

EVERYTHING happens to me! First some slap-happy character gets me so jumpy I can't even go out on the piazza and look at the stars with Susie May any more, without shuddering. It's about that gargantuan space-ship that is going to smash up the whole world next April. So he said.

Then it happened again. Susie May dragged me over to Hollywood to a Colossus Production premiere of *Never Never*, at the Cathay Square Theatre. We sat on crowded benches outside for a dime, watching the celebrities parade in. Susie May loved it.

Afterward she said for me to wait for her, while she ran over to get Percy Parrish's autograph. I told her I'd be in the Xotik bar-room, having a drink.

I sat at a corner table, sipping my sasparilla, and minding my own business—when all at once somebody slapped me hard on the back, making me give a stout gentleman at the next table a free shower bath.

"Hyah, chum!" this brawny individual said, grinning.

"I don't know you," I said coldly, looking him up and down through my heavy bifocals as if I had trouble even seeing him.

This individual was six-foot-four, at least. He had a beef-and-gravy appearance. Ex-football tackle, was my first impression.

He wasn't put out, as I had hoped. "I'm Jock Wemple!" he grinned jovially, extending an oversize hand. "Shake!"

I shook, then removed what was left of my hand, and massaged it tenderly, saying "Damn!" under my breath.

"Want I should tell you a story?" the individual named Jock Wemple suggested. He ordered three beers—to save the waiter trips.

"That premiere reminds me of one. About another premiere here at Cathay Square—some years ago. A scientific picture called *Back To The Dawn*. Remember?"

"No!" I said decisively. "And I don't care to—"

"Come on, chum! It'll pin your ears back!"

"*Et tu, Brute*," I interposed sadly.

"Say, I know I ain't no Tyrone Power," he grinned crookedly. "But you don't need to call me no brute! Who are you, anyhow?"

"Lemuel Mason is my name," I told him. "I'm a bookkeeper by profession. Consolidated Cement." I restrained a smile so as not to encourage him.

He nodded amiably. He seemed to take my introduction as a sign of approval, for he immediately swung into his story—

LIKE I already told you, I'm Jock Wemple. I used to be bodyguard and handy man for the big-shot scientist Stanton Greylock. Of course that was after I'd spent the best nine years of my life on a college football team. Learning pursuing—as they say . . .

"Stanton Greylock was a small size guy with a droopy straw moustache. He always looked kind of sad, like as if he just got a letter edged in black. Maybe it was his cloudy gray eyes. I don't know what he had to be sad about, though. He wasn't married.

"Anyhow Greylock was one of the smartest guys in this country, or any place. Why, he won the Nobel prize twice running, with one hand tied behind his back!

"Me, I don't know anything about science. I thought it meant 'No Smoking' until I took this job with Greylock."

I cleared my throat importantly:

"Until he disappeared so strangely four years ago, Stanton Greylock was considered the world's foremost authority of certain phases of physics and related sciences," I put in, from my store of library magazine knowledge. "He was also keenly interested in paleontology."

"Is that a fact?" Wemple blinked, somewhat put out. "Well, to get back to my story—"

"That morning Greylock and *me* drove out to the La Brea Pits. Our station wagon was loaded to the roof with all kinds of scientific junk, including what looked like an old-time radio set, mounted on wheels..

" 'What gives with all this junk, Doc?' I asks.

" 'I am going to try an experiment in Time,' he told me solemnly. 'Scientists have frequently dreamed of traveling backward or forward in Time. Personally, my research convinces me that it can be done. But the risks involved are so great that one would be foolhardy to attempt it.

" 'I have another plan—a much less dangerous plan. Simpler, and yet it presents an infinite variety of fascinating possibilities . . .

" 'What I propose to do,' Doc says, his face kind of shining, 'is to employ what I call a Time-Net to snare—from out of the past—something that will be of value to science. Preferably a living creature.'

" 'Such as?' I asks.

" 'Mmrm,' Doc answered. I didn't get it. But if Doc wanted to snare around for something out of back-time it was okay with me.

