," which in old Teutonic meant "foreigners."

At a signal from the speaker, two of the creatures picked up the still unconscious Wilson, and all together the group moved across the square. As they crossed the courtyard, other tree-creatures appeared in the archways, and surveyed the "Auslanders" in complete silence. Their faces were immobile, as if carved out of burnished mahogany. Only the hard little eyes showed any signs of life. Duval could see there curiosity—curiosity not unmixed with an odd fear.

The young scientist understood now why he had mistaken these creatures for trees. The toes that stretched from their uncovered feet were greatly elongated, rootlike. Their bodies were gaunt, darkish-brown, and covered with a skin rough as bark. Most wore only loin cloths, but some had on simple tunics.

Duval guessed the latter were females. But little else distinguished them from the males. Their bodies were just as straight and hard.

His captors led Duval out of the sunlit square, and into a wide-domed hallway. The tree-creatures halted, and the one who had first spoken uttered some words of command. The ones who were carrying Jeff Wilson began to bear the unconscious American to the right of the hallway, where an open doorway revealed a flight of steps leading downward.

Duval tried to break loose, but the arms that held him were like steel thongs. The leader's guttural voice rumbled out again. The young scientist caught the word "*Few*"—"chief" or "leader," in old Teutonic. Obediently, his two captors half dragged Duval into what looked like a metal elevator on the opposite side of the hall.

The one who had given the command followed them into the circular lift and moved a lever that shot them swiftly upward. After a few seconds, the lift came to a halt and the doors before them swung wide. Duval's captors led him into a richly furnished corridor, strikingly different from the bare stone of the rooms below. Thick rugs cushioned the floor, and the walls were ornate with tapestries and designs.

Duval knew he must be somewhere in the upper reaches of the Zigfrid Wall. The extent of Teutonia's great fortification bewildered him. It was not simply a military structure like the Magno Wall. It seemed, rather, to have the extensive ramifications of a complete city—with dwellings, squares of farmland and transportation facilities.

The tree-men brought Duval to a halt before a tall,

heavily carved door. In a moment, the door swung wide, and his captors led the young scientist into a large sunlit room in which two people, a man and a woman, were sitting. Both were obviously humans, Duval saw at a glance, totally unlike the tree-men who had brought him here.

The woman was young, hardly Duval's age. Her fair skin revealed no trace of the ugly barklike encrustations of the tree-creatures. The haughty brown eyes that surveyed the young scientist were set under a forehead of milky whiteness. Her golden hair rested in soft curls at the nape of her well-shaped neck. Only the impressive figure of the other person in the room caused Duval to wrench his eyes from the beautiful girl.

THE man presented an imposing sight. He was at least six and a half feet tall and proportionately broad. He was clad in an immaculate uniform of creamy whiteness that served to enhance his girth and height. He had been sitting behind a gleaming metal desk, but he had risen. Now his heavy face revealed displeasure as he regarded the young scientist.

The tree-creatures stood before the giant in awed silence. The leader's head was low as he gestured toward Duval and muttered a few words in a low tone. Duval caught the word "*Feur*" again, but this time it was preceded by a possessive adjective—*min*, or "my" in old Teutonic. *Min Feur!* The man before him must be the present leader of Teutonia!

Historians in the outside world had long debated the question of whether or not Teutonia had retained its dictatorial form of government after the erection of the Zigfrid Wall. Dictators meant war. The young scientist's face went hard as he surveyed the uniformed giant with grim interest.

The *Feur* uttered a short command to the tree-creatures, in that strange tongue which Duval had heard below. The young scientist's captors loosed their grips on him and backed, heads low, to the rear of the room.

Duval rubbed his numb arms. The *Feur's* small bloodshot eyes turned on him coldly.

"You are a Gaulisian?" the giant intoned in a heavy Teutonic accent.

Duval nodded briefly. A satisfied smile appeared on the *Feur's* heavy face.

"That is very good. Perhaps you were in the army. Perhaps, even, you were stationed in the Magno Line, no?"

Duval looked coolly at his questioner.

"Perhaps," the young scientist said dryly.

The *Feur's* smile vanished.

"I do not like that answer, *Minheer*," the giant said slowly. "You will soon learn to give better answers when the *Feur* asks you a question!" He turned to the girl with a slightly ironic smile.

"The Princess Isolde will assure you that I speak the truth. Will you not, Isolde?"

The girl nodded quickly. Some of the pink had vanished from her cheeks. Her proud gaze was im-

perceptibly tinged with concern as she regarded Duval.

"The Princess Isolde," the *Feur* said, turning back to his prisoner, "has a woman's tender heart. And sometimes she forgets the crime of all *Auslanders* against Teutonia. It would grieve her to see a young man like yourself be foolish enough not to talk."

Duval caught Isolde's gaze. For an instant the girl's brown eyes held pity and an intangible warning. Then a warm red suffused her cheeks and she dropped her gaze.

"I am sure, *Minheer*," the *Feur* went on coldly, "that you will spare the Princess unnecessary suffering. Who are you, and why have you come into my country?"

Duval reasoned that nothing could be gained by concealing his identity. In fact, he might turn his answer to a good purpose.

"My name," he said, watching the *Feur's* face as he accented the last name, "is Andre—Duval."

GORDLER'S heavy eyelids lowered. "Duval—" he repeated slowly. "Recently, *Minheer*, the first *Auslander* in a hundred years came into Teutonia. He is now a dangerous enemy of the Teutonian State. Is it not a strange coincidence, *Minheer*, that that *Auslander's* name also should be—Duval?"

The young scientist barely checked a startled exclamation at the *Feur's* characterization of Georges Duval as an "enemy." Instead, he raised his eyebrows in polite surprise.

"A coincidence," he returned with a smile. "But not too strange. Duval is a common enough name in Gaul. I am a scientist. And my only reason for coming into Teutonia was to investigate your means of existence during the past century."

The *Feur* stared at him without belief.

"How did you know," the giant asked suddenly, "that we 'existed' at all?"

Duval grinned. "I had read too much about the marvels of Teutonian science to think your nation incapable of surviving under worse conditions."

The *Feur* returned the young scientist's compliment with a short ironic bow.

"Very pretty," he said with a cynical smile. "And in return I will tell you something you did not know. Our nation is capable not only of surviving—but of conquering!"

Duval stared calculatingly at the *Feur*, waiting for him to go on. But the giant had apparently decided to terminate the interview. He spoke a few words to the tree-creatures who had remained motionless in the rear of the room. Two of them came forward and clutched the young prisoner's arms.

At that moment, Isolde said something to the *Feur* in a low voice. Duval could not catch the words, but they seemed to produce results. The *Feur* boomed out another command and the creatures let go of Duval. As they backed out of the room, the leader turned to the young scientist.

"You are fortunate, *Minheer*," the giant said dryly,

"that Princess Isolde remembered that you *Auslanders* need *bredfood*. I expect to have need of you very soon. Please be kind enough to eat the *bredfood* and keep yourself alive."

The *Feur* bestowed a last ironic glance on Duval, and abruptly left the room through a small door to the left of his desk.

Isolde pressed the switch of a small communicator on the metal desk, and spoke a few words into it. Several moments later, a tree-man appeared in the doorway with a tray of food. The creature set the tray before Duval and departed silently.

Isolde swung herself up on the desk and sat there regarding the young scientist with a half-puzzled, half-alooof air. An exquisite foot clad in a brief sandal tapped impatiently against the side of the desk. Duval ate mechanically and returned the gaze of the golden-haired Teutonian girl with frank interest.

"Your country must have much *bredfood*," Isolde said at last. "You do not seem to be very interested in it."

Duval shrugged. "How about my American friend?" he asked. "Will he be given this food, too?"

"Your friend is being taken care of," Isolde said shortly. And then impatiently she added, "You have not answered my question—has your country much *bredfood*?"

DUVAL smiled at the girl's petulance.

"You will have to pardon my ignorance, Princess," he said broadly, "but I'm not sure I know what you mean by '*bredfood*'."

"*Bredfood* is the kind of nourishment that all human beings needed long ago. Milk, eggs and meat—I need not explain further to a scientist."

"Long ago?" Duval set aside the unfinished tray and stared uncomprehendingly at the girl. "Do you mean that human beings here can live without such foods as milk, eggs and meat?"

Isolde smiled at his disbelief. "Of course, *Minheer* Duval. Teutonian science developed a way of going without *bredfood* fifty years ago!"

Duval's gaze passed slowly over the slim, rounded form of the girl. A faint twinkle crept into his eyes as he said:

"No milk and no eggs? Looking at you makes that very hard to believe. I'm afraid you're too healthy-looking to have gone without these food essentials."

Isolde colored through her haughty self-possession.

"I am of Teutonian royalty, *Minheer*," she reprimanded him coldly. "We are the leaders of Teutonia, and whatever *bredfood* is harvested or grown is given to us. But the men who brought you here have never in their lives tasted *bredfood*."

There was a note of bitterness in Isolde's voice as she uttered the last words. Impulsively then she got to her feet.

"Come," she said briefly to the young scientist. Duval followed the girl wonderingly through a doorway at the rear of the room. Isolde led him onto a wide

stone balustrade that overlooked the buildings and streets of a small city below.

The afternoon sun lit up neat rows of flat metal dwellings, laid out on immaculate streets of white concrete. There were no signs of the stores and shops that Gaul's cities revealed in profusion.

Directly before and below the balustrade was a large square filled with the same black earth that Duval had seen in the Zigrifrid Wall. And clustered here and there on the soil were many of the creatures he had mistaken for trees.

"Look there," Isolde commanded, pointing a slender hand toward the square below, a little to the left. Duval obediently looked where the girl directed.

A group of the tree-creatures was moving, uprooting themselves from the earth. The young scientist watched half horrified, half fascinated, as the creatures pulled their long tentacular toes from the ground. Each tree-man took a short knife from his loin cloth and scraped the black earth from his limbs. Then, moving stiffly and erect, the group marched in unison from the square.

Before Duval could comment on the sight, other tree-creatures entered the square. The newcomers moved to a spot on the black earth, and formed a rough circle. They raised their hard shining knees and literally planted themselves in the ground by plunging their pointed toes deep into the soil. Then each jerkily raised his head and palms up to the sun and stood motionless.

Duval repressed a shudder. "How long do they stay that way?" he asked, unable to tear his eyes from the grotesque spectacle.

"For one hour," Isolde replied. "They come here twice a day. It has been determined that that length of time is more than sufficient to supply their nourishment."

Duval turned his back on the human caricature of a forest below, and faced the girl.

"So this is the great 'achievement' of Teutonia's scientists!" he said grimly. "H-m—it's afternoon. I suppose the common people of Teutonia are now enjoying their lunch!"

I SOLDE'S eyes blazed at the young scientist's pointed sarcasm.

"Do you dare to mock our efforts!" she cried. "You of the outside world that forced us to turn to this desperate means by trying to starve us into submission! For a hundred years our *Feurs* have tried to conclude a peace. It was always refused. Your country and the others would be satisfied with nothing less than the destruction of Teutonia. That day they shall never see! Our great *Feur* has promised us that, at least!"

Duval was taken back by the girl's vehemence.

"Look here!" he protested. "My country has tried to make peace many times. Why, for the last fifty years we have not even been able to get in contact with Teutonia!"

The girl regarded him contemptuously.

"The *Feur* has told me that any *Auslander* would never hesitate to lie. I did not believe him until now!"

With that, the golden-haired girl swept imperiously from the balustrade. Duval had no choice but to follow her back into the room. She was standing at the communicator when he entered.

"Send up a guard," she was commanding, "to take the *Auslander* be—" Her voice suddenly stopped. Duval saw her hand go to her forehead and her body stiffened as if with shock.

"Never mind," she spoke into the communicator box in a low voice. "Do not send anyone until I tell you."

Her finger snapped off the switch. Then—"Paul!" she whispered, and there was anguish in her voice.

Only then did Duval see that there was a third person in the room.

CHAPTER IV

The Martyr

A TREE-MAN emerged from the shadows near the front door and walked toward them slowly. As the sunlight from the windows fell upon the creature, Duval made out a slender man of medium height. Somehow the lean face set on the dully gleaming body was ascetic and sensitive, despite the characteristic immobility of the hard features.

Isolde seemed to shrink from the creature's advance.

"Paul," she whispered, "why did you do it?"

The tree-man's face was impassive as stone as he came close to the girl. His voice, when he spoke, was low and unnatural but somehow not unpleasant.

"Why did I do it, Isolde?" he repeated slowly. "The common people of Teutonia needed leadership. But not from above—not from our overfed 'royalty.' I resolved to become one of the common people, in body as well as mind. They trust me now, Isolde."

The princess buried her face in her hands. Quietly the tree-creature turned to Duval.

"You are the *Auslander*?"

Duval nodded, eying the other curiously.

"I am Paul Thoven, this girl's brother," the man said. His unnatural voice was strangely bitter. "Isolde has never seen me like this—" His sinewy arm swept over his barklike body. "I do not think she knew that nowadays it takes less than two years to become an *Ersatz* man."*

Andy Duval felt a sudden bond of sympathy spring up between him and the gaunt creature. Thoven, in

spite of his wooden exterior, was recognizable as a natural leader of men. A deep sincerity smouldered in the bright black eyes that animated the immobile face. The young scientist felt instinctively that here was a man who could be trusted.

Suddenly Isolde raised her head and threw back her slender shoulders. Her small well-shaped chin was set as if she had come to a decision. She stared straight at her brother, and her voice trembled only a little as she spoke.

"Paul," she said, "you should not have come here. The *Feur* has declared that Prince Paul Thoven is an enemy of the Teutonian State. It is my duty to the *Feur* to have you arrested!"

Thoven did not move. His black eyes were utterly without fear as he regarded his sister. In fact, Duval thought that he detected a sad pity in their gleaming depths.

"You still believe in Gordler—your *Feur*?" he murmured.

Isolde nodded resolutely. The girl seemed to be summoning up all her energies in order to perform what she regarded as her duty. After an instant's hesitation, she flipped up the switch of the communicator.

"Ask the *Feur* to come into the outer office," she said slowly.

There was a short reply, and Isolde raised her head. Thoven made no move to escape. His eyes looked deep into those of his sister's. There was a long silence. The three people in the room stood like graven images, as the door opened and the heavy figure of the *Feur* appeared. The giant's eyes widened a little as he took in the strange tableau.

"Well, Isolde?" he said puzzled, as he approached the desk. His gaze swept over Thoven briefly, without recognition.

The golden-haired girl drew a long breath. A momentary expression as of pain crossed her face. And suddenly she said to Thoven harshly:

"What are you waiting for? Take the *Auslander* below and deliver him to the guards!"

THE slightest of smiles appeared on Thoven's graven countenance. He took Duval by the arm and led the young scientist toward the door. Behind him, Duval heard Isolde's voice, mildly reprimanding.

"The *Auslander* should not be allowed to roam about loose, my *Feur*. I sent for the *Ersatz* man to take him below."

Gordler's amused laugh was free of any suspicions. His reply was loud enough for Duval to hear, as Thoven led him across the threshold.

"Your caution is admirable, Princess Isolde. But hardly necessary. Within twenty-four hours, the siege of Teutonia will be ended. Not this *Auslander*, nor a million *Auslanders* can block our final victory! Take him away!"

Thoven led Andy Duval to the metal elevator and closed the doors behind them. Before descending, the *Ersatz* man spoke rapidly to the young scientist.

* The mystery of life has never been solved, but it is certain that the forces that govern the growth of plants and of animals are basically the same. The animal derives its nourishment from eating plants and other animals. The plant draws its sustenance directly from the chemicals of the earth and from sunlight. Basically, the same function goes on. Therefore, it isn't too incredible to assume that science might discover a way to cause the human body to assimilate its nourishment in the way plants do. We might say that it would be an advance, since technically, the method plants employ is far superior to that employed by animals, who just get their nourishment "second hand," so to speak. The *Ersatz* man is a logical hypothesis.
—Ed.

"Gordler is not interested in the liberation of Teutonia," Thoven said bitterly. "He wants power! If he has his way, all of Europe will become *Ersatz* creatures—to work for the chosen few, the 'royalty' that he has created."

Duval nodded. "I believe that, too," the young scientist said quietly. And he added in a low voice: "I think I know also whom Gordler can thank for the opportunity to conquer Europe!"

Thoven glanced quickly at the young scientist.

"You know, then, about Georges Duval's explosive?"

Duval smiled grimly. "Georges Duval happens to be my father," he told the *Ersatz* man. "I followed him into Teutonia to stop him from giving away the explosive. Apparently, I am too late."

An understanding light appeared in Thoven's eyes. The *Ersatz* man laid his hand on Duval's shoulder.

"Do not think too harshly of your father," Thoven said gently. "He suffers now more than any of us. I know how much he regrets giving Gordler his explosive."

"Where is he?" the young scientist asked.

Thoven's hand found the lever of the elevator.

"We cannot remain here any longer," he said. "I can only tell you this about your father. He is safe with us, and working on a defense against his own explosive. Thus far, he has had no success."

The metal lift shot downward. As it came to rest and the doors swung open, Thoven whispered:

"I must hand you over to the guards now. Your escape will be arranged—there are many of us even here among the guards. Say nothing—and wait!"

The *Ersatz* man led Duval to where a group of uniformed guards stood, bearing rifles. Just before they came within earshot, Thoven found time to add a word.

"Your American friend, Wilson, will tell you more about our underground movement. I managed to enter his cell earlier today."

Before Duval could say a word, two of the guards had gripped him by the arms. Thoven turned swiftly away. The guards led the young scientist down a narrow corridor and half pushed him through a steel doorway into a dimly lit cell.

As Duval reeled down the short flight of steps into the cell, a familiar figure rushed up to him and began to pound him enthusiastically on the back.

"Jumping catfish, Andy!" Jeff Wilson cried. "I was afraid I wouldn't see you again!"

DUVAL followed the ebullient American newshawk over to a single hard bed in the corner, where they sat down. Even in the scanty light, the young scientist saw that Wilson's round face was a mass of discolorations, bumps and bruises.

"For God's sake, Jeff!" Duval cried. "What happened to you? The *Ersatz* men didn't beat you up that bad!"

Wilson smiled ruefully. "You mean the first time, Andy."

"The first time?"

"Yeah. You weren't here the last time it happened. I still don't understand it. There were three of the woodenheads here in the cell. They had come to take away the tray I used for lunch. Well, Andy, all I can remember was taking a cigarette out of my pocket and starting to light it. The next thing I knew, I was picking myself up from the floor and there was no one else in the cell. My face felt as if the woodenheads had jumped on it!"

Duval burst into a laugh as the reason for the attack dawned on him.

"Why, Jeff," the young scientist chuckled, "you ought to know better than to light a match near the *Ersatz* men. Their bodies contain a great deal of cellulose material—it makes them highly combustible. There are probably rigid laws against lighting fires and using matches all over this country!"

Jeff Wilson sighed. "They certainly aren't polite about enforcing the laws, either!" he muttered, feeling gingerly of his swollen jaw.

The American listened absorbedly while Duval recounted the events that had occurred in the *Feur's* chamber. When the young scientist had finished, Wilson in turn described his meeting with Paul Thoven.

The *Ersatz* man had entered the cell disguised as a guard, and eager for news of the outside world. Duval learned without too much surprise that Thoven was a highly educated man. Despite the law forbidding books by all authors living outside Teutonia, Thoven had read and learned to love nearly all of English and American literary classics.

"Here." Wilson picked a small volume from the bed. "Thoven brought me Shakespeare's *Macbeth* to help me pass the time. Of all the classics in the world, he had to pick *Macbeth*!"

The American smiled mournfully. "How could I tell him, Andy, that in my ten-year vacation on the Magno Line—I read practically nothing else!"

Duval learned other things about Thoven from Jeff Wilson. The *Ersatz* man was one of the leaders of a large underground movement in Teutonia, dedicated to the overthrow of Gordler and the making of peace with the outside world. The movement had been getting ready for a revolution until Georges Duval came to Teutonia. Now many of its members were demoralized by fear of the awful weapon that had been put into the *Feur's* hands.

Andy Duval's face was sober when Wilson finished. The American, too, seemed to have lost much of his animation. The minds of both men were filled with the same grim thoughts. A Europe ruled by Gordler meant the end of civilization as they knew it. The *Feur* would waste no time before attacking the Americas.

"And if Gordler succeeds," Duval said bitterly, "it is my father alone who is responsible!"

Wilson said nothing. The two friends sat in silence for a long time. Thoven had not lost his courage, they knew. The *Ersatz* man had said he would help them

escape, and they believed him. But it was doubtful that many other members of Thoven's movement would follow the former prince now. And what could a mere handful do against Gordler's army, equipped with Georges Duval's explosive?

NO, the outlook was not bright. Even Wilson could not think of a clever remark to make. The two men smoked in silence as the hours passed and Paul Thoven did not appear.

Duval had fallen into a light sleep when the creaking of steel hinges awakened him. The young scientist opened his eyes, to see the cell door swinging ajar. He shook Wilson awake quickly. The two men rose to their feet, their eyes fastened on the doorway.

A heavy step sounded on the concrete floor of the corridor outside. An instant later, a great figure appeared on the threshold. *Gordler!* Duval could barely repress a groan of disappointment.

The *Feur*, resplendent in a gaudy new uniform, marched rapidly down the steps and into the cell. Behind him, rifle barrels gleamed from the doorway and the corridor.

Gordler's eyes were cold as twin diamonds as he regarded the two men.

"You were expecting someone else? I am a disappointment, no?" he said in his rapid, clipped speech.

The two prisoners did not reply.

"You will be glad to learn," the *Feur* went on methodically, "that those who were to have helped you escape have been arrested themselves. By association with them, you both have automatically convicted yourselves of treason against the Teutonian State and her *Feur*. The punishment is death!"

Andy Duval returned the fanatical gaze of the *Feur* evenly. Did Gordler expect them to beg for mercy? Duval glanced briefly at Wilson. Despite the hopelessness of the situation, the young scientist almost burst into a laugh.

For Wilson's round face bore an intent look, a delighted look; and he was pulling slowly on his lower lip. Duval had seen these signs every time the American newshawk scented a story. It almost seemed that the doughty correspondent had not heard his death sentence—his eyes were so intent on the giant figure of the *Feur*.

Duval smiled inwardly and decided that Jeff Wilson was hardly the one to do any begging. As for himself—The young scientist's keen eye had picked out the *Feur's* weak spot—a bulging midsection. Duval mentally resolved to aim several of his choicest blows at that protruding paunch before the end. That would almost be worth dying for, he reflected grimly.

A trace of a smile appeared on the *Feur's* cruel mouth.

"Georges was your countryman, *Minheer*," he intoned rapidly, addressing Duval. "He is a traitor now. But in consideration of what he gave to Teutonia, I shall be lenient. I will not shoot you—immediately. I will give you a six-hour respite—both of you. And

I, myself, will entertain you during that time. We will leave here at once. Follow me!"

CHAPTER V

Death on the March

GORDLER'S armored private car shot out of the city along the wide steel highway. Before and behind it, the other steel-plated cars of the *Feur's* entourage traveled.

As the gray night of the Zigfrid Wall grew smaller in the distance behind them, Gordler turned to his two prisoners.

"You will witness," he said, "the final test to determine the exact effectiveness of Georges' explosive. If all goes well, I shall order the beginning of the bombardment of the Magno Wall—this very day! Unfortunately, I doubt whether you two will be alive to see that."

Duval regarded the uniformed *Feur* with undisguised contempt.

"Do you mean," the young scientist demanded, "that you will murder the defenders of the Magno Line without offering them peace terms?"

Gordler laughed harshly. "Murder? You forget, *Minheer*, that there is a war between our countries!"

"A war of your own choosing!" Duval said angrily. "You could have had peace any time during the last fifty years if you wanted it!"

Gordler smiled indulgently. "Perhaps. But Teutonia must not sue for peace, *Minheer*. Teutonia must dictate the peace terms! That I shall do for our conquering nation—when I am in Paris one week from today, the ruler of all Europe!"

Jeff Wilson stared at the *Feur* skeptically.

"That sounds like poppycock to me," the incorrigible American announced dryly.

Gordler ignored Wilson's remark and turned to Andy Duval.

"You made bad friends in Teutonia, *Minheer*," the *Feur* said coldly. "But it may comfort you to know that you would have been put to death in any case—as a spy."

Duval smiled grimly. "You're no doubt an expert, Gordler," the young scientist said, "at finding reasons for executions. But you can't execute all the people in Teutonia who hate you! You can kill us and thousands of others, yes. But sooner or later, your own people are going to come after you. When that day comes, Gordler, I'd rather be anyone else in the world than you!"

Duval saw the big veins on the *Feur's* neck stand out in rage at the ominous prophecy. The young scientist felt a warm glow of satisfaction inside him. This time he had struck home. Gordler genuinely feared the *Ersatz* people he had himself created!

The *Feur* could hardly stifle the emotions that passed swiftly over his purpled face. With a great effort, the giant controlled himself. The heavy car

glided to a stop. Gordler jumped out and in icy tones ordered the two prisoners to follow him.

A flat plain, covered with scraggly brown vegetation, stretched afar on three sides. On the fourth side, about a mile off, a steep rocky summit rose abruptly from the level terrain.

Duval and Wilson followed the *Feur* to where several soldiers stood stiffly at attention. Three small guns mounted before the soldiers caught Duval's eye. The barrels, aimed directly at the summit, were slender and graceful. The blue sparks that glinted from their shining surfaces indicated a composition of beryllium steel. Mounted on sturdy iron tripods, and tapering gently, the guns looked for all the world like small harmless telescopes.

THE *Feur* did not seem disposed to waste any time.

He gave a short curt order to the soldiers, and then stooped back with folded arms. Duval saw the men dip into a black box that stood on the ground between them. Their hands emerged, each holding a small white object that looked like an egg. They placed the "eggs" swiftly into the muzzles of their guns and swung the breeches closed.

The *Feur* issued another command. The soldiers bent in unison over their guns and pressed small black buttons that rose from the blue barrels. Duval saw a slight quiver pass over the steel surfaces. There was no sound and hardly any recoil. The gunners sprang to attention again, as if their task was complete.

Duval heard an exclamation of unholy joy escape the *Feur's* opened mouth. At the same time, Wilson gave vent to a strangled groan. The eyes of both the *Feur* and the American were wide, fixed in the direction that the guns had fired. Duval frowned and swung his head around. The sight that met his gaze seemed to root him to the ground.

The summit had disappeared!

The entire rocky ledge, except for two small portions at either end, had vanished from the horizon. Blue sky shone where before a dark mountain had loomed. All was still and quiet round about. Duval felt as if he had just witnessed a display of sheer magic.

"Ah," the *Feur* was rejoicing, "that is wonderful! Wonderful! Is it not, *Minheers*?"

Neither of the two prisoners found heart to reply. The destruction caused by those little "eggs" had been incredible—horrible! Duval sickened as he thought of the great Magno Wall that stood so proudly around Gaul; of the thousands of his comrades who this day drilled, ate and slept in their normal routine, unaware of their impending doom.

These men of Gaul would never have a chance to fight back. They would never even know they had been killed by a weapon of their own countryman. Duval found small comfort in the last thought.

The *Feur* was issuing orders again. Obediently, the soldiers took down their guns, and with the aid of other soldiers removed them.

"The show is over, *Minheers*," Gordler addressed

his two prisoners. "I trust it was not disappointing?"

Wilson grunted a bitter, unintelligible reply. But Duval did not even turn to the *Feur*. The young scientist was staring through narrowed eyes at the scene of the explosions.

There was something lying on the earth where the base of the summit had been!

What by all the laws of logic should be specks of dust floating in the atmosphere was now something distinctly tangible! The young scientist's lean jaw tensed as he became aware of the implications of his discovery. If only what he was seeing was not a whimsy of pure chance! At any rate, Gordler must not suspect.

Duval concealed his agitation as he turned to the *Feur*.

"No, Gordler," he murmured, "your little performance was not disappointing."

The *Feur* smiled triumphantly.

"Come," he ordered. "There is no time to waste. I shall begin the destruction of your Magno Wall today—within an hour. All is in readiness. Perhaps I shall be merciful enough to delay your executions until we start the bombardment. It would pain me, *Minheer*, to deprive you of witnessing so interesting a spectacle as the disappearance of your famous Magno Wall!"

THE afternoon sun glared reddishly down on the great square of the city. The black feeding ground of the *Ersatz* creatures was empty. Not a soul could be seen on the concrete streets. An ominous hush hung in the sultry air. The hour set for the bombardment of the Magno Wall had almost arrived.

On the stone balustrade overlooking the square, Gordler stood before his two prisoners and explained how he proposed to "entertain" them.

"This," the *Feur* said, indicating a screen about two feet square, "is a televis which I shall focus on the Magno Wall when the bombardment begins. I do not think the sight will lose any of its effect because of transmission. And as you rest comfortably here on my balcony, you should be able to enjoy it all the more!"

Gordler was in high good humor. His heavy face fairly beamed as he regarded the two men mockingly for a moment, then turned and spoke briefly to one of his guards.

Duval felt Wilson's body go tense beside him. The two prisoners were seated side by side under the rifle barrels of Gordler's private bodyguard. The young scientist shot the American a warning glance, and his lips formed the words "Wait, Jeff!"

The doughty correspondent returned Duval's glance with a stubborn shake of his head. But, after a moment, he relaxed in his seat with a hopeless grunt. The young scientist had not had an opportunity to tell Wilson what he had seen on the testing field. He could understand Wilson's frustrated attitude perfectly.

Now Duval leaned as close to the news correspon-

dent as he dared and whispered:

"Jeff, we must get a message through to Paul Thoven. The *Ersatz* men must attack Gordler now—while most of his army is in the Zigfrid Wall!"

Wilson's eyes narrowed puzzledly. With a quick glance, he indicated the pair of Georges guns that had been mounted on the balustrade, commanding the entire square below.

"I can't explain now, Jeff," Duval whispered in answer. "You must trust me. Somehow we've got to get a message through to Thoven to attack at once. It is now or never."

Wilson hesitated for a moment, regarding his young friend closely. Then he nodded cautiously and looked around him.

Gordler stretched out a heavy arm to halt Isolde's speech, but her swift words had already gone out

The guard whom Gordler had sent inside emerged, followed by the slim, golden-haired figure of Princess Isolde. For a brief instant the girl glanced at Duval. The young scientist saw that her eyes held a deep anguish and a nameless fear. Obsequiously the guard placed a chair for her before Wilson. She sat down in silence.

Gordler turned when he saw Isolde. The *Feur* bowed, a faintly mocking bow. He strode before the two prisoners again.

"It has been determined," Gordler informed them, "that it will require two shells to destroy each hundred square feet of the Magno Wall. I will blow Gaul's great defense into dust—without losing a single man!"

The *Feur* turned to the televis and flicked the dial.



A Teutonian army general came into focus on the screen.

"Belitsch," the *Feur* said, speaking into a small black audiphone on a table near the televis, "are all your men at their posts?"

"Yes, my *Feur*!" came the answer.

"Good. Remember, Belitsch, immediately after the Magno Wall is destroyed, our men are to attack—and we have no food for prisoners!"

AT that, Jeff Wilson growled out an epithet of strictly American flavor. Two rifle barrels immediately were thrust against the correspondent's back. Duval shot the American a warning glance, and Wilson

nodded grimly.

"In ten minutes exactly," Gordler was saying, looking at his watch, "you will begin the attack, Belitsch. That is all!"

The general saluted smartly. Gordler twirled the televis dial and Belitsch disappeared from the screen.

"And now," the *Feur* addressed the group on the balcony, "I shall speak to the people of Teutonia, who are not yet aware that their hour of liberation is at hand. If the thought of struggle frightens my people, the voice of their *Feur* shall comfort them. Just as when they were hungry—the hand of their *Feur* nourished them!"

Wilson muttered something about nourishing them "on worms," but Gordler did not hear him. The gaudily uniformed *Feur* was lost in his own glory. He stood before the audiphone like a preening peacock.

"My people," he began in a throaty voice that mounted in pitch with each syllable, "your *Feur* calls upon you today to make the last and greatest sacrifice for him and for our Fatherland! *Auslanders* have held our great nation in a state of siege for one hundred years. They sought to drive us to our knees by cutting off our food supply. But our great scientists enabled us to live on without normal food, and we struggled on undefeated!

"Today our long resistance bears fruit. Today we shall break the hundred-year blockade! Today we shall also break the armed might of the nations that surround us!"

Fanatically, the *Feur's* voice rose and fell. He reminded the people of Teutonia of his love for them, of his honesty with them. Duval knew that each of his statements was a cynical lie. Gordler had kept carefully concealed from Teutonia the numberless attempts at peace made by the Allies. The *Feur* wanted no peace—only war and power.

Gordler raved on. Suddenly Duval saw that Wilson had edged imperceptibly forward so that his lips were very close to Isolde's ear. The girl was inclining her head back to catch his whispered words. Duval could not hear what the American was saying. But after a moment Isolde's puzzled expression disappeared. In its place, a resolute look appeared on the girl's face.

As Gordler paused momentarily, Isolde rose.

"My *Feur*," she said quickly, "if you permit, I would like to speak to the people of Teutonia. Perhaps my words will help in this hour of crisis."

Gordler looked at the girl in surprise. The sincerity of her voice seemed to impress him. With a bow, he motioned Isolde to come before the audiphone.

CHAPTER VI

The Tables Turn

PRINCESS ISOLDE began to speak in a low voice.

"I can do no better in this grave hour than to remind our people of what Teutonia's greatest poet once said: 'In darkness let your mind dwell in light.'

The words are Goethe's but the spirit is ours. People of Teutonia, the past has been dark, but the future will be bright. As another poet from another land once said: '*Let Birnam Wood march on Dunsinane!*'"

Isolde paused briefly. Duval saw a puzzled expression slowly form on the face of the watching *Feur*. But before Gordler could move, Isolde leaned close to the audiphone and said in a clear vibrant voice:

"Paul! Do not be afraid. Let Birnam Wood march on Dunsinane! The hour has come!"

Gordler stretched out a heavy hand to seize the girl's arm. But quickly, before he could touch her, Isolde wheeled and walked, head high, from the balcony.

Gordler looked after her with an ugly frown. But Duval saw that the message conveyed nothing to the *Feur*. After a moment, Gordler shrugged slightly and, turning to the audiphone, resumed his harangue.

Duval looked puzzledly at Wilson. The American newshawk returned his glance with a grim, satisfied smile. And suddenly the young scientist remembered. "Let Birnam Wood march on Dunsinane!" Why, that was a quotation out of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*—Wilson's favorite play!

The lines referred to the King's soldiers, disguised as trees, marching on Dunsinane where Macbeth, the villain, was hiding. Paul Thoven, if he heard the message, would certainly understand the allusion. If he heard the message— Duval sent up a silent prayer that the *Ersatz* man had not been one of those captured by Gordler.

