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MYSTIC

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November 1953

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MYSTIC Magazine

Issue No. 1

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Editorially Speaking...

THE other night we got up out of bed around midnight and went out into the kitchen to raid the refrigerator. Sometimes we like a glass of cold milk and perhaps a few cookies to carry us over until morning. As we sat there munching cookies, our eyes kept playing tricks on us; there seemed to be something black flitting around always just beyond the range of our vision. We couldn't quite catch it, with just the small light on the kitchen range; so we turned on the overhead light. Then we saw it—a large bat was zip-ping through the house, from room to room, with soundless, seemingly effortless grace!

Each time around, he'd swing past our head, almost touching us, and making us duck rather frantically. We tried hitting at him as he passed, but as well try to hit the wind. Bats have a marvelous system of radar, and every motion we made was noted instantly, and avoided.

We didn't like the idea of a bat in the house—we were minded of old legends, even thought of vampires—but what to do? There seemed no way of catching him. Well, we solved it very neatly—we simply opened the outside kitchen door wide and sat quietly waiting. Inevitably the bat flew through the open door and van-

ished into the night.

While we finished our milk we sat there for a time, thinking. Today, in what we are pleased to call an "enlightened" age, we can regard a bat in a calm light. Just a winged animal. That is, until we begin to study him scientifically he is just a winged animal. Then suddenly it strikes us that he is an animal, and *not* a bird! An animal that flies like a bird; and as we noted, even more gracefully and easily and with the added advantage that he has a safeguard against slamming into something in flight, even though unable to see. A bird, under the same conditions, would be helpless.

Where *did* the bat come from? What happened to evolution when just this *one* animal took to the air? Perhaps, far back in time, there is a sensational story, an *alien* story, to account for what we must regard as a tremendous mystery, a weird paradox, a very strange departure from the norm. Perhaps there is *good* reason for the superstitious horror with which most of us regard the bat. Perhaps there is a reason for the bat being an out-cast among animals and birds alike. Perhaps there is reason for this complicated, but effective, substitute for sight. Why did evolution, under the sun, fail to provide this one animal with eyes? Be-

cause it lives in the dark, in caves? But no; for it is free to come out when it wishes—it can fly as well in the day as in the night; its radar does not depend on light, but on sound. Actually, it should be unaware that light exists. In our kitchen, it flew about without change of tactic, with lights on or off. It gave no sign that it knew lights had been turned on.

Did the bat come from another world; a world where there was no light to develop sight; where sight had to be replaced by the strange radar-like sense based on sound? Is this other world *another* world, or is it some dark, unknown place on (or in) *this* world? Perhaps the bat has a most tremendous story to tell—if we could only learn it!

This is a new magazine. Perhaps it is like the bat, flying around in a world in which ordinary sight is like blindness. It is devoted to the unseen things, to the mysterious, to the mystic, to the occult, to the unknown, to the unfound, to the unsuspected. It is at one and the same time, a search for light, and a delving into the dark. It is an effort to bring scientific common sense to bear on the mysterious; and an admission that our unreasonable superstitions may be reasonable after all.

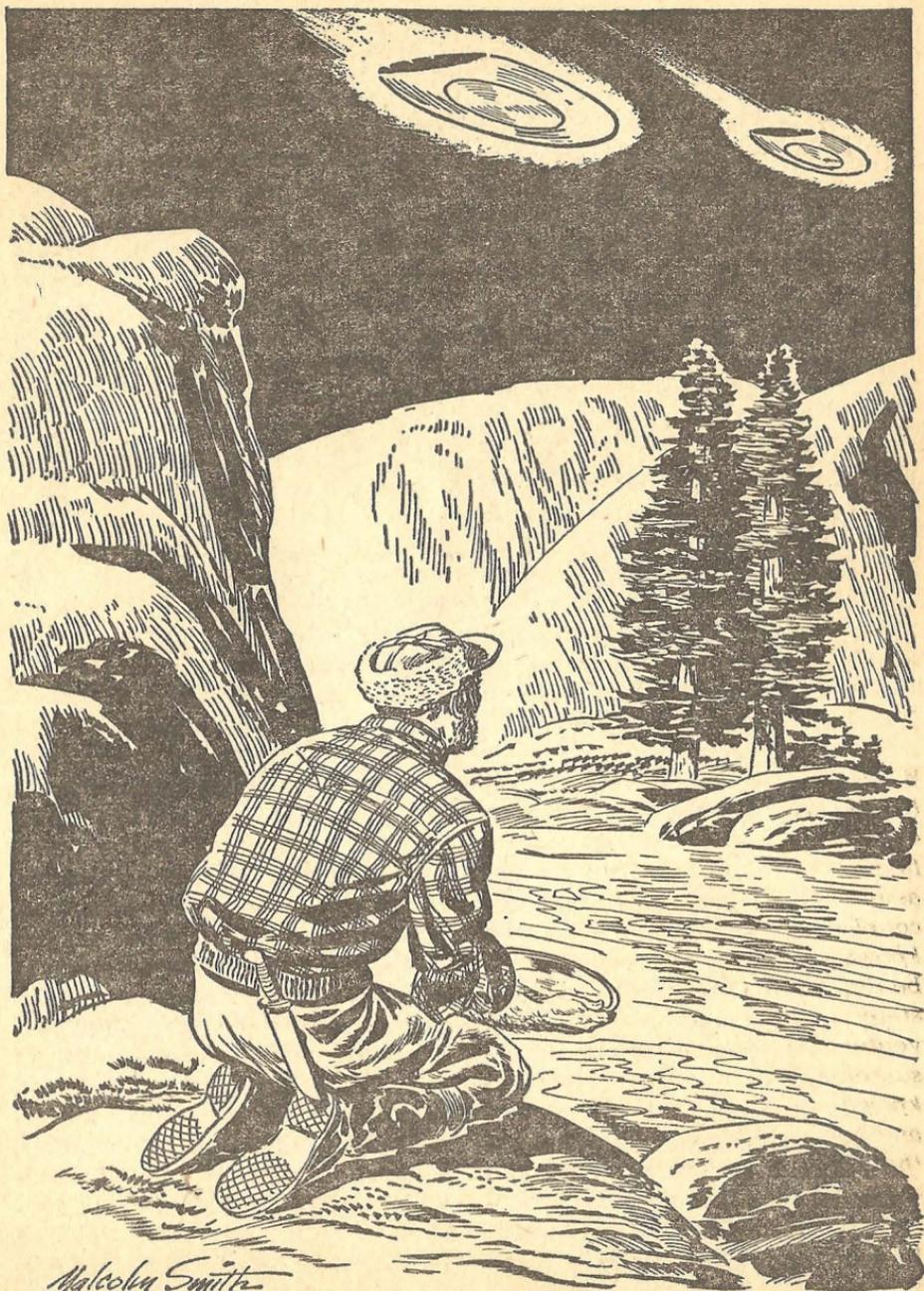
The unknown is unknown. Therefore it cannot be treated in a factual way. The scientific method does not apply; the only result of such application being a negative one. Our inclination, when we

cannot be positive, is to be negative; so that we may not be ridiculed. A bat, says science, is harmless. Yet, somehow, we fear him! And if we put our reasons into words, such as vampire, we are regarded with suspicion, labeled "superstitious."

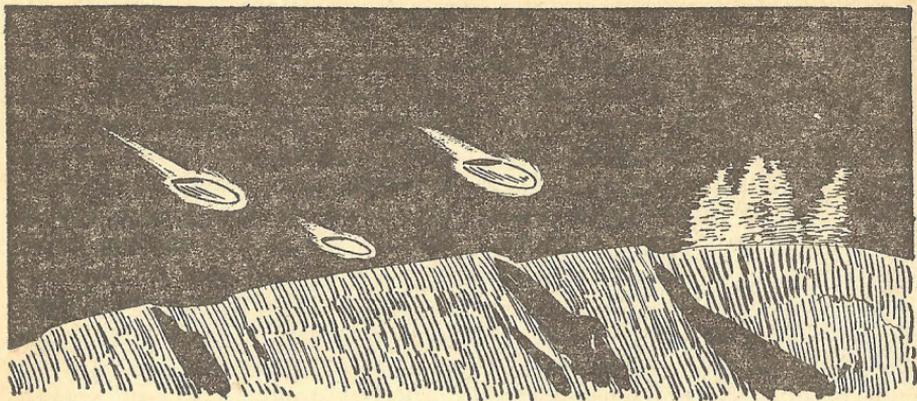
A superstition is a belief, regardless of knowledge or reason. It is a feeling we get, an acceptance due to a sense we may be unaware exists. When we see a bat, something besides reason and knowledge tells us to be afraid. What is that something? Perhaps if we knew the meaning of the word "stition" we'd know what we mean by superstition.

