

# ADDED INDUCEMENT

THE ELECTRICAL APPLIANCE STORE was one of many that had sprung up in and around the city, seemingly overnight. There were half a dozen TV sets in the window, marked at amazingly low prices, and a window-wide sign boasted;

WE'RE PRACTICALLY giving THEM AWAY! "This is the place we've been looking for," Janice said, and she pulled Henry through the entrance and into the store proper.

They hadn't gone two steps beyond the entrance when they came to a common standstill. Before them stood a huge and dazzling console with a 24-inch screen, and if you were TV hunting, you couldn't go by it any more than a hungry mouse could go by a new mouse trap baited with his favorite cheese.

"We can never afford that one," Henry said.

"But, darling, we can afford to look, can't we?"

So they looked. They looked at the sleek mahogany cabinet and the cute little double doors that you could dose when you weren't watching your programs; at the screen and the program in progress; at the company's name at the base of the screen—BAAL—

"Must be a new make," Henry said. "Never heard of it before."

"That doesn't mean it isn't any good," Janice said.

—at the array of chrome-plated dials beneath the company's name and the little round window just below the middle dial—

"What's *that* for?" Janice asked, pointing at the window.

Henry leaned forward. "The dial above it says `popcorn but that *can't* be."

"Oh, yes it can!" a voice behind them said.

Turning, they beheld a small, mild-looking man with a pronounced widow's peak. He had brown eyes, and he was wearing a brown pin-striped suit.

"Do you work here?" Henry asked.

The small man bowed. "I'm Mr. Krull, and this is my establishment. . . . Do you like popcorn, sir?"

Henry nodded. "Once in a while."

"And you, madam?"

"Oh, yes," Janice said. "Very much!"

"Allow me to demonstrate."

Mr. Krull stepped forward and tweaked the middle dial halfway around. Instantly, the little window lighted up, revealing a shining inbuilt flying pan with several thimble-sized aluminum cups suspended above it. As Henry and Janice watched, one of the cups upended itself and poured melted butter into the pan; shortly thereafter, another followed suit, emitting a Lilliputian cascade of golden popcorn kernels.

You could have heard a pin drop—or, more appropriately, you could have heard a popcorn kernel pop—the room was so quiet; and after a moment, Henry and Janice and Mr. Krull did hear one pop. Then another one popped, and then another, and pretty soon the machine-gun fire of popcorn in metamorphosis filled the room. The window now was like one of those little glass paperweights you pick up and shake and the snow starts falling, only this wasn't snow—it was popcorn—the whitest, liveliest, fluffiest popcorn that Henry and Janice had ever seen.

"Well, did you ever!" Janice gasped.

Mr. Krull held up his hand. The moment was a dramatic one. The popcorn had subsided into a white, quivering mound. Mr. Krull tweaked the dial the rest of the way around and the pan flipped over. Abruptly a little secret door beneath the window came open, a tiny red light began blinking on and off, and a buzzer started to buzz; and there, sitting in the newly revealed secret cubicle, was a fat round bowl brim-full with popcorn, and with little painted bluebirds flying happily around its porcelain sides.

Henry was entranced. "Well, what'll they think of next!"

"How utterly charming!" Janice said.

"It's good popcorn too," Mr. Krull said.

He bent over and picked up the bowl, and the little red light went out and the buzzer became silent.

"Have some?"

Henry and Janice took some, and Mr. Krull took some himself. There was a reflective pause while everybody munched. Presently: "Why, it's delicious!" Janice said.

"Out of this world," said Henry.

Mr. Krull smiled. "We grow our own. Nothing's too good for Baal Enterprises. . . . And now, if I may, I'd like to demonstrate some of our other special features."

"I don't know," Henry said. "You see—"

"Oh, let him!" Janice interrupted. "It won't hurt us to watch, even if we can't afford such an expensive model."