The *Feur* had stopped speaking now. He closed the switch of the audiphone and looked at his watch.

"*Minheers*," he said grimly to Duval and Wilson, "the time has come! The destruction of Gaul will now begin. Be grateful that before you die, I allow you to witness a spectacle such as few have ever seen!"

With an abrupt movement, Gordler turned to the televis. Andy Duval's eyes darted to Jeff Wilson. The American nodded imperceptibly. Both men knew they had to play for time. The square below was now quiet and deserted in the afternoon light. They had to give Thoven every chance to make good.

Gordler's hand had just found the dial of the televis, when his two prisoners went into action. Andy Duval's spring carried him head foremost into the paunchy midsection of the *Feur*. Gordler bellowed in surprise and turned swiftly, only to meet a slashing right hand that caught him flush on his heavy jaw. The great figure wavered for an instant, then toppled like a felled ox.

Meanwhile, Jeff Wilson had flung himself backward into the midst of the guards, knocking two of them off their feet. In the mad scramble, the other minions could not get a clear shot at the husky American.

Just as Duval turned, one of the guards had reversed his rifle and was in the act of bringing the heavy stock down on Wilson's unprotected head. The young scientist catapulted himself at the swinging figure and managed to deflect the blow, which glanced off Wilson's shoulder.

The two *Auslanders* then proceeded to put away one guard after another. The minions were still afraid to hit one of their own men by shooting, and their rifles hampered them. Busy as he was, Duval found time to admire the methodical efficiency with which Jeff Wilson worked. The bull-like news correspondent made every one of his blows count—and each had the net effect of a battering ram.

BUT more guards were appearing from the doorway and rushing into the fray. Both prisoners knew they could not hope to win out. Yet they kept up the unequal struggle until they were borne to the ground, helpless under sheer weight of numbers.

"Let the *Auslanders* get up!"

The minions rose quickly at the sound of their *Few*'s voice. Gordler was standing with his back to the stone railing, his hand passing gingerly over the angry red welt that had appeared on his jaw. The *Few*'s eyes, as he stared at Andy Duval, were pools of cold hatred.

The guards pulled the *Auslanders* to their feet. Gordler strode swiftly to Duval and struck the young scientist hard on the side of the head with an open palm. Duval's teeth gritted, but he managed to return the blow with a contemptuous smile.

"What I now show you, *Minheer*," Gordler said with a vicious laugh, "will only be part payment for the blow you struck me."

Turning to the guards, the *Few* rasped out a command. In a moment, the two prisoners were tied to their chairs. Gordler turned to the televis and flicked the dial.

"Bel!" the *Few* began, and stopped before he had actually tuned in the general.

A queer, incredulous look crept into the giant's red-dish eyes. For an instant, a heavy silence hung in the still air under the light blue sky. Only the wind murmured softly against the stone railing of the balustrade.

Gordler's wide gaze seemed fascinated by something in the great square below. At the same time, Andy Duval heard certain sounds coming from the square—such sounds as people who wore wooden shoes might make by walking on stones—

The young scientist raised himself as high as his bonds permitted, and peered over the balustrade railing. The sight that met his eyes caused an involuntary cheer to leave his lips.

Birnam Wood was marching on Dunsinane!

Down the wide promenade that led toward the balustrade, walking without haste, but with grim determination—the tree-men of *Teutonia* were coming after their tyrant!

There was something that chilled a man's blood in the absolute silence that marked the advance of the *Ersatz* men. All the wooden faces were raised to the balustrade; all the stony eyes were fixed unerringly on the motionless figure of Gordler. The tree-men were within a hundred feet of the balustrade, before

the *Few* recovered from the shock of seeing them.

Like a big cat, Gordler leaped behind one of the Georges guns and swung its barrel down.

"Fools!" the giant shouted hoarsely. "Stop where you are!"

The *Ersatz* men wavered. Their step seemed to falter and they slowed their advance. But one gnarled figure moved implacably ahead. Duval recognized Paul Thoven.

Like an angel of grim vengeance, the former prince was moving steadily toward the *Few*, his black eyes never leaving Gordler's heavy-jowled face. And suddenly another figure emerged from the main body, and hurried ahead to walk at Thoven's side. The newcomer was no *Ersatz* man. He was—Duval heard a moan escape his own lips as he recognized Georges Duval, his father!

The young scientist wanted to shout out, to warn the venerable, white-haired figure. But his lips would not open. As if paralyzed he sat and watched the compelling scene.

FOR some reason, Gordler's finger was hesitating on the trigger of the Georges gun. Duval suddenly knew that the loud-talking *Few* was squeamish about killing in cold blood—when he himself had to do the dirty work. Gordler would have preferred to have his minions take care of the distasteful job. But it was too late to issue orders now.

"Stop!" the *Few* croaked. "Stop, you fools!"

But the examples of Thoven and Georges had heartened the rest of the tree-men. Swiftly, they closed the gap between them and their leaders. Gordler's big frame was trembling. Beads of sweat stood out on his heavy face. Duval saw the *Few* aim the gun directly at the vanguard where his father and Paul Thoven marched. The tree-men were less than fifty feet from the balustrade when the giant pulled the trigger.

As if his mind were a thing apart, the young scientist automatically took notice of several curious things after Gordler fired. For one, there was hardly any sound. The explosive caused a gentle cloud of dust to billow up from the square, but it was almost noiseless.

And there was no concussion of air, as always followed ordinary explosives. The Georges gun seemed to disintegrate the matter around it—instead of shattering it into fragments.

Andy Duval could scarcely bring himself to look on, when the dust began to subside in the square. He had not reckoned with his father's presence in the attack of the *Ersatz* men. That was bad enough. But what if his judgment had been altogether wrong! The best of the tree-men of *Teutonia* would be dead virtually by his own hand—

The square cleared. Duval's jaw dropped, and he half suppressed a moan of anguish as he took in the sight below. A neatly rounded crater, about forty feet across, had appeared in the square. There was no sound and no movement from its depths. More than

a hundred *Ersatz* men had been destroyed by one shell!

A high-pitched, demoniacal laugh issued from Gordler's lips. The *Feur* was panting heavily, and his teeth were bared like fangs as he gazed on the destruction he had caused. Wilson grunted and strained at his bonds until the cords sank inches deep into his arms.

Duval sat stunned. His father, Paul Thoven, everything gone! He had made an error and Gaul's fate was sealed. The domination of Europe lay in the *Feur's* grasp! If the young scientist could have reached the gun at this moment, he would have turned it on himself.

But, fortunately, his bonds held him back. Held him long enough so that he saw the first of the wonders—the first indication that his shrewd deduction at the testing field had been scientifically valid!

Gray with stone dust, but clearly recognizable, the figure of Paul Thoven was climbing over the crater's edge! Behind the former prince other tree-men appeared. Grimed, gritty—but unharmed!

The *Feur* stared incredulously at the figures that emerged from the crater. To Gordler, the tree-men might have been gray ghosts come back from the dead to claim inexorable vengeance.

As more and more of the creatures piled out of the round pit, Gordler seemed to lose his head. Thoven was once more leading his men with a deadly step toward the balustrade. The *Feur* began to fire shell after shell from the Georges gun. Most of the shots went awry, digging up earth at far ends of the square. Some of the explosives struck near the tree-men.

But after every dust cloud settled, Gordler's intended victims invariably emerged unharmed from the crater-pocked earth. An implacable human forest, the tree-men moved against the man they hated.

SUDDENLY Gordler abandoned the gun, and with a wild moan rushed for the door leading from the balustrade. For an instant, the uniformed minions guarding the two prisoners wavered. Then as if by signal they took to their heels after their master.

Andy Duval felt someone cutting his bonds. He turned and saw Isolde. The Teutonian princess freed him, then Jeff Wilson.

"Quick," the young scientist said to the girl. "Tune in General Belitsch and get him to suspend operations at the front!"

Isolde nodded and turned to the televis. When the stolid visage of the general appeared on the screen, the girl said earnestly:

"Belitsch, this is the Princess Isolde. Have your men withdraw from their positions. No action is to be taken until further notice. I can't explain now, Belitsch. Simply carry out my orders."

The gray-haired general hesitated for a moment. Then he saluted like the soldier he was.

"Yes, Princess," came the answer. Duval was certain that he detected an expression of relief on Belitsch's lined face, before Isolde switched the general

out.

Duval gestured for Wilson to stay with Isolde. The American nodded. The young scientist turned swiftly toward the balustrade door. But before he had taken two steps, the dust-covered figure of Paul Thoven appeared in the doorway.

Thoven was followed by other tree-creatures. And—inert in their midst—was the massive figure of Gordler!

The tree-men threw the lifeless hulk to the balustrade floor.

"We didn't kill Gordler," Thoven said with a grim smile. "We didn't have the chance! After his private bodyguard deserted him, he just stood in a corner and shivered. He was so rotten inside, he died of fright before we could lay a hand on him!"

"Oh, Paul!" Isolde cried, and a moment later was sobbing relievedly on her brother's breast. Thoven's brown hand stroked the girl's golden head gently. Then he tenderly disengaged himself from her arms. The former prince walked to the televis and tuned in Belitsch.

"General Belitsch," Thoven said in a low compelling voice, "there will be no war. *The Feur is dead!* Dismount the Georges guns, and withdraw your forces. This is Prince Paul Thoven. I will take full responsibility for the action."

Belitsch saluted smartly and replied that Prince Thoven's orders would be carried out to the letter. This time Andy Duval was certain that the general's face had lighted up with relief.

CHAPTER VII

A New World

ANDY DUVAL laid a small wreath of flowers on the simple grave, set in the center of the great square. A plain stone that rose from the black earth bore the words:

Georges Duval, beloved father of Andre Duval, who gave his life that others might live free of tyranny.

It was a clear azure day, one week after the overthrowing of Gordler. Andy Duval, Paul Thoven and Isolde stood in silence for several minutes before Georges Duval's grave.

Thoven laid a hand on the young scientist's shoulder.

"Your father never wanted war," the *Ersatz* man said simply. "But he knew that peace under conditions such as existed in Europe were almost as bad. The walls in which Teutonia existed were strangling her, as soon these senseless, impenetrable fortifications would strangle every other country. But after Georges Duval gave his weapon to Gordler, he realized that he had made a great mistake. He then threw in all his great energies with our underground movement in Teutonia, and worked with us until the day he died.

"I tried to keep your father from the square that day—but he would not stay away. I think he wished to relieve his conscience by dying."

Duval nodded wordlessly. The three people walked slowly from the grave. Thoven led them back to what had been Gordler's palace. In a few moments, they emerged on the stone balustrade that overlooked the square.

"By the way, Andy," Thoven said suddenly to the young scientist, "I never found out how you knew that we *Ersatz* men could not be harmed by the Georges explosive!"

Duval smiled a little bitterly. "Well," he said, "in the first place I knew quite a bit about the explosive from sneaking looks at my father's notes years ago. The explosive sets up a whirling field that disrupts atoms—but not *all* atoms! *Wood is impervious to it!*

"I found that out when the *Feur* took me to watch a test. The guns were trained on a mountain. The rocks disintegrated and the soil disappeared. Afterward I saw that *two large trees* had been uprooted by the explosion—but they were not harmed! That gave me the idea that the *Ersatz* people would not be harmed either, being composed to a large extent of cellulose.

"I admit I was pretty shaky about putting the idea to work—but it turned out all right!"

Thoven nodded. "And it was Jeff Wilson's signal that brought us. You two certainly made a good team."

Duval grinned as he thought of Wilson. The American newshawk had bid them a hurried "good-by" on the very day of the revolution. He had made a beeline for Gaul, to get to a transatlantic radio news teletype before, as he put it, "I blow up and burst from the greatest 'scoop' of the century!"

"Look!" Thoven said suddenly. Duval and Isolde raised their heads. Before them, to their right, a great

section of the Zigfrid Wall was mushrooming up into dust.

Andy Duval looked uncomprehendingly at Thoven. The *Ersatz* man smiled.

"The new government of Teutonia," Thoven said, "of which I am the temporary head, has ordered the immediate destruction of the Zigfrid Wall. We are now suing for peace with the rest of Europe. I know they desire it as much as we do."

Duval nodded soberly, as another great chunk of the steel-ribbed concrete dissolved into chalky powder.

"You see how easily the Georges' explosive brings down the wall it took a quarter of a century to build," Thoven said slowly. "When you go back to Gaul, tell your country that Teutonia will gladly loan them all the guns necessary to bring down their own walls."

WITH that, Paul Thoven excused himself to tend to matters of state. Andy Duval remained standing at the side of Princess Isolde. Both watched the great gray Zigfrid Wall come down as if by magic.

Isolde spoke without turning to Duval.

"This is the beginning of a new day for my country," the girl said in her rich low voice.

Duval's hand found hers.

"And for us," he said simply.

Isolde did not reply. But neither did she withdraw her hand.

Hands clasped firmly in deep understanding, the young Gaulisian scientist and the lovely Teutonian princess gazed outward with shining eyes, as the remainder of the Zigfrid Wall within their range of vision erupted in a cascade of powdered dust.

It seemed to the rapt young couple as though the wall all but sighed with relief as, exhausted from its hundred-year vigil, that which had once come from the earth returned to earth to fulfill the cycle of its destiny.

ROCKET PLANES YET?

A thunderous roar trails away to a screaming crescendo! We look sharply heavenward! Expecting to have fully a squadron of fighting planes confront our eager gaze, we are startled to see only one huge craft streaking across the azure sky, billows of oily black smoke trailing in its wake. But what a ship it is! Looking like a huge projectile, it is characterized by the complete absence of wings or, in fact, of any form of lifting surfaces whatsoever! It's not a dream . . . it's not a "stunt" . . . but a definite reality! Don't fail to read "ROCKET PLANES YET?"

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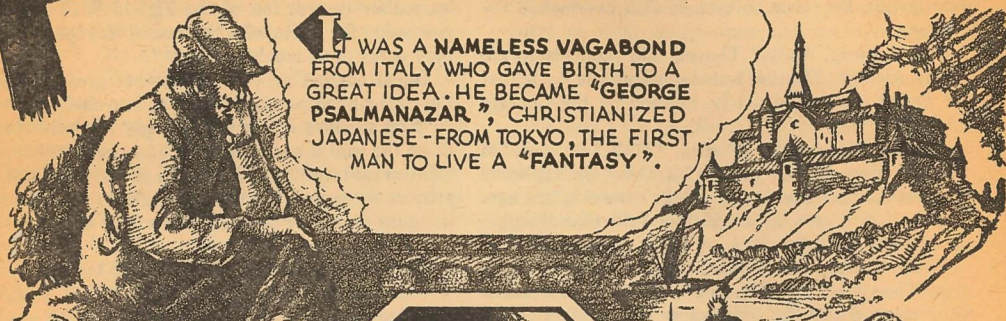
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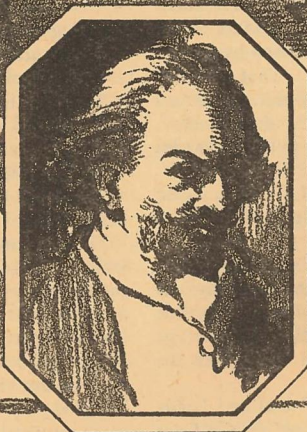
**NOW ON SALE AT
ALL NEWSSTANDS**

Fantastic

IT WAS A NAMELESS VAGABOND FROM ITALY WHO GAVE BIRTH TO A GREAT IDEA. HE BECAME "GEORGE PSALMANAZAR", CHRISTIANIZED JAPANESE - FROM TOKYO, THE FIRST MAN TO LIVE A "FANTASY".



POSED AS A MONK, THOUGH NOT ONE



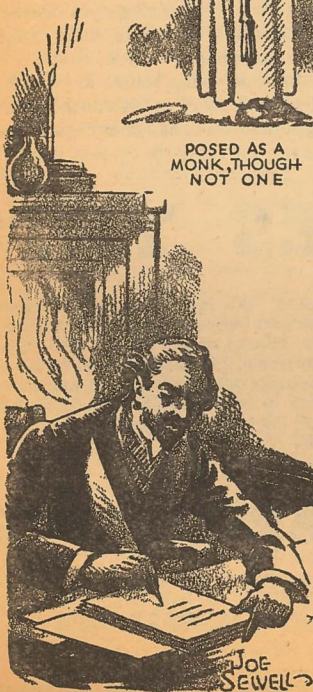
WAS A SOLDIER OF THE DUKE OF MECKLENBURG

POSED AS A CHRISTIAN NOBLEMAN FROM FORMOSA

The **LIVING HOAX - "GEORGE PSALMANAZAR"** HAVING BEEN RAISED BY MONKS IN A MONASTERY, WAS A LINGUIST - SPEAKING MORE THAN A DOZEN TONGUES FLUENTLY, HE JOURNEYED TO ENGLAND, THERE REPRESENTING HIMSELF TO THE BISHOP OF LONDON AS A CHRISTIAN NOBLEMAN FROM FORMOSA . . .



PATER FOUTENAY, RETURNING FROM THE FAR EAST, BRANDED PSALMANAZAR A LIAR AND IMPOSTOR, AND IN A PUBLIC DISPUTE WHICH FOLLOWED, SUCCEEDED IN DISCREDITING PSALMANAZAR'S STORY.



JOE SEWELL

HE WROTE A BOOK ON FORMOSA IN 1704 DESCRIBING A COUNTRY HE HAD NEVER SEEN. LATER ADMITTING HIS HOAX, HE BECAME A SHUNNED MAN. HE DIED IN 1763, POOR AND DESPISED.

HOAXES

By WILLY LEY

One of the most successful impersonations in history is the famous case of George Psalmanazar, who conceived and executed a character that has been recorded in history as an actual character, even though disproved.

HE didn't know his real name; at least he claimed that he didn't. He didn't know exactly his place of birth. He only knew that he had been born some place in Northern Italy between Rome and Avignon. He didn't know exactly his age. All he remembered (or so he said) was that his mother had given him into the care of a monastery for education. They were probably Dominican monks, possibly Franciscans, he wasn't sure. Of his father he knew that he lived somewhere in Germany, but that he was not a German.

That man called himself George Psalmanazar. His were two outstanding talents, one to invent stories that sounded credible even if they were fantastic. The other was a gift for languages. He finally spoke more than a dozen different languages, including Hebrew (which he learned late in his life) and each one of them fluently.

When he ran away from the monastery where he had grown up he had his first "idea." He was not a monk, but he posed as one. His knowledge of theology was sufficient to do so and it made travel easier. Occasionally he worked a bit, as tutor or as teacher. Occasionally he tried to collect money from monasteries for some foreign mission. It did not work very well. Then he found his father and seeing that he was as penniless as he was himself left him.

After that he had his second idea. He sat down on a milestone on a road overlooking the Rhine and began to dream about things he had read. When he got up to resume his journey he had changed. His name was George Psalmanazar and he was a Christianized Japanese, born in Tokyo. He had run away from his tutor to see the world and boarded a ship. After some travel the vessel sprang a leak and was abandoned by crew and passengers, leaving him behind. Eventually the wrecked vessel drifted ashore on an exotic and beautiful tropical island. A man came from the luxuriant forest, evidently a chieftain. But he did not attack George Psalmanazar, he gazed at him and bent down in worship. Thus George Psalmanazar became king of the isle he had discovered—

That was the first story, the story Psalmanazar told his fellow soldiers in Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle) after he had been made to join the forces of the Duke of Mecklenburg.

Later the story changed. Somebody had told him that it would be better to appear as a native of the island, Formosa, discovered by Portuguese early in the sixteenth century and named "Itha Formosa" ("Island Beautiful"). People knew approximately how Japanese looked, he was told, and he did have a white skin and was much too tall.

Psalmanazar heeded the advice. Thereafter he was a native of Formosa and was very careful always to tell that the noblemen of Formosa prided themselves about their white skin and saw to it that no sun ray tanned even their smallest children.

How Psalmanazar got out of the Duke's army is as uncertain as many other things in his life. It may have been the influence of his friend, Chaplain William Innes. Only a short while after his soldiering episode he arrived in London where he was received by the Bishop of London, George Compton.

The Bishop had thousands of questions to ask of the Christian nobleman from Formosa. George Psalmanazar answered every one of them and beautifully evaded the dangerous ones. For quite some time everything went on schedule. London's society was very much interested in the important stranger. If Psalmanazar regretted anything it was that his idea had brought him only fame, but no money.

But then somebody came who had been in the Far East. He was Pater Foutenay. He said that Psalmanazar was a liar, an impostor

who had never traveled except in Western Europe. A public dispute between Psalmanazar and Foutenay was arranged. It was a fascinating spectacle. But it seems that Pater Foutenay succeeded in making the Bishop at least very uncertain about the "Formosan." At any event the Bishop dropped Psalmanazar.

By that time Psalmanazar could not back out any more,—it is even likely that he more than half believed his own stories by then. To justify himself—and to earn some money besides—he wrote a voluminous "Historical and Geographical Description of Formosa" which was printed in London in 1704. In spite of everything the book was dedicated to the Bishop of London. It was certainly a best seller. The Latin original had to go through a second printing, and English, French, Dutch and German translations were made. But it didn't bring much money into the pockets of its author. It is said that he got nothing for the translations and only twenty-two pounds for the two Latin editions.

Psalmanazar's enemies studied the book line for line, word for word. They waited for some slip, for something to enable them to prove that Psalmanazar was an impostor. But they failed to find anything. The descriptions of the island (which is about the size of the two states of Vermont and Connecticut taken together) do not offer a point for attack. The truth of his statements either cannot be checked or it agrees closely with the few sources at the disposal of the others. Psalmanazar had seen to it, of course, that he closely agreed with the two or three authors that had rendered accounts of Formosa based on actual experiences of travelers.

Psalmanazar claimed, as could be expected, that he had written the book in his own language first and that the Latin edition was only a translation. To prove that fact he quoted some examples from the "original," among them the Lord's Prayer, beginning:

Amy Pornio dan chin Ornio vief,
Gnayjorhe sai Lory,
Eyfodere sai Bagalin (etc., etc.).

Nobody could prove him wrong. There were no mission books in which one could check the language in which the Lord's Prayer is taught in the mission schools of Formosa and find that they say:

Rama-jan ka tou tounoun kow ki vullum,
Pakou-tik-tik-auh lou-moulough ta Nanan oho.
Pa-irou-au ta Pei-sasouan-oho. (etc., etc.).

Quite a difference, but unknown at that time. And the linguists examining Psalmanazar's language said that it was a perfectly usable language. . . . Psalmanazar was a linguist himself who did not commit so simple a blunder! In fact, even later a French linguist doubted (in spite of and after Psalmanazar's confession of fraud) that the "language" was artificial. It certainly was not Formosan, but it seemed to be a really existing language. There is hardly a better compliment to Psalmanazar's ability than these doubts.

While people were still buying and reading Psalmanazar's book official opinion changed and public opinion followed soon afterwards. Nobody believed him any more and a miserable life began again. He tried his skill as an actor, but he had been a better actor in a lecturing hall than he was on the stage. He became a tutor again, then a kind of military secretary. He learned Hebrew and translated the Psalms, he wrote a "History of the Art of Printing" and finally contributed to a geographical encyclopedia, exposing himself. But all he could say was that he had never seen Formosa and that the name of George Psalmanazar was an assumed name. What he really was and what his true name was he did not know himself. And neither religious zeal nor opium nor alcohol could make him remember . . . or forget. He died in 1763.

The Judging of the Priestess

By NELSON S. BOND

Out of future Mexico the Japcans came, invading Jinnia. And Meg, the priestess, faced dual judgment as she brought Daiv, her man, back to the tribe.

BEHIND them the sun sank lazily, a huge, lopsided ball of fire too-bright-to-be-looked-at, and the gathering fingers of dusk stole softly through the trees, casting wan shadows where they touched. The air was thin and cold with the breath of approaching night; imps of darkness lurked in the tree-roots and hollows.

But Meg felt no fear. She was alive with warmth, light, happiness. The hills about her were soft-bosomed and gay with autumn's garments; no longer was the landscape salt and drear as it had been back there in the 'Kota territory, in the Place of the Gods. This was her homeland, her native Jinnia. Beyond that turn was a rill, a half day's march beyond the rill lay the village of her own tribeswomen . . .

From her seat astride Nessa, she looked down upon Daiv, her Man, and her voice was vibrant with happiness.

"We are almost there, Daiv! Soon you will meet my people, talk with them, learn to love them as I do."

Daiv smiled at her dubiously.

"That I am prepared to do, Golden One. I can't help wondering, though, how they will accept me. After what you've told me about the Men of your tribe—" He shook his head.

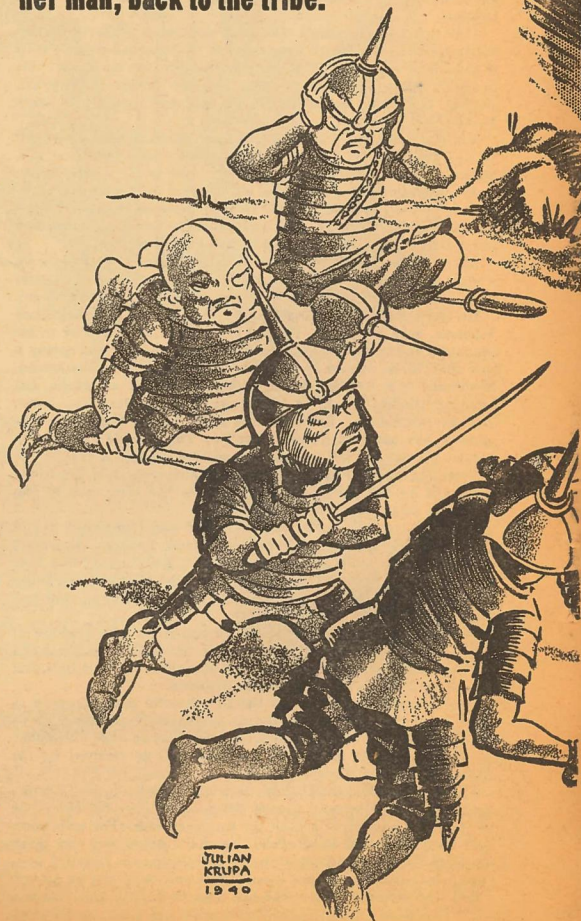
Meg made a happy-sound deep in her throat; slipped from Nessa's back and covered Daiv's lips with her hands.

"There is nothing to fear, Daiv. The Men of my Clan—*pah!*—they are not like you. They are weak things, meant only for breeding. The Mother will know, the moment she sees you, that you are one like the Gods. She too made the pilgrimage. She will rejoice and be glad. And—" Meg moved closer into the circle of his arms. "She will be gladder still when she sees our happiness."

"I hope so," said Daiv soberly. His lips met hers in the touching-of-mouths that he had taught her. Then, "But it is too late for us to finish our journey today," he said. "We must find a place to make camp."

"Just beyond the turn," Meg told him excitedly.

In these latter years of the 35th Century, Mount Rushmore, with its colossal statues of Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt was known to the superstitious tribeswomen as "the Place of the Gods." From a pilgrimage to this holy spot (where she had met Daiv and learned the great secret that the Ancient Ones were Men) Meg was returning. ("The Priestess Who Rebelled," *Amazing Stories*, October, 1939.)—Ed.



JULIAN
KRUPA
1940



Meg leaped astride the doe, and kicked her heels into its flanks. With a wild leap it sprang into motion through the ranks of the little men

"I know every inch of this country, Daiv. When I was young, and studying under the Mother to become a Priestess of the Clan, I used to ride out here to seek solitude and the guidance of the Gods. Just beyond the turn there is forest and a small stream. This is an ancient land, my lover; the trees are mighty and strong. But—" Her eyes found his adoringly. "But not so mighty and strong as you."

Daiv said, "Now, Golden One!" reprovingly, but Meg felt happy-crinkles in her heart as she saw the way he drew back his shoulders to lead the way into the forest. She did not mount Nessa again, but walked behind Daiv, leading the tamed and captive doe by its bridle.

NESSA had been Daiv's gift to her, a mount to take the place of the horse Meg had lost on her way to the Place of the Gods when the Wild One had attacked her. "A wedding gift," Daiv had called it—which did not make sense. But, then, Daiv was always saying strange things. That was, Meg thought, a trifle awfully, because he came from Kirki, which was a holy place far to the southland, near the Land of the Escape. His tribespeople were direct descendants of those Ancient Ones who, long ages ago, had fled from Earth to the evening star in the bowels of a metal bird that spat fire.*

Daiv's skill had captured Nessa, wild woodland doe, but Meg's gentleness had tamed her. She had borne Meg across all these foreign territories; through Braska and Zurrie, to the blue-shining fields of Tucky; now, at last, back to Meg's beloved Jinnia.

It had been a long journey and a strange one. Many things had Meg seen; curiosities that would thrill the Women of her Clan to startled, "Aiees!" of astonishment when she told of them. She had seen the long, straight roads built by the Ancient Ones; their smooth *creet* now cracked and worn but still easier to travel than the tortuous woodland paths. She had seen the remnants of a gigantic *hoam* called Sinnaty, where once had lived a great folk called "the Reds." She and Daiv had lingered for three days with the tribeswomen of Loovil (whose Mother knew the Mother of Meg's Clan, and had sent greetings and gifts of ripe, fragrant bacca); there had they seen an antique statue of a horse-god named Manowah.

They had even—Meg thrilled at the recollection—slept in one of the traditional oaken *hoams* peculiar to the Tucky folk; dwellings immortalized in the Tucky tribal song, "—sing one song of my oaken Tucky *hoam*—"

And, "It is such a great land, Daiv!" Meg had said one night, lying sleepless and excited over the wonders she had seen that day. "Such a great land, this Tizathy! How I wish I had lived in it when the An-

cient Ones had welded it all together."

"A great land, indeed," was Daiv's answer. "But what did you call it? Tizathy?"

"Yes," explained Meg. "That was its name. One of the ancient songs tells of it. 'My country, Tizathy; sweet land of liberty—'"

Daiv looked at her with vast respect. "Someday we must visit my people, Golden One. The elders of my tribe will want to talk to you. You have such great learning . . ."

But now, at last, their journey was over. Jinnia's sweet green hills cradled them; tomorrow they would join and touch hands with Meg's sisters. Tonight they would sleep in the little forest Meg knew so well . . .

Daiv turned, an unfamiliar wrinkle-look on his forehead. "Golden One, didn't you say we were coming to forest land?"

"Yes, Daiv. Right before you. There—"

Then Meg was at his side, and her eyes were round with wonderment. "But—but this is not right!" she cried.

It was no forest that confronted them. Where Meg's memory had told her would be a riotous jungle of intertwining green, great trees that brushed the heavens, high archways of leaves and thick-boled woodland monarchs, there was nothing but a vast and desolate plain, strewn with bristling twigs!

Stark and severe was that glade, swept bare of all vegetation save these thousands upon countless thousands of twigs. No grass, no shrubs, no flowers. Rough, bare hillside, and ankle-deep—the host of stunted branches.

"I—I don't understand!" said Meg bewilderedly. She looked at Daiv, fear suddenly cold in her heart, and she made a magic sign over her breast to ward away the evil wood ghosts. "This is not as it should be, Daiv! Something—"

The plain echoed Daiv's boisterous happy-sound.

"Something tells me," he chuckled, "you've made a mistake, Golden One. So you know every inch of this country, eh? Well—" He shrugged. "It is a cloudless night. And plain or forest, this is as good a place as any to make camp. Get water, Meg, for the cawfee, and I will build a fire."

Silently, with a sun-heat burning her cheeks, Meg moved to the rill and got water. Then, as silently again, she returned to the spot Daiv had designated. By this time she expected he would have made fire-sparks with a rock and the bit of flame-metal he carried in his pouch—but to her great surprise, no crackling blaze awaited her.

Instead, Daiv was standing upright beside one of the branched twigs that festooned the plain. There was an angry-look on his face; perspiration dripped from his forehead and his throat. The look he turned to her was red with shame.

"Meg," he began, "Meg—a magic is upon me. I am weak. I have no strength!"

In the 20th Century a tiny group of scientists, laboring under the direction of Dr. Frazier Wrenna, escaped the holocaust of war that bathed civilization by fleeing to the planet Venus in the first spaceship. Their rocketdrome was in the desertlands of Arizona. ("The Fugitives from Earth," *Amazing Stories*, December, 1939.)—Ed.

"Strength, Daiv?"

"Yes. Look!" He bent to the broken branch before him. His strong thighs tensed; the muscles of his back and shoulders corded with strain. Fresh perspiration broke from his pores as he strained to lift the tiny twig. Then his hands, white-knuckled and trembling, lifted clear; he looked at her again.

"It is so small," he said in a faint, hurt voice. "Yet I cannot lift it!"

Meg sprang to his side; bent to the twig. She was slim, a pale, golden shadow beside Daiv, but she was strong. Her hands grasped the rough bark; she lifted—

And fell forward, thrown completely off balance by that weight imponderable. Coarse soil rasped her knees, but she did not feel the pain. All lesser emotions were lost in the swift, superstitious fear that engulfed her.

"The forest is accursed, Daiv! We must flee!"

Hand in hand they raced wildly across the plain to the shelter of the woodland at its farther rim. The rays of the dying sun cast their shadows long before them, and a dry rattle of mirth seemed to rise from the tangle of unyielding twigs that bruised their feet. . . .

MEG dreamed fear-dreams that night. She was lost in a jungle of trees hard as bone; as she fled beneath them, these trees groaned and toppled toward her, their motionless branches clutching like skeletal fingers. She moaned, cried Daiv's name—then wakened to find him leaning over her anxiously.

"Meg! Listen!"

In the cool morning the sound carried clearly to Meg's ears. A human voice, high-pitched in hideous screaming. A hoarse, grating voice. Meg shuddered.

"A Wild One, Daiv! He has fallen into one of our traps."

"Wild One? Trap?"

"I'll show you." Meg rose swiftly, instantly awake as any forest animal. Bright morning sun cascaded down upon her, wakening a sister gleam of gold on her arms and thighs, touching to warm life the tawny down between her high, proud breasts. Save for the white girdle of flesh beneath her fur breech-clout, Meg was all gold; her hair, piled in a loose knot upon her head, was like a shining crown. It was not all Women, Daiv thought briefly, whose charm withstood the early morning sun. He was lucky to have found as a mate this slim lance of loveliness.

He hungered for her lips. But he was Daiv—"He-who-would-learn"—and here was a new mystery. He followed Meg. Meg followed the plaintive cries.