"I turned the station wagon off Wilshire Boulevard, and eased gently down a bump that led us into the La Brea Park. Where the big stone lizards are.

" 'Ah, here we are, Jock,' Doc says, rubbing his hands together anxiously. 'Park over by those bushes. Then help me unload and prepare the Time-Net.'

"IT WAS a lulu of a gold-spangled morning. And it was bright and early. Traffic on Wilshire wasn't heavy yet.

"I carted out all that heavy apparatus, and set it out just the way Doc directed me to. He picked a nice clear spot on the other side of a low footbridge, near one of those scummy dank-looking tar holes.

"I lugged for a while, and got pretty fagged.

"Say, Doc,' I says. 'Why don't we pick some place what's easier to get to. Where there ain't no marshes. I know a swell stretch down by the beach—'

"You don't understand, Jock,' he says, wagging his head. 'I don't imagine that you even know what La Brea is famous for?'

"He eyed me hopefully, while he fiddled with gadgets on the machine that looked something like a radio.

"I blushed, and looked away. Over at one of those stone lizards.

" 'I'll take a moment to explain,' Doc said kindly. 'La Brea Pits is famous as being the site of a remarkable discovery of dinosaur fossils from the Mesozoic Age. You really ought to avail yourself of the collection of fossils at the Exposition Museum, which were taken from La Brea.

" 'You see, Jock—a long, long time ago there were great pits of tar right here. And many of these great lumbering lizard creatures became mired in this tar. They died in the tar, and it preserved their bones remarkably well through the ages, in fossil form.

" 'Paleozoologists have been able to reconstruct these fossils into replicas of these Mesozoic dinosaurs. We know just about exactly what they looked like . . .

" 'What is most important to us, Jock, is that we know positively that dinosaurs were evident at this exact spot, in the Mesozoic Age. That's why I chose this place for my first experiment . . ."

"You have a remarkable memory, Mr. Wendt," I observed, astonished at his use of words.

"That's nothing," Wendt said sheepishly, wiping a moustache of beer foam off his upper lip. "After what happened later I made it a point to find out about them."

"Now," I said, sliding toward the door. "If you don't mind I'll just—"

"*Siddown!*" Wendt growled. His vexed look vanished right away, and he went on— "Doc Greylock told me exactly how to rig up his Time-Net, while for the next half hour he kept tinkering with the knobs and wheels on his gadget.

"Finally he announced that he was all ready to start, and told me to get outside the circle which his Time-Net enclosed.

"Then he lugged out a special metal box from the station wagon—he wouldn't let me lay a finger on

it—and unlocked it. Very carefully he unwrapped a round white thing that looked like a big egg.

" 'Stand back!' he yelled to me. 'Away from the Net zone!' And he tossed this egg into the middle of the circle.

"It burst. Clouds of vapor shot out on all sides of it. Pretty soon the circle was covered with a queer yellow fog, thick as pea soup.

" 'Now what?' I asks, looking at the yellow fog warily.

" 'There's nothing we can do but wait,' Doc says. 'My Time-Net is all set. If my calculations are correct we should snare something very soon. That circle of space enclosed by my Net has been transferred back to the Mesozoic Age!'

WE WAITED. And waited.

"Nothing happened. Doc sent me out for lunch, and to bring him back a ham-and from a delicatessen. And then we waited some more.

"Doc had arranged to have cops guard all the entrances to the little park, so that no curious bystanders would get into anything.

"Toward evening I commenced to get restless. I had a torrid date with a dame called Ethel. One of those ravaging blondes. What that babe can do with a sweater—boy!

"We were planning on going to the big *Back To The Dawn* premiere, using passes Doc gave me. The studio sent them to him, on account he was what you call a—uh—I dunno. A scientific stooge on the picture. They'd ask him if such-and-such was authentic, and when he said no, they'd go right ahead and put it in anyhow.

"It was sure a break for me. I was borrowing Doc's low-slung Dusenbergs. Make a big splash with Ethel.

"So about five o'clock, I reminded the Doc.