Mr. Krull needed no more encouragement. He began with a discourse on the cabinet, describing where the wood had been cut, how it had been cured, shaped, worked, polished, and fitted together; then he went into a mass of technical details about the chassis, the inbuilt antenna, the high-fidelity speaker—

Suddenly Henry realized that the paper that had somehow got into his left hand was a contract and that the object that had somehow slipped into his right was a fountain pen. "Wait a minute," he said. "Wait a minute! I can't afford anything like this. We were just look—"

"How do you know you can't afford it?" Mr. Krull asked reasonably. "I haven't even mentioned the price yet?"

"Then don't bother mentioning it. It's bound to be too high:"

"You might find it too high, and then again you might not. It's a rather relative figure. But even if you do find it too high, I'm sure the terms will be agreeable."

"All right," Henry said. "What *are* the terms?"

Mr. Krull smiled, rubbed the palms of his hands together. "*One*," he said, "the set is guaranteed for life. *Two*, you get a lifetime supply of popcorn. *Three*, you pay nothing down. *Four*, you pay no weekly, monthly, quarterly, or annual installments—"

"Are you giving it to us?" Janice's hazel eyes were incredulous.

"Well, not exactly. You have to pay for it—on one condition."

"Condition?" Henry asked.

"On the condition that you come into a certain amount of money."

"How much money?"

"One million dollars," Mr. Krull said.

Janice swayed slightly. Henry took a deep breath, blew it out slowly. "And the price?"

"Come now, sir. Surely you know what the price is by now. And surely you know who I am by now."

For a while Henry and Janice just stood there. Mr. Krull's widow's peak seemed more pronounced than ever, and there was a hint of mockery in his smile. For the first time, and with something of a shock, Henry realized that his ears were pointed.

Finally he got his tongue loose from the roof of his mouth. "You're not, you can't be—"

"Mr. Baal? Of course not! I'm merely one of his representatives—though, in this instance, 'dealer' would be a more appropriate term."

There was a long pause. Then: "Both—both our souls?" Henry asked.

"Naturally," Mr. Kalil said. "The terms are generous enough to warrant both of them, don't you think? ... Well, what do you say, sir? Is it a deal?"

Henry began backing through the doorway. Janice backed with him, though not with quite the same alacrity.

Mr. Krull shrugged philosophically. "See you later then," he said.

Henry followed Janice into their apartment and closed the door. "I can't believe it," he said. "It *couldn't* have happened!"

"It happened all right," Janice said. "I can still taste the popcorn. You just don't want to believe it, that's all. You're afraid to believe it."

"Maybe you're right. . . ."

Janice fixed supper, and after supper they sat in the living room and watched *Gunfire, Feud, Shoot-'em-Up Hennessey*, and the news, on the old beat-up TV set they'd bought two years ago when they were married to tide them over till they could afford a better one. After the news, Janice made popcorn in the kitchen and Henry opened two bottles of beer.

The popcorn was burned. Janice gagged on the first mouthful, pushed her bowl away. "You know, I almost think it would be worth it," she said. "Imagine, all you have to do is turn a dial and you can have popcorn any time you want without missing a single one of your programs!"

Henry was aghast. "You can't be serious!"

"Maybe not, but I'm getting awful sick of burned popcorn and picture trouble! And besides, who'd ever give us a million dollars anyway!"

"We'll look around again tomorrow afternoon," Henry said. "There must be other makes of sets besides Baal that have inbuilt popcorn poppers. Maybe we'll find one if we look long enough."

But they didn't. They started looking as soon as they got through work in the pants-stretcher factory, but the only sets they found with inbuilt popcorn poppers were stamped unmistakably with the name BAAL, and stood in the new electrical appliance stores that had sprung up, seemingly overnight, along with Mr. Krull's.

"I can't understand it," said the last orthodox dealer they visited. "You're the fiftieth couple to come in here today looking for a TV set with a popcorn window and an inbuilt popcorn popper. Why, I never heard of such a thing!"

"You will," Henry said.

They walked home disconsolately. A truck whizzed by in the street. They read the big red letters on its side—BAAL ENTERPRISES—and they saw the three new TV consoles jouncing on the truckbed, and the three little popcorn windows twinkling in the slimmer sunshine.

They looked at each other, then looked quickly away. . . .