They stopped, at length, at the lip of a cleft in the earth. It had formerly been covered over with a webbing of boughs and ferns, but now that cover was broken, and from the bottom of the pit came the howls

When womankind, wearying of man's incessant warfare, finally cast all men save a few breeders from their cities and established a matriarchal form of government, the men rapidly reverted to a life of savagery. In Meg's day they were known and hunted as the "Wild Ones."—Ed.

of pain that had drawn them.

Meg's lips were grim, white lines.

"He is in there," she said—and as she spoke she unslung her hunting bow, slipped a bone-tipped arrow from her quiver. She stepped to the mouth of the crevice, drew aim. Then—

"Wait, Golden One!"

Daiv swept the weapon from her hands. He looked down into the pit, cried out sharply, then, ignoring Meg's warning, lowered himself into it. A moment later he was back again, slipping his burden from his shoulder. His burden was, as Meg had guessed, a brutish, hairy Man-thing; foul with the stench of unwashed sweat and grease, grimy with blood and dirt.

"You were going to kill him!" Daiv accused sternly. "He is a Man, wounded, and you were going to kill him!"

The priestess said haughtily, "He is not a Man, he is one of the Wild Ones. Of course I was going to kill him. That is the Law."

"It is a poor Law," grunted Daiv. He was bending over the Wild One now, cleaning his wounds with handfuls of clean, dried grass. "If the Women of your tribe build traps like these for Men, I'm not sure I want to meet them. Aagh! False tops, and sharpened sticks beneath!"

Meg the Priestess disappeared, and in her place stood Meg the wife, a look of bafflement in her eyes.

"But, Daiv—" Faintly. "You killed one of the Wild Ones yourself. The first time we met."

"That," said Daiv curtly, "was because he tried to linber you. I wanted you for myself. There—he's coming around now. How do you feel, Man? Are you all right?"

The Wild One's eyes were uncomprehending as they saw the golden-limbed priestess and this strange, hairless Man before him. His bearded lips parted in a strangled fragment of speech.

"I am . . . all right." Then, to Daiv alone, "You . . . saved my life!"

Daiv nodded. Thoughts crawled slowly behind the Wild One's eyes; he reached a decision. From his filthy loin cloth he drew a chipped and rusted blade; this he offered to Daiv. With the other hand he smoothed flat the verminous tangle of hair above his heart.

"MY life is yours, stranger," he said humbly.

Meg's eyes were wide with astonishment. From infancy she had been taught that the Wild Ones were mad creatures without mercy, without human sentiments; beasts that prowled the forests with but two thoughts in their minds; to satisfy the hungers of their bellies and to kill. Yet here was a Wild One displaying the civilized emotion of gratitude. To Daiv she said querulously,

"He must be crazed, Daiv! Let us take him with us to the village. The tribe Mother will want to see this marvel—a Wild One with a Woman's instincts."

"He goes free!" said Daiv. He was still curt. He lifted the Wild One to his feet. "Can you find your fellows, Wild One?" he asked.

The Wild One nodded mutely.

"Then, go!" ordered Daiv. "And be more careful of traps in the future. Begone!"

But the Wild One hesitated an instant longer. The words came haltingly from his lips—but they sprang from his heart. "My life is still yours, Hairless One. Should ever you decide to claim it, you will find me north of this spot. In a hillside cave by the waterfall. . . ."

Then he was gone; a brutish, gnarled, hairy shadow sliding through the matted jungle. And to Meg, "Come. Let us find your people," said Daiv. "I am minded to see what folk would harm poor brutes like that one."

Meg pondered for hours, as they marched those last few miles to her native village, but she could not quite discover why it was that her cheeks and throat felt so hot. It was as though the fever-god was within her, but she knew she was not ill. . . .

And so, finally, she riding upon Nessa's back, Daiv striding before her on swift, sure feet, they came to Meg's home. To the village of the Jinnia Clan that was her own.

And again the remembrance of the massive twig and the strange forest returned, bringing with it a half-fear. It lay uneasily in their minds like the brooding residue of a dream. . . .

CHAPTER II

The Invaders

THE glad word sprang first from the lips of the Warriors who guarded the gates of the village. "It is Meg! Meg has returned from her pilgrimage. Tell all!"

It spread to the Workers in the fields; they rose from their labors, wiping grit-coarsened hands upon their thighs; their eyes brightened. "Meg has returned!" And the breeding-mothers heard, they lolling their plump, lush bodies in the sunlit doorways. They heard, and their soft eyes filled with ready tears; they waddled forward, their bulging hips swaying like ripened corn. "It is Meg, come back from the Place of the Gods!"*

The Men, too, heard. They simpered foolishly and rolled their great, soft eyes and primped their oiled hair. And word reached the tribal Mother who came from her *hoam* to meet the Priestess. They met within the confines of Meg's village; the aged Mother moved to greet Meg with arms outstretched.

* The matriarchal commune was made up of Warriors, Workers and breeding-mothers, all headed by a learned Mother whose mantle of leadership was handed down from generation to generation. Upon reaching maturity, each girl was permitted to choose which branch of service she should adopt. The Priestess, Meg, was studying to become the Mother of her Clan; hence her pilgrimage to the Place of the Gods.—Ed.

"You are returned safely, my child. May the Gods live forever!"

Meg could not speak for the little happy-imp who clutched her throat and made water in her eyes. Her hands, tight and hot on the withered hands of the old Mother, were speech enough. The Mother bent forward and made a sign upon Meg's forehead.

"You have learned the Great Secret, my daughter; I can tell that by the look in your eyes. Now you have passed the last barrier between you and the Motherhood of our Clan. Tonight we will have a great feast; at its conclusion I will invest you in the ultimate mysteries of your task—"

There was a stir in the crowd surrounding Meg and the Mother; Daiv, chafing with impatience at being thus ignored, had thrust himself forward to his wife's side.

"What is this, Meg!" cried the Mother. "Have you turned Warrior as well as Priestess? Where did you capture this hairless Man-thing?"

Now was the moment Meg had been at once dreading and looking forward to. She placed her hand proudly within Daiv's, and her voice was the clarion call of trumpets.

"It is no Man-thing, Mother. It is a Man; a real Man such as were the Gods! Not a scrimping parody like our breeders, nor a foul brute like the Wild Ones—but a Man. He is Daiv, my mate!"

"Mate!" The word leaped not only from the mouth of the Mother; it was rasped by the Workers and the Warriors, it was piped in the shrill, frightened quaver of the breeding mothers. The Mother's eyes clouded.

"Mate, Meg? What madness is this? Surely you know a priestess who would be a Mother may not mate with a Man!"

Daiv said humbly, yet at the same time proudly, "So Meg believed, O Mother, until I taught her differently—and until she learned the Great Secret at the feet of the Gods. I am Daiv, known as 'He-who-would-learn'; I come from the place of the Escape. My people live by the Laws of the Ancient Ones. In our land Man and Woman are equal; we give and take love in the sacred customs of marriage."

Meg wished desperately that Daiv had said nothing. Given time to lead up to these revelations, she felt she might have presented the argument more convincingly. But in Daiv's deep voice these truths—which she now recognized to be truths—sounded like rankest heresies.

And they drew from the assembled listeners the response Meg had feared. There was the snicking of metal upon metal as the Warriors half-drew their swords from their scabbards; a low rumble of dissent growled from the throats of the Workers. The breeding-mothers squealed like stricken animals, fled with hands covering their ears lest the Gods destroy them for having heard this impious outburst.

LORA, Chieftain of the Warriors, stepped forward, her lean jaw grim. "Blasphemy, O Mother! By

Tedhi, She-who-laughs, this Man-thing befouls us with his lies. Shall I strike him down?"

She took a step toward Daiv. Meg cried out, moved between them, turned beseeching eyes to the Mother. "No! I beg of you, O Mother, no! Look upon Daiv! Look—and remember that which *you* saw, many winters ago, in the Place of the Gods! You know I speak the truth, Mother, and that Daiv, too, tells that which is so.

"Tell my sisters that this is well; that this is as it should be. *You* know—"

Jain, Captain of the Workers, shook her head sorrowfully. In a gentle voice she said, "Our priestess has gone mad, O Mother. The rigors of the pilgrimage have been too much for her. What is the law? Death for her, as well as for this hairless Man-thing? Or, having taken herself a Man, must she become a breeding mother?"

But the Mother stayed her. There was a faraway look in her eyes; Meg knew that the aged leader of the Clan was remembering a pilgrimage made many, many years ago to the Place of the Gods. The Mother, Meg knew, had once looked upon the majestic figures of Jarg, Ibrim, Taamuz and Tedhi on their great, rocky promontory at Mount Rushmore and had seen, as Meg had seen, that the Gods were, in truth, Men like Daiv. A word from the Mother now . . .

The Mother spoke. There was infinite sadness in her voice.

"It is the Law," she said, "that none shall strive to change the ways of the Clan. You, Meg, have ignored the Law. You and your mate will be given justice."

And she turned away.

A gasp spun Meg's gaze to Daiv. His face was crimson with an anger-look; great veins throbbled in his forehead. He roared, "Here, then, is the joyous welcome your Clan offers us, Golden One! Justice? What kind of justice may we expect from a doddering, thwarted old harridan—"

"*Daiv!*" screamed Meg.

But her cry broke too late. With one swift gesture Daiv had wrenched the sword from the hands of Lora. Now he tested its blade, swept Meg into the circle of his arms, and laughed at the startled clanswomen defiantly.

"So you would judge a Man?" he taunted. "A Man of the Kirki tribe? Come, then, you filthy diggers of dirt and loveless scarecrows. Let your judgment be the matching of my steel against yours!"

There was a tense moment of silence. Then anger, bitter as the fruit of the simmon tree, flamed in the voices of Meg's sisters. A score of Warriors sprang forward, swords drawn. At their flank advanced the Workers, hoes and adzes uplifted. Meg smiled piteously at Daiv and murmured a swift prayer to the Gods. It was grievous to die thus, before the blades of loved ones . . .

AND a faint, thin cry stayed them all! They turned to see, at the deserted southward gate, the torn



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and bleeding figure of a Warrior who, hair disheveled, face scarred and raw, hands and arms deep-scored with gory cicatrices, pulled herself within the Jinnia camp dragging behind her one sturdy leg and one blackened, withered stump.

In that moment of dread wonder it did not even seem strange to the clanswomen that the first to reach the wounded Warrior's side should be the stranger, Daiv. But Daiv it was who raised her in his arms.

The visitor's eyes were filmed with pain, horror, fatigue. They unveiled now, and an indomitable purpose shone through. In a husky voice she faltered, "It is too late . . . to save me. Soon I will join . . . my Clanswomen . . . and the Gods. Save . . . yourselves!"

There was unbelievable gentleness in Daiv's voice. "What is it, Warrior?" he asked. "What enemy thus cruelly destroyed you? Of what would you warn us?"

From some deep-hidden well the messenger drew new strength. Her eyes blazed as she answered, "I bid you flee to the secret spots of the mountains. An evil foe even now marches upon your camp. Stunted and vicious little yellow-skinned Men-things who liner* our Clans, destroy our fighters with tubes that maim and stun."

The aged Mother was beside her now.

"Who are you, daughter?" she begged. "Whence come you?"

"I am Vivyun," labored the refugee, "of the Durm Clan. Short days ago came strange lightings in the heavens; mad thunders burst in the forests about our village—"

Jain interrupted, startled, "Mother! The omens we heard night before last in the forest to our west!" and Meg looked swiftly at Daiv. She cried,

"The forest through which we fled, Daiv! The wood of heavy twigs!"

Daiv silenced her with a thoughtful nod. Vivyun's halting speech continued.

"—then came the onslaught. Armored demons, the color of mustard seed, burst upon us. Our Warriors went to meet them but the dwarfs loosed lights from sticks and where the soldiers had stood, now were but inch-long, stony parodies of Women. One of the lights played for an instant upon my leg—"

Meg looked and shuddered. The dying Warrior's leg was firm and round from hip to thigh; ten inches above the knee it ended abruptly in a scoriated stump from which depended an ugly, wartlike excrescence which—Meg saw with sickening horror—was the perfectly formed simulacrum of a human limb.

Daiv was muttering savagely, "Speak on, Warrior!"

"They come," persisted Vivyun, "to capture Women. Like the Wild Ones, they die out for lack of Mates. Out of the far southland they come, from a land called Mayco. They bear other strange weapons. A stick that shoots lights of insanity . . . a wall they build of invisible bricks . . ."

"More!" pleaded Daiv and the Mother in one breath as Vivyun faltered. "More!"

But a strange, foolish look glazed the dying one's eyes. Her lips moved whitely and her breath was a whisper. "You are a strange . . . creature," she said to Daiv. "Somehow you . . . make it easy to die . . . Man-thing . . ."

Then she was still.

LORA, Chieftain of the Warriors, broke the spell that bound them all with a thunderous cry.

"Invaders? No invaders can take the village of the Jinnia tribe! To arms, Warriors! To your posts. Let these yellow dwarfs attack us, and—" She laughed evilly.

Daiv sprang to his feet; his voice a peremptory challenge. "Hold, Warrior! Did you not hear what Vivyun said? These invaders have magic weapons; sticks that spit insanity and crumpling death. It is best we should flee to the hills. Maybe there we can devise some way—"

Meg's cheeks were hot with sorrow for Daiv as the Warrior Chieftain scorned him with her eyes.

"It is a Man-thing after all!" she spat. "A hairless Wild One with the cowardly instincts of all Men. Fool! Know you not the dying one babbled foolishness in her delirium? Sticks that dwarf Warriors! Walls without bricks!"

Daiv gritted, "I have no time for argument, Warrior." To the Mother he cried beseechingly, "There is little love lost between me and thy Clan, O Mother. But because you are Meg's sisters, I would see you live. Believe me, there was truth in Vivyun's warning. I myself have heard elders speak of a sunlit land called 'Mayco,' peopled by savage demons—"

The Mother pressed her hands together in an agony of indecision. To Meg, in her desperation, she turned, crying, "See now, O my daughter, how heavy is the task of being a Mother?" And she muttered, half to herself, "If this be true, then all are doomed unless we flee. But if it be lies—"

Daiv, man of action, tired swiftly of this maundering. For the second time that afternoon he reached for Meg's hand.

"Come, Golden One! Let these fools die; let them become stiffened twigs of humans as the branches we saw in the forest were stiffened and dwarfed trees! I will take you to safety—"

Meg took a step forward. And then—one of the Women laughed. A sneering laugh. Meg's cheeks flamed, and her outstretched hand dropped to her side. She shook her head.

"No, Daiv." Sadly. "I had not dreamed you were—"

"A coward?" Daiv supplied the word wrathfully. "I am a coward to wisely flee from the magic of men who know the secrets of the Ancient Ones? By the Gods, Golden One, it is you who have lost your senses. If you will not come willingly, I'll save you in spite of yourself. Come!"

* Linber—to kidnap, (derived from Lindbergh?)—Ed.

And he sprang toward her. Meg stumbled backward, torn by a thousand conflicting emotions. Then, of a sudden, came that which coalesced all her emotions into one indistinguishable chaos. There came a mighty roaring *sough* from the woodlands south of the village; a portion of the walls caved inward with a mighty crash; spent air howled like the breath of the flood-time gods, and—

In the opening, golden sunlight gleamed on glinting armor! A horde of dwarfed and evil yellow men, shining sticks in their hands, stormed in through the rent!

CHAPTER III

The Mate of Grensu

WHAT happened then was never afterward to be clear in Meg's mind. She realized that the air was alive with the cries of the attacking dwarfs; that these cries found echoes in the shouts of her Warrior sisters who sprang forward to meet them.

She was conscious that a Warrior at her side, with a half-uttered choke of fear, had suddenly met breast-high a streaming light expelled from one of the invaders' sticks; she heard the clatter of metal upon rock as the Warrior's sword fell. She did not realize she had stooped instinctively to retrieve the fallen weapon until she found herself charging forward, cries ripping her throat, the sword waving above her head.

There seemed to be two Megs; one who raced futilely, vaingloriously, toward that crouching, smirking band of attackers; the other who stood somewhere apart from the mad press, watching the battle with impartial judgment. It was the first Meg who flashed down upon a stunted yellow man unnoticed, swung her heavy sword in a flailing motion that split his hauberk and sent his headless body toppling to earth.

It was the second Meg who noticed, with incredibly cool appraisal, that from the sticks of the invaders emerged two different types of light. One, a pale, greenish light, caused those bathed in it to drop their swords, cease their shouting, wander aimlessly off across the blood-drenched field. The other, a cherry-flamed light, was the horror of which the Durm Warrior, Vivyun, had warned.

The attackers seemed only to use *it* when dire necessity pressed. Its results were ghastly. Meg's brain reeled before the shock of seeing a Worker on her right run full-tilt into that cherry beam. One instant the Worker was there; the next she was gone. A sharpened hoe lay beside a blasted doll-like thing from which, momentarily, rose a steamy mist and a nauseating stench.

Given weapons to match those of the yellow dwarfs the Jinnians might have won through. Their numbers were as great as those of the invaders; their spirit was that of Women fighting for their native homeland. Gallantly they pressed onward, forward—and as gallantly they died. Save for that greater portion of them who assumed the "life-in-death" Meg had

marked; the stupid insanity that sent them staggering, weaponless, upon mindless errands.

For conquerors, the yellow men waged stupid war. They seemed more intent on capturing prisoners than on destroying—or perhaps they had not anticipated such a stubborn resistance. Howsoever that may have been, time and again a member of the Jinnia Clan, evading the sticks-that-flamed, would pierce the enemy lines. There, ere the cherry light steamed her body into brittle stone, her sword would draw the life-blood of a yellow invader.

MEG had learned much in her long pilgrimage to and from the Place of the Gods. Daiv had taught her how to take advantage of all natural protections when warring against a superior force. These guerilla tactics served her well now. With the first conflict of forces she had sprung to a place of concealment behind the ruptured wall; from this vantage point she could see straggling invaders as they entered the village; could not be seen by them until their eyes widened at the sight of a dripping sword thirsting for their throats.

Four died thus beneath her blade. Cautiously, now, she ventured a glance into the yellow men's defense line.

There she saw what her quick intelligence told her must be the object of her attack. Outside the village stood a tiny knot of dwarfs garbed in armor more glittering, more ornate, than that of those who made the attack.

These, Meg recognized, were the leaders. The commander-in-chief must be that overripe, ochre plum in golden graves and casque; he who stood impatiently fingering the handle of his light-stick as he watched his warriors' progress.

To think was to act. It never occurred to Meg that her solo foray was suicidal. Hurdling the bodies of those before her, she leaped through the broken wall; raced, bobbing and weaving, shifting her course to make herself an impossible target, down upon the commander's party.

As she ran, her hair broke loose from its handknit snood; lithe muscles snapped the sinews that held her cloak. She was like some magnificent golden panther as, hair flowing behind her in a liquid honey stream, high, firm breasts rising with the quickening of her breath, she charged down on her tribe's enemies.

Thoughts flashed dizzily through her mind. A great burst of exultation; she was too near, now, for them to stop her! Then a soul-shaking disappointment. She had been seen! One of the officers' eyes bugged; he raised a light-stick—

Then most incredible thing of all—the commander-in-chief had seen her, and his porcine eyes, slanted and deep-sunk in rolls of saffron flesh, were glittering with delight. His left hand was beating down the cherry-flame of the lieutenant as his right was pointing at her breast his own stick. Light flashed—pale green. Something within Meg seemed to snap; suddenly she

was suffused with a sense of coolness, a bewildering drainage of the fever that had coursed through her veins.

So funny. So funny to have thought this battle important. It wasn't, really. It was all a mistake. And the sword in her hand? Meg glanced at it idly, her charge slowing to a walk. She cast the sword away.

The din of conflict was a thin and distant sound. The world about her was sweet and green . . . the clouds billowed on an endless blue like boat-sails scudding before the wind. *There was something she should remember.* There was a dancing haze before her eyes . . . flowers about her feet. Were she to wander gently, now, to that farthest field—*what was it she could not remember?*—there would be golden buttercups and the prim, starch cornflower ripe for plucking.

Her body was numbed and drowsy with a sense of comfort. Only—*there was a Man; a Man named Daiv*—only she could not be happy here. Not unless she forgot her troubles, forgot the man named Daiv, forgot the world was spinning and reeling and swirling before her eyes like a gigantic wheel going faster and faster and faster . . .

Then there was blackness.

HER first thought was that she had fallen, momentarily stunned, on the field of battle. She woke with a start, groping for the sword that should be by her side.

It wasn't there. She touched the flabby flesh of a breeding-mother who, flaccid-breasted and aquiver, shook beside her in an ecstasy of fear. Meg gagged as she stumbled to her feet. Her limbs were still weak beneath her, as if the veins that fed them had been fouled; her head was filled with tiny imps who danced and shrieked unmercifully. But—she was alive! And the mists were clearing from her brain.

Now she knew there was sobbing beside her. Strange sobbing. Not the soft, easy gulping of a breeding-mother; a harsh sound like the rasp of an adze on *creet*. It was Lora, Chieftain of the Warriors. Her armor crusted with blood, her great hands twisting with grief, she was rocking backward and forward, alternately weeping and cursing the Gods.

"Now accursed be the breeding-mother that gave me birth!" was her plaint. "This night shall my stars burn as cinders—"

Meg shook her shoulder roughly.

"Lora!"

The Warrior Chieftain's eyes recognized her. Lora cried prayerfully, "Search well your girdle, Meg! Have you a dagger upon you?"

"No. But, why—?"

Lora beat her tiny, thwarted breasts with clenched fists. "I live!" she choked. "I, their leader, continue to live, while they lie there, in peace and glory—"

Meg saw, then, that she was part of a group huddled in the center of that which had been the fortress of their Clan. They numbered more than three score; a

mixed group of battle-grimed Warriors, Workers, breeding-mothers, even one or two pale-faced, weeping Men. The studs of the Jinnia Clan.

But there was another group at the far end of the court. These would never again either laugh or mourn. They were the dead. Workers and Warriors for the most part, although a few plump, bulbous bodies fed the mound. In still another place lay the bodies of the slain invaders; these had been accorded more dignity. All about the arena lay curiously shaped pebbles which—Meg knew, shivering clamorously—were not pebbles. Two stunted yellow men, grinning callously, now busied themselves raking up these grisly objects.

Meg said, "The—the Mother?" and as if in answer to her thought, a gentle voice reached her ears.

"I am here, Meg, my daughter."

MEG turned swiftly. The Mother of the Clan lay behind her, motionless, head lifted upon a bolt of cloth someone had provided. There was an image of dreadful pain in the Mother's eyes. Meg sprang to her side, heart bursting with sorrow.

"Mother—you are hurt!"

"Nay, daughter, I am slain." The Mother sighed; a wan breath of regret. "They had no intent to kill me. But the rays were too potent for my aged body. I will linger yet a little while, then I must go. It is sad that I must leave my Clan captive to a race of beasts like these."

Meg said, "Rays, Mother?"

"Yes, my child. Those weapons which our Warriors could not comprehend are similar to those which, in the old legends, it is told the Ancient Ones used to destroy each other. Vibrations that cause, in one case horrible death; in the other case, stupefaction."

"But—but how?"

"I am not sure. But I think the cherry-light has the power of absorbing all water from the human body, thus dwindling it instantly to a husk. The green ray interrupts the nerve-centers, breaking the brain's contacts with other organs." The Mother's face was resigned. "All these things and many others you would have learned, Meg, had not this catastrophe come upon us. And had not you returned from the Place of the Gods with—a mate."

Her last word reminded Meg of that latent question which the green ray had driven from her mind. Instantly her heart was cold with dread.

"Daiv! Oh, Mother—Daiv! I do not see him. Is he one of—of those?"

Her eyes stared with horrid fascination at the tiny pile of simulacra the invading warriors were raking together. But it was not the Mother who answered. It was Lora, now come to their side. The Warrior Chieftain's lean face was etched with scorn.

"No, Meg, your Man-thing is not there! That would be an honorable death for him."

Meg faltered, "Then—then where—?"

The Mother's eyes, in pity, would not meet Meg's.

"He fled, Meg."

"Fled! Daiv fled!" Meg stared, every fibre of her body taut as the gut of a bow. "I—I do not believe it!"

Even Lora's harsh voice was more gentle as she said, "It is true. He was but a Man, Meg; a Man, weak and cowardly. With the first breath of fighting he turned and fled the camp. Into the hills beyond."

The Mother intervened, "Perhaps it is better so, my daughter. Perhaps your own madness escaped on his limbs? If ever we win free of this host—"

Meg's new-found world of love and happiness crumpled into shards about her feet. There was a redness on her cheeks, for Daiv and for herself who had let his mouth touch hers. The rains of weakness filled her eyes, and she said, "So be it, Mother—"

IT was at that moment a coarse, guttural voice interrupted her.

"Ah—there she is! That's the one, Leekno. Step forth, ivory one!"

Meg turned. Staring at her, his lips red and moist as the pepper-fruit, was the golden-greaved and helmeted commander whose actions had at once saved her life and broken her will for battle. A fungoid puff-ball of a man with twisting mouth, his eyes upon her made Meg feel suddenly naked and unclean. She shuddered.

"Step forth, I say!" repeated the leader. A yellow soldier moved to enforce his command. Meg shook free of the underling's touch, moved a step forward with a proud freedom of motion that wakened a dancing light in her accoster's eyes.

His voice was a purr of satisfaction.

"I was right. Very well, Leekno, you may distribute the other captives to our men by lot. And mind there be no wrangling amongst them. This barbarian I will take to my tent."

Meg demanded, "What is the meaning of this, little monster? Who are you to thus address a Priestess of the Jinnia Clan, and what would you of me?"

The commander's slant eyes blinked in appreciative delight. "A spirited filly, this!" he murmured. "Know, then, Woman, that you are greatly honored. I am Gensu, captain of this band. We are a legion of the mighty race of Japcans who rule in the sunny land of Mayco, many days' march to the south of here."

From behind Meg the aged Mother's voice stirred in sighing wonder. "Mayco? In the books of the Ancient Ones it is written of a land by that name. But its rulers were white men—"

Gensu made mirthless happy-sounds in his throat.

"The old one surprises me. Aye, withered crone, in the early days it was as you say. But that was before the great wars, and before the rebellion of the Women. Even then there were in Mayco many of our race, children of the Sun.

"But when mankind destroyed itself and the Ancient Ones died out, battling first each other, then be-

tween their sexes, we stayed aloof; we waited and planned and bred. Our Japni blood mixed well with that of the Maycans, giving rise to the mighty stock we now represent—the Japcans." Gensu glanced down his own obese frame proudly. "Now, not only are we the possessors of the secrets of the Ancient Ones' war-weapons, but we are become perfect in body and brain."

Meg laughed scornfully, "Little fat-bellied lemon, I could squeeze between my fingers—so!" And she took a step toward Gensu. For a second he looked startled; then an expression of mingled pique and admiration mottled his pudgy features.

"You will make a haughty doe to tame, ivory one," he smirked, "but tame you I will. Come!"

Still Meg did not move.

"Come where?"

"Have I not said," Gensu informed her, "that you are to be favored? Like the Wild Ones who infest the forests of your land, we of Mayco find need of new and sturdy mates. That is the purpose of our expedition. But you, white-limbs, I have chosen for myself!"

The high color rushed to Meg's cheeks.

"Me, little toadstool! Know you not I am a priestess and inviolate?"

Gensu's waning patience snapped. He turned to his lieutenant. "Leekno—!" he said.

CHAPTER IV

Meg's Daring

BUT not at that moment was Meg to be forced to make the choice between submission and death. For there came an interruption. One of the Japcan lieutenants approached the group, hailed his leader.

"The wall is set up, O Gensu! The men await your inspection before setting its field into operation."

Gensu snarled, "Away, sluggard. Cannot the men do the least thing without— Very well. I will come immediately. Leekno, stay you here and keep a watchful eye on my reluctant priestess. I will return soon."

He waddled away, a lecherous ball of dough in gold armor. He joined at a little distance a group of invaders huddled over a strange, shining box. From this emanated fine bars of soft god-metal. There was brief conversation between Gensu and the workers, then one of the yellow dwarfs nodded and pressed down a standing lever.

There rose a startled cry from the captive Jinnia tribeswomen. For a crackling wave of thunder rolled about the camp; arcing out from the two arms of the magic box came an invisible something that sent dust flying as it scratched a mysterious circle about the entire village.

At the opposite end of this circle the two racing walls of invisibility met; there was a concussive echo and a blinding flash. Somewhere high above came the

rare pain-cry of a buzzard; as the Women watched, the sheered hinder half of a bird-of-prey plummeted to the ground, fell with a thud, lay there flopping and bleeding—already dead!

Lora cried, "Walls without bricks!" and Meg looked at the guard incredulously.

"What marvel is this, ochre toad?" she asked. "I see no beam, no ray, yet a bird is slain."

Leekno growled, "Mind your tongue, Woman!" but he grinned. "The bird must have been right above the circle when Togi switched on the force-field."

"Force-field?" repeated Meg dazedly. She was not sure, now, but that the Clan had erred in opposing these invaders. Surely men—howsoever ugly and miscolored—who possessed magics like this must be Gods in themselves. It might be wise to submit to them without further ado. Then she thought of her own tribal Gods. Of stern, judicial Jarg and smiling Tedhi. Of the ringletted Taamuz and the sorrow-eyed Ibrim carven in eternal rock in the salt wastes so many marches from here. No, her Gods were the true Gods. . . .

"YOU don't know what a force-field is, eh, Woman? Well, I suppose not. Come along, then; I'll show you. It will teach you that you can't escape."

Leekno led the way to the spot where armed guards huddled over the god-box. Grensu had left; with his engineers he had gone off to some privy conference. Beside the scratched soil which marked the barrier, Leekno paused. His grin was mocking deviltry.

"I think, Woman," he said, "I shall let you escape. Flee now, while no one is looking."

Meg's heart leaped in her breast as a startled fawn at the voice of a hunter. Swiftly she breathed, "My undying thanks, yellow friend. Meg the Priestess will never forget this—"

She sprang forward. The surrounding forest was but a few yards distant; let her reach that leafy fastness no dwarfed invader could ever recapture her. She would flee to a neighboring tribe, there find help for her captured Clanswomen. . . .

These thoughts spun dizzily through her brain as she took three . . . four . . . five leaping strides to freedom. And then there came a violent, staggering shock! Pain trembled through her body, flooding her with torment; it was as though a mighty hand had struck her across the face, bruised her straining breast, flung her backward.

She lay in a crumpled heap, dazed, shaken, upon the ground. And in her ears was the belly-deep, taunting laughter of the yellow-skinned guards—and Leekno! Leekno's bulbous body quivered with jelly-like mirth; fun-waters streamed from his eyes.

"Meg the Priestess," he howled, "'will never forget this!' How right you were, white-legs. Tell me, is it your bruises that will keep the memory fresh in your mind?"

Meg said nothing. But she reached out, cautiously,

before her. This time it was a hesitant finger, rather than the reckless force of a headlong plunge, that touched the invisible wall. Even so, her finger jerked like a slain snake as jolting current grounded through her. Her jaw set, Meg endured the pain, pressing.

Nothing happened. With every ounce of her whip-lash strength behind that finger, she could not make it penetrate that barrier.

She rose, a great anger cold in the pit of her stomach. To the still-laughing guards she said, "This is a coward's weapon, O dwarfs the color of slime! Yet it will take more than this wall-without-bricks to save you when my neighboring Clanswomen come to rescue us. Their swords and arrows will hack this fanged barrier to bits—"

"So?" mocked Leekno. "Move aside, Togi." And he stepped over the god-box, moved to his right, and was facing Meg. "Togi will lend you his dagger, Woman. Hurl it at my breast and learn the truth."

Meg snatched the proffered weapon eagerly. And in the same movement spun and whipped it squarely at Leekno's bulky frame. There was a brief, scintillant prick of light. The dagger dropped harmlessly to earth at the circle's rim. Leekno's thick lips continued to grin as he returned through the portal which stretched above the box.

"Thus you have learned, Woman, that there is no escape. And now—back to your companions!"

THE Mother said, "Meg!" Her voice was a whisper, so low that Meg could scarcely hear it.

The priestess bent beside her. "Yes, Mother?"

"The force-wall. You have seen it?"

Meg said despairingly, "I have seen it, Mother. No Woman can pass through it. Nor can a weapon."

"Yet," whispered the older woman weakly, "there is an avenue of escape. I watched while the yellow one taunted you. As all who mock, he revealed his own weakness. Did you not notice that twice he passed unharmed through the wall?"

Meg said sadly, "Not through, O Mother. But at the point of meeting where lies the god-box. I—" Then quick excitement touched her fingertips with fire. "Mother! That which he did, so can I do also!"

"Hush, my daughter! Yes, from that point only may you hope to escape. And escape you must, Meg. Flee to the Clan at Loovil, tell them of our plight. Once we aided them when the Wild Ones laid siege to their village. Their Mother will lend you Warriors; perhaps other Clans will also help."

Meg begged, "But, Mother, *how?* I cannot—"

"I have shown you the way, Meg. You must take care of the rest."

The Mother fell back, breathing heavily. The crisp rasp of footsteps raised Meg's head. Grensu, his investigations ended, had returned to claim his linbered mate. There was triumph in his eyes as Meg rose, obedient to his command.

"So, ivory one, you have decided to accept my fa-

vors? That is well. Come with me!"

Only Meg knew that her meekness was the blind obedience of a body reacting without the counsel of a mind. Meg was thinking, thinking desperately. Seeking some ruse which would give her the time, the opportunity, the speed and the weapon she needed.

Grensu, warfare forgotten now, was anticipating a pleasant interlude. "You will not find me a bad companion," he boasted. "I am a mighty leader and a strong man, my wild doe—"

Doe! Suddenly it was all clear in Meg's mind. The Japcans had, upon seizing the village, immediately taken into custody the few horses owned by the Jinia Clanswomen. But there was Nessa! Surely no one could suspect that soft-eyed creature of being anything but a camp pet; of being a steed broken to the rein and spur. . . .

She turned to Grensu with an exclamation of dismay.

"My doe! My lovely pet! You destroyed her?"

Grensu said placatingly, "Was the doe thine, white one? No, she has not been killed—yet. Though her meat—"

Meg prayed that the Japcan leader would read the actions of her body rather than the purpose that stood printed in her burning eyes.

"You are going to kill my Nessa? My lovely doe; my pet from childhood? You must let me see her once again, bid her farewell—"

"Now, Woman," snapped Grensu crossly, "there is no time for that!"

"I beg it of you—" Meg drew a deep breath, hating the word that must defile her lips, "—my Master!"

"Well, if you must, then." Grensu looked pleased. It was a small price to pay for willing compliance. His face still bore the nail-marks of that screaming harridan he had captured in Lanta, and she had been a much less tempting morsel than this Woman. "Well, if you must—"

HE turned aside, led Meg to the small grassy patch in which Nessa, untethered, was wont to graze. With a cry of gladness Meg threw her arms about the doe's neck. She sobbed openly, startling even the well-trained Nessa with the fervor of her caresses. And purposely she took a long time; so long that Grensu's impatience rose.