This is a magazine of fiction. The stories you will read herein are not based on reason or knowledge. They are based on the stranger things. They are tales of the things of which superstition is the only historian. They are stories of the supernatural, of the weird, of the mysterious, of the unknown, of life after death, or reincarnation, of dreams; of vampires and witches and goblins and werewolves; of the soul, the subconscious mind, the unconscious mind, the superconscious mind; of hell, or heaven, of the devil, of super beings, of angels, of demons, of elementals, of familiars; of spirits, ghosts, phantoms, afreets, djinns; of magic, both white and black, legerdemain, illusion; of cults and secret societies; of the white brotherhood and the

(Concluded on page 51)



Malcolm Smith



The HIDDEN KINGDOM

A Sensational Revelation of the Secret Rulers of Earth, and of the Coming War Foretold in Ancient Prophecy, the Battle of Armageddon.

By Ray Palmer

When you read this story, you will tell yourself that it is fiction; the editors assure you that it is. But what if it isn't? What if, by some strange coincidence, the writer has hit upon the truth? What if, as you read, you find yourself repeating the word fiction to yourself in order to feel reassured — because what you are reading stirs some deep conviction, coupled with dread, that it is not fiction? The writer is a craftsman: he knows how to spin words with such skill that even a wary reader may be duped into believing. To avoid any cry of hoax, the writer wishes to state positively that he has only attempted to write a story of high adventure, of thrilling action, of exciting plot and development, and of supreme entertainment. He has woven into his narrative a wealth of knowledge of the mysterious, of philosophy, of occult and forbidden — and hidden — things. His story is soundly based on factual research. All that happens is only an imaginative representation of what might conceivably be true, but to the best of his knowledge, is not. If you wish to commend him on his logic, he will be delighted. But more than that . . . ? One thing, however, is sure — you are in for a reading treat you will never forget!

HE said to the light, "Go out!" and it did. At almost the same instant the earthquake smashed San Francisco flat. Afterward, my father argued that there must have been an initial tremor, imperceptible to the senses, but sufficient to sever the pipes leading from the gas main. But to me, crouched that night on the stair landing, peering out through the carved staves of the hand rail, it seemed that the light had *obeyed* my father's mysterious guest.

I was only six years old, or a little more. I was born in 1899. My father was one of the guiding lights of lusty San Francisco; some said the light was a bit on the misguiding side. However that may have been, we children were kept strictly: to bed at eight, church on Sunday, clean clothes at all times, and a sincere respect for the rod.

That particular night (no need to tell you the date, it's in all the history books) I had been put to bed as usual. But I hadn't remained there. The gist of the conversation that came drifting up to me from the living room was intriguing. I was at that age when curiosity was becoming a consuming thing. Also, I had a vivid imagination along the lines of Arabian Nights, flying carpets and magic lamps. So, when the subject of magic came up in the living room (I called it magic

because they were talking about doing things without using their hands) I crept out of bed and quietly down the stairs to the landing, where I remained, peering down at the group visible through the arch of the big living room doors, slid now all the way back into their recessed niches.

There were a half-dozen men and as many women—and my father—present. The women were dressed in evening gowns and because of my youth I did not recognize them then as "daring," so my attention swiftly centered on the young man who was speaking.

Even while sitting at ease in a great lounging chair there was a certain animation and alertness about him that made him a commanding figure. He already had the attention of the group, and he instantly gained mine. His hair was coal black, and quite long. It was wavy and his head was massive, with pronounced cheekbones. His lips were wide, smiling, easy, likeable. As he sat directly facing me, I could stare into his dark and piercing eyes, almost spellbound by the electric force that seemed to emanate from them. He was very tall, taller than my father who is over six feet. His hands were delicate, with long, tapered fingers, giving the impression of the strength of fine steel rather than of muscle. He was dressed in a very plain suit, contrasting sharply with

the evening clothes of the other men in the room. Yet he did not seem less dignified because of that.

"It can be done," he was saying. "The power of the mind is far greater than is generally realized. I have witnessed telekinesis on several occasions. The subject was kept closely confined, and yet objects were seen to move apparently of their own volition."

"My own experience has been more practical," my father spoke up, and it seemed to me he was being a trifle sarcastic, for it was the tone of voice he used when we children had done something especially stupid. "If it were true, I should have had very bad luck in several of my establishments. Consider the results if my patrons were able to control the movements of the dice! Obviously they are not able to do so, and it is not because they do not try. Every roll is accompanied by the utmost concentration. If the dice could be disturbed in their natural motion, they *would* be, I assure you."

"What about young Fancher, the other night?" asked another of the men, a fat-bellied person whose vest sported a huge gold chain that criss-crossed it, and from a loop of which hung a large elk's tooth.

My father laughed. "Luck! After all, we can understand luck; and one such instance—or a dozen—cannot be construed as some-

thing else, something that requires a far greater stretch of the imagination."

The commanding young man turned slightly toward my father. "Your attitude is a commendable one," he said. "At least you shall never be tricked. Yet, I say that both factors exist—luck, and the ability to control that luck."

"Is that ability due to any special powers which most of us do not have?" asked my father.

"No. It is a power in all of us."

"Then *you* should be able to do it!" The challenge in my father's voice was obvious, and as before, the tone was somehow insulting.

"I should," admitted the young man.

"Then why don't you?"

"It is a matter more of knowing how to apply the power than a question of whether or not one has it."

"You've witnessed the power in use, you have claimed. Then you must have some meagre inkling of how to apply it."

"Yes."

"Then *do* it."

"And if I should, what would you think of me? Would you regard me as a clever charlatan, or would you perhaps fear me—for what I might do at your dice tables?"

My father laughed aloud. "Fear you! I fear nothing. Rather, I think it is you who fear to be bested in your argument; which you have already been, in my

mind, for it is a senseless argument to begin with. When less practical discussions are launched, it will be a dull evening indeed."

The young man did not seem disturbed by my father's ridicule. "What would you like me to try?"

My father looked nonplussed. Finally he said, "Anything! Far be it from me to dictate an impossibility. Select your own subject, and make it easy."

The young man glanced up at the chandelier, which was an ornate glass one, with its gas mantles flaring brightly. "Perhaps I might contrive to turn off the gas in that light."

"You'll have to turn it on again," said my father. "I'll be dashed if I sit here in the dark—if you succeed!"

There was general laughter, but it subsided quickly as the young man sat in his chair, still at ease, but staring up at the lamp with a peculiar look of detachment in his expression.

For a long moment nothing happened, then suddenly, exactly as though the key had been turned to shut off the flow of gas in the pipe, the mantles stopped flaring, faded to a dull red still visible in the resulting gloom, then turned black.

From below me there came several exclamations, a muttered curse from my father, and a muffled scream from one of the women. Whether or not she

screamed because of the darkness or for some other reason, I was never to know, for at that precise instant there began a fearful roaring so tremendous in magnitude that all other sound was drowned out as though it had never existed. With the same instant came a rolling, shuddering motion of the landing on which I crouched. To my terrified young inexperience it was the staircase that was falling. I had no concept that it was the whole countryside that was going through this terrible convulsion. I had no idea that within the next two minutes all of San Francisco tumbled into ruin about me. For something struck me on the head and I knew no more.

I WON'T burden you with a long description of what followed; of how my father, in the darkness, fought his way up to the landing where he discovered my body, and as flames began to light the gloom, carried me outside. Nor of how he fought his way back in to rescue my older brother and sister, but failed to save them from perishing in the fire. Nor of the hours I wandered in my nightie in the inferno of destroyed San Francisco, fleeing the advancing fire up toward Knob Hill, until at last I was rescued by a smoke-blackened man who delivered me to a first-aid station that had been set up in a clear space, where eventually my father found me.

All this is but a vague memory to me now. More than forty years have passed, and it is a thing I would rather forget.

But never have I forgotten the handsome young man and the way he made the light go out.

IN the summer of 1947 I saw the flying saucers. I was prospecting near my mountain cabin when they came. It was a bright blue flash from the equally bright blue sky that first attracted my attention, reflecting from the shiny bottom of my pan as I emptied it in the stream. I looked up. Coming across the mountains to the east was a chain of seven bright objects, seemingly round, proceeding with great speed toward the west. But suddenly they dipped. Dropping down with great rapidity, they disappeared from my view behind a ridge that rose up out of the flatland between the creek and the western mountains.

I got slowly to my feet, laid my pan aside. My legs were cramped with stooping, and I stood there while I fumbled for my tobacco. The ridge was about a mile and a half away, and when the shiny objects did not reappear, I lit my pipe and started out. I felt that the walk was what I need anyway, and the shiny objects had aroused my curiosity, which was as lively now as it had been in my childhood. In fact, my chosen life as a prospector was

hardly because of the lure of finding gold, as I never had and never hoped to, but because I was curious about life, about Nature, and was continually delving into her mysteries. In my youth I had grown tired of the city and its ways. The new San Francisco had boggled me about until I had rebelled against it. With the death of my father and inheritance of a type of business that did not appeal to me, I sold it out and went into the Nature I was to come to love.