The truck was parked in front of their apartment building when they got home. Two of the sets had already been delivered and the third was being trundled down the nearby alley to the freight elevator. When they reached their floor they saw the set being pushed down the hall, and they lingered in their doorway long enough to learn its destination.

"Betty and Herb!" Janice gasped. "Why, I never thought they'd—"

"Humph!" Henry said. "Shows what their values amount to."

They went in, and Janice fixed supper. While they were eating they heard a noise outside the door, and when they looked out they saw another Baal set being delivered across the hall.

Next morning, three more were delivered on the same floor, and when Janice looked out the window after fixing breakfast, she saw two Baal trucks in the street and half a dozen consoles being trundled into the alley that led to the freight elevator. She beckoned to Henry, and he came over and stood beside her.

She pointed down at the trucks. "I'll bet we're the only people left on the whole block who still pop popcorn in their kitchen. Mr. and Mrs. Neanderthal—that's us!"

"But at least we can still call our souls our own," Henry said, without much conviction.

"I suppose you're right. But it would be so nice to pop popcorn in the living room for a change. And such good popcorn too. . . ."

They put in a miserable day at the pants-stretcher factory. On the way home they passed Mr. Krull's store. There was a long line of people standing in front of it, and a new sign graced the window where the dummy come-on sets still stood: GOING OUT OF BUSINESS-THIS MAY BE YOUR LAST CHANCE TO OWN A TV-POPCORN CONSOLE!

Janice sighed. "We'll be the only ones," she said. "The only ones in the whole city who pop popcorn in the kitchen and watch their favorite programs on a stone-age TV set!"

When Henry didn't answer, she turned toward where she thought he was. But he wasn't there any more. He was standing at the end of the line and waving to her to join him.

Mr. Krull was beaming. He pointed to the two little dotted lines, and Henry and Janice signed their names with eager fingers. Then Henry wrote down their street and number in the space marked ADDRESS and handed the contract back to Mr. Krull.

Mr. Krull glanced at it, then turned toward the back of the store. "Henry and Janice Smith, sir," he called. "111 Ibid Street, Local"

They noticed the tall man then. He was standing at the back of the store, jotting down something in a little red notebook. You could tell just by looking at him that he was a businessman, and you didn't have to look twice to see that he was a successful one. He was wearing a neat charcoal-gray suit and a pair of modern horn-rimmed glasses. His hair was quite dark, but his temples were sprinkled becomingly with gray. When he noticed Henry and Janice staring at him, he smiled at them warmly and gave a little laugh. It was an odd kind of a laugh "Ha ha ha ha," it went, then dropped abruptly way down the scale: "HO HO HO HO! . . ."

"Incidentally," Mr. Krull was saying, "if a million dollars *does* come your way, you have to accept it, you know—even though you won't get a chance to spend it. Not only that, if you get an opportunity to win a million dollars, you've got to take advantage of it. It's all stipulated in the contract."

Janice repressed a nervous giggle. "Now who in the world would give us a million dollars!"

Mr. Krull smiled, then frowned. "Sometimes I just can't understand people at all," he said. "Why, if I'd approached our prospective customers directly, in my capacity as Mr. Baal's representative, and had offered each of them a brand new TV console—or even a million dollars—for his or her soul, I'd have been laughed right off the face of the earth! If you want to be a success today, no matter what business you're in, you've got to provide an added inducement. Oh, good night, sir."

The tall man was leaving. At Mr. Krull's words, he paused in the doorway and turned. The final rays of the afternoon sun gave his face a reddish cast. He bowed slightly. "Good night, Krull," he said. "Good night, Janice and Henry." He appended to his words another measure of his unusual laughter.

"Who—who was that?" Henry asked.

"That was Mr. Baal. He's preparing a list of contestants for his new TV program."

"His TV program!"

Mr. Krull's smile was the quintessence of innocence. "Why, yes. It hasn't been announced yet, but it will be soon. . . . It's a giveaway show—and quite a unique one, too. Mr. Baal has everything arranged so that none of the contestants can possibly lose."

Janice was tugging at Henry's arm. Her face was pale. "Come on, darling. Let's go home."

But Henry hung back "What—what's the name of the show?" he asked.

"*Make a Million*," Mr. Krull said.