"That will do now, Woman. Let us go!"

"Not yet! Not yet!" pleaded Meg. "Later—"

"Now!" insisted Grensu. He stepped forward to disengage Meg's arms. For the barest fraction of a second his both hands were free and weaponless.

And in that split second Meg moved. "About!" she cried to Nessa. The doe wheeled, throwing Grensu off balance. As he tottered, vain ball of yellow fat, Meg's left arm found his throat, choked him into crimson breathlessness. Her free hand whipped the golden sword from his scabbard; then, as he fell limply to the ground, she sprang to Nessa's back.

"On, Nessa!" she screamed—and her heels bit the doe's flanks.

She was halfway across the open walk-avenue of the village before the first startled cry of warning seared an invader's throat. She was flaming down upon the god-box, the narrow gateway of the magic wall, by the time that shout had spun its guardians' heads about.

Then there was mad confusion. Meg cried, "Nessa! Leap, Nessa!" even as Togi and his companion guards fumbled for their ray-sticks. The foremost was the first to lift his weapon to her breast—but even as he would have released its charge Meg's sword was biting through the thin plate of his shoulder-harness.

The Japcan screamed horribly and clutched with his free hand at a grisly stump from which spurted a scarlet ribbon of blood. The fingers of his severed arm contracted in an insensate reflex; cherry flame spewed from a stick rolling aimlessly upon the ground—and another of the guards crisped into steaming filth before it.

Now a jolt shook Meg as Nessa's cloven hooves met solid earth, and a brazen cry of gladness split the air.

"On, Nessa!"

It was like part of some nightmarish dream to see that beneath and behind her lay groveling bodies of those who would have stayed her passage; that the blade of her once gleaming sword now glinted with the bright crimson of death. But it was a joyous dream—for she was over the portal, through the barrier. Just a few more strides of the frightened doe, now, and she would be safe within the forest.

If—she glanced back over her shoulder. If one of those now springing from the camp did not succeed in snaring her brain once again with that green ray. Or if—but Meg did not want to think about that other more ruthless weapon.

Her deft hands guided Nessa right . . . then left . . . a zigzag path to spoil the dwarfling's aim. Once air hissed and crackled beside her head as a burst of cherry flame just missed her, flashed by to cinder a huge tree instantly into a withered, massive twig. Her nostrils caught the stench of scorched hair, and Nessa whimpered piteously—but the doe's hoofbeats never faltered.

ONCE again Meg's brain spun with a brief moment of dizziness; she found herself thinking how pale and lovely was the sunset—and knew, instantly, that the green ray had found her. She ducked her head with a last conscious gesture, and was rewarded by feeling sense flood back like a cleansing tide.

And then green branches were whipping across her face, her fair skin was slashed with the hungry clutch of forest brambles—but she did not feel their hurt. Joy rose in her heart, joy like the glory of the newborn moon. Free! Free to find aid for her Clanswomen!

Free to—

At the last moment she saw it! Saw it and screamed a sharp cry to Nessa. The trained doe obeyed that cry, but both Meg and the deer were powerless before the eternal force that bore them onward—the force of gravitation.

For that which Meg, too late, had seen, was a patch of green soil too fresh, too even, to match the surrounding earth. Even as Nessa's scrambling feet struggled vainly for security, even as Meg felt herself pitching headlong and helpless from the doe's back, she knew that Daiv—gone, now, forever—had been right in cursing the traps with which her Clan destroyed the Wild Ones.

It was one of these traps that now, in her moment of triumph, had deserted her!

Then Nessa's querulous bleat was in her ears; her loins quivered with the fall-feeling; the sunlight fled, and darkness engulfed all. Darkness and great, dizzying circles of pain that drove the breath from her body. She tried to cry out. The cry died in her throat. Fiery needles scored her arm, and breath deserted her. Dull silence. . . .

CHAPTER V

Wrath and Uprising

IT was a strange heaven and hell in which she stirred feebly. Heaven because she rested on a soft, warm couch of fur; hell because a horde of flaming pain-imps wrenched and tugged and twisted at her sword-arm. Heaven because a thick, earthy fragrance was about her; hell because dinning in her ears was a babble of coarse and indistinguishable chatter.

Meg opened her eyes—then closed them, shuddering violently—knowing, now, that this was neither heaven nor hell, but life. Life futile and unwanted.

She was lying at the bottom of the Wild One trap, her right arm bent crookedly beneath her, her body aching with a hundred bruises. But alive. Alive because the warm, furry bed on which she lay was the body of Nessa, cruelly pierced and broken by the sharp-pointed sticks from which the doe's bulk had saved Meg.

Meg's eyes filled with waters of sorrow and pain. Sweet Nessa, gallant Nessa, was gone. And now—

And now above her, squat silhouettes against the blue sky, were the Japcans from whom she had almost escaped. Even now one of their number was being lowered into the pit; was reaching for her warily, one hand clutching a ray-stick. Meg groped, with her good left hand, for the sword she had dropped, but the yellow dwarf's finger tightened, green radiation expunged all thought from her brain. As in a dream she felt herself being lifted and borne, surrounded by fat figures whose voices were raised in angry condemnation.

Then she was again within the confines of the camp and Grensu was before her, his tiny, slant eyes aflame with bitterness.

"You have animal cunning, priestess of a barbarian race," spat the Japcan commander. "I erred in believing you docile. Henceforth your taming will be that of the scourge and the chain."

Meg said nothing. But she noticed, her head lifting proudly, that some of the little man's confidence had deserted him, and that as he spoke he moved his stiff neck gingerly from side to side. There was throbbing strength in the crook of Meg's elbow.

Leekno, his sallow face rebellious, was at Grensu's side.

"What is your command, O Grensu? Shall we destroy the white-limbed one?"

Leadership and desire met in conflict on Grensu's swart features. "The woman pleases me—" he growled.

"She slew," reminded the lesser officer, "Togi, Ras and Yinga. Two others lie wounded. It is written in the Law 'Death shall be punished with death—'"

"I know the Law!" snapped Grensu. "But now we are not in Mayco. Here, I am the Law. And I am minded to—" A hesitation halted his words. Of Meg he demanded, "Make your plea, Woman. Grensu listens."

THERE was a coursing pain in Meg's arm that began at her fingertips, sped through forearm and upper arm, spread even to the rest of her body, turning her stomach with nausea. Her heart was sick with disappointment. Almost had she succeeded. But "almost" was a bitter draught from the waters of might-have-been.

This day, which had dawned so fair and with such great hopes, had become a leaden weight to her heart. There was nothing, now, worth living for. Daiv, her mate, in combat had proven a coward. The beloved Mother of her Clan lay dying. A score of her sisters were pellets of death, heaped in a pile of rubble. Her last, desperate attempt at freedom had failed.

"I make no plea, yellow man," she said haughtily.

The Japcan warriors muttered amongst themselves. Grensu's ripe lips pursed irately.

"You do not understand, ivory one. I offer you one last opportunity. Pledge fealty to me at even this late moment and your life will be spared. Your wounds will be soothed by our healers, and, yes, even now Grensu will permit you the great honor of becoming his mate." His slant eyes probed hers. "Well, Woman? What is your answer?"

A laugh of sheer hysteria; a laugh that was half a sob, broke from Meg's throat. She stepped toward the little yellow commander.

"This is my answer!"

And she spat squarely in the dwarfing's face!

Grensu turned livid. Beneath his yellow skin the blood surged unhealthily, turning him to a sallow parody of a man. Fat fingers shook as he wiped his face, screamed viciously, "Seize her! Put her to the sword, Leekno! No—wait!"

Flames of pure hatred danced from his eyes. "Who

defiles the haughty blood of Japcan shall not die thus painlessly. Her death shall be a slow one; one in which, shrieking for mercy, she shall have time to remember this moment!"

He stood quivering, shaken, searching the dregs of his mind for a fitting torment. Meg, waiting, saw from the corner of her eye a faint movement to her right. The Warrior Chieftain, Lora, had stolen close to one of the stunted invaders; her hand was even now reaching for his sword. Meg knew the meaning of that trial. Lora well knew she had no chance to fight or escape; her sole purpose was to clutch that sword and plunge it through Meg's heart to spare the priestess worse horrors. Then, though both of them died, their deaths would be clean and welcome . . .

Meg wrenched her eyes away; tensed her body for the moment of cold fire. And then—

There came a shout from the portal. The voice of a Japcan guard crying amusedly, "By the Serpent, O Grensu—we are attacked by a band of naked apes! Come you and view this wonder!"

All wheeled. And a swift hope flamed in Meg as she saw that the new besiegers were—a host of the Wild Ones!

Lora, at Meg's side in one swift bound, cried out hoarsely, "What other marvels shall the Gods send us this day, my priestess? Behold, even the skulking rats of the forest have this day turned against us! Are we, then, accused?"

But Meg, forgetting her pain as for the moment she had been forgotten, gasped as the full import of this raid broke upon her.

"It is not *us* they attack, Lora! See who commands the Wild Ones!"

The leader was not hard to discern. His supple, hairless body stood out like a living white flame against the background of gnarled, hairy ones. His chestnut mane towered a full head above the tallest of the Wild Ones, and he bore a great, rusted, two-handed sword in one hand, waving it as a child a shaking-gourd. It was Daiv!

THEN Grensu's hand was upon Meg's shoulder, spinning her about. To a brace of yellow warriors he was howling, "To the *hoams* with this prisoner. We will attend to her when we have broken these foolish Man-things from the forests. Come!"

He moved away with his lieutenants as Meg was taken to the *hoam* wherein her sisters had been confined. Brutally she was shoved inside; the two guards took their posts at the doorway. Meg pushed her way to a window to better watch the battle.

There was little—pitifully little—to watch. By the time she reached her vantage point, the horde of Wild Ones had deployed in a great circle about the Jinnia village; now, at a signal from Daiv, they rose like a great, swarthy tide and rushed down upon their enemy.

With their advance, a groan of despair rose from the imprisoned women. Daiv had made his escape

too soon. He had not seen, had not suspected, the existence of a weapon such as the Japcans' force-wall. At one moment a throng of roaring Wild Ones was racing upon the village; at the next, scores were piled, shaken and bruised, before that invisible barrier. Unharméd, but—futile!

How futile, they did not at first realize. There was courage in the hearts of the Wild Ones. Courage the existence of which the Clanswomen had not dreamed. Despite their bruises and the racking pain which—Meg knew from experience—was throbbing through their veins, they rose from the ground; they hurled themselves once again and viciously at the wall they could not see.

Lances shattered against that impenetrable force-field; swords were hammered into blunt grips—but the Wild Ones could not effect entry.

Daiv was everywhere at once; begging, pleading, cajoling his new-found army into greater effort. Twice Meg trembled as he threw himself vainly against that force; she matched, with her own cheeks, the whiteness in his as the second time he picked himself up weak, pain-racked, exhausted. She gripped the arm of the Woman nearest her; it was Lora.

"They outnumber the Japcans. That is what my mate counted on; that though many might fall before the rays of the yellow ones, enough would break through to free us! We must help them!"

Lora shook her head grimly.

"The Gods know we want to. But we cannot."

"We can! If we can turn off that god-box before it is too late—!"

Meg screamed the final words. For she had seen, now, that which must ultimately destroy the attackers. The Japcans, having had their fill of mirth at the sight of this impossible attack, were now preparing to go into action. In full view of the Wild Ones they were spreading out, taking positions behind the invisible wall. Their ray-sticks were poised and ready. A signal came from Grensu, grinning evilly in the center of the walk-avenue.

"Drop screen! Fire! Up screen!"

AS swiftly as he spoke, the events occurred. The engineer at the god-box threw up his lever; instantly sticks in two score hands spewed cherry flame into the ranks of the Wild Ones. Steam rose; bodies disappeared; weapons dropped from hands now dwindled into cinders. Then the force-field was replaced.

By sheer chance, one or two hurled weapons flashed through in the brief instant the barrier was down. One dwarf clutched, screaming miserably, at a pronged lance that split his throat in twain, bore him backward and pinned him to the ground to writhe out his life. Another collapsed, moaning, his thigh-bone shattered by a huge, hurled stone.

Meg's eyes sought Daiv frantically; found him. He still lived, but even at that distance she could read the sickness in his eyes as he stared dazedly at the dead about him.

Even as she watched, Grensu gave the triple order again. "Drop screen! Fire! Up screen!"

And once more death stalked amongst the attackers, choosing his victims with fingers of cherry-flame . . .

Lora's grasp shook the dread from Meg's eyes.

"You are the swiftest among us, priestess," cried the Warrior Chieftain. "You must reach the god-box."

Then Meg saw that Lora had not been inactive. She had gathered about her all those of the Clan who were not disabled. A motley crew they were. Hard-lipped Warriors, coarse-skinned Workers. There were even—amazingly—three breeding-mothers in that little band! Their billowing hips and pale, soft faces were strange attributes for a fighting woman, but their eyes were lighted with the same fire that suffused the eyes of Meg and Lora.

One of these, a woman named 'Ana, said now to Meg, "Once long ago, Priestess, I too aspired to be a Mother. It was not so fated, and this more humble lot became mine. But I will do my little part for you, for the Mother, and for the Clan—"

Lora interrupted crisply, "You're slim, Meg, and you're fast. We will create a disturbance at the door—" A tight and humorless smile played upon her lips. "Then must you break through the window, somehow reach the god-box."

Meg nodded. Her right arm dangled loosely at her side, but the pain that had seared it was devoured now in a greater intensity, a more vital urge. "So be it, Lora!"

"Then strike, Women!" cried the chieftain. Strong shoulders struck the door with ravaging force; wood splintered, and the door burst from its hinges like a splitting pod. Outside, the two yellow guards wheeled, their eyes wide, their hands streaking for the ray-sticks in their harnesses. One raised a shout.

Meg had only time to see that her Clanswomen were pounding through the doorway, that both guards had fallen before them, that the tumult had drawn the attention of the yellow men assembled in their tactical circle. All eyes were focused on the escaping prisoners spilling from the door; no one noticed as she clambered awkwardly from the window on the farther side of the *hoam*.

IT was Meg's village; she knew its every twist and turn. She did not take at all times to the shortest route; she chose that which would disclose her least as she moved toward the vulnerable spot of the Japcan defense; the god-box.

But if the dwarfs could not see her, neither could she see them. She marked the progress of the split battle by those few sounds she could identify. Most important was the fact that she did not again hear Grensu's voice raised in the commands to drop and raise the force-wall. Destruction was, then, not presently breathing through the ranks of the Wild Ones . . .

But her own folk? Meg could only pray silently to the gods that their bravery might not be in vain—and

continue running.

It was a short journey, but the torment within her brain made it endless. It seemed hours later that Meg found herself finally slipping through the last shaded alley, facing the spot which was her destination—the spot on the invisible circle's perimeter where lay the god-box.

Now confronted her but a few scant yards, and these the most dangerous of all. Could she cross these without drawing the fire of the guards about the box, she could lift that lever, if only for a moment, and let in the battering host of Wild Ones. Once she had raised it, Meg vowed, the lever would remain upright so long as she had a hand to hold it.

The Gods favored her in two ways. The guards about the box were looking the other way, gaping at this astonishing counter-attack being made by the supposedly vanquished Women. And—at Meg's feet lay something that had been overlooked by the detail of yellow soldiery assigned to cleaning up evidence of the first battle! One of the yellow invaders' ray-sticks!

With difficulty Meg stifled the cry that leaped to her lips. From force of habit, she stopped to lift the stick with her right hand; winced with pain when those benumbed fingers touched the ground and refused to grasp the object. Her left hand gripped it, held it; her questing fingers found the button that activated its ray.

Which ray, Meg had no way of knowing. Nor could she take time to experiment. Like a swift, golden ghost she sprang from the shelter of her alley into the cleared space. She was halfway across that space when one of the guardians of the god-box, by sheer chance, happened to turn and see her.

His mouth opened in a shout of warning that never emerged. For Meg lifted the stick—pressed the button! A spurt of cherry flame engulfed the dwarf, and he sank lifeless to the ground.

But his death was warning enough. Shock slowed the turn of the other guardians, and in their slowness lay their doom. Meg's finger remained rigid on the button; her ray swept clear the defenders of the force-field—and she had reached her goal!

With a great shout of triumph she stumbled through that foul, steamy mist, feeling scorched cinders beneath her feet, and found the lever. With a mighty heave of her shoulders she forced it upward—

Then all was Bedlam!

CHAPTER VI

"The Old Order Changeth—"

A NEW note rose suddenly in the din of battle. It had been a howling note of despair before; the outraged cries of impotent Wild Ones mingling with the dying screams of the gallant Women. Now there rose to the skies a paean of joyous triumph. Hoarse masculine voices cheered madly as the horde of hairy



An invisible wall seemed to rear itself before him as Daiv hurled his body forward

Wild Ones found the barrier before them gone. Daiv foremost, their avenging circle closed in upon the vil-lage.

Where but a few moments before this engagement had been a slaughter of the Jinnians upon which the Wild Ones had been forced to look helplessly, now the battle became a free-for-all, split into a half-hundred tiny sectors.

Here a cherry-flame, wielded by a retreating dwarf in tarnished armor, winked its ruddy eye amongst Men who cried out, steamed, and fell. There a dozen Wild Ones hurled themselves upon a tiny knot of Jap-cans, literally ripped the yellow men into bloody shreds, and raced on—with one of the Wild Ones now brandishing a lethal ray-stick!

Still another place a handful of Maycø invaders fought vainly to fight a diverse foe—the Women before them and the Wild Ones who charged upon their flank. Up to now the Japcans had been content to subdue this Jinnia uprising with the green, stupefying ray; now they broke out their red weapon. Meg curdled with agony to see Women die beneath that cherry-flame.

But—Daiv?

Even as her mind asked the question, she found him. He had been at the farthest perimeter of the circle; now he was racing recklessly across the central arena toward her. In haste or sheer bravado he had picked up no ray weapon, but still brandished the huge, two-handed sword with which he had stormed the citadel.

But it was not this that miraculously saved his life from the lightning of crimson that flashed about him. It was his instinctive grace and agility, his perfect sense of timing. More than once Meg's lips formed a wordless shout as it seemed one of those flaming tubes must surely spend its charge on his smooth, gal-lant body. Each time Daiv saw the new danger, swerved to avoid the ray. And more than once his mighty sword accounted for the dwarf who would have been his destroyer.

THEN, from another angle of the courtyard, burst a fat, bustling figure. Grensu. His golden armor, once so proud, was now dented in a score of places; there was a red stain upon his forehead, his ripe lips were working with a fearsome rage.

His objective was Meg, and upon her he was advancing, mouthing vile threats.

"So, ivory one, you think to triumph at last? Know, then, that Grensu takes with him in defeat his adver-saries!"

And he raised his ray-weapon to cover Meg. For the first time in all those hectic moments, a sense of personal fear weakened the Priestess' knees. It had not seemed ill to die for a worthy cause. But now—when the cause was almost won, and when, in moments, her lover's arms would have been about her—But, as ever, Grensu's vaingloriousness was his own undoing. Once too often had he stayed his vengeance

for a speech. Now as his finger tightened on the but-ton that would blast Meg into rancid oblivion a tre-mendous object came hurtling through the air.

It was Daiv's claymore. Seeing there was no other way to halt Grensu's move, Daiv had heaved it square-ly at the dwarfing commander with all the strength his mighty arms possessed. It was like a whistling fall of the Gods as it cleft the air; ripped the ray-tube from Grensu's hand, and with the spitting stick sheared yellow fingers.

Then, even as Grensu howled his pain and turned to flee, Daiv was upon him. He lifted the squat, heavy dwarf, massive armor and all, above his head; shook him as a dog might shake a ground-rat. Gren-su's thick lips blubbered incoherent pleas, his eyes bulged wildly. But there was stone in Daiv's breast.

By the head and the calves he grasped the scream-ing commander; his arms made one sweeping motion. Grensu's fearful bleat ended in a choked wail of agony . . . something snapped like a forest twig. . . .

Grensu lay still.

AFTERWARD, one of the Wild Ones came to Daiv where he stood with Meg beside a god-box that now lay quiescent on the ground.

"They call for the Priestess, Master," he grinned. "The Old One lies dying. Will you bring the lovely one to the *hoam*?"

Daiv said, "I have told you, Wilm, that it is not nec-essary to call me 'Master.' I am a Man, like your-self; we are all Men, proud and noble. Do not for-get." To Meg he said, "You remember Wilm; don't you, Golden One?"

Meg did, though it was difficult to see behind the grinning, confident features of this hairy one the same terrified creature whom Daiv had rescued from the pit just the day—could it be so short a time?—before. She nodded.

"I remembered Wilm," Daiv told her with a happy-look, "when the lemon-skinned dwarf band attacked us. From the first I knew our defense was futile. We were too few. We needed more, and stronger fighters. So I went for the aid of the Wild Ones—aid which Wilm had pledged me should I need it.

"Though," he shook his head ruefully, "I did not know they would have this other weapon, the wall-that-cannot-be-seen, when we returned. Without your help, Golden One, all would have been lost."

"And without his," mused Meg, "I should be the pale bride of death." It was an unprecedented ges-ture for a Woman and a Priestess of the Jinnia Clan to make, but Meg made it. She stretched forth her hand. "I would grip your hand in my own, Man of the forests. Henceforth let there be peace between us."

She winced at Wilm's enthusiastic grip. Then, "But let us make haste, O Daiv, my love. The Mother sends for me; I fear she will soon go to join the Gods."

There was already the God-look in the Mother's eyes when they reached the *hoam*. A look of strange

peace, mingled with one of happiness, as she looked fondly upon Meg.

"I am to be with you but a little while longer, my daughter," she breathed quietly. "The Gods have called me, their voices stirred in my ears like the whisper of night-winds in the trees. Soon I shall go."

Meg's happiness was suddenly gray with the cloud of heart-hunger. She dropped to her knees beside the older woman's side.

"You must not go, O Mother!" she sobbed. "There is much to be done, and only thy wisdom can achieve it."

The pale hand of the tribal guardian sought, found, Meg's golden head.

"You speak the truth, daughter mine. There is so much to be done. But already you know how to lead our Clan upward to the stature of the Ancient Ones. With your mate at your side—"

There was a concerted gasp from the assembled Women of the Clan. The Mother, hearing, smiled wanly.

"YES, thus openly do I approve that of which, from the beginning, my heart approved. Listen, my children—Meg was right. In her pilgrimage she learned, as did I many winters ago, that the Gods were Men. Men like Daiv. She rebelled against the Law that said a Priestess might not mate—but she was right in her rebellion.

"List, now, for with the all-seeing eyes of one on the threshold of death I tell you truth. It is right that Women should mate with Men. There should be no Workers, no Warriors, no breeding-mothers. Our Clan should own no stud-males, pale chattels like our kine and horses. All this is wrong."

Lora, her harsh-lined face sagging with confusion, cried, "But, Mother—the Wild Ones!"

"Never again must we prey upon the Wild Ones. Do you not see that the Gods avenged our doing so when they permitted Meg to be captured in one of the pits we dug?"

"Henceforth—" The Mother's voice grew weaker, and a hurt-devil pierced Meg's heart. "There will be peace and amity between Women and the Wild Ones. I see a day—a day in the future to come—when mankind may again attain to the heights of the Ancient Ones. In that day the children of the Ancient Ones may return from the evening star to find a new world happier than that from which they fled—"

Daiv whispered to Meg, "Her holiness is one with the Gods. Hear now her sacred vision!" and Meg saw that his eyes were wet with heart-rains.

Then said the Mother to Meg, "Once I deferred judgment upon you, my child. Now I give my approval of you . . . and of this Man who is thy mate . . . and of all you have done. Lead well thy people. . . ." And she was gone.

A soft murmur stirred through the room, a murmur that was the sobbing of a bereaved Clan. One by one the Women left the presence of death for the sunshine and life of the world outside.

Only a huddled group of Japcan captives, over whom grim-jawed Warriors stood guard, the bodies of those who had fallen in the battle, the scarred and blasted *hoams*, told of that which had been. Soon all this would be changed; a new and better existence would rise out of the mistakes of yesterday.

Wilm was capering at Daiv's side, plucking at his elbow feverishly. "Daiv, Master—"

"Not 'Master,' Wilm!" reminded Daiv sternly.

"Daiv, friend," corrected the Wild One. "Will the Women do as the aged one told them? Will they now, perhaps, become our mates?"

There was a pathetic eagerness in his voice. Meg was strangely stirred by it. Not so the angular Lora, who sniffed aloud.

"The Mother's word is the Law, O hairy thing that smells." Her voice was derisive. "What Woman of our Clan so excites your fancy? One of those, I suppose?" She nodded toward a young and buxom breeding-mother, white-fleshed and not yet plump from over-bearing, who strolled down the walk-avenue with hips swaying enticingly.

But Wilm shook his head.

"THAT?" he exclaimed. "Pah! What Man would want such a wobbly thing? I like a strong Woman; a Woman with arms like a weathered oak. A fighting Woman. A Woman like—" He paused breathlessly. Then, "A Woman like—you!"

"Me!"

The Warrior Chieftain gasped. Then the slow crimson started at her throat, spread slowly upward until it mantled her cheeks. And her voice was choked. "Like me, Man?"

"Not just like you," said Wilm staunchly. "You!"

Meg waited for the Chieftain's reply, atingle inside with wonderment and tickling little fun-bubbles. Then Lora spoke, and her answer was the answer of all womankind to the new regime. . . .

"You must be mad, Man!" she declared. "But—but I think I like your madness. We'll discuss it further if you'll go bathe the smell from your body. And shave off that awful beard. . . ."

Meg looked at Daiv; he looked back at her, and a happy-look was on his lips. He whispered, "The change has begun, Golden One. The change for which I hoped. We will live in a new world soon. Surely the poet of the Ancient Ones wrote truth."

"Poet?" asked Meg. "I do not understand, Daiv."

"His name," said Daiv softly, "was Tensun. Long ages ago he wrote, 'The old order changeth, giving way to new . . . and the Gods fulfill themselves in many ways. . . .'"



FANTASTIC HUMANS

by HERMAN E. KRIMMEL

The records of persons in contact with out-of-the-way places of the earth contain many instances of human beings living under strange conditions. Here are a few of the most strange

IN 1930 a group of naturalists in Bengal, India, sighted through their field glasses a spectacle that made them doubt their sanity. From a cave in a hillside five figures emerged. Two were full grown wolves and the third a cub, but the fourth and fifth, although they crawled on all fours, were not wolves. They were human children! Estimated to be about three and eight years of age, they had apparently been abandoned in infancy and adopted and raised by the female wolf.

Both girls were wild in habits, howled like wolves and fought to claw and bite their captors. When they were taken into custody by the Rev. Jal Singh, an orphanage official, the atmosphere of human civilization did not seem to agree with them. The younger died within a year while the other continued to behave in primitive fashion, rejecting cooked food, but ravenously devouring raw meats and vegetables. She developed an almost canine loyalty to the Reverend and his wife, enjoyed being petted, and bristled and growled at strangers. Her senses of hearing and smell were abnormally acute, but she learned slowly. After six years she comprehended simple instructions fairly well, but could speak only about forty elementary words, and those with difficulty.

It is a fantastic tale, of course, and the question of its credibility almost caused fistic battles among the members of the swank London Club. But these wolf children were by no means the first or only cases on record. The first known case was the Hessian Boy who was also found living with a pack of wolves in 1341 and died untamed. Since that time hundreds of stories have been told of similar phenomena and while the vast majority can be dismissed as folklore born in superstition and handed down through the generations, there are about a dozen that must be accepted as authentic since they were found in municipal records or reported by unimpeachable witnesses.

The most complete of these reports was made by Jean Itard on the Wild Boy of Aveyron. In 1789 three hunters captured a naked child, about eleven years old, who was roaming in the woods and who, despite his youth, easily climbed to the uppermost limbs of trees in his efforts to escape. He ran away

from the first home in which he was placed, but was recaptured and sent to the hospital of Saint-Afrigue where he remained until Itard adopted him. At that time Itard described him as a "disgustingly dirty child affected with spasmodic movements and often convulsions, who swayed back and forth ceaselessly like certain animals in the menagerie, who bit and scratched those opposed to him, who showed no sort of affection for those who attended him; and who was, in short, indifferent to everything and attentive to nothing." His memory, judgment and imitative powers were defective and "he would pass, without any assignable motive, from a state of stupid melancholy to extravagant bursts of laughter." But as the years passed he developed further than any of the other animal children. Under the careful and patient teaching of Itard, he became fairly literate, leaned to eat at the table, managed to hold simple conversation, was docile and sometimes even sociable. Until his death, however, the Wild Boy of Aveyron kept the stooping gait of a monkey.

Information about other wild children is fragmentary, but that they existed is virtually certain. An old Polish history records the doings of three Lithuanian boys, the first of whom was found in 1657 living with bears. His body was abnormally hairy, his physical strength incredible, and his teeth which he bared savagely when angered, were uncommonly strong and sharp. The lad enjoyed nothing so much as to tear into a chunk of raw meat. Little is said of the second except that he was captured in 1669. The third was somewhat more tractable than the first and, in time, was persuaded to eat from the table although he rejected knives and forks.

In 1701 a peasant couple in Poland misplaced their 16 months old baby and despite a unique birthmark, official search proved useless. She was found some years later romping in the forest and apparently quite happy and able to take care of herself. Her male counterpart was Jean deLiege who was lost at the age of five and lived in the wilderness for sixteen years before he was found. He was never tamed.

In 1731, the so-called Girl of Songi, a lass of nine, startled the villagers when she very calmly strode

belligerently out of the forest near Chalons. A large dog attacked her and she clubbed him to death. She was taken into a home and seemed willing enough to stay but continued her wild ways, notably snatching fish from the streams and gobbling them raw. Later her guardian sent her to, of all places, a convent where she learned to carry on simple conversation and acquired considerable skill in embroidery.

One of the strangest cases of this kind was that of Clemens of Overdycke who was cruelly and deliberately forced into animal life by a peasant farmer who adopted him from the asylum of Count Vonder Ricke shortly after Napoleon's war with Germany. His foster father set him to herding pigs. He was forced to live with his charges in a pig-pen and it was not long before he became one of them, happiest when wallow-

ing in mud, eating garbage and grass, and he even learned to suck milk from cows. He spoke only a few monosyllables and for the most part squealed like his companions.

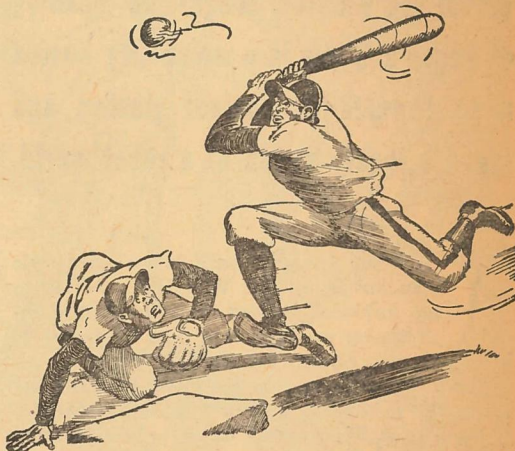
Those are the most important cases. All were unquestionably born of human parents and either lost or abandoned in infancy. That they became conditioned to primitive life is evident from the fact that they survived their surroundings and, almost without exception, the primitive way of life became so integral a part of their natures, that they could never be completely assimilated into human society. All but a few died soon after capture. One or two lived into early middle age but only one, Peter of Hanover, reached his late sixties when he died tamed, but unable to speak.

"'C'MERE AND GET SOCKED!'"

"What the hell?" squawked Kelly, purple with rage. He jumped at the ball, waving his club menacingly, swinging back and forth madly! The ball twisted and flew over toward third base, swung around behind the pitcher and danced into the outfield, zig-zagged back into the infield, corkscrewed, jitter-bugged, cavorted, whirled up and down . . . did everything except approach the plate!

"'C'mere and get socked!" howled Kelly. The ball obliged by flashing temptingly close to him . . . then off down the first base line it flew! Kelly shouted and ran in hot pursuit. Around first and toward second it sailed, with Kelly right behind, yelling and shaking his bat! "Stop and let me swat ya!" he bellowed.

On all sides, spectators and sports writers and big league scouts were swarming down on to the field! The game was completely forgotten. All anyone cared about was that amazing ball Lefty Lopez threw and its fantastic duel with Kelly! All we care about is that you don't miss "THE WIZARD OF BASEBALL" . . . one of the most unique and entertaining stories ever presented in FANTASTIC ADVENTURES!



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QUEEN of the METAL MEN

By ROBERT BLOCH

Darro, the warrior, sought the meaning of Dagon's Curse in a weird city buried deep beneath an ancient glacier, and found a lovely queen of a robot world.

"YOU must promise," said the wrinkled little man known as The Wise One. "Warriors are forbidden to read the words of the ancients. Now that you have read from the forbidden books, you must forget. Promise that."

Darro turned away. In the dusk, the little fire before the two men, the Wise One Tabor, and the young warrior, Darro, was a flickering point of light. The hot coals lay like red eyes on the dark earth, and Darro looked again at the old man.

"Tell me, O Tabor," he said slowly, "why the knowledge of the great cities that lie buried beneath the ground is kept from us." His eyes searched as he spoke. "What have our strong people, the descendants of the great and ancient city of Baltimore, to fear from a world we have never seen, a world dead these two centuries?"

The Wise One was silent a few moments. At length he said, "You are young, Darro. In my grandfather's day there was a warrior, strong and impetuous as you, with a curious nature. He too had read the books, and he resolved to find the hidden entrance to the dead city. One day he did find it. Half the men in our clan were killed before . . . before . . ." and the old man stopped.

"What, O Tabor?" cried Darro. "You are speaking of my ancestor Dagon. What did he find? What is the meaning of *Dagon's Curse*?"

"Do not ask me," spoke the Wise One. "There are dead cities buried beneath the ground all over our land. But under us alone, under the proud Marylander Clan, lies the key to ultimate death of every

living being on earth. The days of ice sealed it. You must not disturb it."

"But tell me what this key is, and I will be content."

"Do not ask me," repeated Tabor. "If you ever knew, the fire that burns in you would not be content until you had found the entrance again. A thousand lives were lost there once. Go now, only promise me to forget."

"No!" cried Darro, fiercely, as he sprang up. "No! I am not a timid maid! I am not a fool! If there are things to be known, I will know them—and I will tell the whole world!"

He remembered the eyes of the old man as he stalked away, eyes that held sorrow and an old fear. But Darro was heedless. He had come to the Wise One honestly, asking him what the forbidden books meant, the books over which his elder sister constantly pored, and which he had read secretly. But something else he had not told old Tabor. . . .