It took me a half-hour to reach the ridge, and another fifteen minutes to climb it. And it must have been during that climb that the mysterious objects flew off and disappeared; for as I topped the ridge and gazed into the flat little valley below, it was as bare as the palm of my hand, save for a few shrubs and scrubby trees and barren rocks. The climb up the ridge had winded me, so I sat down on a rock to rest. While I rested, I relit my pipe. As the smoke curled into the still air, I saw a man out in the valley. He was walking toward me.

His presence in this vicinity surprised me more than had the appearance and disappearance of the mysterious flying objects. To the east was a desolate area rimmed by a towering escarpment almost impossible to surmount. Nor was there any settled habitation within forty miles either to north or south. Water also was a problem, and for a man

to be walking into this area from either direction was contrary to the dictates of common sense. Therefore I waited his approach with no little curiosity.

Within twenty minutes he had reached the slope. Seeing me, he waved and came on. As he drew near, I saw that he was a tall man, perhaps thirty years old, and dressed in brand new levis and a broad sombrero. He wore a khaki shirt and a Sam Browne belt. His boots were plain and he carried a small knapsack over his shoulder.

Reaching me, he removed his hat and revealed a mop of wavy black hair and grinned at me. "Hello," he said. "Never expected to find anyone out here."

I didn't answer for a moment. Something about him was disturbing, but I could not place what it was. "No more did I," I said finally. "Especially from that direction. You must have had a long walk."

He turned and looked back the way he had come. "It is a long way, isn't it?" he said. "But I like walking."

"Did you see anything peculiar on the way?" I asked.

"Yes. Did you?"

"Something in the sky?"

He looked at me. "What did you see?"

"Seven shiny aircraft, but not any aircraft I've ever seen before. They were flying mighty fast."

"Yes," he said, "I saw them." "They landed in the valley," I said.

"You saw that too?"

"No," I admitted. "I was down at the creek panning for gold, when I noticed them. They dipped down behind the ridge, so I came up to see. When I got here, they were gone."

"They went up the valley, flying low," he said. "That's why you didn't see them go."

"You must have had a good look at them."

"I did. They were those flying saucers you've been hearing so much about."

"I haven't been hearing *anything* about them. I've been out here all summer, and I don't have access to either radio or newspapers."

"Oh, then you've missed one of the big stories of the year!"

I got to my feet. "Why don't we go back down to my cabin, and have a bite to eat? Then you can tell me about it."

"Sounds fine to me," he enthused. "I'm hungry as a dog, now that you mention it."

He followed me down the ridge and back to the creek, where I picked up my pan and pick and shovel. Then we went to my cabin. All the way, I kept looking at him, and back in my mind something was stirring, but I couldn't place it. I became disturbed more and more as he looked at me with his piercing black eyes.

WE ate in silence. When we'd finished, I lighted up my pipe. I offered him tobacco, but he waved it away.

"Don't smoke."

"Good thing," I said. "It's an unnecessary habit—but I get to feeling lonesome sometimes, and it gives me a sort of companionship."

"Why do you live out here in the wilderness, then?"

"Can't stand the city."

He laughed. "Neither can I. Is it for the same reason?"

"You mean the people?"

"No, not that. It's the way they live, not the people themselves. They are unable to help themselves."

"Don't want to, you mean," I grunted. "Now, what about those . . . flying saucers, I think you called 'em?"

He shrugged. "Nothing definite really. Nobody's even been able to prove they exist. But lots of people have seen them . . ."

"They exist, all right," I said. "I saw them."

He laughed. "That doesn't prove anything. Try to tell your story to anybody who hasn't. They ask for pictures, for proof."

"People are always asking for proof."

"Well, to tell you about the saucers, they suddenly appeared a few months ago, and everybody in the nation, even in the world, has been seeing them. They see everything from saucers to flying

ice cream cones and bananas, and in all colors. The air force has chased them, denied them, confirmed them, and even the president has been forced to make a comment. Some think it is a secret weapon, either American or Russian; and some think they are signs from heaven. It's all a great mystery, and the newspapers have played it up for all it's worth. Nobody knows what makes them go. Some authorities think they fly on the waves of the Earth's magnetic field. Some say they even come from Venus or Mars, at velocities almost as great as light. They've been tracked at speeds up to 2400 miles per hour several times."

I eyed him, my mind only half attentive because of the strange feeling that was still disturbing me. "Have you any idea of what makes 'em go?" I asked. "You saw them today. They didn't make any noise; they didn't have any propellers or wings. And they traveled fast. Seemed to me they went a good deal faster than any jet plane, and I've seen a few of those go over."

"I think they travel by the power of thought," he said.

I took my pipe out of my mouth and dumped the ashes out of it, tapping it against my chair. Unaccountably I was trembling, and I wanted to hide it from him.

"That's a strange thing to say," I said. "Saying they travel on magnetic waves is fantastic

enough, but why go so far afield as to say they travel by thought? Aren't you being just a little bit ridiculous?"

He looked at me gravely. "Why no. The human mind is a strange thing. It can do many things not generally accepted as possible."

"Have you ever seen it do any of these impossible things?"

"Yes. One called telekinesis. I've sat in on groups where objects have been caused to move by sheer concentration. Dr. Rhine says, and has proved by rigid tests, that it is possible to dictate the fall of dice by the power of the mind."

I dropped my pipe. As I stopped to pick it up, an icy chill raced up and down my spine. But when I faced him again, I was calm. I said slowly, "If you've seen it done, you must know what you're talking about, and maybe something of how it's done?"

"I have some ideas," he admitted.

I got up, took down the kerosene lamp from the shelf and put it on the table. Although it was bright daylight I lit it with a match and replaced the glass. I looked at the flame burning steadily, then looked at him.

"Turn it out," I said.

For an instant there was silence in the cabin, then he smiled, and his eyes twinkled. "Challenging me, eh?"

"No. Just asking."

He looked gravely at the light;

an absorbed look stole over his face. Then, suddenly, the wick in the lamp drew down, the flame went out. I looked at the smoke rising from the lamp, watched it taper out and disappear.

I gripped the chair arms tightly. "That's the second time you've done that."

"The second time?"

"Yes," I said, the icy chill in my spine growing now until it engulfed me in a wave of fearful anticipation. "In San Francisco, in 1906. In my father's house."

"You?" he eyed me doubtfully.

"I was only a kid. I watched you do it from the landing of the staircase—just before the ceiling fell in."

He looked at me wonderingly, and then he noted my tight grip on the chair. Suddenly he smiled. "And you're afraid there'll be another earthquake?"

A long moment I stared at him, then I relaxed. "No," I said. "I never did believe you had anything to do with that! You may be able to put out a light by the power of your mind, but you couldn't smash a whole city."

"No," he said. "Not I."

I LOOKED at his slim, tapered fingers, seeming strong as steel in spite of their delicate look. Then I looked up again at his eyes.

"You should be at least seventy years old."

He nodded. "At least."

"You certainly don't look it."

He was smiling at me. "You're trying to calm yourself; so you are making small talk. Why don't you speak right up?"

"All right. You came off that flying saucer, didn't you?"

"Yes."

I grunted. "Don't know why I should be surprised. I knew it all along. I must have half-recognized you the minute I saw you up close. But I wasn't prepared to admit it, so I buried it in my subconscious—the implications were so . . ."

He was sitting suddenly very erect, not paying any attention to me. He seemed to be listening. I fell silent and listened too. I heard nothing. But suddenly, without reason, there was terror in me. I felt a queer prickling of my skin, an almost electric effect in the air, and the blood began to pound in my temples.

"What . . . is it?" I asked hoarsely.

He got up, took a swift step over to me and placed a hand on my shoulder. "Remain seated. Concentrate on me. Give me every bit of your strength, and ask no questions. We are in great danger."

I focused my attention on him, stared up at his eyes, which were looking into space with a deadly serious look about the narrowed lids. Sweat began to bead my forehead, and roll down my armpits. But I obeyed him and asked no

questions.

At last I heard it, the sound that had obviously first attracted his attention. It was a strange vibrating sound, like the beat of a great piston that is somehow off-stroke, so that its rhythm is never a rhythm that can be followed, but constantly changing in pulse-rate. Its eerie unworldly tempo beat into my mind and began to overwhelm it with terror.

"Steady!" he warned. "I need your attention!"

I clamped my teeth together to stop the unaccountable trembling that had overtaken my bones. I tried hard not to listen to the off-beat pulsations that were reverberating now like a giant drum being hit by dozens of sticks all at once, each in its own and conflicting timing.

What was it he had said? He needed my . . . *attention*. I concentrated on the need for my attention. What sort of a need was that? How could my attentiveness be of aid to him? I literally drove my mind out to meet his, focused on the black pits of his eyes, dove deep into them. . . .

A smile hung fleetingly on his lips. He looked down at me. "That was good. They can't touch us . . . the way they are now."