"He heaved a couple sighs. 'You're right, Jock,' he says sadly. 'We may as well go home. The yellow fog is almost gone, and nothing's appeared yet. I must have made a mistake somewhere. I'll go over to my laboratory and check over my computations.'

"He asked the cops to stand guard for a couple hours more just in case. Then we packed up the Time-Net, and scrambled.

"Back home, I slipped into my tux, looking pretty zootsuit if I do say so. Then I drove over and picked up Ethel.

"She had poured herself into one of those Dorothy LaMarr slinkers, and made me wish I had on dark glasses. Did she glitter!

"We stopped for dinner at the Brown Derby, me blowing half a week's pay to make a good impression. Then I lit a Corona-Corona, and sent the hack purring down Wilshire Boulevard toward the Cathay Square Theatre. I was all set for a large evening ...

"I slid Ethel a shy-violet look, and then all of a sudden saw her pretty pan change into a mask of surprised horror.

" 'What's the beef ?' I inquired. "'Look!' she screamed, pointing out the side window. 'A monster!'

"I LOOKED.

"She wasn't kidding! We were right near the La Brea Pits again, and, shambling out of the Doc's Time-Net circle on mammoth earth-shaking pins, flopping a gigantic tail behind him, was a dinosaur!

"I knew right away that was what he was because he looked a lot like one of them stone lizards in the park, only ten times bigger. Also he looked like a model of a dinosaur what was worked by a man inside it—that I saw when I was out at a Colossus Picture's set, when they were shooting *Back To The Dawn*.

"Ethel shrieked again, blotting the sight away with her red-nailed fingers. "I braked the car at the curb, and sat rubbering at the dino. What a sight he was! Must have been fifty feet high, and bigger than six elephants rolled into one.

"He made a kind of slobbering noise with his mouth, and weaved his long serpentine neck slowly from side to side. He looked like he was plenty surprised, too, to find himself in the middle of Hollywood

— instead of among a lot of funny looking fern trees back in the Mesozoic Age.

"He was brilliantly colored—sort of orange and vivid green shades—and from him there came an ugly swamp odor.

"He looked around with his silly little eyes, and that simpery smile on his homely snake's puss. He didn't seem much bothered by the gaping crowd that stopped their cars to stand around him and look—but nobody got very close.

"There was a couple minor smashups, and three or four f rails passed out cold, but nothing very serious happened.

"At last he headed out, seeming to know just where he wanted to go. He lumbered thunderously out into the middle of Wilshire Boulevard, which was blocked off for the big premiere. He paid no attention to the frantic drivers, just shuffled nonchalantly toward the Cathay Square Theatre, his long snaky neck still weaving slowly from side to side.

"It was almost like daylight, on account of all the searchlights. They stabbed up into the dark sky. Hollywood's way of telling everybody what's coming off.

"Ethel shuddered, putting her taffy hair up close to me. I was making the most of the situation when a cop poked his head in the window and barked,

" Say, you're Doctor Greylock's handy man, aren't you?"

" 'I'm his assistant,' I corrected him. " 'This is his car, ain't it?' he snapped. 'Where is the Doc? He told three of my boys to stand guard over

the La Brea Pits entrances, but he didn't let on *this* was going to happen! That monster's on the loose! You'd better get hold of Greylock right away!"

" 'Sure,' I says, letting loose of Ethel. `Right now!"

"I FOUND Doc Greylock puttering away in his lab.

"I think I know what was wrong now,' he said almost happily, nodding to me as I stepped in. 'My calculations were inaccurate by only a few hours. If we hurry right over to La Brea—'

" 'Doc!' I yells. 'You found out too late! It's come already!"

" What—' he started to say.

" 'The dinosaur! One of those giant lizards! He's lumbering along up Wilshire toward the premiere! Holy sugarbags—if we don't get up there and do something, I don't know what'll break loose in that mob up there!"

He jumped back a little, looking at me kind of funny, then started frantically building one of his Time-Bombs.

" 'Jock, we must hurry!' he rasps, his hands flying around the table, mixing chemicals. 'Not a minute to lose! I'll never forgive myself if—'

" 'Take it easy, Doc,' I warns him. `You'll blow a fuse if you don't slow down. I'll get all the junk loaded in the station wagon, and send Ethel home in a cab.'