For Darro had found the entrance to the ancient city! Days before, returning alone from a hunting foray, he had come upon the overgrown crevasse that hid it. Or else why should he, the warrior Darro, read books like a child or a maiden? He had waited long enough, and Tabor had only taxed his patience. Now he stood on a hill, his face turned to the sky, impatient with the very night itself. When the dawn came, Darro would go!

Then, when the day was but a streak of light grey in the heavens, Darro was on his way. Swiftly he ran over the hilly ground, past fields laid bare by the advancing autumn, through a deep woods, until he stood at length before the first ridge of what formed the crevasse. A little cave marked the beginning. After that there was a huge iron door—a door that he had found ajar, rusted with age and unwieldy. Farther than that he had not gone before, but now . . .

Cautiously Darro drew his hunting knife, gripped his spear more firmly, and stepped into the gloom of the cave. With both hands he pressed against the huge iron door. Creaking, it gave until Darro squeezed past it—and suddenly Darro the warrior knew fear.

He stood in the half-darkness and gazed at that



"Forward!" she commanded the robots. "Take him!"

which rested before him—the iron body of a man; motionless, quieter than death. It did not breathe, for iron cannot live, and yet within the metal face glared two living eyes. The eyes were yellow, blazing with sight here in the murkiness of the cavern.

With an effort, Darro stopped trembling.

His face relaxed, and the long jaw protruded in a defiant grin. He stood his spear against the rocky wall and advanced slowly toward the throne, staring at the metal monster, hand clenching the dagger tightly. The Thing did not move.

Slowly Darro reached out one hand and touched the cold metal of the Thing's chest. Nothing happened. Darro's hand moved over the iron body, and he grinned. No need to fear this image!

And then, eyes blazed and body lunged. But not the eyes or body of the metal man. Charging across the floor of the cave on great, talon-studded paws, lunged a shaggy, elephant-bodied monster. The Thing had a head the size of a horse's body, and the great, slant-jawed skull held blazing green eyes. The snarling face was catlike, but no cat or common carnivore had the tusk-like fangs of this monster. The gaping red jaws held teeth like ivory sword-blades.

Darro whirled to face it. Sabre-tooth! The deadliest creature of destruction of a new primitive world was upon him. That explained the half-open door—the sabre-tooth lived there!

The monster leaped, and with a lightning movement Darro dodged behind the rocky throne on which the metal man rested. Yet the tiger did not swerve. Soaring through the air it landed full on the chest of the iron man, claws raking the metal in an impotent swath of doom. The ponderous body swayed. It was toppling back, crushing Darro as the beast lunged frantically against it.

Darro braced himself, trying to hold the figure erect as a shield. The rear of the iron being was studded with knobs and levers; Darro felt one strike his temple as he pushed against it. The creature was falling upon him; a moment and the sabre-tooth would push it over, pin him helplessly beneath the giant iron figure, then leap over and close tiger-teeth in his throat.

Darro felt his knees give. He slid desperately to the floor, his hands clutched despairingly at the iron knobs in the metal back. They twisted under his fingers, slipped away as he landed with a gasp. The tiger lunged again. The figure would topple backward now, crush him, and then—

But no. The figure didn't fall. *It was moving!* With a start of awe, the trapped warrior gazed upward. The metal man was rising on ponderous feet. Great arms went up and embraced the shaggy body of the monstrous beast, catching it against its chest as one might catch a playful dog. Slowly the arms bent in. The roaring sabre-tooth raked impotent claws against the metal, bit furiously at the iron face. But the arms pressed, squeezed, crushed.

Suddenly the roaring became a fierce scream and the body of the metal man became covered with

ruddy spray. Claws ripped in one last convulsive spasm, and then the iron being dropped the limp carcass to the floor. The sabre-tooth was dead.

For a moment the metal man stood swaying, arms still open. Darro saw that the tiger's blows had taken some effect, for one of the arms was dangling loosely on twisted wires, and the chest was partly crushed. Darro rose to his feet, rushed around to the front of the iron creature. He gazed into the yellow eyes that were strangely fading. With a thunderous crash, the iron body toppled to the floor atop the sabre-tooth, the head splintering against the rocks into a tangled mass of coils and jagged splinters of steel.

LATER, a crude pine torch in his hand, Darro proceeded cautiously down the rocky floor of the passage. In the torchlight he could see smoothly-chiseled walls. He was on the right track; legend and fable must be true! Men had fashioned this corridor under the ice—for what strange purpose he could not say. Men, or else—

Darro nearly stumbled over the first one. It was an iron man, lying across the path. One great metal hand still grasped a strange implement. Tools lay scattered around the sprawling figure.

Another iron man! Darro pressed the levers in the back. Perhaps this one would move, too. But no, twirl as he might, the fallen figure lay motionless.

Darro rose, puzzled. What had destroyed the spark in this metal giant? And restored it to the other?

He shrugged, passing on. And then he found another. And yet another. From this point on the floor was strewn with fallen men of metal. Each one held a tool or instrument of outlandish design; the use of which Darro could not fathom.

Darro paused. His torch was exhausted. As he lit the second one he shivered. It was hellishly cold here in the pit under the ice. It was cold; much colder than in the cave above.

Darro hastened on, shivering, through the endless maze of the passage. Every few feet he passed another metal man; another giant sprawling helplessly on the rocks. There must have been thousands of them, and Darro felt a strange awe surging through him. Why did they lie here? What was their purpose? What civilization had produced them? And the buried city that legend said lay below; would he really find it dead when he reached it?

The cold grew intense; the journey became a nightmare of torch-lit shadows on twisted walls under icy earth, of frantic groping in frozen darkness beneath the glacier, of blind stumbling over the cold iron bodies of monster-men. Darro plunged doggedly forward, a burning spark of life in a world of death.

And then the cavern slanted down—down to a door. The metal men lay in heaps, covered with a frost which made their bodies horrid, fur-covered monstrosities. But Darro did not waste a glance on them.

He stared at a new door; a great metal thing in the rock walls. It was flat, solid, undecorated, but it was

a door—and beyond . . . ?

Darro ran down the incline. His arms gripped the remaining torches; he raised them and beat upon the door. A brazen clang echoed down the silent corridor under the heart of ice. He stood there, a grotesque, half-naked little figure—pounding vainly at the gates of frozen mysteries.

Again and again he hammered on the doorway. It did not yield, it did not open. Darro swore softly. Was he to be thwarted at the end of his quest? He hammered with redoubled fury.

And then the miracle happened. Slowly, with a grating clang, a groaning of metal torment, the door began to slide open at the side.

Darro gaped. He thought of a city beyond, of power; of machines, of a million metal men straining and wrestling with that massive gateway. He gazed avidly, waiting for the revealed sight of the city's might, moving the mountainous door for him to enter.

The door slid back with a ponderous crash, and then Darro's mouth dropped open in amazement, for standing alone in the shadows, was a tiny, golden-haired girl!

"COME in," she said, smiling.

Darro's ears stung at the sound of the southern tongue, spoken here under the ice!

Darro had seen in his father's camps at ancient Baltimore the captive maidens of a dozen lands; he had journeyed through the world and gazed on beauties of every tribe. But this girl, this golden woman, was beyond any comparison he could make. Her hair was a misty cloud drawn from the sun, her eyes deep pools bluer than the diamond-glint on the ice, her slim body a creamy loveliness which dimmed the glacial snow. Her shapeliness was veiled in a flowing robe of green that struck fiery contrast to her vivid lips, now parted in a smile of greeting before which Darro's senses reeled.

"Come in," repeated the girl. Darro stepped past the doorway, no longer intent on seeking an army of automatons. He had eyes only for the charms of the golden girl. It was a full moment before he realized that the door had slid noiselessly back into place; a moment more before he comprehended that the operation was performed by her slim hand pressing a lever at its side. In another instant his senses were struck by the pleasurable warmth of the air about him; it was a tropical atmosphere contrasting delightfully to the freezing temperature of the tunnel beyond.

Still all this meant nothing to Darro, staring into the incarnate face of Beauty.

"You have come again," she said. "You returned."

"I don't know what you mean," Darro said slowly.

The girl regarded him. "You look so alike," she murmured. "Yet it could not be. That was so long ago. I have almost forgotten about time." As if from a reverie, she asked, "Who are you?"

"Men call me Darro. I am of the south."

"The—the world?"

"The world."

"But how do you come here?"

Darro explained, briefly. The blue eyes of the girl clouded. "Then the robots did get through to the surface after all," she whispered. "I—we—couldn't know, you see. 18366 was set to come back and report; but the cold must have reached its coils before it could return."

"Didn't you send some one out to investigate?" Darro demanded.

"Who could—we—send?" asked the girl. "That was many years ago, and it had taken many years to build the passageway so that by the time it was completed I—we—had almost forgotten about it. And there was nothing to do. If the robots succeeded in digging a tunnel to the outer world they would return; if not, I couldn't risk going alone."

Darro knitted his brows. "I don't understand," he muttered. "I don't know."

The girl smiled. "Of course you don't—Darro. It's simple. When I say 'I refer to myself, naturally. I am the only *moving* being left here in Subterra, now that the robots are gone. I could not leave alone to investigate the progress of the tunnel. When I say 'we' I am referring to the other living being that cannot *move*; the brains that I tend. But perhaps I had better explain as I show you."

The blonde girl grasped Darro's hand. Her fingers were cold, but they held him firmly as she led him away from the door. Darro's eyes widened at the panorama of Subterra before him.

This was the great city under the ice. This was the gigantic realm of wisdom. This was the miracle of all legends.

This tiny little series of small rooms!

Darro saw his surroundings for the first time. He stood in an iron chamber with a high, plated ceiling embedded in the rock. A series of small apartment cubicles opened before him; their walls rising only a few feet higher than his head, so that he could see the rooms from the elevation at the doorway where he stood.

"Come along," said the girl. Darro followed, disappointment gnawing at his heart. But there was mystery, too; and Darro listened as the girl spoke.

"I'll be brief," she said. "The details are recorded in the talking cylinders, and you can hear it all later; data, statistics, scientific information, everything. Subterra was once a great nation under another name, ruling above on outer earth. This you know from the legends. The war years forced all life underground, and even when wars had gone, people lived there. And then the ice came.

"The scientists had known, of course, and made certain plans. But the actual glacier was preceded by volcanic convulsion which destroyed the city; ruined the tunnels and subterranea already dug in preparation. Only a small band of nobles and scientists escaped to one of the pits. This was the cavern of

Rann Sivo, the Creator.

"Rann Sivo was the man who invented the robots; the metal men. They were the result of his experiments with electricity, and were provided with electrically-actuated brains attuned to vocal command. Rann Sivo was a great and wise scientist; he had been among the leaders in the preparation of plans for moving underground and escaping the ice. He built this pit, lower than the rest, and reinforced the walls with iron. In fact, on the night of the quake, he and some of the leading nobles were performing a tour of inspection here. They thus escaped the fate of the others. Rann Sivo was trapped, with his handful of men, here below the surface of the earth.

"The ice came, covering all, and still Rann Sivo and his few companions survived on the stores of food-tablets. Rann Sivo's vision of a great new underground city dwindled to this pitiful sham, here in a tiny alcove. But he did not despair. He worked. He built the robots; knowing some day that he would want them to dig a way out of the buried world. He set to work collecting all the wisdom he and the others could remember; all the history, the science recorded on talking-discs. They are now stored here, in this apartment."

The golden girl led Darro into the first tiny chamber, pointing to the rolls of metal cylinders in racks along the walls. "There is a machine to play them," she said. "Later, perhaps, you may wish to hear these things." She withdrew, and Darro followed.

"You see, it was Rann Sivo's dream, like your own, to some day bring wisdom back to a ruined world. But he was a man. And men are human. They die."

The girl's voice was harsh. Darro started at her tones of bitterness. "So Rann Sivo planned again. He was wise. Knowing that he was getting older, that others were getting older and the race would not endure, he began one of his greatest creations—the brain-tube."

The girl led Darro into the second apartment. "The robots he never animated, storing them on the halls until the time the digging to the surface would begin. Now he concentrated on the brain-tubes."

The girl indicated the tables in this second small room, and Darro saw that their surfaces were covered with shiny silver domes. Wires ran from the dis-tudded sides of these silver containers.

"Into these tubes Rann Sivo planned to place the brains of the men as they died. A simple surgical operation, and then the living brain-tissue, preserved in a saline solution favorable to maintain existence, would be hooked up by means of electrical apparatus, to speaking-devices. Rann Sivo's science that had discovered the electrical basis of life in creating robots, also extended to the preservation of thought as electricity in human brains.

"And thus it was. As men died, their brains were transferred to these cylinders, to live forever, and electrically record their thoughts as speech when the proper wires were connected. Now Rann Sivo and his

followers would, in a manner of speaking, live forever. When the time came they could instruct the robots to dig them out, return, and carry their living brains into the world beyond; there to be hooked up again and by vocal command instruct the robots to rebuild the shattered cities. A tremendous scheme; and this simple account will hardly satisfy you. Later you can hear the cylinders."

"You mean Rann Sivo and his followers are still alive?" Darro gasped.

"Of course. Their brains are in these tubes. I myself change the saline solution regularly and do whatever else is necessary."

"But then why not turn them on, let me hear the words of Rann Sivo himself?"

It must have been imagination, or else Darro did detect a look of furtive fear flickering across the girl's face.

"No, I never turn them on. It is—forbidden," she whispered. "Later, perhaps—now, let me finish."

She led him into the other apartments in turn. "This is where they lived, centuries ago."

"Centuries?"

"Of course. Rann Sivo was the last to die, and his brain was transformed into a cylinder fully eight—"

The girl stopped abruptly, then rushed on. "But that's not important. This is: Rann Sivo had accomplished what he set out to do, but it was not enough. He dreamed of another triumph. He wanted to improve his robots so as to perpetuate the race he knew had been destroyed. He began to experiment with synthetic flesh preparations. His knowledge of the electro-biologic basis of chemical life served him well. He built machines, instruments, which are stored now in these other apartments. He had accomplished much when he died, the last of them all."

"But you?" said Darro. "Who are you, and how are you alive after so many years?"

The girl was silent. Then— "Soon you may know all," she said quietly. She continued.

"But Rann Sivo's plans had gone further. He had meant to keep his work going after death; energizing the robots and having them carry out his commands directed by his voice from the cylinder. Then the robots would create the synthetic race under his direction, and finally tunnel a way out of Subterra.

"But he had finished his first experiment when he died, and although the robots transformed his brain to a cylinder they could not work on. Because Rann Sivo would not give them the secret of fire."

THE girl sat down on a chair in the apartment and Darro followed suit.

"You may have noticed that there is no fire here. This sealed chamber has natural heat, fed through vents from the gaseous inner earth beneath, and it has a ventilating system the secret of which died with Rann Sivo. But no fire. Sivo used fire to make the robots and he needed fire to create the synthetic robot race, but he refuses to give up his secret from the

brain-tube. So after his solitary experiment, no more synthetic humans were created.

"The robots began to dig the tunnel and their controls were affected by the cold so that they did not return. So there is no one to carry the brain-tubes or the cylinders of wisdom into the world.

"With the secret of fire I could build synthetic humans myself and form a new race; then we could go forth and with our hidden knowledge rebuild the world; fill it not with puny men that die, but with mechanical beings far more clever and beautiful than mere products of earthly flesh.

"That was my dream. But I could not leave here after the robots failed to return; I had to keep the brains alive, and the cylinders oiled. All that is changed now. You have come, and with that coming have brought the secret of fire once more. The machines will hum again, and soon we can go forth together. Heat will cause the robots to rise up from the passageway; they can be our army as we march back into the world with wisdom. Then we shall rule, and I can destroy the hateful brain of Rann Sivo and his friends' brains will be smashed, and only we two shall know and rule."

"We two . . .?" Darro's head spun. Who was this woman? What was she, with her strange story and her stranger dreams? There was something wrong here, something dangerous. He turned to question her, but the baleful beauty of her blue eyes held him in flaming bondage to her smile. "But why do you hate them?"

"I've talked too long," she whispered. "You're tired. Rest here. Tomorrow—strange, I have not used that word in years!—we shall plan."

Darro wanted to rise, to protest. But her eyes, her lips commanded. The golden glow of her beauty, blending with the blissful warmth of this chamber, impelled him toward impotent lethargy, toward the release of dreams. Darro let his head sink back. It was all so confusing. Tomorrow, rested, he could think, reason. Now, he wanted to sleep. His eyes closed as he felt the strangely cool hands of the girl restfully stroking his forehead.

DARRO awoke. How many hours had passed he did not know. Here in the cavern created by Rann Sivo there was no time. But Darro was rested, although somehow strangely nervous and tense. Something was wrong. He could feel it in the silence. Where was the girl?

That girl—she was stranger than everything else. Her fantastic story, her reticence concerning herself, her unnatural beauty, her wild plans. What weird mental outlook actuated her?

Why wouldn't she let him talk to Rann Sivo? Was it all a fraud?

Darro rose, searched for her. She wasn't in any of the apartments. Nor was she in the outer chamber. The gate of iron was closed. For some reason, instinctive panic was rising in Darro's heart.

He stepped down the hall between the cubicles. Impulsively he halted before the second one—the one housing the brain-cylinders, as the girl had called them. This was where Rann Sivo's brain rested; in the largest of the silver dome-things. Darro's eyes carefully inspected the wiring, the dials. Perhaps, if he were to tinker about a bit—

Cautiously he twisted and turned. For a moment nothing happened. Then Darro jumped. From a sounding-board in the wall above his head a strange, metallic voice crackled into the room.

"Greetings."

"Rann Sivo?"

"I can scarcely hear you. Turn up the auditory response."

Darro found the dial, twisted it. And then he spoke, asking questions and the voice from the tube answered. For ten minutes Darro lived in a world of horror. Then he heard the crash.

It came from overhead; from far overhead. It was a rumbling, a thundering, a cosmic clashing; the sound of moving mountains, of shifting continents.

"Earth tremors," came the passionless voice from the brain; the same passionless voice that had just spoken such unemotional words of horror. "Escape. But do as I have told you."

"*Dagon's curse!*" Darro cried. He turned, quickly, as the thundering increased.

"Turn me off," commanded the voice from the cylinder, and Darro complied. He raced from the room, hands fumbling at his waist. Sure enough, his flint was gone. *She* had stolen it as he slept, just as the brain of Rann Sivo had hinted. And Rann Sivo had done more than hint of what *she* would do with fire. His revelations had filled Darro with a sort of sick horror which was now tremendously accelerated in its effect by the ominous quaking of the earth about him. Such a tremor, long ago, had walled the little band of scientists and nobles in this subterranean chasm. Now he would be trapped unless he hastened. And somewhere out in that corridor, *she* worked, with one of the machines Rann Sivo had spoken of, warming the robots, bringing them to life so they would march out—

Breathing a prayer, Darro tugged at the lever in the iron door. It groaned open, and he reeled forward into the fetid air of the long passageway. The warm air!

Out here, where it had been awful cold, it now was as sultry as Hell's own chambers. Darro plunged down a long passage, running desperately. The rumbles shook the rock ceiling over his head. The place would topple at any moment!

Racing through the midnight madness without torch, Darro sprinted on. Horror gnawed his brain as he saw that his feet did not stumble over iron bodies. They were gone. She had raised them!

HE ran, breath surging in time to the rumbles from above. A crash like doom echoed in his ears from

behind. He knew a section of the rock had fallen, crushed down by glacial pressure, to bury forever the secrets of Subterra.

Darro sobbed with aching lungs as he rounded the curve and ran relentlessly, driving his body forward. The rumbling increased. Soon the entire cavern would collapse. He must reach *her* in time.

The heat increased. He was near, now. Yes, there—

Ahead, marched the iron army of robots, filing with brazen tread through the rocky passage. Hundreds, row on row, metal faces set in grimaces of brassy dread. And before them, the golden body of the girl, bending over each robot as she passed, bathing their bodies in the flaming glow shot from a long tube she carried in her arms; a machine ignited by the flint she had stolen, which warmed the secret core of the robot bodies and brought them again to life. Sensitive, coiled inner springs reacted to heat and a constantly augmented robot army marched on into the world, with *her* at the head, *and that must not be!* Darro remembered the words of Rann Sivo, thundering in his brain as now the very walls about him thundered.

He plunged through the robot ranks, heedless of danger, of trampling feet and iron arms that swung. He struggled up, the girl not suspecting his approach. She was bending over the figures, bathing them in the flame from her instrument, and they rose like resurrected corpses. There was a smile on her face which no human should ever wear, and her eyes blazed with an unearthly triumph.

Straight ahead she stared, straight ahead her iron army marched, and then Darro saw that they were nearly out of the passage.

"Too late!" he gasped. "I'll be too late!"

The gateway to the world loomed before them. Another moment and—

Darro reached her, as the ground quivered sickeningly beneath his flying feet.

"Stop!" he screamed hoarsely.

She faced him then, and the robots halted. On her face was a look of hideous dismay. It faded quickly, to be replaced by a crafty smile.

"Forward," she commanded. "Take him."

The ponderous surge, the metallic thudding of iron feet, moving over the rocks. They were coming, iron hands ready to crush and rend, and then over their thunder rose another thunder—a colossal, elemental

throb that wrenched the earth in the throes of utter agony.

With a roar the walls caved down. The golden queen of the robots leaped toward Darro, bearing him back. They made the gateway, stood again in the cave beyond, safe in the upper world. But behind them the surging still sounded, and mountains of rock rained down to shatter the moving iron figures under tons of glacial debris.

Darro glanced down at her, panting with exhaustion.

She clung to him, the golden girl of his dreams. Her eyes were wide with fright, her lips parted with invitation. She was all woman, all female, now.

"Darro," she whispered. "I've been an ambitious fool. I meant to trick you, to take the robots out into the world and rule with my wisdom. But you were stronger, wiser. I know that now. So I ask you merely to take me with you. You will be the master, I the slave. I can teach you many things, Darro; I know the wisdom and the secrets of Rann Sivo. Together we can go far."

"*You thought you knew me,*" Darro breathed. "You remembered Dagon, the man whose hot curiosity proved a curse to his people. You enchanted him with your beauty—and it took a thousand lives to right that mistake. It almost cost mankind its existence."

Darro gazed tenderly down into the most beautiful face he had ever known. Tremblingly his hands caressed the cold throat, then suddenly they tightened.

She screamed then, just once, as Darro ruthlessly crushed her unearthly and beautiful body backward. There was a sharp snap, his hands clawed away strips of non-human tissue. He ripped once more and from beneath the mask of flesh projected a mass of torn wires and tiny cogwork.

Darro let the broken doll sag to the floor of the cave, and the shiny, twisted coils rolled outward.

"A robot," he grated through clenched teeth, "just as Rann Sivo told me!"

Several hours later, the warrior Darro, great-grandson of Dagon, came back to the peaceful plain of his clan. His eyes shone as he thought of the story he would tell. There would be a new story told for generations, told to his children's children—to the whole world, for the world was waking again.

The Editor's Notebook

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

(Continued from page 5)

very diligently engaged in painting a cover for a forthcoming issue. It reminded us instantly, somehow, of Stanley G. Weinbaum, whose stories always seemed to carry exactly the atmosphere Krupa had captured in color.

"What's happening here?" we asked him.

"That's up to you to figure out," he returned with a happy ex-

pression on his face that plainly indicated his joy at giving your editor another problem.

All of which means that when this cover appears, it will feature a story written to order by an author we will select to remove the problem from your editor's shoulders. And that's how a good many of our cover stories are written; an artistic conception, and then an author begins to explain what it's all about. Sort of a one-man cover contest.

SCIENCE marches on! Maybe, like us, you've sometime pounced thankfully on the last clean shirt in the drawer on date night, only to find that since its return from the Sam Wong Laundry Company, the sleeves no longer reach to your wrists, the collar has shrunk to the neck measurements of a Singer Midget, and the general fit is like the

embrace of an Iron Maiden! If so, you must be a deep and grateful admirer of factory pre-shrunk cloth. So much so that in comparison you may only shrug your shoulders at science's latest offering in this same line—unshrinkable glass!

Made by mixing two borosilicates, one soluble in acid, the glass has its soluble ingredients eaten away so that it is left honeycombed with air pockets. A second heating packs it solid again, shrinking it 35% in volume.

As a result the new glass is so dense and tough, so resistant to expansion and contraction, that it can be heated cherry red, then plunged into ice water without breaking! The importance of these qualities to other fields of science is readily seen. Just for example, the expansion under heat of the new glass is less than one-third of that in the mirror of the great new 200-inch Caltech telescope! It would practically eliminate distortion—remove the greatest single barrier to precise observation of the most remote outposts of the universe.

SEVERAL new theories have been advanced in astronomy which merit a mention by your editor, because he's been pushing the old ones around for quite some time now, and a few new ones might serve to make a liar out of him—and after all, that's progress.

First, the origin of the solar system. "It happened this way—" say scientists Lyttleton and Russell. Originally the sun was a binary star, and another star collided with the sun's companion, knocking it out of its orbit and leaving behind merely "debris" of the collision as material for planet formation. This material first formed a few large planets, rotating rapidly by virtue of the shearing action of the collision. As each of these planets cooled and contracted, its rotation produced fission into two main masses, with again some debris not absorbed into either. The main components are identified as present major planets, while the debris is supposed to have formed their satellites as well as the "terrestrial" planets, and probably the moon.

This new theory seems to account for the existence of bodies of as low masses as the planets and for known disparities in their densities.

In reality, had they been formed directly out of stellar material, they would have evaporated instead of condensing.

ANOTHER new discovery is that of a new star having a diameter of 3000 times that of the sun. Which is a lot of star, believe us! The new giant is E Aurigae, and it is an infra-red star, and therefore invisible, except by eclipse of its companion, a type F₂ star.

COMING a bit closer to home, it has been discovered that Jupiter has two more moons. They've been named JX and JX1. Both are extremely faint, and it was Nicholson of Mt. Wilson who discovered them. JX was discovered on July 6, 1939, and was under observation until August 25th. It was about seven million miles from Jupiter. JX1 was observed on July 30, and remained under scrutiny until August 25th. Its distance is at least ten million miles from Jupiter.



"What's this I hear about money growing on trees?"

IF you've glanced at the contents page of this issue, you've seen a lot of new names. James Norman, John Broome, and John York Cabot. These three are first-timers in FANTASTIC ADVENTURES. And we think you'll agree that each one has given us a pretty good yarn for their debut in our magazine. Personally, your editor likes "The Man the World Forgot," by John York Cabot, which is a delightful bit of real fantasy. It has the sort of idea we kick ourselves over when we see how simple and how good it is, and wonder why we never get ideas like it.

Anyway, this issue features the work of new writers in a greater volume than ever before, which is an excellent indication that science fiction and fantasy are rapidly becoming an important focal point for the efforts of more and better writers every day.

More power to 'em, we say. And in prediction, we'd advise you to watch John Broome, and John York Cabot especially. These boys will take their place on our pages without much trouble, we predict. Watch them come up!

AND that just about closes up the editorial notebook for another issue. We'll be seeing you. RAP.

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a girl
needs
help

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The Madness of Lancelot Biggs



With a sigh, Biggs went to work on the radio while the captain glared

THERE was more at stake than just a football game for Lancelot Biggs and the crew of the Saturn. So Biggs made a bargain; his rocket emblem in exchange for a new uranium condenser—and how it worked!

WE had barely cleared Lunar Three and I was taking final instructions from Joe Marlowe, the port Sparks, when my plates dulled out and there I was staring at a blank expanse of metal. So I said, "Merdejo!" which is Universal for a naughty word, and started looking for the trouble. I was on my hands and knees under the audio bank when Cap Hanson came into my control turret.

He said, "You lose somethin', Sparks?"

"Two minutes ago," I told him. "Take a look around. If you see something bright red and covered with hairy spikes, don't step on it. It's my temper."

The Skipper sighed. "If my troubles," he declaimed, "was as mild as your'n, I'd do cartwheels from here to Venus. Sparks, you got a copy of the Space Manual here, ain't you?"

I nodded toward my bookcase; he found the reg book and leafed through it carefully. Finally he shook his head.

"It ain't here," he gloomed. "Are you sure this is the latest edition?"

"Just what are you looking for?" I asked him.

"I was kinda thinkin'," he said hopefully, "there might be a paragraph givin' a space commander permission to boil his First Mate in oil, or cut him into small cubes an' feed him to the octopusies. But the waffle-fannies what wrote that book—"

I knew, then. It was the same old complaint. Our lanky and incredibly omniscient friend, Lancelot Biggs, whose genius for getting ye goode shippe *Saturn* out of tight spots was surpassed only by his ability to fester Cap Hanson's epidermis, was back in the soup.

I said, "But, sweet comets, Cap, what's he done now? He hasn't had time to do much. We've just pulled our Ampie¹ out of Earth's H-layer."

"Which," rasped the skipper, "took three hours. Or time enough for Mister Biggs to render hisself liable to homicide. I've tooken plenty from that long-legged scarecrow. I got carpeted for platinum-chasin' on his say-so.² I caressed pirates³—which, by the way, if you ever tell anybody, Sparks, I'll massacre you for—an' I—"

"You also," I reminded him, "got your stripes saved on two separate occasions. Not to mention your bank-roll and your life. Remember?"

"Nevertheless," said the skipper stiffly, "an' however, this time he's gone too far. He's been makin' eyes at my daughter."

"Your," I repeated slowly, "daughter!"

"You seen her. She come aboard at Long Island Port for the Venus trip." Here his space-gnarled, leathery face cracked into a grin that would have

melted custard. "Pretty as a picture, don't you think? Some say she resembles me."

"Some people," I told him dazedly, "will say anything for a laugh." I was thinking about that girl. What a girl! Five and a half feet of cream and velvet, surmounted by hair the color of a Martian sunset. Eyes like blue haze over Venus, only alive with crinkly laughter. Sure, she resembled the skipper! They had the same number of arms and legs; they each had one nose and two eyes and two ears—but there the similarity ended. Their difference was that between a lumbering old space freighter like the *Saturn* and a modern, streamlined man-o'-war. And I *do* mean streamlined!

The skipper said sourly, "Well, get the blank look off your pan, Sparks. An' take down a special message from me to Mr. Romeo Biggs, on account of if I try to tell him myself I'll forget my dignity an' tear him into asteroids. Tell him that the next time I catch him tossin' goo-goo eyes at Diane, I'll give him a one-way ticket through the air-lock. That's all!"

And he left the turret, snorting. I stared after him dreamily. I found myself doing something I haven't done since I was a kid, counting off my name with that of Diane Hanson. "Friendship, courtship, love, hate, marriage—"

It came out "friendship." I told you I had my troubles. . . .

AFTER a while came a sound like a three-legged pelican doing the Martian fling in a cornpatch, and Lancelot Biggs ambled into my turret, eyes aglow, his unbelievable Adam's-apple bobbing up and down like a photon in a cyclotron. I could tell he was busting with the desire to spill his overflowing heart to me, but he said, "Trouble, Sparks?"

See? That's why you just couldn't help liking the guy. Soon as he saw me fiddling around the audio bank he was ready to help. It's hard to figure a jasper like Biggs. I sometimes thought he was the dumbest mortal who ever hopped graves, but just about the time I'd be ready to delegate him to the Booby-hatch Convention he'd come through with a spark of brilliance that would make Sol look like an infra-red ray.

I told him glumly, "I wish the nearest I'd ever come to radio was playin' that kid's game with beans. This time the audio's gone haywire and I can't even find out what the hell ails it."

He came over beside me and looked. He jiggled a few wires, snapped switches and succeeded in bunting the button of the feed line cable. At last he said, "The trouble's in the plate, isn't it, Sparks?"

"Looks as if. It's gone cold and I can't raise a signal out of it."

"These plates you use," he frowned, "are made of a seleno-aluminum alloy, aren't they?"

"Right," I told him, "as rain. However right that is. And they're as dependable as a spacecomber's promises. Always going on the blink just when you

¹ The strange, energy-devouring Venusian creature that serves as a protective shield for space ships going through a planetary Heaviside layer.—Ed.

² "FOB Venus", *Fantastic Adventures*, Nov., 1939.—Ed.

³ "Lancelot Biggs Cooks a Pirate," *Fantastic Adventures*, Feb., 1939.—Ed.

need 'em most."

"That's what I thought." Biggs shifted his gawky length from one foot to the other, a sign of deep cogitation I'd seen before. Then, suddenly, "Listen, Sparks," he blurted, "I've been thinking over that problem—"

I rose hastily.

"Look, Mr. Biggs, if you've been thinking, this is where I get off. Don't tell me or I'll catch the contagion. I'm just a hard-working bug pounder—"

"—and I think I know a way," he continued eagerly, "to put an end to space radio transmission difficulties. They're using the wrong metal in the audio plates, *that's* the trouble! The seleno-aluminum alloy was all right for radio in the early days of television, but space-flight demands a sturdier, and at the same time more sensitive receptor."

"Like," I demanded, "what? Comet-tails, maybe?"

"Uranium," explained Biggs simply. "As I told you, I've been experimenting. And I've discovered that uranium, no longer as rare and expensive as it was when audio plates were first invented, is the ideal plate."

"It's been nice," I said sarcastically, "seeing you, Mr. Biggs. Any schoolchild knows that mobile electrons account for the electrical conducting ability of metals. And as the number of electrons per atom increases, metallic properties decrease; the metals become harder, more brittle, less ductile and poorer conductors. Uranium, my friend, would be what we Universal-hurlers call, in our simple patois, a first class 'stinkeroo!'"

Biggs flushed faintly, and his liquescent larynx leaped in a lopsided lurch. There was a hurt look in his eyes.

"Would you be convinced if I showed you?"

"St. Louis," I said.

"I—I beg your pardon?"

"I'm from there. It's in the State of Missouri." But I gave my slumbrous receiving set a glance of despair. "Still—this thing's not working. If you'd like to try out your new floppola—"

"I've got it in my quarters," he said delightedly. "I'll go get it right away!" And he started toward the door.

I remembered, then, that I had a message for him.

"Wait a minute," I said, "I just remembered. Our beloved skipper left you a billet-doux. He told me to tell you to ipskay the assespay at the aughterday."

Biggs frowned. "Latin?" he hazarded.

"Pig-Latin," I told him, "and horse-sense. Hanson says you've been wearing it on the sleeve for his gal, Diane. And if he sees it pounding in the open once more, he's going to chop it into mincemeat."

Biggs' face looked like a national holiday on the calendar. He strangled gently.

"But—but I like the girl, Sparks. And I believe she likes me."

"She'll revere your memory," I told him frankly, "if you don't obey the Old Man's orders. When he

issued his manifesto he had granite in his jaw and mayhem in his eyes. You'd better do as he says."