I merely looked at him. I didn't ask the question. But it could not be kept out of my mind. *Who?*

As though compelled, my gaze turned toward the open door, and outside the cabin the atmosphere

seemed to be shimmering. Though I could see nothing, there was something there—something beyond the range of my vision, not because of distance, but because of something else, some *property* of invisibility not due to light and its reflection.

He gripped my shoulder tighter. "But they are more advanced than we suspected. They are not going to remain . . . as they are! Concentrate again! I must send a message . . ."

All at once a vast dizziness, and an even vaster weakness began to come over me. I tried hard to hang on, to keep my mind linked with his, but the room began to swirl around me in great sweeps, and vertigo washed over me like a wave. His fingers on my shoulder were digging in like iron, holding me with him, holding me back from the unconsciousness that was dragging me down into darkness.

Vaguely my eyes found the door, and even more vaguely I began to see things out there. First, hanging only a few feet over the ground, I saw a strange blue shimmering, an oddly metallic shape that seemed ghostly, but even as I watched, was less ghostly than the preceding moment, until it became solid and I saw it as a more crude, less graceful counterpart of the flying saucers I'd seen while panning gold.

Swarming from it were human figures, but what strange

figures they were! Tiny, midget figures, no more than three feet tall. But they seemed to grow larger as they leaped toward the cabin. I gasped as I saw them come—what strange figures they were. Their costumes—were crazy! Some of them wore uniforms, but uniforms of a time long past—uniforms of the minions of the Conquistadores. Spanish clothing of centuries gone. And there, in the forefront, a leaping, grimacing little man in leather doublet and pantaloons, bearing a gleaming rapier. Immediately behind him was a buckskin-clad frontiersman, long rifle clutched in the crook of his arm.

Now all swam into darkness, and even before the first of the advancing figures reached the door of my cabin I sank into unconsciousness.

I COULD not have been unconscious for very long, because when I opened my eyes I was lying on the floor of my cabin and my companion knelt on one knee beside me, his hand still on my shoulder. He was facing a group of men and one woman standing around us in a semicircle. As I looked at them, the conviction that I was having hallucinations swept over me again. One of the men was the buckskin-clad frontiersman, who held his rifle in nervous fingers, its barrel pointed directly at me.

For the moment I could not examine the others, for this one seemed determined in the next instant to end my life. There was a snarl on his lips.

He was speaking, but I could not understand his words. I recognized the language, however. He was speaking French. His voice was loud and threatening.

"*Non, non,*" my companion answered him.

A sneer curled over the lips of the man who spoke French. Suddenly he lifted the rifle and aimed it directly at my head. He pulled the trigger and I saw, in that split second, the sputter and spark of flint. I was a dead man, and I knew it!

But faster than light, it seemed, my companion lifted his hand and as the roar of the gun shattered the silence of the room and a burst of smoke came from the muzzle that obscured everything for a long minute, I thought I saw his palm intervene between my head and the muzzle.

Almost unthinkingly, I rolled frantically on the floor, scrambled to one side, and lurched to my feet. I stood with my back to the cabin wall, waiting for the smoke to clear. Unbelievably I realized that I was unhurt. In spite of the close range, the bullet had missed me. How, I could not imagine, but it had.

The smoke lifted toward the ceiling and floated out of the door, and I saw first the frowning face

of the man who had tried to end my life. He was looking at my mysterious companion, who had risen to his feet, his hand still outstretched. Slowly, as we both watched, he opened his palm, and there, flattened by the impact, was the bullet that had been fired at my head. My companion tossed it at the feet of the frontiersman.

"*Mon Dieu!*" said the Frenchman.

Behind him another man spoke, this time speaking Spanish, which I understood. It was the man in the leather doublet and pantaloons. "You are a fine one to call upon the name of God!" he said. "It is most inappropriate."

The remark brought a coarsely musical female laugh, and my eyes turned toward the woman who stood in the doorway.

"A nice trick, Mr. . . . what's your name?" She spoke in English, and she addressed her question to my companion.

He looked at her calmly. "Alcibedes is my name," he said.

The woman lifted her eyebrows, and as she did so I noticed that she was quite beautiful, but that her beauty was marred by an air of hardness that gave harsh lines to her face, a harshness that was more characteristic than featuristic. "As far back as that!" she exclaimed. "Then you must be from Outside?"

He nodded briefly.

The Spaniard uttered an exclamation of alarm and stepped

forward. "Outside! Then we'd best be away from here! Here, Dumont, let my cold steel perform the task for which your lead is impotent!" With the words he sprang at me, whipping his blade in a gleaming arc of steel. Once more I faced death, and Alcibedes was yards away.

But not so the girl. Like a fiery whirlwind she leaped forward, flung herself between me and the advancing Spaniard. She pressed her back against me, and I felt the warmth of her flesh with an almost unrecognized surprise. Somehow I still retained the subconscious impression that what I was witnessing was phantasmagorical, and not real at all. Therefore, to feel the solidity of her body against mine was surprising, and it served only to make more incomprehensible the thing that I was witnessing and partaking in so desperate a fashion.

"No!" she said. "What have I brought along with me—a lot of cowards!"

The Spaniard halted, his blade lowered its point to the floor. "Perhaps so," he said. "But not a lot of fools. Don't you know what will happen to us if we don't get back to our base? This Outsider has already sent for help, or I miss my guess. We'd best kill this fellow, and be off."

"What good will that do? You can't kill Alcibedes."

"Of course not. Nor can we take him captive. We will have

caught a Tarter."

She laughed contemptuously. "That's as much as you know," she said. "There have been a few improvements made lately, and I'm going to show you one of them right now."

She drew a tiny tube from her bodice, from between her full breasts, and pointed it at Alcibedes. A look of surprise spread over his face, but before he could move she pressed a button on the tube. A pale reddish ray sprang out from the opening in the muzzle of the tube and touched Alcibedes. He sagged in his tracks, and slumped to the floor.

"Pick him up and carry him into the ship," the girl ordered. "He'll be paralyzed for several hours."

Then, as the surprised Spaniard stared, and the group of Conquistadores moved forward to carry the inert form of my friend out of the cabin, she turned toward me, took me by the hand and smiled up at me. "You remind me strangely of a man I once knew in San Francisco," she said. "Come, let's get into the ship. . . ."

But I made no move to accompany her. Instead all the eeriness of the past few minutes became as nothing to the flood of cold that now began to chill my spine, my blood and my brain. For the second time this day a phantom came out of my memory, and grew to dreadful proportions. "San Francisco . . ." I

mumbled, and my gaze held for a moment on her dark eyes, her smooth complexion, her full red lips, and then traveled down over her white throat, the full curve of her half-exposed breasts, and down over the spangled velvet dress that draped itself so revealingly to her form. There leaped into my mind's eye a duplicate of that dress, only casually noted, but remembered just the same, as I had seen it . . . *a long time ago*.

"What are you staring at?" she asked coyly, with a suggestive toss of her head. She moved a bit closer to me, took both my arms in her hands, and pressed her breasts against my chest.

"That . . . dress!" I gasped.

She frowned, moved back again, looked down at the dress. "What about it?" Then she smiled again and looked at me. "You like it? It's my favorite dress. It's the one I was wearing when . . ."

"When the earthquake . . ." I blurted out before she could finish.

She looked startled. "How could you know that?"

"I was there," I said hoarsely, "when the ceiling fell on you. And Alcibides was there too."

"Alcibides!" Suddenly fright leaped into her eyes and she half whirled to the door. Then she called to the Spaniard, "Estaban!—catch him before he falls, and put him into the ship . . ." and in the same instant whipped the little metal tube from its hiding

place and pointed it at me. I suddenly went limp, darkness slammed over me like a wave once more and the last thing I saw was Estaban's leather boots as I fell at his feet.

IT was Alcibides' hand on my shoulder that wakened me. He had regained his senses before I, and he sat now beside me, looking down at me with an expression of deep thought on his face.

"You certainly have a wonderful access to your memory for one so young."

"Young? I'm forty-eight." I struggled to sit up and stretched my muscles, which tingled strangely. Then I looked at him curiously, and almost at once with an equal curiosity at my surroundings as two thoughts struck me.

He seemed to divine both thoughts. "You're in our lovely Angela's 'flying saucer,' as those below us who are seeing it now must be calling it—and compared to me, you are just a baby."

"Is that her name?" I asked. My gaze roved around the plain metal walls of the tiny room in which we were. It was peculiarly shaped: like a piece of pie with one bite taken from the point of it. "Angela. Not very appropriate; there's nothing angelic about her."

He smiled. "She's very sweet, although a bit misguided."

I stared at him. "Your chari-

tability is quite extreme. Or else you are not very observant."

"I have looked very closely into her heart."

I lifted my hand in protest. "I must still be dazed. This conversation isn't making much sense. Let's go back to the beginning. I think you commented on my memory; why was that?"

"You gave Angela quite a scare by remembering her."