"I went out, and done it. I was plenty excited, myself, but I knew somebody better keep on the beam, else we'd never even get over there.

"Ethel was glad to go home. She said her mother would kick her out in the street if she went cavorting around with a mess of zoic monsters. Hollywood woof-woofs *was* bad enough.

"It wasn't long until we were spinning burn-rubber down side streets. I wanted to make time. We finally got within a couple blocks of the theatre. There the crowds stopped us.

"I used a little Hollywood lip-magic about being chauffeur to a movie mogul who had to get through. That got us a ways in, but then the crowd wouldn't budge.

"The crowd was gabbing hilariously. I heard one slick haired bozo shout to his red-head gal, 'This here Brindell van Hastings sure does things up right! Imagine a mechanical monster what's that big! I wouldn't have believed it had I not seen it!"

" 'Ain't it the truth, Joe,' the redhead wagged, gleefully. 'You wouldn't know it from a real whatdumacallus, wouldja?"

"Doc groaned.

"`Get them, Doc!' I yelled in exasperation. 'They all think it's part of the show! They think it's a studio prop, built for use in the movie, and lumbering around as an advertising stunt!'

"STILL groaning, Doc stepped out of the car, pulling me with him.

" 'We've got to get further in, through this crowd!' he yells. 'But how?'

" 'Follow me!' I tells him. I wasn't a football tackle nine years just for fun.

"It wasn't long before we were in the dress circle.

"We gave the dinosaur a close-up look.

" 'A brontosaurus!' Doc yells delightedly.

" 'Yeah?' is my comment. 'Well, he is beginning to look irritated. I don't think he likes Hollywood night life. Nobody seems to have been hurt yet, but—'

"Doc's dinosaur did look peeved. His flabby lips drew back in a snarl, showing his teeth. He sort of bristled up on his hind legs, like a walking mountain, and his snaky neck darted from one side to the other.

"Se still headed for the theatre, shaking the earth as he shambled along the little flag-laden parkway in the middle of the wide boulevard. Right across from his great shadowy bulk was the theatre entrance, blazing with light.

"There, under a flower-banked canopy were the stars of *Back To The Dawn*, Dorothy LaMarr and Stanley Smoosh, dithering into a microphone.

"Suddenly, as I glanced around, I heard a lot of commotion off to one side. Then Brindell van Hastings' fat torso pushed out of the sidelines, followed by a flock of cameramen and props carrying cameras and flood-lights.

"Brindell van Hastings was one of Hollywood's ace flicker men. He was producer-director of the premiere opus. He yelled and gesticulated at his men.

"They propped up their sound cameras and flood-lights, and went to work, under his orders.

"There were about half a million other cameras snapping and blinking up at Doc's brontosaurus, too. Reporters, newsreel men, and amateurs. No wonder the dino was annoyed.

"He unclamped his jaws, slavered, and uttered a thunderous squeal. Then he lumbered over and dumped one of the cameras, sending the cameraman sprawling.

" 'You big baboon!' Van Hastings yells, shaking his fist up at him. He whirled on his men. 'Get all this action, you nincompoops—or I'll chop you!'

" 'Jock!' Doc Greylock yells, pulling my arm. 'You start wheeling the Time-Net out, and set the cable up around him, while I go and enlist the aid of the police!'

"So I started carting the junk out of the station wagon, shoving bystanders aside.

" 'What's up, Bub?' the guy with the red-head asks importantly, grabbing my arm.

" 'Listen,' I tells him. 'That dino is on the level. And if you and this whole bunch of boobs knows what's good for you, you'll blow!' There upon I socked him for being so familiar.

"Things commenced to happen thick and fast after that.

"Word spread around that the dino wasn't a fakus, and before long the whole mob was bleating and milling like a herd of sheep.

"It was my last trip. I wheeled the Doc's gadget ahead of me like a kiddie-car. The monster started cleaning up.