"But it's not fair!" protested Biggs. "After all, I'm an officer and a—"

"And a gentleman," I finished wearily, "by courtesy of the U.S.S.A. Yeah, I know. But in my estimation, that's just strike two against you. The skipper doesn't have a lot of use for you graduate Wranglers, you know. He graduated from the N.R.I. before there was such a thing as an Academy."

PERHAPS, for the sake of you Earth-lubbers who are tuned in I should explain this. The rivalry between Earth's two great schools of astronavigation is something paralleled only by that which existed, centuries ago, between the United States' two military schools, the U.S.M.A. and the U.S.N.A.

The National Rocket Institute is the older college for spacemen. Originally designed for merchant marine training, it became a natural "friendly foe" of the United States Spaceways Academy when that institution was founded fourteen years later.

Today there is a constant companionable rivalry between graduates of the two schools; one subordinate, of course, to the routine of daily work, but that flares into definite feeling when, each Earth autumn, the current football teams of the academies meet in their traditional grid battle.

They tell me that in the old days soldiers and sailors the world around used to gather about their short-wave radios to hear the broadcast of the Army-Navy game. Well, it's that way—only worse—nowadays in space. Graduates of the N.R.I. ("Rocketeers," we call 'em) listen, cheek-to-jowl, with "Wranglers" from the Spaceways Academy. There's a lot of groaning and a lot of cheering and a lot of drinking and sometimes there's a sizable chunk of fisticuffing. It usually ends up with the representatives of the winning team standing treat, and the grads of the losing academy vowing they'll win "Next year!"

Take our ship, for instance. The *Saturn*. I won my brevet at the Academy; so did Dick Todd, the second-in-command, and Lancelot Biggs graduated just last year. Chief Engineer Garrity, on the other hand, took his sheepskin from the Rocketeers' school, and so did Cap Hanson.

Which made another important reason why I should do something—and do it mighty fast—to get the *Saturn's* radio clicking again. Because the annual Rocketeer-Wrangler grid fracas was to be broadcast just two days from now, and my scalp wouldn't be worth the price of a secondhand toupee if the old grads from both schools couldn't hear the game.

Biggs spluttered like my condenser would if my audio had been working, which it wasn't—if you know what I mean.

"I'm not one to complain, Sparks. But when Hanson tries to come between Diane and me—"

I said, "So! Mister Biggs, accept my apology. I underrated you. It's reached the 'Diane' stage al-

ready, has it?"

"It—it—" Biggs stammered into silence. Then he said, almost meekly, "Sparks—can you keep a secret?"

"I'm a mousetrap," I told him.

"Then I'll tell you—this isn't the first time Diane and I have met. We— we knew each other before I came aboard the *Saturn*. As a matter of fact, I asked for this berth in order that I might gain her father's favor; so we could get married."

That explained a lot of things. I had often wondered why Lancelot Biggs, whose uncle, Prendergast Biggs, was a Vice-president of the Corporation, should have chosen to serve out his junior officership on a wallowing, old-fashioned Earth-to-Venus freighter like the *Saturn*. Now it all became clear and I began to feel like the adviser of a lovelorn column in a daily newspaper.

I said, "So to put it poetically, Biggs, you're a little bit off the gravs for the gal, hey?"

"Little bit?" he said miserably. "Sparks, you'll never know."

"That's what you think," I told him, remembering how it came out "friendship."

"What?" Then he forgot his curiosity in a burst of—for him—uncommon petulance. "But I'll not take this lying down, Sparks. I'll show the skipper I have a right to love his daughter. I don't care if he is a graduate of the N.R.I., I'll show the leather-pussed old space cow—"

"Are you by any chance," roared a voice, "referrin' to me, Mister Biggs!"

We both started. The Skipper was standing in the doorway!

I SAID, "Pardon me, folks! I've got to see a guy about a shroud!" and tried to slide past Cap Hanson to the safety of the deck, but the Old Man roared me down with a blast.

"Come back here, Sparks! I want you as witness!" He turned to Biggs, whose face looked like a prism revolving in sunlight. "So! So I'm a leather-pussed old space cow, *Mister Biggs*?"

Biggs stammered, "I—I—"

"*What!*" Hanson's bellow raised a dozen decibels. "You impertinent young jackanapes! Did you hear him, Sparks? He said, 'Aye, aye!' Well, I'll show you—"

He extended a horny palm. "Your rocket, sir!"

Lancelot Biggs' lips quivered. He reached up and mechanically unpinned from its place over his left breast the tiny, shining gold rocket replica which is the brevet of a space lieutenant. Hanson snatched it. In a decisive voice he said, "I'm markin' you down, Biggs, for insubordination, for slander of a senior officer, conduct unbecomin' an officer, intent to malign an' injure, an'—Well, that's all for now. Maybe I'll think of a few more things later on.

"To your quarters, Mister Biggs. An' consider yourself under arrest until further notice."

Biggs saluted; turned on his heel and marched from the room. And it struck me, suddenly, that for once there was nothing amusing, nothing humorous, in the youngster's gangling walk. Oh, he stalked, yes. And I've often kidded him about how much like a crab on stilts he looks. But now I felt sort of choky when I saw the pathetic dignity in the set of his shoulders, the proud way he strode away without a backward glance.

I guess I lifted my own gravs for a minute. My voice sounded harsh in my own ears when I snarled at Hanson, "Well, you certainly threw the book at him that time!"

But to my surprise, Cap Hanson was grinning. He looked like an Ampie in a power plant. And he said, placatingly, "Oh, come now, Sparks! You don't think I'm such an ogre as all that, do you?"

"You busted him," I accused. "You lifted his rocket and put him under arrest. When the Corporation learns about it, they'll—"

"The Corporation," said the skipper, "isn't goin' to hear about it. I'm not even goin' to put this on the log. This is between you an' me and Lancelot Biggs, Sparks. Don't you see? I had to do somethin' to separate him an' Diane."

I did see. And I realized how completely I was caught in the middle by my friendship with two guys, each of whom believed in his own ideals, each of whom thought he was doing the right thing. I said slowly, "I get it, Cap. But are you sure you're doing the right thing? After all, maybe Biggs and your daughter really like each other."

Cap Hanson said seriously, "That's just what I'm afraid of, Sparks. Put yourself in my place. How would you like to have a grandson what looked like Lancelot Biggs?"

I don't know. Maybe he had something there.

WELL, to make a short story longer, that happened the first day out of Long Island Spaceport. Tempus, as the old Romans liked to remark, fidgetted. I spent the working hours of the next two days trying to get that confounded instrument of mine operating; I spent my off hours shuttling back and forth between the bridge and the brig.

I had the pleasure—and, boy! you'd better know I mean it—of meeting Diane Hanson. She was a rag, a bone of contention and a hank of hair, but if she'd snapped her fingers I would have jumped out the spacelock and brought her back a handful of galaxies. She had a voice that made me feel like my backbone was charging .30 amps, and when my eyes met hers my knees went all wobbly.

But her heart belonged to the baddy in the hoosegow. And she didn't care who knew it—except the Old Man. She asked me, "He's all right, Sparks, he's comfortable?"

"He's comfortable enough," I told her. "But he's as restless as a squirrel in a petrified forest. He's been pacing his room so much that he's not only got

corns, but he's got corns on his corns."

She said wistfully, "If Dad would only be reasonable. Sparks, do you think that if I went to him and told him everything—?"

I shuddered.

"Don't mention it! Don't even think of it! Your old ma—I mean your father might read your thoughts." I forced a grin named Santa Claus, because I didn't believe in it myself. "Cheer up, Diane. Lancelot will find a way out of this trouble."

"He will?" she said hopefully. "You think he will, Sparks?"

"He always does," I told her. I squared myself with Kid Conscience by muttering under my breath, "Always—except this time."

SO finally here we were, a baker's dozen of us, in the radio turret on the fateful day. Twelve of us were scowling, and me—I was number thirteen—I was sweating like an ice-box in the Sahara. Because it was the day, and darn near the hour, of the Big Game back on Earth—and my radio *still* was as talkative as a deaf-mute in a vacuum.

Todd was there, and Chief Garrity, and Wilson, the third officer, and Billings and—oh, shucks!—every one of us who had studied at either of the two academies. And Cap Hanson was there. He was very much there. He was howling ghastly threats in my ears, the mildest of which was that if I didn't have the radio repaired within the next minute, or maybe less, he'd personally tattoo the word "Scoundrel" on my forehead with a riveting machine.

I squawked, "Good golly, I'm doing the best I can! Don't you think I want to hear this game as much as you do? Maybe more. Because the Wranglers are going to beat the bejeepers out of you Rocketeers today, anyhow."

Cap raged, "What's that?" but it took some of the blast out of his tubes, because he knew it was true. The Spaceways Academy team was strongly favored over the eleven from the N.R.I., having so far run through an undefeated season while the Rocketeers had lost to Army and Notre Dame and been tied by Yale. "What's that? Why, last year—"

"That," Lieutenant Dick Todd taunted him, grinning, "was last year, Skipper. You beat us then, yes. But this year the shoe's on the other foot."

"Well, anyhow," howled the Old Man, "my shoe's goin' to be you-know-where, Sparks, if you don't get that damn radio talkin'."

I stood up and stripped off my rubber gloves. I said, "I've done everything I know how. I've had the thing apart twice and put it together again. It won't work—and for one simple reason. The selenium-aluminum plate is shot."

Chief Garrity said, "Then get ye a new one, lad."

"Right. As soon," I told him, "as we cradle into Sun City spaceport."

The skipper looked like he'd bitten into an apple and found a worm. "You mean we're not going to

hear the game?"

"That's exactly what I—" Then I paused. "Wait a minute! There's a faint possibility we might. If his invention really works. He has a spare plate in his quarters, but he'll have to install it. I don't know how."

"He?" yelled the Old Man. "Who? The man in the moon?"

"The man in the doghouse," I corrected. "Biggs."

"Biggs!" The skipper's look changed. Now he looked like a man who'd bitten into an apple and found *half* a worm. But he turned to Dick Todd. "Go get him, Mister Todd," he ordered.

Todd left. We all watched the clock. Todd returned, bringing with him L. Biggs, ex-exile. The skipper glared daggers at his First Mate.

"I hear you've an invention, Mister Biggs," he said caustically. "I distrust it. It may turn out like some of your other brain-children. But this is no time to be choosy. Attach it. And be kind enough to look at the radio controls instead of my daughter!"

Lancelot Biggs stood very, very still.

"Well," roared the Old Man, "get going!"

Lancelot Biggs smiled; a faint, thin smile.

"For," he said, "a price, Captain."

"A price!" Hanson's voice lifted the roof an inch. "Lieutenant, you're not tryin' to dicker with me?"

"Not trying," corrected Biggs, "I'm dickerin'. For a price, I'll attach my new plate unit to the radio. Further, I will absolutely guarantee its operation."

"You—you insolent young pup!" raved the skipper. "Todd, Wilson—put him in irons! No, stand still you damn fools! Let him alone! What's your price, Biggs? You can't have her!"

"Her?" said Biggs innocently. "I don't know what you're talking about, Captain. My price is—my rocket!"

Cap Hanson looked at the faces of the waiting graduates around him. He knew when he was stalemated. He said, "Well—" and reached into his pocket.

Biggs pinned the tiny golden emblem where it belonged and I never saw a man look more proud. Then he said quietly, "Very well, gentlemen. Now, Sparks, if you'll lend me a hand here . . ."

THE uranium plate worked. Two minutes later, as I tied in the positive cable, dancing light began to play over the tubes, the galvanometer skipped gaily, and current began to hum once again. I yelled, "Biggs, you're terrific!" and reached for the vernier. But Biggs' hand stayed mine.

"Not there, Sparks! Higher. The ultra-short wave, I believe. About one over fifty thousand on the Ang vernier."

Cap Hanson rasped, "Sparks knows how to operate a radio, Mister Biggs, without your help!"

"Not *this* radio," shrugged the lanky lieutenant. "This plate is considerably different from the old type. Considerably different!"

I thought I detected a faint note of amusement in his voice, but the thought vanished as swiftly as it came—for at that instant my fingers found the proper spot. There was a moment of whining super-het; then—

“—a great day and a great crowd, folks!” came an excited voice. “And here comes the next play. The Wranglers have the ball on their own eighteen yard line, second and ten to go—”

“That’s it!” roared Cap Hanson exuberantly. “By golly, that’s it! Biggs, maybe you’re not the dope I think you are!”

But the shocks weren’t over yet. You remember I told you the Wranglers were strongly favored to take the Rocketeers down the ramps? Well—this was evidently just another example that in a traditional battle anything can happen—and usually does!

We had had the radio on barely five minutes when the Rocketeers blocked a Wrangler kick, fell on it, and took possession on the Wrangler nine yard line. In two power plays the eleven from Cap Hanson’s academy had plunged over for a touchdown. One minute later they made the conversion and the score was 7-0 for the supposed underdogs.

The faces around that room were a sight! Hanson and Garrity looked like Venusian bunny-men in a carrot patch; those of us who acknowledged the Academy as our Alma Mammy would have soured milk with our smiles. The expression on Lancelot Biggs’ face defied description. He looked faintly startled, faintly pleased, like a man shouting echoes against a mountainside.

Cap Hanson groped in his hip pocket; brought forth a wad of hoarded Earth and Venus credits.

“Well, you broken-down Wranglers—any of you like to lay a few creds on your team making a comeback?”

He got plenty of takers. After all, one touchdown isn’t a football game, and the Wranglers were favored to win. I shelled out to the extent of thirty credits, Todd staked a few. Chief Garrity unbuttoned his ancient wallet, shooed away the moths, and risked some of his own credits after demanding three to one odds.

And the game went on.

The first quarter ended, amazingly, with Rocketeers still leading by that score of 7-0. In the second quarter, Cap Hanson, overflowing with the milk of human I-told-you-so, turned to Lancelot Biggs, crowed tauntingly,

“Well, Mister Biggs, I take notice you’re careful not to lay any bets on that team of your’n?”

Biggs, whose eyes had been fastened hungrily on a girl in that room—guess which one!—gulped, and his neck-elevator bobbed. He said, almost embarrassedly,

“I—I don’t know whether I should, Captain—”

Hanson snorted. “Just what I might have expected of a Wrangler. Well—”

Then Chief Garrity shushed him suddenly. “Quiet,

skipper! Something’s going on!”

Something was, indeed. The radio announcer was in a dither. “—and it looks bad for the Wranglers, friends! The Rocketeers’ quick kick has them on the one yard line . . . now they’re lining up to kick out of trouble . . . Wait a minute! Here comes a substitute from the Wrangler bench. It’s—we don’t have time to get you his name, folks, but it’s number 36. He’s going in at quarterback for O’Doule—”

Hanson gibed, “Well, Biggs?”

The announcer continued, “Number 36 in at quarterback, folks. Now he’s calling signals. There’s the snapback. The new man is going to kick . . . No, he’s going to pass . . . No, he’s going to run . . . No—he’s fumbled!

“There’s a pile-up behind the goalposts! They’re unscrambling the players. And—it’s a touchdown for the Rocketeers, folks! The score is 13-0!”

Hanson let loose a great roar of delight. “There! I knew it! Good thing you didn’t bet, Biggs!”

And then, astonishingly, Lancelot Biggs spoke up. “How much would you like to wager, Captain?”

“How—much?” Hanson looked stunned. “Every cred in my poke, Lieutenant. Two hundred and fifty.”

“I’ll take that bet,” said Biggs.

I SIDLED to his elbow and gave him a swift poke in the ribs. I hissed, “Don’t be a sap, Biggs! Make him give you odds if you *must* bet—”

But I spoke too late. The bet had already been placed in the hands of a neutral party, steward Doug Enderby. And now, a new tenseness in all of us, we listened to the remainder of the broadcast.

In the third quarter, Dick Todd got out the crying towel. “Gosh, Sparks,” he mourned to me, “what’s the matter with our boys? This is a slaughter. The same as last year.”

Because by that time the Rocketeers had scored once again; this time on a smooth sixty yard forward. Garrity and Hanson were literally swooning with joy, by this time offering fantastic odds to any Wrangler who would bet. But we had all pulled in our horns. All, that is, but one man—First Mate Lancelot Biggs.

In a moment of lull, he turned to the skipper.

“Skipper,” he said, “I have no more creds, but I’d like to wager for another stake.”

Hanson chuckled. “Your shirt won’t fit me, Biggs.”

“I’ll bet you,” said Biggs thoughtfully, “my space claim against the privilege of the next three landings that the Wranglers beat the Rocketeers this year.”

We all gasped. They were *real* stakes. Every space officer is granted, by the IPS, a space claim consisting of property rights in all unexplored areas of a given arc. He may either explore in this sector himself after he has served his trick, or he may delegate the exploration to professional space-hounds. In either case, a substantial percentage of all ores, precious stones and miscellany found in his allotted sector belong to him. Many a space officer has found

himself fabulously rich overnight when his sector turned up with rock diamond detritus or granules of meteoric ore.

On the other hand, Biggs was asking a great privilege. Before a space officer can become a commander, he must have made five personal cradle landings on any planet. Skippers were chary of granting permission on these, often making junior officers wait years to earn their Master's ticket.

But it looked like Biggs was again sticking his neck out. I tried to stop him. I said, "Don't, Biggs! This game is in the bag for the Rocketeers. Don't be so rash!"

But only half the words had garbled through my larynx when Cap Hanson yelped exuberantly, "*Done!* Gentlemen, I call upon you to witness that wager!" And he rubbed his paws together like a raccoon eyeing a bowl of honey.

TWENTY to nothing! That was the score then, and it was the score fifteen minutes later when, with but seven more minutes remaining in the annual fracas, Lancelot Biggs went stark, staring mad.

Now, Cap Hanson contributed to that madness. I must admit that his glee annoyed me. I can stand taking a licking as well as the next man, but I hate like hell to have someone rub it in. And that's what the skipper was doing. As the minutes ticked by, and the Rocketeers' margin became momentarily more insurmountable, he first taunted us Wranglers, then insulted us by offering ridiculous odds against our winning, and finally accused us all of lacking sportsmanship.

Biggs, standing carefully aloof from Diane in order not to rouse the skipper's latent wrath, had a strange pallor on his cheeks. Not so strange, maybe. It's hard to stand by and watch everything you possess slipping down the skids.

Cap didn't make things any easier for him. Every so often the Old Man would bend over, slap his thighs, and howl, "Anything more you'd like to bet, Mister Biggs? Whoops! I'm a space-bitten son of Jupiter if this ain't the most fun I ever had!"

And then Lancelot Biggs jolted out of his curious stupor. He said, "Yes, Captain—I *do* have something else to bet!"

Even Hanson was staggered by that one. "Huh?" was his snappiest come-back.

"If—" There was a dreamy look in Biggs' eyes. "If you'd be kind enough to step into the corridor with me. You and Sparks, please?"

Good old Sparks; witness extraordinary. But don't think it gave me any pleasure to witness this example of sheer madness. As we moved through the doorway, away from the wondering crowd, I pleaded with Biggs, "Biggs, for gosh sakes—haven't you lost enough already? Don't make another bet!"

But the glance he turned to me was mildly puzzled. And he whispered swiftly, "It's all right, Sparks. I know what I'm doing—"

Then, outside, to the skipper,

"Captain Hanson, I have only one more thing of potential value left in the world. The patent rights to my new invention, the practicability of which you have witnessed all afternoon, the uranium audio plate. This will be my share of the wager."

Hanson said suspiciously, "I don't know—" To me, "Sparks, is it worth anything?"

I nodded sombrely.

"In my estimation," I told him, "it's worth at least a quarter million credits. It's the first plate I've ever seen that really works. Didn't you notice we're not even picking up static?"

The Old Man nodded. "Very well. And my stake—?"

Biggs said boldly, "Permission to continue seeing your daughter. And—if she'll have me—to marry her!"

Something popped, and for a minute I thought it was the Old Man's fuses, but it was only the top of his head rising two feet.

"*What!* I thought you understood—" Then a crafty grin touched his lips. "Just a minute," he said cannily, "I presume that you imply by this that if you lose, you'll never try to see Diane again?"

I wanted to shout "No!" so bad I could taste it. But I was just the party of the third part. Biggs' reply was just the opposite.

"Yes!" he said.

I groaned. Love's young dream—twenty points away!

LET'S get the agony over with. We returned to a control room full of madmen. For in our absence the Rocketeers had intercepted a desperate Wrangler pass, and the score was now 26-0. Just one point different from that licking they had given the U.S.S.A. boys last year. And as we listened glumly they kicked the extra point.

And that was about all. For three plays after the next kickoff a gun boomed, the crowd screamed, and the announcer howled, "—and there's the end of the game, folks! The Rocketeers win a great ball game, 27-0. You have been listening to this program through the courtesy of Hornswimble's Robot Corporation, makers of the world-famous 'Silent Servants.' Why be lonely? A Robot in the home is a constant companion—"

Chief Garrity squealed his tight-fisted glee. His palm waved simultaneously beneath the noses of three sorrowful Wranglers—including me. "Pay up!" he demanded. "Pay up, ye benighted rascals—!"

And Cap Hanson was one big grin on legs. He said to Biggs triumphantly, "Well, Biggs, I hope you've learned a lesson today! Two hundred and fifty credits, if you please. I'm minded to be kind with you. I'll not accept your space claim, my lad. But that third bet—" He beamed on Diane. "*That one I'll hold you to!* And now—"

Biggs moved. To the radio bank. As he moved,

he spoke.

"Yes. And now," he said, "I think you should all hear *this*—"

He twisted the dial. There was a moment of howling; then came a voice, clear, crisp, enthusiastic,—"four minutes of playing time remaining, folks, and the Rocketeers have the ball. But it won't do them any good. Even if they *do* score the result will be the same. They can't overcome that tremendous Wrangler lead, 33-6—"

THUNDER and lightning; madness and confusion! The control room became as noisy as a well-populated tomb, and out of the terrible silence came the faint, thin voice of the skipper demanding, "What—what does this mean?"

Biggs boomed pleasantly, "It means, Captain, that you've lost your bets. You'll remember that all our wagers were based on the result of *this* year's game—which you are now listening to.

"It is unfortunate that human memories are so brief. Otherwise some of you gentlemen might have recognized the astonishing similarity of the broadcast we've just listened to with that of last year's game! Which it was!"

Cap Hanson groaned, "Last year's game! But that's impossible! You couldn't—"

"I couldn't," agreed Biggs pleasantly, "but my new invention could. You see, I discovered in the course of my experiments that uranium has some definite peculiarities. It, being highly radioactive itself, has the strange property of being able to delay, almost indefinitely, the passage of electrical impulses traveling through it.

"Thus, under certain circumstances—in this case, Sparks, the fact that it was activated in the ultra-short wave field—it can be used as a 'time-speech-trap' to recapture sound waves released into the ether long ago.

"When Earth's scientists have further investigated this phenomenon I predict some amazing results. Possibly in the near future we may be able to 'listen' once again to the voices of our ancestors 'way back in the Elizabethan Age, the Machine Age, or the American Business Age. But meanwhile—" He grinned amiably. "Meanwhile, you have just heard a broadcast

of last year's Rocketeer-Wrangler football game. *This* year's is just concluding!"

And so it was. With the Wranglers out in front by a score of 33-6. The outraged screams of Chief Engineer Garrity will haunt me all my days. . . .

Afterward there were just four of us in the turret. Biggs, Diane, the skipper and me. The Old Man had the look of a St. Bernard who has lost his brandy cask. He said, "But, confound you, Biggs, you're not goin' to hold me to them bets, are you? When you knew all the time—"

Biggs grinned.

"You were magnanimous with me, Skipper. I'll be the same with you. Keep your money. And I'll settle for two landings. But the third bet—well, you know the old saying."

"I know," mourned the Captain, "plenty of 'em. What one do you mean?"

"All's fair," quoted Biggs softly, "in love and—." We'll skip the other part. Diane, honey—"

One thing about the skipper; he knew when he'd lost. He forced a grin to his lips—and, do you know, when he'd had a look at the light in Diane's eyes as she moved into the circle of Biggs' arms, that grin began to look almost natural. He gave me the high-sign, and we started to leave. But I had one more question. In the doorway I turned and asked, "Biggs, come clean! You didn't know that thing was going to work that way, did you?"

He frowned gently. "I didn't *know*. I suspected."

"But when," I insisted, "did you really find out for sure? Your memory's no better than mine. Certainly you didn't remember the events of last year's game?"

"Some of them," he said amusedly. "I caught on when I heard that episode about the awkward quarterback, the substitute, number 36. Remember?"

"Remember! You bet I do. The clumsy galoot who fumbled in the end zone and gave the Rocketeers a touchdown? He should have been drawn and quartered, the dope. But how did you remember *him*?"

Biggs smiled wanly.

"I just left the Academy last year, Sparks," he said. "And the football team. I was number 36!"

Then he turned to Diane, and she turned to him, and—aw, hell! I know when I'm not wanted!

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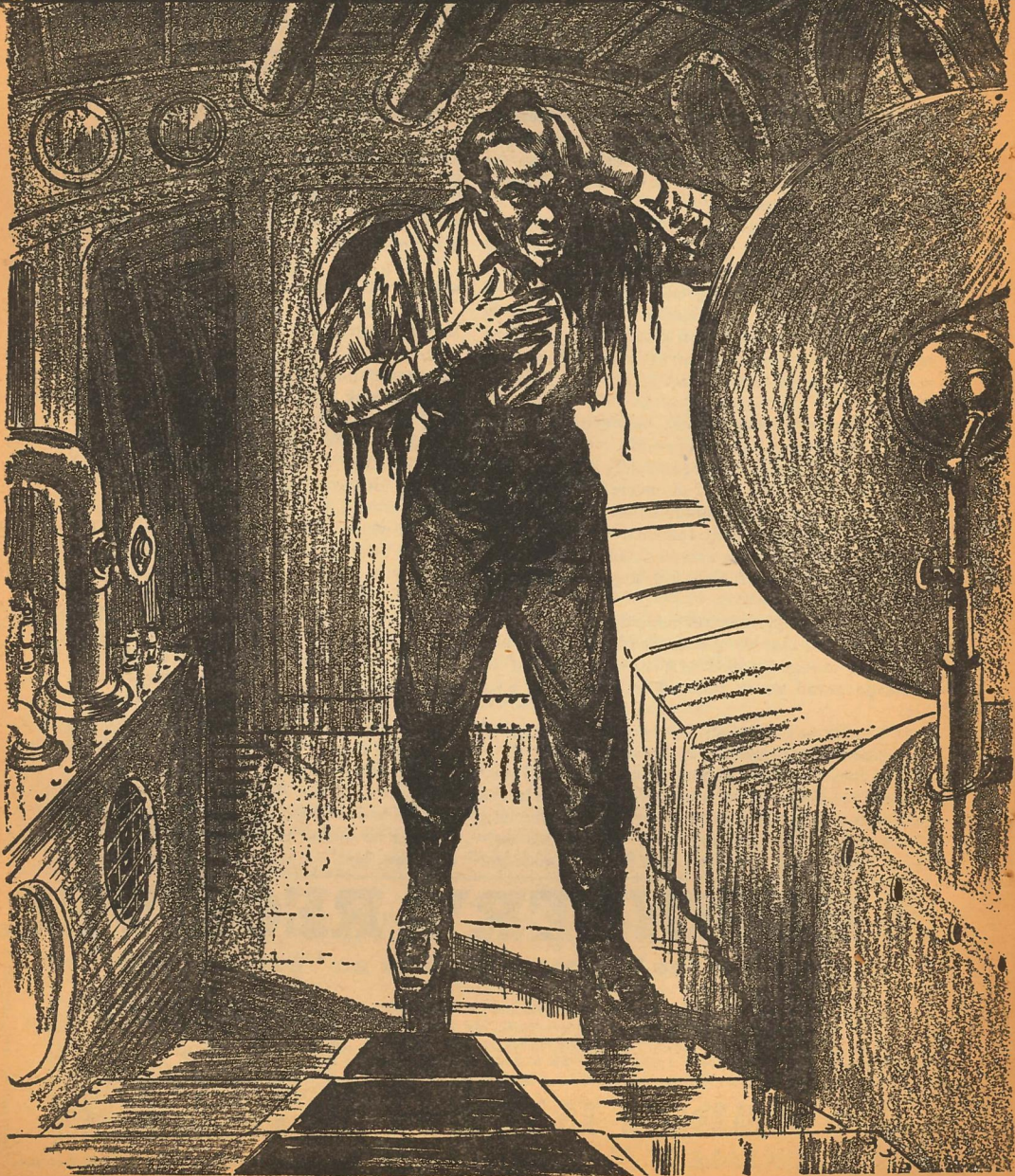
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**RADIO
NEWS**

Norris Tapley's



Tapley clutched his hand in his hair and a handful sloughed away

Sixth Sense

By ED EARL REPP

"You can't make me believe in luck," said Frazier. "It's no such thing. It's a sort of sixth sense that lets you take advantage of the breaks." But Tapley had a ring...

ILLUSTRATED BY LEO MOREY

THE two of them stood at the end of the hard-luck line. Two hundred other dejected men separated them from the employment window of the Space-Craft plant.

A trace of a smile crossed the features of one of the men as he glanced at the man behind him.

"Well, Tapley, line's moving a little," Dave Frazier remarked cheerfully. "By noon—"

"By noon," Norris Tapley cut in, "we'll be singing hymns for soup at the Salvation Army. Don't get your hopes up, my friend. Space-Craft will have those fifty riveters by the time we get in sight of the interviewer."

"Say, now," Frazier grinned. "You aren't letting this job hunting business get you down, are you? A man can't have bad luck always, you know. You're bound—"

"Can't he?" Tapley interrupted again. His sour features mirrored a soul deviled by cynicism. "That's where you're wrong. When I was a kid, it was always me that got his pants snagged on a limb when the farmer caught us snitching apples. In college I was the lad who had the best lab experiments but flunked the course—because my lab book got burned in a small fire.

"Last year I was drawing five hundred a month in this very plant. Then an efficiency expert decided my job cost more than it was worth. Now I'm licking boots for the privilege of driving rivets for Space-Craft. Listen, Mister, you're either born lucky or you're born with luck like mine."

Dave Frazier smiled slowly and shook his head.

"You said 'luck'. I wonder if you know the meaning of the word."

Bitterly, Tapley snorted, "Enough to know I haven't got it. But I know something else, too." He realized he was talking more than he intended, but went on.

"I know this is the last time I'll wear out shoe-leather in a job line!"

The blond young physicist looked surprised. "Then

—then you're expecting another position somewhere?" Frazier asked.

"Position? Yeah, you might call it that. Sort of a permanent position."

Dave Frazier caught his meaning, then, and a look of shock claimed his pale eyes.

"Say, now, look here!" he began, but Tapley cut him off with a sigh of disgust.

"Oh, hell! Don't take me too seriously. But when you've seen as much of life as I have, you'll realize what I mean: that some of us are born under the proverbial dark star."

Frazier's eyes remained fixed thoughtfully on Tapley's surly features for a few seconds. Then:

"I've got a theory about luck, too. I don't think there's any such thing as good luck always happening to some and bad luck to others. To me, luck means the same as intuition."

"You're getting involved there," Tapley remarked dryly.

"Well, look. Luck isn't a divine blessing—it's an acute ability. It means not walking under a signboard because some tiny sense heard plaster crumbling above the sidewalk; a sound far too faint even for a dog's ears, perhaps. It means that a stock-broker sells out all of a certain block of securities because a thousand tiny facts in his mind welded themselves into one cord of certainty—that the stock was going to drop.

"How did he know it? Scraps of conversation, figures, experience, all tending toward the final deduction. And all of it done unconsciously to the stock-broker!"

"You say 'some tiny sense' heard that signboard preparing to give way," Tapley frowned. "What do you mean by 'sense'?"

Getting warmed up to his speech, young Frazier fished for a cigarette, found only crumbs, and went on earnestly without the thought-catalyst of tobacco.

"You've studied science," he said. "You realize, of course, that our crude 'five senses' take cognizance of only about a fiftieth of the sounds and sights that

actually exist. Why couldn't some shock, some jolt, put part of our minds into parallel with these other forty-nine octaves? Such an event could account for phenomenal ability in sports, which otherwise seems to be luck. In other words, luck is the infinite capacity for analyzing problems instantly and *unconsciously!*"

Tapley scoffed. "What about horse racing? Your theory won't hold water there."

"You show me a man who can win consistently, over a period of years, or even months, and I'll admit I'm wrong. The point is, you can't. Gambling luck is vastly exaggerated. Most gamblers die poor, anyway."

FRAZIER shrugged his wide shoulders under his seedy coat.

"It's all theory, of course. But I like to think that something could happen at any time to jolt a man's consciousness into the plane where he'd have that boundless luck some individuals seem to possess! It's not beyond—"

A bell rang harshly, drawing their attention to the wide gate in the structural glass wall surrounding the plant. Over an amplifier, a man's metallic tones rasped:

"All positions filled! Leave applications at employment office if you wish to be notified—"

The shuffle of men's feet leaving the line blotted out the words. Mechanically, the group filtered into the street and went back into the score of dismal points from which they had come. Tapley was chuckling unpleasantly when he turned back to Dave Frazier.

"There's the jolt you were asking for," he jibed. "But I don't see any gilt-edged break attached to it!"

Good-naturedly, Frazier came back: "That's not quite the type of jolt I meant. But I can't say it wasn't a stiff enough one."

They walked off together, not speaking until they had gained the clamorous business district. Norris Tapley began to feel condescending toward his young friend. Poor, damned fool! He'd be trudging back and forth for months, he supposed, answering ads. While he, Tapley, had made his mind up to the thing he'd avoided so long.

"What's your line, Frazier?" he asked, just before they reached the corner where he was to turn down. "What do you do when they give you a chance?"

Once more Frazier warmed up. "Astrophysics," he answered, something in his very tone implying love of the work. "I—I've done quite a bit along that line. All on my own, of course. I've got a scheme now that would make those space giants Space-Craft turn out as antiquated as the Model T. They're nine-tenths machinery. My ships would be one-tenth machinery, with the rest of the space for storage and living. Some time I'll show you my plans—"

His eyes said he was eager to do it now, while his hand unconsciously rubbed at a bulging pocket.

"You do that," Tapley smiled thinly. "Right now

I've got to rush. Where'll I find you—in case I hear of anybody needing a good astrophysicist?"

"Central Park," Dave Frazier replied. "On any of the benches near an ash can. They make first-class stoves at night, when the cops aren't around!"

Then they parted, Frazier's blond head looming inches above the throng as he moved away. Tapley stood in thought. He had two dollars and fifteen cents left from the five he'd got on his wrist-watch. He really owed it to his landlady, but she didn't need it as much as he wanted that last delicious meal he was planning.