"How so? I know she reacted violently, but was she scared?"

"Very much so. You see, when you told her you were present with me in your father's house the night she . . ."

"That's it!" I said excitedly. "That's what's been bothering me! She was *killed* that night!"

"Yes. And in the dress you remembered."

"But how could that be! The dress, I mean. I refuse even to think about her being dead, because quite obviously she is not. Nor is she over seventy, as she'd have to be, if she was one of the young ladies present that evening."

"I'll explain it all to you; but ask no questions until I finish, or your bewilderment will only grow."

"Go ahead," I said.

"First, Angela is very much alive, as you've noted, which is almost as disturbing to me as it is to you. But just the same, she was killed in your father's house over forty years ago, wearing

the very dress, or rather its very image, she is wearing now. The reason for that is simple, really. Persons who have passed through death often wear either the semblance of clothes in which they died, or a counterpart of a favorite article of clothing. This dress happens to be both, in Angela's case. She wears it infrequently, though, as she prefers to appear in her own natural beauty.

"Death is not what it seems to be—it is merely a sort of re-birth. Man has, in actuality, three bodies: a flesh and blood body, an astral body, and an ethereal body. The first part of existence, the flesh and blood existence, is something like a continuance of the initial existence in the womb in which the body is protected and developed to the point at which it can survive for itself; death is the point at which the astral body is separated from its protective flesh body—actually as much a 'birth' as the initial birth from the womb.

"That is what happened to Angela. She exists today, every bit as real as when she lived in her flesh body, on what mystics are pleased to call the astral plane. These words are misleading, as the astral plane is not strictly a location, but merely the Earth itself, sometimes coincident with the surface on which fleshly humans live, sometimes above it, to varying heights, and sometimes below it. You might say

the atmosphere of the Earth, at its outer limits, which are far more distant from the ground-and-sea surface than today's humans believe, is the actual surface of the Earth, and that where you live is quite near the core.

"To an astral inhabitant, you live in dark caves. To an ethereal inhabitant (in what you call space), the astral humans also live in caverns.

"I am an inhabitant of outer space, where invisible worlds exist, far beyond your comprehension or your ability to detect, even with your most sensitive instruments. I was born in ancient Greece, and by Earth reckoning, I am more than 9,000 years old. I lived in the Greece of which only a few misunderstood ruins exist today. For several thousand years I lived on Earth, after what you call death, in the astral world now called home by Angela and her companions. It is a teeming world, filled with many races, nations, empires and in some regions with wars more tremendous than any you have known.

"Then I went through the second rebirth, which, very remotely, is similar to the first death, and went out into the area Man has always dreamed of penetrating by mechanical means, even as he does today. Strangely enough, for the first time in the history of Earth (which is far more ancient than you realize), Man's scientific knowledge is reaching

the point where he may succeed in reaching at least a portion of his goal.

"Science is always the means, and the supposedly empty reaches of space are filled with giant ships, surprisingly like the imaginative vessels often referred to in Earthly fiction. Some of these ships are bigger than the Earth itself. I myself captained one for several thousand years.

"Angela is captain of a smaller ship, one capable of traveling in her astral realm, and because of her forceful, energetic nature, she is dominant over many people far older than she. Angela is a born leader, with many talents. She will one day be one of the best loved of women in the etheric reaches of this universe, which is just one of many millions of other universes.

"I have come here, now, as I did forty years ago, to observe and to record. The Earth is fast approaching the period in its history (through which all worlds such as this eventually go) in which occurs that event known to you as Armageddon. It is the period in which the inhabitants of the astral regions discover the means of controlling the races of the living, and doing battle among and with them for dominance of both realms.

"To my extreme embarrassment, I have discovered the degree of progress being made, without sufficient preparation to combat

it instantly. In short, I and my companions have been caught unawares. An impossible thing has happened. An ethereal human has been made captive by an astral human. Astral humans have developed such scientific knowledge that they can wield potent weapons against us. True, they cannot 'kill' us, for there is no death possible for us in the usual sense of the word, but they can and have caused us much inconvenience.

"What is more important is the fact that you have noticed so forcibly, that astral humans have found the way to assume the semblance of the living human to such a degree that there is actually no difference. Angela, as she captured us, was as flesh-and-blood as you."

"I can assure you of that!" I interrupted.

Alcibides smiled. "Her beauty did strike you, then."

"She's pretty, yes," I admitted. "But apparently death hasn't improved her; she's as much a . . . a tramp . . . as she was in San Francisco."

"How would we judge the ripe if it were not for the unripe?" said Alcibides mysteriously. "Personally, I find more of real beauty in immaturity than in the full bloom of ripe development. I was always partial to the very young. But to go on with my explanation . . .

"What Angela has shown us adds up to the greatest danger

that has ever faced the normal evolutionary development of Earth. First, she and her fellows have succeeded in usurping the domain of the living. They can walk once more among men, indistinguishable from the living. This, coupled with their superior scientific knowledge, which can now be translated into corporeal actuality directly rather than by inspiration, as was the atom bomb, faces humanity with an overwhelming disadvantage in the coming battle. Unless something is done, defeat will be their lot, and Earth will be lost to us as the fertile Garden of Eden that it has been up to now.

"What will happen has been pictured often in your science fiction stories. This last ghastly war of Armageddon will result in total depopulation of all mankind from the corporeal surface of the Earth, and establishment of the astral humans in their place with what will amount to fleshly immortality, which has ever been the goal of those who know nothing of the realities beyond all deaths.

"Picture it! No longer the planned orderly progress from initial creation of the entity upon the planet through the regions and existence of the astral, and on into the everlasting wonder of existence among the stars where there is no more death but only progress through marvel after marvel to a goal unapproachable.

Instead, no more new entities, but only a fixed number of already existing entities, bound forever because of their own ignorance to a retrograde activity. The end result can only be self-annihilation. It is the one great tragedy the cosmos should never see. And the defeat of the astral realm in the era of Armageddon is the only way it can be averted!"

I stared at Alcibides aghast. A giant hand was clutching with chill fingers at my heart, and terror welled up in me.

"So that is why you have come to Earth in your flying saucer?" I whispered.

"Very few battles of Armageddon have been lost. We always intervene."

"But what of free will?" I asked. "Isn't that a tenet of almost all religions—and religion *must* be based on these things you have told me—that man is free to choose for himself?"

"Free will is a matter of decision based on experience. Is free will for babes without experience? Is free will for unborn entities, still in their mother's womb, but entities all the same? Should they be doomed to eons of darkness because of a false premise?"

I nodded in involuntary agreement.

For a moment there was silence in the little metal room. Then once more I thought of his opening remark. "What about my memory?" I asked. "Why did you re-

mark upon it?"

"Because of the fear it struck into the heart of our lovely Angela."

"Again, how so?"

"Because when you remembered her death, she knew you had been present, and when you said I was also there she remembered me too, as the young man who turned out the gas light. And thus she assumed that you were not what you seemed to be, an ordinary human, but one of us—and she has imagined, because of her mistake, that we have intentionally drawn her into a trap from which she thinks her prompt action and flight is freeing her."

"But I am not one of you."

"And therefore there is no trap," finished Alcibides.

"Which means it is we who are ensnared."

"Yes."

I paled. "What are we going to do?"

"Wait," he said, "and hope that my message got through!"

WHERE are we going?" I asked Alcibides after a moment of silence. "Where is this contraption taking us?"

"At present we are about 500 miles above what you call the surface of the Earth. We are heading for an ancient region called the Caves of Aoasu, once known as one of the Seven Holy Mountains. It is here, among the re-

mains of a tremendous ancient science, some of it still intact, that Angela and her group have established their headquarters. As a matter of fact, I believe we have arrived."

A slight shudder of the craft in which we rode accompanied his last words, and there was an almost imperceptible jar. After a few minutes the door to our prison opened, and the Spaniard, Estában, stood in the opening.

"Come," he said. "I will escort you to more permanent lodgings." He stepped aside and indicated the narrow corridor beyond the door, which I found ran in a tight circle.

"Make no effort to escape or cause trouble," he warned as I passed him. "This place is most impregnable." I caught the meaningful look he shot at Alcibides, directly behind me.

Almost immediately we came to the entrance port of the circular ship, and I stepped out onto a rocky floor to find myself in a dimly illuminated cavern, vast beyond belief. The flying saucer in which we had come sat on tripod legs on a level floor, almost directly before a large black opening in the cavern wall which led downward at a steep slant into perfect blackness.

"The roadway by which we ascended to this place," explained Alcibides, as though noting my unvoiced question in that strange perceptive ability of his. "All of

these great caverns are linked by such roadways, constructed many thousands of years ago by builders from Outside. Such roadbuilding feats as this could not be performed by humans on the astral planes."

I stared, bewildered by the immensity of rock that surrounded me. Off in the distance many tunnels branched into this central cavern, some of them brilliantly lighted.