"I heard a shrill feminine shriek. It was Dorothy LaMarr. Her dress was gold, and shone fit to knock your eyes right out through the back of your head.

"I wouldn't know whether the dino liked that or didn't like it. Anyway, he made a sideways grab at her with one of his slow-moving nippers—the size of a steam-shovel scoop. ,

"I was too far away to do anything. Not that I would have anyway. Who but a dope wants to pick on a walking mountain?

"But Stanley Smoosh did something. He started to run away. His cute face was drained white as a blotter.

"But his foot got tangled up in the train of Dorothy LaMarr's dress, and he fell flat, right plop on

Dorothy.

"This was a break for her, as it turned out, on account of the dino missed her, and had to draw his claw back for another grab.

"By this time Dorothy and Stanley Smoosh, hugging each other like they never even had done in flickers, crawled hurriedly away to hide in a hole somewhere. Which wasn't a bad idea.

"Me, I had to get real close to the monster, in order to set out the boundaries for the Time-Net. He caught sight of me, and turned on me curiously.

"The place was a pandemonium. Everybody was wise by now that this was the real McCoy. Not a reasonable facsimile.

"They were shrieking, and yelling, and trampling each other underfoot. Made a kind of Roman holiday of it.

"Van Hastings' cameras were still rolling, getting it all in. He stood off to one side, yelling directions. His strident voice topped them all.

"I edged around the dino, spreading out the heavy coil of wires that was to mark the Time-Net limits. And when I edged, he edged.

"His snaky head weaved downward to get a good look at what I was up to. His funny eyes blinked at me coldly.

"Finally I had the time circle around him. I knocked down a couple of Van Hastings' flood-lights to do it, and he let loose with a couple of old Armenian curses.

" 'Go peel an apple-knocker,' I says. "I caught a glimpse of Doc running toward me and the dino, with a battery of cops on his tail. I turned to yell at him.

"About that time I felt a slimy claw reach around my mid-section, and sweep' me up in the air. First thing I knew the palms; searchlights, and mob was all way down below.

"I sweated, struggled, and yelled. Then I was peering into the ugliest puss I ever hope to see. Awful green and brown and orange, with cold lizard's eyes, and a red gaping mouth. The odor that came out of it gagged me.

" 'Let me down, King Kong!' I hollers. 'You're pinching my belly!' "Down below, running back and forth, was Doc Greylock. And in his hand he held the Time-Bomb.

" 'Throw it!' I yells.

"No!" his far-off voice protests. `You don't want to go back to the Mesozoic too, do you?'

"I could see what he meant. It looked bad."

"WHAT happened, Mr. Wemple?"

I asked breathlessly. Very deliberately, he called the waiter over, and ordered three more beers.

"You ain't interested, chum," Wemple grinned aggravatingly. "No. You don't want to hear my story. I'll stop now!"

"Please, Mr. Wempel," I said very humbly. "Don't stop now! The brontosaurus has got you in his clutches!"

"Okay, chum," he grinned. "I was only kidding. Well—

"The idea was to get him to set me down easy, if possible. Instead of plucking me to pieces, or tossing me clear down to Central Avenue. . . .

"I yanked out this little pen knife I always carry on the other end of my watch chain. I jabbed it into his claw.

"He let out a funny squeal, looking down at me questioningly.

"I jabbed him again. He swung me around until I didn't know from nothing.

"I found out later Doc distracted him some way, and he swung his claw down, tossing me carelessly away. I passed out cold.

"But not before I vaguely glimpsed Doc draw back, like a Notre Dame left end, and toss his Time-Bomb . . .

"When I woke I was lying on grass. That scared me. Grass! I didn't dare open my eyes for a couple seconds. Then somebody grabbed my arms, and turned me over.

"f blinked my peepers open. 'Doc!' I yells. 'Are we in the Mesozoic?'

" 'No, Jock.' Doc felt me over for broken bones. 'I thought you'd be half-dead. You seem to be indestructible!'

" 'Where's our playmate?' I asks, pushing up on my pins, and squinting dizzily around.