So he headed for Maxie's, where he could get the best French dinner in town for a dollar seventy-five. Turning the corner, he squinted as the setting sun poured its blinding brilliance into his eyes. His hand made a quick gesture meant to shut off the light. A sharp gasp tightened his throat.

On his little finger was a ring with a green stone, a cheap thing an aunt had given him years ago. Cheap as it was, it had an unusual cut that gave it seemingly bottomless depth, like that of a volcanic pool which measures the very core of Earth. Now the sun's rays were setting it on fire with light that penetrated Tapley's very skull. He staggered back, pawing at his eyes. The spell was broken, then, but in his brain was a humming and a tingling that made him light-headed.

The tingling seeped down through his body like champagne flowing through his veins. He straightened up, looked about him with new alertness. Hurriedly he fell back into the crowd as he noticed people watching him.

His glance stole to Aunt Mary's ring. But even though he furtively held it up to let the sun bathe it once more, it remained the same cheap bauble he'd worn for ten years. Norris Tapley drifted on, a puzzled and strangely exhilarated man.

Several blocks short of Maxie's Café, something brought him up short before the Colonial Club, New York's most expensive restaurant. With a clutch of panic, he found himself turning into it! He, Norris Tapley—without the price of the cover charge!

He had scarcely entered the warm, fragrant atmosphere when the second strange thing happened.

CHAPTER II

Death Picks a Winner

IT was as if everyone in the exclusive café had been awaiting his entrance. From the sunken dining floor, hundreds of faces tipped up to his in smiling expectancy. The string orchestra struck up "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow." Two men in evening dress moved from the checkroom toward him, smiling broadly.

Eventually, the noise died down, with Tapley still standing there while a short, blue-jowled man pumped his hand.

"Congratulations!" he was saying. "I am Andre,

the proprietor. We have been expecting you, *Monsieur*. Welcome!"

"You've been expecting—me?" Tapley got out.

"*Mais, oui!*" beamed the portly little restaurateur, while the head waiter nodded and rubbed his hands. "*Vous savez*—you are the five-hundred-thousandth customer to enter these doors! Tonight you are my guest. Eat, drink, at my expense. Henri, show the gentleman to his table!"

Amid a polite din of applause, Tapley was ushered to a table near the orchestra, decorated with a centerpiece that would have paid his rent for three months. At last the excitement died down, and the embarrassed engineer was allowed to order and think it over.

It was the first time luck had happened in his life as far back as he could remember. But was it luck? Never in the world would he have entered such a place as this of his own free will; some force stronger than his will had dragged him through those doors. Tapley was reminded with a quick thrill of Dave Frazier's words. Had he somehow been conscious of the things that were taking place inside the Colonial Club as he passed?

Norris Tapley dismissed the thought with a grunt of disgust. His dinner—pressed duck, truffles, champagne, and all the trimmings—was being brought on a little glass-and-chromium cart, and he turned his attention to it.

The food was excellent, the best in the city. Soft music put him in a mood conducive to reflection and good digestion. And so he was able to partake heartily of this, his last meal; but his enjoyment was that of a condemned killer eating his final dinner—rather a bitter one.

For Tapley wasn't kidding himself that his abominable luck had in any way veered from its heartless path. Facts remained unchanged: he was jobless, wearing his only suit, hopeless of work. Tonight he was going to put the period on his haphazard life.

In his abysmal self-pity, Tapley ignored the part shiftlessness and selfishness had played in his failure. It had been his way to spend his spare time in idleness, his spare cash on Sweepstakes tickets and craps. But those who fail never think of those things; and that was why he himself had failed.

Tapley left the Colonial Club with the manager's good wishes ringing in his ears, and warm food in his stomach. Only one thing was lacking—an after-dinner cigarette. He stepped into a saloon, walked over to the cigarette vending machine and put in his dime and nickel. At the last moment, he retrieved the coins and deposited them in the slots for a different brand from his usual one. He didn't know why.

When he shoved in the plunger, packs of cigarettes began to strike him in the stomach like corks from a popgun. They were literally geysering from the machine. Something had gone wrong. After the machine had gutted itself of that particular brand, Tapley counted twenty-nine packages of cigarettes at his feet.

More than anything else, Tapley was frightened.

He grabbed a couple of double handfuls of the smokes and left. Oddly, he was resentful of these peculiar twists of Fate. It was as though they had deliberately planned to disturb his last evening. Deeply troubled, he made his way home.

SUICIDE was a very simple matter. There was one bathroom on the fifth floor that held his dumpy flea-bag of a room. Into it he locked himself, then drew a tubful of water. He unscrewed the bulb from the socket that dangled on a long cord above the bathtub. Light, coming mistily through the dirty window, cast an eerie glow over the tiny room.

Tapley removed trousers, shoes and socks. At this final moment of life, fear suddenly smote him. Death—would it be quick and painless? What was it like to die? Would he be plunged into a typical evangelist's hell, with brimstone bubbling on every hand and devils to prod him with pitchforks? Swearing softly at his weakness, the engineer stepped into the tub.

He fumbled for the socket. Gripping the porcelain case with one hand, he prepared to insert his finger into the socket. One thrust—and death!

Then he froze that way, as someone pounded on the door.

"*Herr Tapley! Herr Tapley!*" It was the guttural voice of his German landlady. "Is you dere, *Herr Tapley*? It gives a man wants to see you about some-tings!"

"Hell!" Tapley hissed the word through locked teeth. "Well, who is it?"

A man spoke. "Are you Norris Tapley?"

"That's me."

"Did you buy an Irish Sweepstakes ticket in the name of 'Never Wynne'?"

Shock hit the would-be suicide right in the solar plexis. Grotesquely, he kept standing there in the ankle-deep water, hands dangling.

"I—yes, I did. Did I—" He couldn't say the word.

"Win?" the man laughed. "Boy, I'll say you did! I've got a check for seventy-five thousand dollars for you! What's more, you drew Blue Boy for the race, the favorite. If your horse wins, you'll get one hundred and fifty grand!"

* * *

THE next two hours were a whirlpool of excitement in which the jobless man was borne like a chip of wood, helplessly. He hadn't realized he possessed so many friends. Too, there were legions of automobile salesmen, insurance salesmen, inventors. At midnight, he escaped out the back entrance and started walking, trying to realize his great good fortune.

It was not strange that his thoughts should conjure up the vision of Dave Frazier. Nor that Frazier's words should glow in his mind.

"Luck isn't a divine blessing—it's an acute ability!"

An acute ability! Maybe he *had* heard Andre, at the Colonial, whispering with the head waiter as he hesitated before the café! Maybe his eyes had some-

how seen through the very mechanism of that cigarette vendor, to know that it was ready to go haywire.

Maybe the flash of light from his ring had jarred his brain into that special sensitivity of which Frazier had spoken!

"I like to think that something could happen at any time," the physicist had said, "that would jolt a man's consciousness into the plane where he'd have that boundless luck some individuals possess!"

Tapley stood in the shadows with the whole thing flooding him with wonder. Then, suddenly, he knew that the thing of which Frazier had spoken had come to pass. He was one of those lucky people; he had that luck—and he couldn't lose it. *He couldn't lose!* With the idea blossoming magically in his being, he began to walk, then to trot, finally to run—toward Central Park.

After he got to the park, it was forty minutes before he found Frazier. Covered with newspapers, the young physicist had draped his lanky frame on a bench. Tapley sank rude fingers into his arm and shook him from sleep.

"Wh—what the devil!" Frazier sputtered, sitting up with a great rustling of papers.

The lean, swart man who stood over him was grinning like a fiend.

"Frazier!" he blurted. "You were right. I'm lucky. Lucky as sin. The whole world's mine! I can't lose any more even if—"

Dave Frazier's eyes went narrow and his lips firm. "Get hold of yourself, man," he advised. "You've let bad luck ride you until—"

"Oh, to hell with that!" Tapley laughed. "Listen, my friend!"

In jerky, potent sentences, he told the whole story, finally waving the check in Frazier's face.

"So what do you think of that?" he concluded jubilantly.

Frazier shook his head. "I think just like I did," he said. "Any jolt might work the miracle. In your case, your ring did it."

"Talk about good luck rings!" Tapley beamed, and held the stone off to stare at it. "But look here!" He was frowning, abruptly. "That Sweepstakes ticket—what did my brain have to do with that?"

"Nothing. That was pure luck—the old-fashioned kind. You were just in line for a break, after all these years. But the agent's coming at that particular instant wasn't luck. You heard him coming and knew the thoughts in his mind, unconsciously. And you delayed your suicide until he got there."

NORRIS TAPLEY nodded slowly. "Whatever it was, in this case my luck is yours. You were talking about an invention. I'm going to back it for you, Frazier!"

Frazier's eyes lighted up like stirred coals. But then he shook his head.

"I can't let you risk that windfall on any idea of mine," he said glumly.

"Risk—ha! I don't know what a risk is. I could back a buggy whip factory and make money. I'm going to sink all of my hundred and fifty thousand in your crazy idea when Blue Boy romps home. Now, just what was that notion of yours?"

Frazier pushed strong fingers through thick blond hair. Emotion wrestled with his well-formed features.

"I'm not man enough to refuse such an offer," he murmured, "though I know the risk in bucking an outfit like Space-Craft. I've got faith in my idea, but—we'll be using thousands where they're backed by millions. You're buying trouble, Tapley."

"We'll break them and their millions," said the other. His face was brutally cold and vigilant. "Something more than money is on our side. My luck! Bank on it, Frazier. It saved me from death tonight and gave me a hundred and fifty grand to start out new again. I'm going to run that money to the sky. You figure out what you'll need, right now. I'll promote it. You and I are going places, Mister!"

Needless to say, the afternoon the race was run, Blue Boy crossed the finish line three lengths to the good.

CHAPTER III

Lightships, Inc.

TAPLEY and Frazier went to town, all right. Within three months, a new, experimental space ship appeared on the market. Weeks were all that were needed to skyrocket it to the peak in rocket-ship sales. Small, sturdy and fast, it had one advantage that all other makes lacked—cheapness of operation.

Where Space-Craft's luxury cruisers required tons of rocket fluid for a trip to Mars or Venus, Lightships—as the new trans-spatial vehicles were named—needed only a few hundred pounds of a powder as easily handled as sacks of flour. A lighting engineer of years before had given the clue upon which Frazier based his invention.* It enabled the partners to build ships capable of carrying a thousand passengers, yet smaller than a ten-passenger Space-Craft!

The inevitable took place. Lightships drove all competitors out of business. With savage ruthlessness, Norris Tapley blocked Space-Craft at every turn in their fight for survival. And in the end, he won out. Frazier, wrapped up in his laboratory work, knew little of the deliberateness with which his partner had ruined the company which once refused them work.

Soon, the Lightship plant spread over a thousand acres. A small city sprang up to house all the workers. And back of it all loomed—Tapley's luck.

* Samuel G. Hibben, lighting engineer for Westinghouse, succeeded in carrying Florida sunshine to the New York World's Fair, by causing it to be "absorbed" by a luminescent powder. It is supposed that the sunlight caused the outer orbit of electrons to be shifted to another plane of energy and lie dormant. Frazier did the same thing on a greater scale; his "canned solar energy" supplied a thousand times the power of dynamite when needed.—Ed.

Several times it had saved them from ruin. Once, when they were about to invest all their capital in the big, new plant, Tapley refused to agree to the site that seemed most logical. He took one look at it and shook his head. A month later, the land began to sink, and a gaping hole showed how right he had been.

Sometimes he knew these things because the ring on his finger would begin to glow, until the warning almost frightened Tapley himself.

But the first time he had to ride in a Lightship, something strange happened. *The green stone began to burn.* It seemed as live as a live coal. It burned through its setting and ate into Tapley's skin, and would have burned the finger through the bone if Tapley had not turned back.

From that day Tapley knew he must not ride in a Lightship—not in any ship, not even his own.

Even in love, his luck held. He fell hard for a beautiful chorus girl whom every playboy in New York had been courting. But Tapley won her. He couldn't lose, with his good fortune.

Came the day when Norris Tapley sat in his luxurious office, looking down on the humming plant ten stories below his window. Money was pouring in like water through a head-gate. But it seemed slow to his greedy fingers.

"I wish," he mused, "that we'd get a chance at some *real* money. Something in the ten millions."

At that instant his televisor buzzed. Idly he flipped the switch and the office girl's face appeared.

"A gentleman to see you and Mr. Frazier, Mr. Tapley," she informed him. "Will you step into Mr. Frazier's office and talk to him there?"

Tapley grunted, snapped off the televisor, and went through the door that joined their twin offices. His eye was immediately caught by a tall, solidly built man seated beside Frazier's desk. There was a military set to the man's shoulders, and his gray, clipped mustache looked white against a florid face.

Frazier waved a hand. "My partner, Mr. Bruning. Norris, meet Mr. George Bruning, who says he's got an offer for us that'll make our ears perk up."

Tapley knew a quick tug in the region of his heart. He shook hands with the visitor. Bruning spoke.

"Would twenty million dollars mean anything to you gentlemen?" he inquired softly. "An order for one thousand of your fastest ships?"

At that moment, as Tapley withdrew his hand, he noticed the ring was glowing. He stared at it intently, then took a deep breath. He spoke slowly.

"Is that real money you're talking about?"

BRUNING drew from an inside pocket a blue slip of paper, laid it on the desk. It was a check made out for twenty million dollars and endorsed by a solvent European country. Bruning said:

"I'll countersign that check the day you turn over to me one thousand ships, built to specifications."

"And what are your specifications?" inquired Dave Frazier, toying with his cigarette.

Bruning looked sharply at him; then at Tapley.

"Each ship must be equipped with ten heavy-caliber guns we will furnish you. The ships must be maneuverable within ten miles of the ground, not comparatively helpless, as is the case with ordinary ships. They must provide accommodations for 1500 men each."

Frazier stood up angrily. "Do I need to remind you—" he began; but Bruning's hand halted him.

"That the International Arms Agreement forbids construction of armed flying craft? Of course not. But, gentlemen, we are all business men. And confidentially, these ships will never fire a gun within thirty million miles of Earth. They will leave this planet secretly, destined for a far-distant world."

"Not interested," Frazier clipped.

"Wait a minute!" Tapley interrupted heatedly. "Of course we're interested. I can't see that we'd be breaking the letter of the law—"

"That's it exactly!" Bruning snapped his fingers. "The law forbids fighting ships, to forestall any such conflagration as took place in 1950. These ships will do all their fighting on Venus. Perhaps their guns will not be needed; we hope not. But in the interest of Venus, that backward planet, my country aims to put it under a modern, progressive rule—"

"Like the type of rule that makes the International Arms Agreement necessary," Frazier drawled. "Mister Bruning, you can sink your twenty million dollars in the bottom of the ocean for all I care. Lightships, Incorporated, is definitely not interested in this butchery of yours!"

Involuntarily, Tapley looked at his ring. Its light was like a serpent's eye, glowing coldly, warning him. He felt his blood run cold—until he thought of the millions in his grasp. He turned to Frazier and moved swiftly to his partner's side, gripped his arm wrathfully.

"Don't be a damned fool!" he rasped. "This is our chance for some real profits. Don't forget where you'd be if I hadn't staked you. Sleeping under newspapers in the park! I've never asked for thanks before, but I do now. We're accepting that offer, Frazier!"

Frazier crossed his arms, glaring at his partner.

"If you sign with Bruning, it will be my duty to the whole world to report it. And I won't shirk. Good day, Mr. Bruning. And don't forget your hat."

Tapley could only stare furiously as the foreign agent turned stiffly and left. Alone in the office, the two men seemed on the point of a physical battle, when the door reopened. It was a girl's face which showed in the portal—the face of Evelyn, Tapley's wife of three months.

The engineer faced her sullenly, finding little of the pleasure in her beautiful, spoiled face that he had known at first.

"You know I haven't time for you during the day, Evelyn," he snapped.

"Not even for lunch with me?" Evelyn pouted. "You used to take me every day."

Frazier clapped him on the back good-naturedly.

"Sure he has!" he laughed. "Come on, Norris.

Let's all run down to the Colonial Club for a celebration. Do you realize this is just one year since you walked in there and started a new life?"

Tapley hadn't. However, it did seem to call for some kind of blowout. He glanced at the ring. It had stopped glowing. Together, the three of them drove downtown and lunched sumptuously. But driving back afterward, Tapley's temper went sour again. Surlily, he brought the argument up once more. Evelyn was horrified when she learned of the proposition.

"Why, it would mean thousands of innocent lives!" she gasped. "Those poor Venusians; the most ignorant and yet the happiest beings on the four populated planets. Why can't they leave them alone?"

"That's not our problem," her husband snapped. "You two talk like Sunday school teachers. Twenty million dollars!"

Recklessly, he swung the car through a turn.

"And maybe twenty million lives," Dave Frazier flared. "Forget about it, Norris. I'll never consent."

EVELYN gave Tapley a cold-eyed stare. "Sometimes I wonder what kind of a man I married."

Tapley's foot grew heavier on the accelerator.

"You make me sick!" he snarled. "I wish to hell you were both dead and out of the way—"

Fate selected that moment to send a taxi slewing wildly out of control around a corner. Had Norris Tapley been driving carefully, he might have dodged the thing. But he was driving fast and recklessly. Panic claimed the interior of the car.

Evelyn shrieked and grabbed for the wheel. Dave Frazier threw himself across the dashboard, trying to shield the girl against the crash. Tapley suddenly swung the wheel. Rubber screamed and smoked. The street gyrated before their eyes as the machine flung itself headlong into the careening taxi. Tapley felt the door-catch give and knew he was flying out the door and into the air.

The crash was heard for blocks. Tapley never knew when the cars collided, because he had landed, unaccountably, on his feet, and was running like mad to keep up with his racing body. Eventually he went down. Shaken, but unhurt, he picked himself up.

Flames were boiling from the machines. They had meshed like crumpled toys. Broken glass, oil, gasoline and water doused everything within fifteen feet. With horror in his heart, the engineer staggered back to the curb and watched the spectacle.

He knew Dave Frazier and Evelyn could never come out of the holocaust alive. It was ominously silent out there, save for the crackling of the flames. Someone touched his arm.

"Mister, you were plain lucky!" a hatless, portly man breathed.

"Lucky!" The syllables fell from Tapley's lips like leaden pellets. Roughly he shoved the man out of his way and began stumbling down the street.

"Lucky!" The word sickened him, somehow. For he knew that, in its way, that accident was premedi-

tated murder.

Frazier's words marched before him like soldiers in a line, taunting him:

"Luck is the capacity for analyzing problems—unconsciously!"

That was what he had done. He had wanted his partner and his wife out of the way, and the taxicab, looming up like that, provided the means of doing it. His mind grabbed at the opportunity, caused him to avoid the one chance to miss the cab; made his elbow strike the door-catch, letting him be thrown free.

That was the day Norris Tapley realized his luck wouldn't let him lose, even when it was best for him.

CHAPTER IV

Wanderer of Space

HE didn't miss Evelyn much, as the weeks rolled on.

What he did miss was Dave Frazier's steady hand on the controls. He had signed the contract with Bruning a week after the tragedy, refusing to look at the ring, afraid of what he might see in the heart of that cold green stone. He almost never looked at it now. Though the thousand fighting ships were now on the point of completion, he felt like a rocket cruiser with its rockets gone bad.

The night when he was to meet Bruning at the little hidden aircraft field in the hills, to turn over the ships and receive the twenty million dollars, he was as jittery as a shell-shocked war veteran. An hour before he was to leave, he gave himself a severe going over.

"Tapley," he said, looking in the mirror at his haggard visage, "you're a yellow coward. You couldn't miss a trick if you tried. Yet you get stage fright on the eve of the biggest thing that's ever happened to you. Don't be a fool, man; you can't lose!"

Tapley was right, in a way; it *was* the biggest thing ever to happen to him. Also, it was the worst. At seven-thirty, he got in his fifteen-thousand-dollar coupé and sped into the hills.

Where two arms of the hills curved around to lock a tiny valley inside, he halted in a grove of live-oaks and started to get out. Almost immediately a flash-light beam stabbed him.

"That you, Bruning?" he hissed.

The light snapped off and footfalls approached.

"Yes. Is everything ready?"

"All set! One thousand of Lightships' finest are right around the point."

They began to walk, with difficulty, because of the rough terrain. Bruning panted, finally:

"The guns are installed?"

"Not yet. I couldn't take that risk in my factory. But I had them shipped out here, and your own men can install them easily. The ships were brought here just yesterday. But I'd have your men take them away within the week, if possible."

"It will be done tomorrow night. Ah! I can see them now."

Through screening growths of shrubbery, flashes of gleaming metal came to their eyes. Hurrying ahead, they came upon the vast array of trim fighting craft. Noses pointed skyward, the savage little rocket ships were a thousand silver bullets ready to be launched against a helpless foe.

Bruning strode to one that loomed larger than the rest; the flagship. His practiced gaze missed nothing as he ran an experimental hand over the smooth hull. Not a rivet, not a seam, existed.

"*Das ist schön!*" he breathed admiringly.

Tapley pointed at the gleaming nose above them.

"This one's got the bow gun in place," he explained. "I had it put in to serve as a model for your pilots when they mount the others. Provisions have been stored too, as you requested."

"You forget nothing, my friend," Bruning smiled. In his fingers, now, was the check for which already two lives had been forfeited.

"If the ships are satisfactory, there will be many more orders for you. My thanks, *Herr Tapley*."

Tapley reached for the check. Every nerve, every fiber in him went rigid as light sprayed over them and a voice called:

"Get your hands up, boys! The game's over!"

SHOCK seemed to slam the pair against the side of the silver ship. From twenty points, men in Government uniform came running swiftly. A groan issued from Norris Tapley's throat.

"My God! Somebody tipped them off!"

Bruning's hand made a flashing movement toward his coat pocket. The gun was only half drawn when pistols barked, and the foreign agent went down in a writhing turn. His companion in the conspiracy watched him fall, then he was stimulated to action. One leap put him before the space-ship port. Instantly, guns began to speak again.

Something seemed to grab at Tapley's feet and he sprawled headlong through the opening. Slugs burned the air over his head, but his tumble saved him. He scrambled around the corner and slammed the heavy door, threw the bolts securely. For an instant he stood irresolute, hearing the spat of futile lead against the ship's walls, the dim cries of the Government men.

What to do, that was the problem. They had him tread for sure. They could starve him out, or blast the craft to kingdom come. His only escape was—out in space!

Tapley recoiled from the idea. The feeling still persisted that he and his luck didn't belong in a Lightship. But it was the only way. Provisions stocked the cruiser, food for fifteen hundred men for two years. With a groan, he dashed for the elevator to the bridge. His steps rang hollowly through the empty rooms.

Pointed upward, as the craft was, access to forward quarters was by an elevator that, on even keel, ran horizontally. Tapley shot full speed up to the control room and darted inside.

He knew how to run the thing, even if he had never

done it. But now, as he drew near to the ship, he felt his ring finger grow warm, and when he touched the door of the ship, the ring was burning beyond endurance. For a moment he stood irresolute, almost crying with pain. Then he tore the ring off his finger and entered the ship.

He planted himself in the pilot's chair, strapped himself in it. His left hand hovered over speed and deceleration dials, his right over directional levers. Between his knees was the firing lever for the bow gun. Pausing for only a moment, he twisted the starting dial full around.

With a surge of power the ship zoomed upward.

The stars, seen through thick glassite double-plates before him, grew momentarily brighter, as though a giant hand had twisted a rheostat. They were like iridescent spangles against the black velvet night; and the next instant sunlight flooded the bridge and the stars disappeared. Tapley was through the stratosphere and into space.

His eyes lifted to the rear-view television. At what he saw there, shock poured through him. A dozen Government pursuers were on his tail! The whole ship lurched, began to roll nauseatingly, as a force-charge detonated within a few hundred yards of him.

Savagely, his lips went back in a snarl. He gave the port rockets full blast and slewed around until he was shooting through space backward. The driving rockets began to belch once more, and the flagship shuddered to its last case-hardened plate. Momentum began to drop off. And as the pursuers zoomed up on him, Tapley began to fire his lone gun.

He had the first ship right on the indicator cross-hairs when he triggered. Projectile and pursuit ship met nose to nose. There was a blinding flash. Tapley jiggled the controls, jockeyed the skidding Lightship around to bring a second Government craft into his aim! Just as he fired, debris from the first ship began to rattle against the silver hull of his own, as it went by like a comet fragment.

It was the same with the second pursuit ship. Then Tapley was forced to veer off to the side. Soon he was on the tails of his pursuers. Ruthlessly, he began to cut them down. The smaller ships were helpless. Antique Space-Craft they were, useless against ships twice as fast and ten times as maneuverable.

It was a matter of minutes before the others realized their helplessness and dropped away from him. Tapley began to laugh as he hunched over the controls.

"Yellow dogs!" he muttered.

Soon he forgot his amusement. A curious tingling in his body, at first unnoticed, had increased until his teeth seemed on edge. It was not unlike that unpleasant sensation when a limb, long asleep, returns to normal feeling, bringing needle-sharp little jabs with it. Only this tingling affected his whole body. Tapley strode about, trying to shake off the feeling.

BUT it wouldn't depart, though he set the controls in the general direction of Venus and killed hours

striding nervously through the ship.

The tingling was a painful, crawling sensation by now, crawling like thousands of ants through his veins. Too, his eyes felt slightly bulging and his teeth ached. Norris Tapley was genuinely terrified. He was afraid to return to Earth, apprehensive of continuing any longer through space. There was only one course left for him. To send the ship through space to Venus as fast as possible and take up a new life there.

TWELVE hours later he knew he could never make it to the foggy planet.

It had been a shock when he saw himself in a mirror. He was looking at a strange creature with bulging eyes and drooling lips. In sudden horror Tapley tore his shirt from him in shreds. He could see the veins pumping under his flesh.

Thoughts of Earth tantalized him. Lucky Norris Tapley! "The man who couldn't lose!" He remembered when he had ridden around in the best cars money could buy, eating at the Colonial Club, flashing his luck and his money before an admiring world—

The ring! He wasn't wearing it! Feverishly he searched his pockets, found it, put it on. It was burning his flesh, but he endured it, screaming with pain, and made his way back to the controls.

Sitting there in the pilot's seat, hands shaking on the controls, he was like a corpse. There wasn't a wisp of hair left on his body. He had lost half his teeth when he tried to bite through a steak when he had prepared his last meal. His nails were gone, and without them the fingers looked like fat, pink worms.

His face—Norris Tapley twisted to stare at his reflection in the mirror-door.

"*Oh, God!*" Tapley was on his feet, goggling at the incredible sight in the mirror.

Above his collar, there was a semi-transparent oval in which a lumpy gray mass and a few teeth were the only distinguishable human characteristics. He was as transparent as a jellyfish. His brain and teeth showed up as through a fluoroscope. And his eyes—they were inhuman, staring orbs that terrified him.

Childishly, his fingers groped over flabby, invisible lips. In the next moment, Tapley started.

The ring! His good luck ring—the damned thing was alive with a green, supernal brilliance! That was the thing which was turning him into a monstrosity, by converting solar energy into something devilish.

He had long forgotten the burning. His finger was a charred bone, with the ring hanging loosely from it. He ripped it off and flung it against the controls. Then he locked himself in and sank exhausted into the pilot's seat.

Within an hour, the change was noticed. That maddening tingling left him. His teeth and gums ceased to ache. With Earth fast looming up at him, something of his old confidence was returning.

"I'll lick it!" he shouted. "Back on Earth I'm still the luckiest guy in the world! *I'll show 'em—*"

Utterly worn out, he fell asleep across the controls.

WHEN he awoke, it was dark in the cabin. The significance at first escaped him. Then he realized—he was within Earth's shadow! Startled, he dived for the deceleration rocket dials.

Bucking and skidding, the Lightship broke its headlong plunge. Tapley's eyes quested downward. He saw a shining spot that was a city.

Northern New Jersey! Tapley started, realizing he had been gone just twenty-four hours. An intense longing built in him to land and be out of the ship. He ground down the impulse to hurry, sighted through the cross-hairs for a plain on which to land.

Staring him in the face were rolling hills. He was approaching them at a speed of six hundred miles an hour. Beyond was a flat space, and safety. Tapley pulled at the rudder control. But it wouldn't budge!

All of his failing power went into the effort to move the slender baton back. He stood up, throwing his weight backward with hands clutching the rod. The rudder control only groaned in its socket.

The jets blasted powerfully. Rocking and rolling, the ship tossed itself about. Tapley hung onto the edge of the table for dear life. But when the ship leveled off again, those uncompromising hills still loomed before him. Firing all the rockets simultaneously had merely added to the craft's speed.

Tapley sank into the chair, fighting the rudders. "I can't lose now!" his cracked voice sobbed. "I'm too lucky. I'm the luckiest guy in the world—"

On hands and knees he began searching for the ring. Only the ring could save him now. His mind was aflame. Burn—let it burn!—he had to find it!

And there it was—but *the stone was gone!* The cheap setting stared up at him like an open, dumb eye, mocking. . . .

The stone was gone—and the ring worthless! It had fallen somewhere when he had thrown it from him.

In the moments that followed, the whole history of his life swam before him, but it was the story of the ring. There it was—the finding, and everything that followed. . . .

Gone! "Lord," he screamed, grovelling. "Let me find it! Let me find it!"

But plead as he would, the high-crested hills continued to swim before the cross-hairs, rushing toward him. He was babbling like a half-witted child when the crash came.

* * *

THEY located the ruined ship a few days later, lying at the foot of the steepest hill as though it were a toy carelessly cast aside. Those who extracted Norris Tapley from the crumpled mass of girders and wiring found an odd thing. Wedged into the socket of the rudder-bar, so that the rod was immovable, was a little green stone that glittered cheaply when a chance ray of sunlight struck it. . . .

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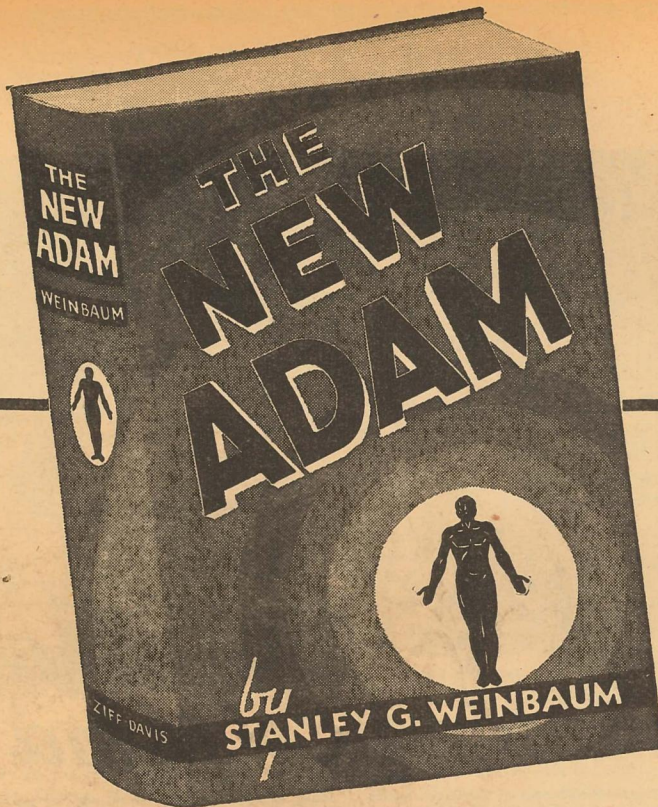
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»»» Introducing ««« THE AUTHOR

ROBERT BLOCH

Author of

QUEEN OF THE METAL MEN

READERS of my stories (and they're two of the finest people I know) confess themselves amazed at my genius. Handsome as a Greek god, with a mind keener than Einstein's and a literary style superior to Shakespeare, they find it hard to believe that only six months ago I was a 97-pound weakling.

"How much do you weigh now, Bob?" they ask in admiration.

"97 pounds," I modestly reply.

This only goes to show where good hard work and clean living will get you in the end. That's where it got me. And yet I insist on writing fantastic fiction. I would write more, if it wasn't for the little green men that run out of the woodwork and pull down my socks every time I sit at the typewriter. I have managed to fool these fellows by not wearing socks, but lately they've taken to tugging at my trousers instead. Now there's nothing left for me to do but crawl into a burlap bag and take my typewriter with me. Fortunately there are plenty of editors who would be glad to furnish me with the bag.

Which brings us to this month's story. I had my usual trouble with the tale, owing to the fact that I never learned to read or write, but it was a yarn I very much wanted to do.

The ideas set forth in the tale are sincerely my own. I do believe that the imaginative field which produced a Weinbaum a Merritt, and a Lovecraft demands really superior writing—and that at times it doesn't get it.

It took a vast nature to create this cosmos over billions of years; and yet many a callow hack goes blithely ahead and destroys half of it, swings planets out of line, blots out civilization, and spawns a dozen races of monsters—all in ten thousand words, or less. Quite a job. But it's a pretty serious thing to play God, and sometimes the poor author isn't always up to it. He is apt to bite off more than he can chew, or the reader can swallow.

It took a Biblical God seven days to create one poor stooge of a man, and it took a blind evolution millions of years to do the same—and yet too many authors set themselves up as demiurges and do the trick in a couple of hours.

Now why is this so? Because I think too often the boys forget that they are writing *fiction*. They take one puny fact; inverting a chemical equation to create a new physical law, for example—and because they are so sure that they have "science" in their story they forget how to be convincing. Anything goes, the wilder the better. Haven't they got a "fact" in the yarn to back them up? This fallacious reasoning often results in a sorry job.

I am throwing no stones from my glass house. I know, only too well, that most S-F authors are sincere, and that the editors are conscientious. A lot of swell tales are being written, and I am inclined

to think that the poor ones are the fault of only one person—the reader.

As long as S-F readers sit back on their haunches and swallow childish corn that's what they'll be fed. Every sincere author and editor welcomes honest constructive criticism; begs for it. Only one person can improve science-fiction, and that is the reader by his plain statement of what he wants.

In this story, "Queen of the Metal Men" I have tried to create a fantastic scene, based on the facts and theories of the present day, and visualize a world of the future as it might conceivably be. Darro is the product of a world gone mad with war, and he is as innocent of the past as his prototype, the caveman, was innocent of the future.