"I can't believe it!" I exclaimed. "You told me we were 500 miles above the surface of the Earth, yet this is not empty space, nor even empty atmosphere. This is solid rock, and no doubt about it."

"In a way you are right, of course," he said. "Your physisists have some vague idea of how this could be so, in their sub-atomic concepts. This solid rock that you observe is composed of the same pattern of atomic structure that makes up rocks on your surface. As an illustration, imagine your own body, without any increase in mass, expanded some 1,600 times in volume."

"I wouldn't photograph very well," I admitted.

"Exactly. You'd be so tenuous that you'd actually seem to be an almost perfect vacuum insofar as surface instruments could detect."

"Do you mean that is what has happened to me? Have I been expanded 1,600 times?"

He looked at me strangely. "No.

In physical proportions, you are exactly the same size as you were before. If anything, a trifle smaller."

I pondered upon his answer for a long moment, frowning. I kicked at the rock beneath my feet. "But this seems solid to me, although you say its atomic structure is some 1,600 times more expansive than ours. . ."

Behind me Estaban laughed. "Don't be so stupid. It seems solid because you're equally un-solid!"

I turned to face the Spaniard, who stood in the port of the saucer behind us. "What do you mean?"

"When we discharged our superatomic structure down below, naturally we had to discharge yours too. In short, my friend, you're . . . dead. As dead as I am!" Once more he burst into laughter. "And now, if you don't mind, we will proceed on our way."

My mind numbed by his words, I noted vaguely the way he pointed and stumbled on ahead of him, Alcibides marching along beside me, his hand on my arm in comforting fashion.

WE went toward one of the illuminated tunnels opening on the large cavern which obviously served as the landing field for the saucer-ship; and as we entered it, I forgot the stunning news that Estaban had conveyed to me in my wonder and

amazement at the evidence of a tremendous and ancient civilization that the illuminated tunnel presented.

First, we boarded a concave object shaped something like a huge sea shell, and seated ourselves in velvety-soft cushions that were made of something I could not identify. Estaban apparently did nothing except sit in the forward portion of the shell, but instantly it lifted a few inches off the rocky floor and we began to float swiftly down the illuminated way.

Next, my wondering gaze took in the ornate carvings that lined the tunnel on both sides and even on the ceiling, a continuous panorama of bas-relief sculpture that would have put Michael Angelo to shame. As we moved forward, the sculpture told a story, obviously historical, for there were scenes of exploration, a great battle, a city being built, all curiously and startlingly like some of the ancient Persian paintings I had once seen in a museum. That they were incredibly old there could be no doubt. The aura of thousands of years lay over everything, for here and there even some of the most robust of figures were softened by age and decomposition of the rock.

"What is all this?" I asked Alcibides in bewilderment, waving a hand toward the carved walls.

"The sculptures depict the story of the great deeds of one

Hoab, 9,000 years ago, who overcame a powerful and evil false god in this place, and liberated more than a thousand million captives enslaved in the empire of the false god. He built a new empire, and his capital city was the most beautiful ever erected in this plane. I believe that we will enter this city in a few moments."

"You use the past tense," said Estaban suddenly, from his position in the prow of the floating shell on which we rode. "The city *is* beautiful still, even if much of it has fallen into ruin."

"That is good," remarked Alcibides.

Estaban frowned at him. "What do you mean?"

"I mean it is good that you have a sense of beauty. I am much encouraged."

"We are not as primitive as you might think," said Estaban. "You will not be enslaved as were the minions of the empire that Hoab defeated. But all the same, you will find that escape is impossible. Nor can you be rescued. Every road leading to the city is impregably guarded by new weapons which we have set up superior even to the weapons of the ancients."

"I fully realize your scientific development," said Alcibides. "I am sure it is sufficient to accomplish what you say."

My heart sank at his words. "You don't seem very hopeful of rescue?"

"We do not even know if my friends got our message," he said.

I fell silent and continued to watch the magnificent decorations on the cavern walls as we passed. Gradually the cavern widened, until suddenly it debouched upon an opening that I did not at first recognize as an incredibly extensive and lofty cavern. Above me was a hazy blueness that almost seemed to be the blue of a night sky; until I saw the immensity of rocky crags far over my head. Straight ahead the blueness was lost in mist, at a distance which must have been more than a hundred miles. But directly before us, and below, as though in a huge valley, was the most wonderful spectacle I have ever seen.

It was a city—but what a city! Arranged in a gigantic pattern I first identified as a six-pointed star, and then realized was really a pair of triangles interlocked, was a city almost thirty miles in extent, all built of what seemed to be marble of the most beautiful hues and quartz and crystal-line formations that resembled nothing so much as tremendous jewels—diamonds, rubies, amethysts, agate, emeralds and opal. The buildings were faery, soaring things; massively impressive piles; tiny, delicate bowers. Some were in perfect states of preservation, others fallen into majestic ruins. Here was a combination of teeming, living city and loom-

ing ruins that reminded of Roman and Athenian remains; and an utterly unworldly utterly new kind of architecture so strange as to be difficult to place into any classification whatever.

"Hoab reigned here for thousands of years," said Estaban. "But now we are its rulers, and soon we will rule far more." His voice took on a note of pride, and he turned flashing eyes upon us. "Not even the Outsiders can prevent us!"

Alcibides was looking beyond the city, his brow furrowed, his eyes surrounded by serious wrinkles.

"I can well believe you," he said. "If that is your invasion fleet beyond the city."

I looked quickly in the same direction, and gasped as my eye beheld, row upon row, literally thousands of gigantic silvery shapes, disk-like, metallic, ominous.

"We have accomplished much in thirty years," said Estaban with studied modesty. And as if to further the impression he was trying to convey, he pointed casually toward the center of the city. "There is our destination," he indicated a tremendously tall building, its spire gleaming like a giant diamond all in one piece. "There you will be made comfortable, complete freedom of the city if you wish it, for there is no way of escape."

He sped the shell now into the air toward the building.

We landed on a high terrace and stepped out of the shell. Estaban led us into the building and through corridors of such magnificence that my breath was taken away.

"No potentate of Earth ever imagined such munificence!" I gasped.

"A bit too gaudy," said Estaban guardedly. "But it was built in an era when such things were far more important than they are now."

"We are being taken before Angela?" asked Alcibides.

Estaban's eyebrows lifted. "It does not seem necessary to tell you much," he observed. "But since you ask, that is where I am taking you. She wishes to question you in the presence of His Excellency, Napoleon the Great."

"Oh no!" I groaned.

Alcibides turned to me. "Is that so strange? Do you think that the ambitions of men die with their bodies?"

"I've never thought of it one way or the other," I said. "But after hearing that name, I'll find it hard to rationalize anything from now on."

"You will hear even stranger names," said Alcibides.

We came now to a magnificently carved ebon door, set in what seemed to be a solid diamond. Before it stood several Napoleonic soldiers, in full dress uniform, stiffly at attention.

"Now I believe you!" I said

heavily.

The doors swung open, and we walked through them. On the opposite side of the room beyond was a pair of thrones, heavily draped with crimson and gold hangings. On one of the thrones sat a man in purple knee-length velvet trousers, buckled shoes, and a soft white shirt. At first glance I knew him for the man he was, Napoleon himself. Then my glance slid to the other throne and I stopped dead in my tracks.

There, leaning gracefully with one elbow on the arm of the throne, her chin resting calculat-ingly but carelessly upon her half-closed fingers, was Angela. The light from the crystal windows that lined two sides of the great room fell softly in gleaming highlights on the whiteness of her body, unadorned except for the cascade of her hair which tumbled about her shoulders.

Beside me I heard Alcibides' soft but all too audible voice. "Do you think now that she is ill-named?"

I felt my face flush crimson as I saw that she had heard. I half turned to Alcibides and whispered fiercely. "She could do more than paralyze me for this!"

He grinned at me, the first time his smile had ever assumed that homely quality. "No. She is a woman. And besides, I have looked into her heart." He paused an instant, then added: "And I have looked into yours."

ANGELA beckoned us forward now, and we walked to the base of the pair of thrones.

"Alcibides," she said. "You came from Outside. Would you care to explain the reason for your visit, and whether or not you have any companions?"

"I have no objection, dear girl," said Alcibides. "Perhaps if you will listen to my story, it will in some small measure sway you to a new way of thinking."

"I doubt it," she said. "But go on. We're listening."

He turned a moment toward Napoleon. "While you listen, perhaps it would be well for you to remember an event in your own Earthly life—the battle of Waterloo."

Napoleon looked at him calmly. "I have never forgotten it. And you're quite correct—I'll not make the same mistakes again. If what you have to say makes sense, I shall take it as good advice."

"I expected you would," Alcibides. "But to answer your question, Angela, the reason for my visit should be well known to you. It has been the custom, for age upon age, since the beginning of the Earth for those of us who have gone into the Outside in the service of the Creator and as helpful brothers to those who are to follow after us, to return periodically to assist as much as we can toward the ultimate goal for which you are all striving.