"He'd tossed me on the parkway grass, which helped break my fall a trifle. But no brontosaurus could I see.

" 'Back where he came from,' Doc says. 'A sadder and wiser lizard, no doubt. You know, Jock, I've just figured out something that has been puzzling me for some time. Just why the dinosaur was so persistent in his drive to get to the Theatre—'

" 'Maybe he ain't never seen a premiere,' I puts in.

" 'Jock, I think the Cathay Square Theatre is now standing in the exact spot that was his home-site, back in the Mesozoic. Instinct immediately brought him here, and when he didn't find his mate waiting for him, he became furious.

" 'The brontosaurus was a herbivorous lizard. He wouldn't have eaten anyone, but—'

" 'But he sure could have trampled this joint into a shambles!' I finished for him.

"THE police herded the crowd gently away, but a lot of them stayed. The feeling persisted that this had been all part of the show. And would you believe it, they went right ahead with the premiere.

"A medium sized crowd hemmed us in, curious-eyed. All at once Brindell van Hastings bristled through, and marched importantly up to the Doc.

"So you're the scientist who invented the Time-Net, that brought back the dinosaur!' he cries, sizing the Doc up. He shoved a paper and pen into

Doc's hands. 'Sign right there, on the dotted line!'

" 'What is—?' Doc begins puzzledly.

"Van Hastings looked around him fearfully, as if he was afraid of rival studio spies, and then bent over pompously and whispered something in Doc's ear.

" 'What did you say?' Doc exclaims.

"Van Hastings gives a repeat performance. This time I shove my shell-like ear in and get the low-down.

"It was like this: Van Hastings wanted Doc Greylock to use his Time-Net to reach back in time and snare glamor gals like Cleopatra, Salome, and Helen of Troy, right out of their boudoirs—for *him to star in exclusive autobiographical movies of their lives!*

"Wow! I waited eagerly to hear what sad-faced old Doc Greylock would say to that. Knowing how he never had much use for women before, I doubted that he would approve.

"Doc's eyes glittered. He pulled at his straw moustache, like he always did when in deep thought.

" 'Wan Hastings!' he says suddenly. 'I will not sign on any dotted line! I will not get Cleopatra and Salome out of the past—for you to star in your misinformative epics! But you have given me a very marvelous idea! Do you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to—' "

"LEM MASON, I'm surprised at you!" a shocked feminine voice behind me cried.

I was following Jock Wempel's narrative breathlessly, so only glanced back in annoyance. But one glance was enough.

It was Susie May. She was standing in the bar-room doorway, tapping her foot. And when Susie May taps her foot, look out.

"Susie May!" I choked. "Er—have a drink?"

She sauntered over. "I will not have a drink, you wolf in cheap clothing! Sitting here talking about other girls behind my back, right in front of my face. I heard you!"

She talked so fast she swallowed her gum.

"But, Susie! We were only talking about Cleopatra. You know *her!*" Her eyes snapped fire.

"I sure do know about her! She's one of those burlesque queens down at the Folly Theayter on Main Street!"

She pulled me toward the door, tossing Mr. Wemple a look of scorn.

"Come away from that Hollywood smasher. He's a bad influence on you, Lem!"

"But—"

At the doorway, as she whirled me out, I clung to the edge of the bar, and yelled back,

"What was it the Doc said, Wemple? Quick!"

He looked up from his sixth beer, winked and nodded rakishly.

"Doc says to Brindell van Hastings, 'You've given me a marvelous idea! I'm going to build me a hideaway some place far away, and bring back some of them historical glamor gals—all for myself!'"

THE END.

A NEW USE FOR RATS

ACCORDING to the yearbook published by the United States Department of Agriculture, rats are very useful "test tubes" in which to test the value of foods to be consumed by humans. The reason given for this is that a rat's appetite is very similar to that of a human which also explains why rats prefer to live in homes rather than in the outdoors. The rat is also preferred to dogs, guinea pigs, and rabbits, all good food testers, since the rat is inexpensive. They require very little living space and can be fed for only 50c a year while a rabbit costs \$4.50, and a dog \$15.00.