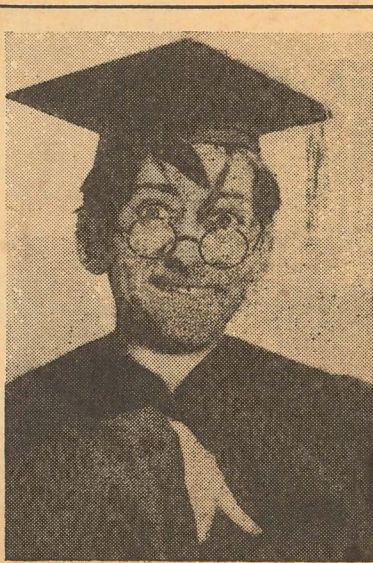
I was intrigued by the thought of a future man, digging down into the ruins of a vanished civilization, and finding something just a bit too hot for him to handle. I have managed to get his viewpoint sufficiently to lend enough credence to the narrative to carry him to the existence of a strange world of mystery which does lie about us; a world which should be utilized in science-fiction. Realizing that he is writing fiction and not depending on his precious "fact" it seems to me the author can do a better job every time. But as I say, it's my own insignificant opinion and nothing more; I only hope it served as inspiration for a tolerable yarn.

For the benefit of those who came in late; I was born in Chicago 23 years ago and am at present living in poverty. Have written over 1,000,000 stories and have sold less than 1% of them. A professional schizophrenic, I am allergic to human beings. I owe everything to my mother, and she is suing me for it. My favorite color is redheads, my favorite sport is anthropophagism, and my hobby is reading the biographies of fantasy writers. I eat fan-letters, and my one ambition is to throw an editor into a wastebasket.—Robert Bloch, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

(Editorial note: Mr. Bloch, in giving us this rather humorous account of himself, has neglected to tell a few facts about himself that your editor knows of, as a personal friend of a writer who is not in the least the sort of screwball he likes to tell people he is.

Oh, yes, he does do unusual things, and he hasn't given us as much hokum as you might infer, because your editor remembers one anecdote wherein Author Robert Bloch journeyed to the local graveyard, and there awaited the rising of the spirits, just for the purpose of getting "into the mood" for a weird yarn, and to gather "local color" of a eerie nature.

But in reality, Robert Bloch is one of the most earnest and hard-working authors in the business, and wherever he goes, is the favorite, and the center of interest. He is vastly prolific, turns out mainly weirds and science-fiction, and does some very creditable radio script. In addition, his self-directed humor has, in your editor's opinion, led to the writing of a humorous book which tops Thorne Smith by a country mile. He's a swell fellow, that Robert Bloch.



ROBERT BLOCH

(Ed.'s Note: According to Mr. Bloch, he hasn't had a "straight" picture taken in years. Thus this photo is intended only to represent a favorite science fiction humorist.)

Quiz Page

The following quiz has been prepared as a pleasant means of testing your knowledge of things scientific and fantastic. We offer it solely for the pleasure it gives you, and with the hope that it will provide you with many bits of information that will help you to enjoy the stories in this magazine.

Count 2 points for each correct answer. If your score is between 80 and 100 you should put in a bid for the Nobel Prize. If you score between 50 and 80 you have a good general knowledge of science. But if your total is below 50 we'll be kind and say you just have forgotten a good deal of what you once knew!

WHO'S WHO

Below are 10 scientific expressions which you should be able to define in one word. If you will then correctly fill in the letters of this word to the blank spaces immediately following you will have the name of an eminent scientist.

1. Heavenly body that is the center of attraction of the solar system. B - n - e - .
2. Coating caused on iron by oxidation. P a - e - - .
3. Any satellite revolving about a planet. C - - p t - - .
4. Liquid secreted by female mammals for the nourishment of their young. - i - l - - a n .
5. Condensed vapor of the atmosphere falling to the earth in drops. - r - h e - - u s .
6. Gaseous inert element. - d d i - g t - - .
7. Alloy of iron. P r i - - - - y .
8. Vessel of the circulatory system. C a - - d - s h .
9. Any morbid change in function or structure of an organ or tissue. M - c h - - - - .
10. Most important metallic element. C - p e - - - - c u s .

RIGHT OR WRONG?

1. Sound travels better through 10 feet of wood than one foot of air.
2. While it is possible to work out when and where an eclipse will occur, it is impossible to know when and where eclipses have occurred in the past.
3. The reason why metals reflect light so well is that they are opaque and take a high polish.
4. While X-rays are used for the treatment of cancer, they may also cause it.
5. Nitrogen at ordinary temperatures is very inert and combines with almost anything.
6. Pure iron rusts far more than impure iron.
7. The red-blood corpuscles of the blood are true cells.
8. Two nerves, the vagus and the sympathetic, control the speed of the heart-beat.
9. Insects' wings are muscular.
10. The greatest boon to man resulting from the discovery of bacteria has been the way to get rid of them.
11. The brains of males and females weigh the same.
12. The faster atoms move the hotter they are.

13. The melting-point and freezing-point of a pure substance is the same.

14. A comet receding from the sun travels tail first.

15. The hotter a liquid is the quicker it will evaporate.

CELL THEORY

Living things are organizations of units called _____. Some organisms consist of single cells or aggregations of similar cells, as, for example, the _____ in the animal kingdom and _____ in the plant kingdom. Most cells possess many similar structures. In the center of the cell is a small body, circular in outline and light in color, called the _____. The portion outside this small body is called the _____, and both are composed of _____.

Cells reproduce or divide either directly, called _____, or indirectly, by a process known as _____. In the latter process several changes take place simultaneously, but for convenience it is divided into four successive phases: prophase, _____, _____, and telophase.

A MATTER OF CHOICE

1. The Crêpe ring: (a) is found in hydrogen atoms, (b) occurs during a solar eclipse, (c) is an infection of the foot, (d) is the innermost ring of Saturn.
2. The color of a star is a guide to its: (a) distance, (b) brightness, (c) temperature, (d) location.
3. If the boiling point of water at sea level is 0°C, the boiling point on a mountain 10,000 feet high is about: (a) 120°C, (b) 110°, (c) 90°C, (d) 80°C.
4. The only thing which can be made into a permanent magnet is: (a) iron, (b) steel, (c) nickel, (d) cobalt.
5. Essentially, all fuels consist of two elements combined in different proportions. These are: (a) carbon and hydrogen, (b) carbon and oxygen, (c) carbon and nitrogen, (d) carbon and sodium.

A CHEMISTRY MATCH

Match the following:

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1—Aqua Regia | A—Aluminum ore. |
| 2—Amalgam | B—Solution of sodium hypochlorite. |
| 3—Bauxite | C—A substance formed by wasting starch. |
| 4—Dextrin | D—Carbonyl Chloride. |
| 5—German Silver | E—Mixture of hydrochloric acid and nitric acid. |
| 6—Javelle Water | F—Solution of Sodium Silicate. |
| 7—Lactic Acid | G—Alloy of Mercury with another metal. |
| 8—Phosgene | H—Substance 550 times sweeter than sugar, but with little heat value. |
| 9—Saccharin | I—Acid in sour milk. |
| 10—Water Glass | J—Alloy of Copper, Nickel, Zinc. |

(Answers on Page 95)

READER'S PAGE

WHAT A HOLIDAY!

Sirs:

Here it is the 23rd and I've already finished your six swell stories in the January issue of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES.

Thanksgiving was indeed a big holiday for me. After watching a thrilling football game between our two local high schools I enjoyed parts of turkey, and how! And then came the real treat! With most of the day before me, and with cigarettes and fruit within reach, I comforted myself in the ole rocker and ate up those swell stories so fast that I am in a way now sorry. I have to pine a full month ere I can once again feast my eyes.

In fact, so interesting were the stories (all of 'em) that I smoked but one cigarette (and that one I didn't finish) and had not even touched the fruit. But I'm not sorry; my day was well spent.

Paul is great. What will he draw next—I refer to his swell back cover pictures—after he completes his imaginary drawings of possible inhabitants on the planets?

Believe me when I say that I'm overjoyed now that FANTASTIC ADVENTURES is a monthly feast.

I am absolutely against science in any FANTASTIC ADVENTURES issues. Science belongs to your AMAZING STORIES. No serials, please.

Sidney Plotkin,
823 Adams Ave.,
Scranton, Pa.

You certainly had a Thanksgiving! And we are glad that FANTASTIC ADVENTURES played such an important part in making it a success.

Paul hasn't run his series out yet, and as to what he'll do next, we don't know. But you can depend on your editors to see that he does something!—Ed.

WELL, HOW ABOUT IT, FINLAY?

Sirs:

I am a boy 13 years of age and have been reading your S-F magazine for 3 years. I am picking "The Robot Peril" for first place this month because I think Mr. Wilcox has done a swell piece of work. His story has feeling, action and everything that goes with it. I read a letter sent to you by a Thomas P. Ellington, and he said a mouth full when he said "make mine Virgil Finlay." Why don't you give Finlay a chance to do at least your inside drawings or your cover. Come on, make him do your cover just this once. How's about it?

William Papalia,
59 5th St.,
Rochester, N. Y.

You really can brag about starting young! And in three years you've apparently learned to recognize a good yarn when you see one. As for Finlay, we'll certainly make every effort to give him to you in the near future. You'll notice Paul has a lot of work on this issue, inside and out!—Ed.

A BOOSTER

Sirs:

I'm disgusted. "Captives of the Void" was a fine story. Two were good. The rest so-so. Where are the space stories?

A friend of mine, Chuck Novak, and his dad read FANTASTIC ADVENTURES. They get their own now, but I started them off. Four pupils of mine are beginning to read 'em, too. They devour all the back issues I've got. Then there's another friend who started to read 'em because he's in love. Stars inspire him.

R. Fascione,
3826 E. 144th St.,
Cleveland, Ohio.

We've got some space stories coming up in future issues that will knock your eye out.

We're very much interested in your boosting among your friends and students. Especially in that fellow who reads us because he's in love. How come? We didn't think we had a love magazine. We admit the stars, but—tsk tsk!—Ed.

NOWLAN VERSUS BURROUGHS

Sirs:

"The Prince of Mars" is one of the most exciting stories that I have ever read. If the hero's name had been changed to "John Carter," the story would have passed for one of Burroughs' Mars stories. Everything that the critics have said about the John Carter stories applies to "The Prince of Mars," so why should I write more?

Val Vodicka,
2431 1st Ave., West,
Cedar Rapids, Ia.

You aren't alone in your opinion of Phil Nowlan's yarn. He's captured the Burroughs atmosphere, and added to it his own famous Buck Rogers (of the old days) flavor. "The Prince of Mars" is proving quite popular.—Ed.

FORMAT

Sirs:

FANTASTIC ADVENTURES will always be read by collectors of science-fiction as long as its format remains as it is now. For the large-sized pages bring back memories of the days before the depression, memories of enthralling tales that delved for the first time into a neglected branch of literature. Today, science-fiction is experiencing a real renaissance, with more than a dozen magazines devoted to thrilling yarns of future life. But only FANTASTIC ADVENTURES has brought back the old aristocratic size. Strangely enough, the magazine that first introduced science-fiction and the big format, AMAZING STORIES, is now published in a small size as a sister to FANTASTIC ADVENTURES. Time works many queer changes.

Dan E. Anderson,
East New Market, Md.

Perhaps it is peculiar that FANTASTIC ADVENTURES should be the only science fantasy magazine on the market in the large size, but we feel that FANTASTIC ADVENTURES is in a class by itself insofar as contents is concerned. It is the only magazine which has a definite fantasy flair, based purely on adventure. Sometimes we have a fantasy that doesn't go "bang" on the action side, but it still has the tang of adventure in it, and perhaps that's what makes it so successful. We all like to experience strange adventures. As for size, we like it too. And it'll stay that way as long as you readers like it.—Ed.

POPULAR POLTON CROSS

Sirs:

"The Man From Hell" was really the best story in the November issue of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES.

Mr. Polton Cross deserves a medal. I wish that a Dake Bradfield could be found to halt the European war.

Kenneth Wolf,
4423 Pine Street,
Philadelphia, Pa.

Your editors liked "The Man From Hell" too, and many other readers liked it. Especially the ending, which was not the usual happy ending. As for there being a Dake Bradfield, we don't intend to preach in FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, nor do we want to propagandize, but it seems right now the world could use a man with peaceful purposes, coupled with the scientific ability to enforce those purposes on the belligerents of the world.—Ed.

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COULD HAPPEN

Sirs:

Too often, I'm afraid, the word "fantastic" conveys the idea of "utterly impossible," "wild pipe-dream" to persons seeing it in the title of a book or magazine. Such was my thought when I saw my first copy of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES.

But I'm glad to say that many of your stories contain a plausibility—a could-happen vein—that has made me an avid reader.

A fine example of this type of story is "The Robot Peril," a story built right here on earth, with a solid ground-work of science, and with plenty of action. It easily convinces one that such a situation *could* happen. It's written in punch, "Americane" language, and has an ingenious, different plot.

Robert C. Loper, 648 Indiana, Oswego, Kan.

You assure us when you admit that the plausible air of our stories takes the sting out of the word "fantastic." Everyone likes fantasy, and if we can make 'em believe it—ah! And Wilcox will be tickled to know that he has achieved that effect.—Ed.

LIFE ON OTHER PLANETS

Sirs:

I would like to read more stories on life on other planets. I've just read your January issue of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES and enjoyed every story. But I would like to see more stories like "The Empress of Mars" and "Golden Girl of Kalendar." In this issue I liked "The Robot Peril." Here's hoping I get my wish for more adventures.

John Bels, 1914 Kings Highway, Brooklyn, N. Y.

We'll give you many more stories like "The Empress of Mars." In fact, we've got a really fine story of this type on our desk now, and we'll spring it on you very soon. Between writing this editorial stuff, and answering letters, we're casting longing glances at the manuscript, because we really enjoy editing such stories. We assure you, it's a pleasure.—Ed.

POLAROID GLASS

Sirs:

Steel yourselves for a juicy brickbat, as I have a few complaints to make! This letter is relative to the September issue of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, which, in my opinion, contained five swell yarns, and one *boner!* (The boner—"The Man Who Saw Too Late" by Eando Binder). The Messrs Binder & Binder have caused me to lose many nights of sleep because of one word: "Polaroid." (t.m.reg.U.S.Pat.Off.)

I am an ex-employee of the Polaroid Corporation, and therefore I think I know a bit relative to Polaroid "film" or "glass"

Turning to Page 79 of the issue in question, I find, in paragraph 2, that Pat Riker is in the habit of keeping expensive disks of Polaroid glass in a box of miscellaneous junk, where they can easily be broken! In the following two paragraphs he throws a pair of makeshift glasses together, with the Polaroid "type one" (glass) disks, in 15 minutes, then turns on the light, and lo and behold, his sight is corrected!!!!!!

In the 9th paragraph, right hand column, same page, Pat tells Rita that he can see by Polarized light . . . moonlight is Polarized light.

- Now may I tear this hoey apart?
1. Pat throws a pair of Polaroid glasses together;—how in the name of heaven did he get the axes on the same plane? (Or was that to be taken for granted?)
 2. Pat says he can see by Polarized light;—If he could see Polarized light he could see diffused, or un-polarized light, too, as the process of polarizing light merely comb out certain vibration of light; allowing the vibrations on a plane parallel to the axis of the polaroid glass to pass through, while the vibrations tangent to the axis are blocked, or shut out. (i.e. Pat's glasses are oriented axes vertical, he sees only the vertical light vibrations, all other vibrations are stopped by the glass—when he takes off the glasses he should be able, still, to see the vertical vibrations through his eyes are sensitive to no others.)
 3. ". . . moonlight is polarized light." *It ain't!!!*

May I request that anyone who writes a yarn incorporating "Polaroid Glass" first write the Polaroid Corporation, 285 Columbus Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts, and ask them for free literature on what the material is, and what it does? I hate to read about any substance, or piece of mechanical, electrical, or scientific equipment, when it is described by a person who doesn't know what he's talking about!

I expect all types of science-fiction to stick to true fact when relating to something already in existence, and appreciate the fact that a good knowledge of known science may be obtained from carefully written science-fiction.

Richard E. Simpson, 24 Albion St., Hyde Park, Mass.

Well, as the editors, we feel rather sheepish about this. Here's a reader who knows his polaroid, and we present his letter for an example of what an editor has to watch in manuscripts. Hey, you, Binder! Read this and learn—as we did!—Ed.

HORROR?

Sirs:

While reading the January issue of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, I came across something on the Readers' Page which I should like to mention.

Mr. Robert G. Thompson asks the question: "What gave these readers the idea that FANTASTIC ADVENTURES has to be a science-fiction magazine?"

Well, of all the so-and-so's I ever heard of! If he wants stories like "The Mummy of Ret-Seh" he can go and buy a horror magazine.

The first time I bought FANTASTIC ADVENTURES and read stories like "The Mummy of Ret-Seh," I quit reading it. But a few months later having read an issue, I was converted back to FANTASTIC ADVENTURES. Why? Because of your stories, science stories, too, which had punch to them.

All I can say is: "Keep up the good work." FANTASTIC ADVENTURES is meant to be science-fiction, and not a horror magazine.

Frederick Weiner,
14 Buswell St.,
Boston, Mass.

You may sometimes find a story in FANTASTIC ADVENTURES that has a touch of the weird in it, because some of the best of the world's fantasies have been weirds, and certainly they fit in FANTASTIC ADVENTURES. We admit, we don't want the horror type, but if Frank Owen were to write another "Wind That Tramps the World," we'd like to get a look at it before it went elsewhere! As for FANTASTIC ADVENTURES being a science magazine, we take exception. We do run science stories, but ONLY when they can be classed as FANTASTIC ADVENTURES. "The Man From Hell" was one of that type, and too, wasn't it just a little bit on the horror side? Yet it ranked first.—Ed.

SIMPLY SWELL

Sirs:

Your latest issue was simply swell. The features are superb, especially the quiz page and the Readers' Page. After all, we readers like to see what other readers are thinking about this magazine too.

I am a newcomer, having read S-F for only about a year, but I am also a fervent reader, not missing an issue. I think FANTASTIC ADVENTURES could stand improvement even though it now leads the S-F field. Getting back to the January issue, I think it is the best so far with the exception of the first issue. Your illustrations are better than any other S-F magazine. It is a good idea to give us a little of each artist instead of too much Krupa and Fuqua, although they are both good. Your cover this month by McCauley was the best to date; let him do more. And your back cover is the best feature; congrats to Paul.

Warren Rosse, Jr.,
731 S. Grand W.
Springfield, Ill.

Yes, the Readers' page is an important feature in FANTASTIC ADVENTURES. All the world likes to hear what the other half has to say—and confidentially—likes to tell the rest of the world off! And how your editor likes to be in his position—to get "told," and to "tell."—Ed.

REAL FANTASTIC ADVENTURES

Sirs:

I wish to contribute a few comments and personal opinions on your youthful but already popular publication.

"The Man From Hell" by Polton Cross, is my selection for the best presentation of that number. The tale was given advance recommendation in both FANTASTIC ADVENTURES and AMAZING STORIES, and it fully lived up to your claims. "The Man From Hell," having been given the feature billing and the lead-off spot in the magazine came first to my attention, and you may be sure that I was not diverted until the last word flickered into the labyrinth halls of my so-called brain. Polton Cross' attempt gained my esteem with its varied, furious action, its science, its human characters, and its pathos. The fantasy, which, after all, is the quality you claim to present in all your stories, is excellent, and in places there are some very thought-provoking statements. Besides all this, the ending is just as it should be, for if it were not so, it would just be another impossible triumph of man over forces which he cannot reasonably master.

Second place was given to "Into Another Dimension," for it also satisfyingly supplied the fantasy which many readers expect but often miss. "Lunar Intrigue," in third place, is probably there because Thornton Ayrk ranks high as a writer with me. Fourth, "F.O.B. Venus" for its humor, interesting explanations of transmutation, and ostensible description of life of the crews of space vessels.

I couldn't quite figure which was the worst tale in the magazine for "The Purple Conspiracy" and "Pioneer—1957!" were fighting it out for last place in my consideration. The latter won—or lost, which ever way you'd like to put it—and the Martian story eased into fifth, badly battered from the fray, victor mainly because of that desire for fantasy and adventure which I mentioned before.

If Henry Gade, who is on the bottom of the pile, is to be a truly passable writer, I suggest we take up a collection to present to him Edgar Rice Burroughs's set of fantasy masterpieces, the "John Carter of Mars" series. Study of these, plus a

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30x40-12	\$4.50	30x40-10	\$4.50
30x40-10	\$4.50	30x40-8	\$4.50
30x40-8	\$4.50	30x40-6	\$4.50
30x40-6	\$4.50	30x40-4	\$4.50
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little Poe, an omnibus volume of H. Rider Haggard, some Jules Verne, and a load of E. E. "Skylark" Smith (if you aren't averse to mention of a writer on a competitive publication), might develop him into something better.

Your new magazine has taken its place in the field of fiction, and if you continue to hand out at least three real fantastic adventures in every issue, I shall forever be your fan.

A. S. Manley,
 1628 N. Abingdon St.,
 Arlington, Va.

Obviously you didn't go for Henry Gade's yarn, but you seem to think he can do better. You mention a lot of really top-notch writers for his perusal. Maybe he'll take the hint, and whip out a yarn that will equal those fellows' work. How about it, Henry? We haven't had a yarn from you in some months. Just because you just got married is no reason to quit writing—whoops, we let that slip out. Yes, dear readers, we know now why this particular story had so much romance in it. He's a married man these two months!

What'd ya mean, writer for a competitive publication!? E. E. (Skylark) Smith did his famous Skylarks in AMAZING STORIES, our sister publication.—Ed.

A SWELL CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Sirs: I am getting everything I asked for in the February issue. I asked for more stories like "The Princess of Mars" and "The Golden Girl of Kalendar" and I'm getting my wish. All I can say is that's a lot for a swell Christmas present.

John Bels,
 1914 Kings Highway,
 Brooklyn, N. Y.

RAPID PROGRESS

Sirs: How did FANTASTIC improve so quickly? It's getting to be up to its big brother, AMAZING's level. Maybe it's because of the change to a monthly. Thanks for changing it.

The drawings this month were swell. You're right, it is the best cover yet. The best drawing inside is Krupa's for "Captives of the Void." The worst is Jay Jackson's for "The Gift of Magic." Looks like the funny papers.

Here's backing Francis J. Litz's idea for a science-fiction quiz. Before I sign off, I must propose a toast to Paul. Also one to Nelson S. Bond, the human machine who uses most of his time writing science-fiction stories, and he writes plenty. In his spare time he rips off some sport novels. All his stories are good, too. How does he do it?

Larry Swinbarne,
 % Mrs. T. B. Peck,
 Syosset, L. I., N. Y.

Maybe it's this department that aids in FANTASTIC ADVENTURES' rapid improvement. The readers express their opinions, give suggestions, and your editors follow 'em out—wherever we think they ought to be followed out (pardon us while we duck!)—and presto, improvement!

Which brings us to the end for this month!—Ed.

STORY CONTEST

BERTRAND L. SHURTLEFF, author of "New York Fights The Termites," First Prize..... \$75.00

NELSON S. BOND, author of "Lancelot Biggs Cooks A Pirate," Second Prize..... 25.00

WARREN ROSS, 731 South Grand West, Springfield, Illinois, Reader Prize 10.00

They are they, the winners of our February awards. Bertrand L. Shurtleff collected first prize for the issue with his excellent story laid in the subways of New York, and Nelson S. Bond proved that Lancelot Biggs is a popular character by knocking off the second place spot. And congratulations also, to Warren Ross, for winning the reader award with his astute judgment and opinions.

Beginning with this issue, we are discontinuing the monthly prize contests. However, the editors of this magazine continue to invite the opinion of the readers in regard to special merit in any stories that appear in our pages. Stories by authors whose work is popular with you readers will most certainly win for their creators additional rates as a reward. The editors feel that we can better these prize awards to the greater satisfaction of the writers without the chance factor of being "lucky" having any bearing on reader opinion.

But don't forget to vote on the March issue, if you haven't, as yet. Prize winners will be announced in our May issue, and don't forget the April front cover is the reader award for that issue. It will be appropriately framed. And already, according to the opinions expressed in our mail, this cover is proving a very popular one. It's by top-notch, Robert Fuqua.

If you haven't voted already, do it now!

—The Editors.

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QUIZ PAGE ANSWERS

(Quiz on Page 90)

WHO'S WHO

1. Sun, Bunsen. 2. Rust, Pasteur. 3. Moon, Compton. 4. Milk, Millikan. 5. Rain, Arrhenius. 6. Neon, Eddington. 7. Steel, Priestley. 8. Vein, Cavendish. 9. Lesion, Michelson. 10. Iron, Copernicus.

RIGHT OR WRONG

1. True. 2. False. 3. True. 4. True. 5. False. 6. False. 7. False. They have no nuclei. 8. True. 9. False. 10. True. 11. False. The female brain is lighter, but only in proportion to the lighter weight of the female body. 12. True. 13. True. 14. True. 15. True.

CELL THEORY

Cells, Protozoa, Protophyta, nucleus, cytosome, protoplasm, amitosis, mitosis, metaphase, anaphase.

A MATTER OF CHOICE

1. d. 2. c. 3. c. 4. b. 5. a.

A CHEMISTRY MATCH

1—E, 2—G, 3—A, 4—C, 5—J,
6—B, 7—I, 8—D, 9—H, 10—F.

CORRESPONDENCE CORNER

Corlene Berwald, 4027 Prescott St., Dallas, Tex. wants to correspond with any SF fans; 15 yrs. . . Clayton Stoddart, 536 Western Ave., Lynn, Mass. wants to hear from scientifans anywhere, particularly England, interested in science in general, and psychiatry. . . Noel Dwyer, 10 Manning St., Waverley, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia is desirous of having a couple pen pals, boys or girls, about 15 yrs. . . Joseph Marcus, 2017 S. Beechwood St., Philadelphia, Pa. wants to hear from either sex concerning their opinions of future space travel; 24 yrs. . . Joseph Marcus also wants to know from the weaker sex, why they give up cook books, love stories, etc., for scientification stories. . . Laurence Dube, 10 Lowell Ct., Leurston, Me., has back issues of AMAZING STORIES and various SF magazines for sale at 20c each to first buyer. . . Sylvester Brown, Jr., 7 Arlington St., Cambridge, Mass., wishes to procure old copies of "The Shadow" and "Doc Savage". . . Harrison Cunningham, Pleasant Hill Rd., RFD No. 2, August, Me., would like pen pals in the U. S. and England, Scotland. . . Claude Held, 494 Carlton St., Buffalo, N. Y. would like a pen pal between 15 and 20. . . N. W. Turnbull, 124 Tartutta St., Wagga Wagga, New South Wales, Australia, wants pen pals interested in seas, ships and sailors, preferably in U. S. Navy. . . Abraham Oshinsky, 2855 W. 25th St., Brooklyn, N. Y. is forming the International Astronomical Society and invites anyone interested from any part of the world to get in touch with him. . . Bill Grill, 434 Hays Ave., Mt. Oliver, Pittsburgh, Pa., is 19 yrs. and would like to hear from either sex between 16 and 20 interested in everything; all letters will be answered promptly. . . John Cunningham, 2050 Gilbert St., Beaumont, Tex., wants pen pals, from Hawaii especially. . . A. R. Charpentier, 4541 Rusk Ave., Houston, Tex., wants back issues of AMAZING STORIES. . . Robert Jennings, 909 E. Maple St., Jeffersonville, Ind., desires to trade SF magazines prior to 1935 for recent issues, and wishes to correspond with anyone between 15 and 16 interested in SF and Astronomy. . . Norman W. Siring, 17710 Franklin Blvd., Lakewood, Ohio, wishes to sell copies of AMAZING STORIES and other SF magazines; prices set at 10c, postpaid. To Allan R. Baker of Cleveland: Norman Stringer has tried unsuccessfully to contact you by letter concerning the SF club. Inform him of date of next meeting. . .

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THE NEW ADAM

A SUPER STORY OF A SUPERMAN

See Page 88

LIFE ON URANUS

By HENRY GADE

(See back cover painting by Frank R. Paul)

On our back cover this month we present the artist's conception of the inhabitants of the planet Uranus, deduced in imagination from scientific facts about that world as astronomers know them

URANUS is one of the four major planets and therefore, one of the four upon which the most strange conditions of theoretical life must exist.

Before attempting to picture the life form the planet might possess, we must consider the facts, meagre indeed, known about the giant world.

First, it is the seventh planet in distance from the sun, revolving in an orbit at a mean distance of 1,782,800,000 miles. It takes 84 years to complete its voyage over its orbit. Its diameter is 30,900 miles or nearly four times that of earth. However, its mass is only 14.6 times that of earth, which places its density at 0.25 that of our own planet, and 1.36 that of water.

From these facts we must deduce that it has a great proportion of gaseous elements in its makeup, probably indicating a tremendously thick blanket of atmosphere, of many kinds of gases, most of them poisonous.

However, its great distance from the sun means it must be a cold world, and we may find the surface of the planet, consisting of a great quantity of liquid, frozen to a great depth. There would be some land areas, probably crystalline or metallic (aluminum, bismuth, etc.) in formation, and rather impracticable as a means of supporting life.

Uranus is a pale, sea-green in color, which may come from its atmospheric blanket entirely, or from its watery surface, visible through the atmosphere. There is no reason to assume that we could not observe the surface through the atmosphere even though it were extremely dense, because the cold world would result in clarity through precipitation of foreign and non-gaseous elements in suspension, and in the lack of precipitation of a liquid nature, or even rare snowstorms.

Bearing all these facts in mind, let us voyage to Uranus and land our space ship on the frozen surface, after a perilous journey through an atmosphere that is dense enough to cause us great worry as we cut down our speed to avoid overheating from friction.

Finally, however, we land. We find it necessary to wear our space suits, and perhaps we have our anti-gravity shoes on. We'd have trouble carrying our 400 pounds of weight, if we didn't don them.

We carry a weapon, because we've noticed some very peculiar metal domes sticking up out of the icy terrain. It is evident that it never melts, and the structures seem quite permanent. However, we won't be too sure, because it's "winter" where we have landed, and these things look as though they would float if the ice melted. No telling what we'll find inside. Or what will emerge to greet us.

We walk through the thin, powdery snow, and we pass one of the metal domes. It's hollow, but there's no answer to our pounding. We pass on. But we've been observed. The next dome opens, startling us. Peering at us, we see a queer metal being. No, he's not metal. It's a suit he's

wearing. He remains motionless, regarding us with a cold stare. We come closer.

We see a queer, tiny green-furred being. He seems unafraid. But we feel certain that he'll pop down if we make an overt move, and slam his dome down over him again. Reminds us of a ferret, somehow.

Approaching, we signify by sign language that we intend no harm, and we descend into the interior of the Uranian's queer home. We are amazed. We find a veritable little city, all self-contained in metal.

Here is a frozen world with all the elements that would force a living being to develop scientifically in the struggle for existence.

He has built himself a home fitted with all the comforts possible. Air-lock, to keep out the poisonous outer atmosphere. Air purifying plants, furnishing an atmosphere much too heavy for us to breathe, although the Uranian now takes off his suit and reveals himself as a squat, little fellow, with webbed legs, short and powerful, and tiny, many fingered hands, with webbing between them.

Obviously, he is partly amphibian. We learn to our astonishment that he is able to descend below the ice crust of the planet, and swim like a seal in the water below, where grows his food supply. These are mostly seaweed, small fishes, and jelly-fish.

Down below, the water is warm, in fact, it becomes hot at great depths, because Uranus' great bulk retains much of its original heat. It is only the surface that is frozen.

At times, we learn, the heat increases, and the ice melts, allowing steam to escape, and accounting for the strange white bands in the atmosphere noticed by Earth astronomers through their telescopes. This also accounts for the snow we find outside.

It is down here that the Uranian really lives, and we find that he can breathe directly in the water with a set of gills.

Also it is here that the mating takes place. The eggs are deposited in the warm waters, in clumps of floating weeds, and there hatch, to develop into tadpole-like creatures which develop later into the full-grown quasi-amphibian Uranian.

Evolution has driven this being to prepare himself for an ultimate life on a world which will be entirely frozen, and the watery underworld no longer exists as the planet loses its natural heat.

Thus, the city we entered is the forerunner of Uranian surface cities built on everlasting ice. At present they are temporary affairs, capable of floating at the season of melting.

Peculiarly, of all four giant worlds, Uranus is the one most fitted to support an intelligent form of life, and it is a world where we can expect to find such life with more assurance than we would anywhere else in the solar system with the exception of young Venus, and aging Mars.

A VISION OF MURDER!

... it was as though Rex Thomas were dreaming while still awake! A vision of his dead brother appeared ... his twin brother, Brian, lying on a long surgical table ... gazing in blank horror at something unknown ... his head shaven as bald as a peeled egg ... a laboratory filled with chemical and medical apparatus, electronic tubes, magnets, mazes of wire, and powerful arc-lights hanging overhead. Many a time in the past his being a twin had given him unexpected visions of his brother, particularly in time of trouble, but how could it apply to this occasion when his brother was a corpse in the morgue? Was Rex Thomas just a victim of a nightmare ... or was this a vision of murder? Turn to page 6 of the April AMAZING STORIES and start reading "The Case of the Murdered Savants" by Thornton Ayre ... one of the finest, cleverest, "scientific murder" stories ever written!



6 GREAT STORIES

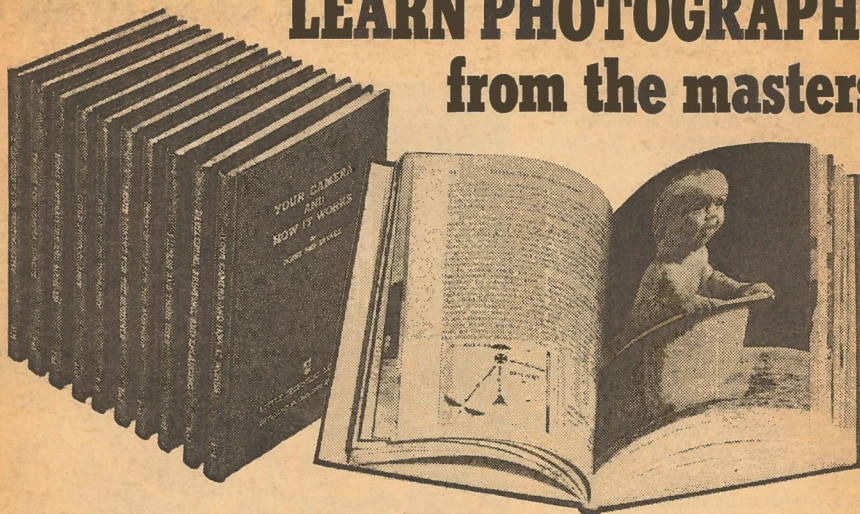
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- ★ **REVOLT OF THE ANTS**—by Milton Kaletsky. According to the constitution, and the Supreme Court's decision, an ant is a "person" and therefore has the right to vote! Yes, the ants came to Washington!
- ★ **FISH MEN OF VENUS**—by David Wright O'Brien. Manny Carter was accused of the murder of Prince Bramm, of the Fish Men of Venus ... but down in the depths the real truth came out ... there was hell to pay undersea!

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