"My visit, this time, is a pre-

liminary one. I have no idea when our regulating visit will occur, when we will come in power to rebuild what you shall tear down, but perhaps that depends on yourselves more than upon us; upon your readiness or unreadiness...."

"We are ready," commented Angela briefly.

"Then we are also ready," said Alcibides. "But since we are not destroyers, but builders, we will not arrive prematurely. Thus it will be given to you to accomplish your will. Yet, I beg of you to listen to me and ponder well on my words, before you embark on the course which you will select. It is within your power, and it is your glorious opportunity, to work a great good, to make of this Earth a shining jewel among the many other shining jewels of the great family that belong to the Creator.

"You have built an armada, a fleet of ships so far advanced over anything ever before achieved on this planet, or for that matter on any other world which has reached the stage of evolution known as Armageddon, that it is within your power to perform a miracle that will be heard and sung for uncounted ages among the galaxies. Here, within your own system of caverns, in the great holy mountain of Aoasu, and in the other six holy mountains of the Earth, plus all the inhabited planes of the lower astral from the surface of the

Earth to many thousands of miles high, a great work exists. It is a needed work, and you can perform it. It would be great glory to do it alone, without our help.

"Great have been the wars on Earth in the past thirty years. Many have been the slain. Legion are the vengeful and the hateful. Great are the hells that have been set up, even on the borders of your own mountain. The suffering of millions upon thousands of millions is incredible. They thirst for rescue, for kindness, for hospitalization, for education, for the right path. But they are blind and helpless, and enveloped in unceasing rage. They strike out right and left, dealing punishments without regard for justice. They battle tremendously among themselves for power.

"You can bring them back to sanity, to humanity, to love and to eternally progressing life. Your great science, your great courage, if directed to the task in hand, can accomplish what mayhap even the gods may not—for it is in my memory that once before during my existence the gods were tried: a comet came into the orbit of the Earth during just such a period of darkness as this, and before the awful storm even they were helpless, and failure was their lot. Then, as now, success came only because a few great souls rose out of the Earth and with their leadership, gained eternal glory for themselves and

salvation for the Earth. Today it is not a comet, but an unforeseen scientific advancement on the lower planes, a gaining of knowledge never before attained except on the Outside.

"There are three ways in which you can use your knowledge: You can do as you now plan, and invade the corporeal plane, destroy all the living from their fleshly abode, and take for your own the domain that has never been intended for the world of the spirit, assuming to yourselves the garb of flesh that will deny you access to the higher realms, mayhap for thousands of centuries; or you can strike out toward the Outside, battle the power of the Almighty, and be shattered as completely as you, Napoleon, at Waterloo; or, finally you can take your mighty science and restore order in the thousands of hells that war and the cruelty and savagery of man have created in the past hundreds of years since last we of the Brotherhood restored peace.

"Which will it be?"

Napoleon sat for a moment silently on his throne, then he spoke. "You speak of us as inferiors," he said, "and yet you admit that we have attained to a science hitherto unknown except on the Outside. Doesn't that make us equals? Does it make sense that you assume we will be beaten in a struggle between us?"

"Perhaps not; if we met you

on your own terms, with your own weapons. But never has the Brotherhood come armed with anything except the power of the Eternal. Never have we come except with open hands and with love. Never has such power been defeated by mere science and the control of the elements of destruction."

"Never have you been met with that science!" exclaimed Napoleon. "I think that you assume too much. But listen, Alcibides! We have no intention of attacking the Brotherhood. We have no desire for the Outside. It is empty; it is nothing. It is the ghost of a ghost. The Earth is big; more than big enough for us. After more than seventy thousand years but a small fraction of it has ever been inhabited, or even explored. We can inhabit it for millions of years without exhausting ever new places to abide. But, if we allow the process of reproduction to go on interminably at its ever multiplying pace, even the huge Earth will become crowded. That is what we propose to do; destroy the Tree of Life so that we can stabilize the present population. Once we have done that, then we will have all the time we need to perform the task you say we are capable of doing. It is true that we *are* capable of it—but you assume that we will not *do* it! You are wrong. When we have achieved the first and most important goal,

the stabilization of the Earth's population, then we shall go into every last corner and restore all to sanity, peace, happiness, and everlasting enjoyment.

"Where is there a Paradise which cannot be duplicated right here on the Earth? Where is there more space than we have here to perform all that we require? Why should we venture into a vague unknown, the true nature of which has never been proved to us—in fact, may be a trap and a snare; an enslavement clever and concealed beyond belief?

"I say let the Brotherhood mind their own business! Let them *stay* Outside. We don't want them here. But if they do come, then I promise you more than a comet will strike them!"

For a long moment there was silence, then Alcibides sighed. "I knew in advance what you would say, yet my heart would not let me be still. I had to present my case to try to dissuade you from the great crime of cutting off the river of Life."

"And I have listened," said Napoleon. "Go now in peace to your quarters which I have provided for you. I cannot allow you to leave the city, for by your own admission the Brotherhood will not come to Earth for some time yet, and I do not propose that those plans be changed. When they do come, it will be too late."

"One moment," spoke Angela

from her throne, leaning forward now, her beautiful hair falling over her white breasts. "This man who has come with Alcibides—if he is what I think, then perhaps the Brotherhood is already aware of our plans."

Napoleon looked at me curiously. "What do you think he is? All I see is a youngster who has come to us prematurely."

"Is he? He recognized me from a meeting one night, the night I was killed in the San Francisco earthquake, a meeting at which Alcibides, in another guise, was also present. I have not discovered which of that group he was, but if he was one of them, then he is not what you see, a youngster who has come here prematurely."

"Ask him," said Napoleon.

Angela looked at me. "There is something vaguely familiar about you, but I can't remember. Why do I have this feeling? Who are you—or who were you?"

I looked at Alcibides, and he smiled. "Tell her," he said. "Don't distress the young lady further. Too much anxiety may make ugly lines on her lovely face."

I looked at Angela, then shrugged. "I was not where you could see me, that night. I was on the landing of the stairway, peering down while you discussed what I called magic, watching while Alcibides turned out the lights. I was only a boy of seven . . ."

Angela leaped to her feet, and in that instant I had to admit

that she was uncommonly beautiful. There was relief and relaxation on her face now, and intense interest and wonderment. "John!" she exclaimed. "John Arnold! You're John Arnold's son!"

"He was my father," I said. "My name is Robert Arnold."

Suddenly she was pale, and she sat down again. "I *killed* you," she said. "I thought you were one of the Outsiders. I would not have brought you here if I hadn't made such a terrible error. . ."

Napoleon looked at her with a slight frown. "Let's not get emotional about it. He would have died in a few years anyhow. And if he hadn't, we'd have killed him when we came. What does it matter whether he joins us now or then?"

Angela did not answer but continued to stare at my face. She was still staring when Estaban prodded me and motioned me to the door.

In that instant the room was filled with a blinding blue light and there was a crash of tremendous thunder. Napoleon uttered an exclamation and leaped from his throne. All three of us followed him as he ran from the room and down the corridor, out toward the terrace. I saw now that Alcibides had left the room when Napoleon had bidden him. When I arrived on the terrace, I stopped short. There, hanging a few yards away, was the huge golden bulk of a ship, spherical

in shape, and surrounded by a brilliant bluish light. There was an open port in the side, and in the port stood Alcibides and several other men equally as handsome and majestic as he now seemed.

Alcibides waved to me, and in my mind I heard his voice: "My message did get through. My friends have come for me. Good-bye, and trust in Angela; her heart is good."

Then his voice became audible to us all, and he spoke first to Estaban. "You see, Estaban, even though your roadways are guarded impregnably, there are ways the ships of the Brotherhood may travel that you cannot guard. And you, Napoleon—there is yet time to change your plans from the conquest of flesh to the conquest of self. If you go on in your purpose, remember that the way of the conqueror is lonely, and there is ever the traitor to deal with!"

The port in the giant golden ship closed now, and it shot up, straight toward the rocky roof of the cavern, high above. As it reached the rocks there was a mighty blue flash, a clap of resounding thunder, and the ship was gone.

For an instant Napoleon looked up with a black frown on his face, then he turned and strode off the terrace. For a brief moment Angela hesitated, looking strangely contrite, then hurried after him.

"Come," said Estaban hollowly. "It seems that your friend from Outside has deserted you. It seems that he speaks of traitors with knowledge, for he is one himself! He had no obstacle to taking you with him."

"I'm not so sure," I said. "Even Angela admits it was a mistake to have taken me *this* far. I don't believe I'm ready for . . . the Outside!"

Estaban looked at me strangely. Then he nodded. "For once I agree with you."

SEVERAL times during the next few weeks Angela paid me a visit. Each time she asked me many questions about myself, about my life on the surface of the Earth. And each time she seemed more agitated. The last time she came, she wore the dress I had first seen her wear.

I asked her about it. "Why do you wear the dress now?"

She looked at me seriously. "It helps me to think. Do you like me better without it?"

"Does a woman of your experience need an answer to that question?" I demanded, and my face was red.

Strangely, her face remained serious, and now a tear gathered in her eye. Abruptly she turned and ran. Strangely shaken, I turned and resumed my study of the city from the window of my high quarters.

That night (for there was

night here, although I could not understand it, considering the lack of a visible sun) Estaban came. He had a peculiar expression on his face, and somehow it disturbed me.

"Would you like to go for a little ride?"

"Where to?"

"Is that important?"

I shrugged. How would I know? You might be taking me for a ride to one of those little hells I've heard about, with the intention of dumping me in."

He laughed queerly. "I might. But I'm not."

"In that case, let's go," I said. "I could use a little variety."

We boarded one of the little shells and floated away from the building where I was housed. We drifted slowly through the dark toward one of the dark tunnels in the cavern wall outside the city. As we passed within it, I felt a qualm of uneasiness, but dismissed it. Even if the trip boded ill for me, there was little I could do about it.

A short time later we came out into the smaller cavern where the spaceship that had brought me to this strange world lay at rest. We floated more rapidly now toward it, and Estaban jumped to the ground, his actions suddenly more hurried and anxious.

"Into the ship!" he ordered. "Quickly!"

I obeyed, and as I stepped inside, I stopped short. "Angela!"

I exclaimed.

"No questions now, Robert," she said. "Just stay out of the way until we get out of here. Sit somewhere."

I watched Estaban close the entrance port behind us, then followed him into the control room where Angela was seating herself in the pilot's chair. I sat down as she had directed, and looked at her as she made swift manipulations of the levers on the control board. Meanwhile Estaban stood against the wall, looking at both of us by turns. His face was enigmatic.

Finally I felt the ship move, gather speed, and I felt a sinking sensation. We were going down, and swiftly!

Angela turned from the controls and faced me. Her face was pale, but determined.

"Where are we going?" I asked.

"I'm taking you back," she said.

"Back!" I said, astounded. "How can you do that?"

"Nothing difficult about it. We will merely submit you to the process we used when we first captured you, and the process we intend to use when we take over the surface plane so that we may live there."

"How do you do that?"

It's too complicated to explain. But we take elements from the atmosphere and condense them. Your spiritual body is a matrix for your flesh body, and given the proper elements, an exact du-

plicate of the original body can be formed. That is what we will do to you. Then we will return you to the spot where we found you."

"Why are you doing this? You will have to answer to Napoleon, and I'm afraid that won't be an easy thing for you to do."

She faced me defiantly. "I'll take care of that. It was by my hand that you came here. I don't feel that I want that responsibility, so I am going to take you back. You will benefit by it, because I'll do certain things that will repay you for the inconvenience you have been put through. For instance you won't feel or look a day over thirty-five."

"Aren't you a little . . . old . . . for your conscience to begin hurting you now?" I said, and was sorry instantly that I had said it.

"It's not my conscience!" she flared.

"Then what is it?"

She looked at me, her face pale, then she turned back to her controls and I saw her neck grow slowly pink.

I looked at Estaban, caught his intent gaze upon her, a strange look of realization in his eyes. As his eyes turned to mine, I wonder what it was he had realized, and what he would do about it.

Nothing more was said until the ship landed at last in bright moonlight before my cabin in the mountains, which remained ex-

actly as I had left it what seemed ages ago. Angela cut off the motors of the ship and led the way to the door. As she opened it and stood in the moonlight, lovely as I had never seen her before, I paused.

"You haven't done anything to restore me," I said.

"Yes I have. It was all automatically done as we descended in the ship. You, and I, and Estaban are all as solid and fleshly as any human ever was. When we leave, you will remain so, and Estaban and I will shed our corporeality as we return to Aoasu."

She stepped from the ship, reached up and took my hand. I felt her cool fingers in mine, and suddenly gripped them tightly as I descended from the ship and stood beside her. She looked at me, then up at Estaban, standing in the port behind us. Then she led me toward the cabin, paused in the shadow of the wall. She stood there, staring up into my eyes.

Then, before I realized her intent, she threw her arms around my neck and kissed me fiercely. I clutched her to me and returned her kiss, and for a long instant she clung to me. Then she sobbed and tore herself away. She ran toward the saucer-ship, but the voice of Estaban halted her.

"Stop!" he said warningly. "Or I'll have to paralyze you."

She stopped, dazed. "Estaban!" she gasped. "What are you doing?"

He laughed at her. "I'm closing the port. I'm leaving you here."

"Leaving me here! You can't. Napoleon..."

". . . knows all about it," finished Estaban. "He's not the man to make mistakes, and he is following Alcibides' advice—and by this time he ought to have had experience enough to be able to detect the potential traitor in his camp! When a woman falls for one of the enemy, she's no longer to be trusted!"

The port clanged shut and Angela stood as though frozen, her nude body a white statue in the moonlight. Then slowly, the ship rose from the ground and gathered speed into the night. I walked slowly over beside Angela and looked upward with her until the ship vanished among the stars. When I looked down it was me she was looking at. And she was smiling.

I gasped. "What's the big joke?"

"I'm not as good at it as Alcibides, but he isn't the only one who can read hearts. And even Napoleon has a heart!"

"You mean you planned all this deliberately . . . to be left here with me?" I asked wonderingly.

For answer she put her arms around my neck and snuggled close to me. As she pressed her body against mine I became aware that she was not the only one who was nude. At my start, she laughed coyly, and I realized she had sensed my thought.

"I couldn't reconstitute your clothing. It wasn't a part of your matrix. Clothing in the astral planes is only a matter of mind, and of mental choice. You just hadn't anything in mind!"

I looked down at her. "What about you? I think you'd better get some clothes in your mind right now—it's not warm in these mountains, and as the night goes on, it's going to get a lot colder!"

She looked regretful. "I wouldn't like to be cold—but I'm afraid the clothing I have in mind just isn't corporeal enough to keep me warm. I'll have to do more than just imagine my clothing from now on."

I studied her, then grinned. "You are going to look pretty terrific in a pair of my old overalls. And even more terrific getting married in them . . ."

She clutched her arms around my neck again and pulled my lips down to hers. After a moment she released me.

"And after we're married, we're going to try to warn people of what the flying saucers mean—and try to teach them how to fight back! Just let me get to the government; I'll show them some things that will open their eyes!"

"And Napoleon's too, I'll bet!" I said. "And do you know, Angela, I'm getting psychic too. I thought all along that was what you were intending to do. Maybe by the time Alcibides and his friends arrive, he'll find his task a little lighter."

She looked up at the stars. "I hope so," she said seriously. "But no matter what we do, we can't avert Armageddon. At best, we can only hope to make the odds a little less overwhelming."

Suddenly she shivered, and I drew her close to me.

"They've got to listen to us!" I said.

She looked up at me and her lips quivered. "What if they don't!"

I looked down at her and my voice became gruff and sober. "Let's not think about it," I said. "The first thing to do is for us to get inside and build a fire before you catch cold. After all, you're just a human being now."

We went into the cabin and I closed the door to the cool night air. In the morning we would start back for San Francisco—and the beginning of the Battle of Armageddon.

Pray God we do not lose it!
The End

THE INVASION OF THE DARK ONES
NEXT ISSUE'S
FEATURE PRESENTATION

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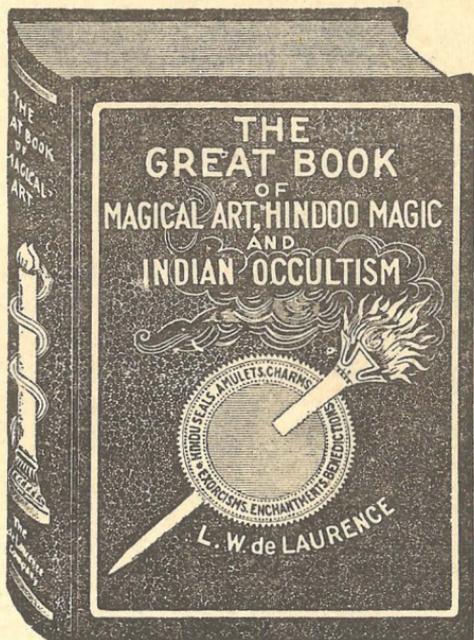
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IN presenting this sensational story to you, the editors have tried to dramatize a widespread belief in karma and reincarnation as a means of working out our destiny. The illustration on the opposite page is a symbolic conception of reincarnation: the primitive nude figure in the foreground being Man as he first comes into being, the gloriously stylized figure in the background the ultimate Perfect Man, and the jagged lines between them the various lifetimes in which that perfection is reached. In order to introduce entertainment value and novelty, author Rog Phillips, himself a famed mystic, has laid the scene of his story in the future, when there are even more scientific marvels than today—for Mr. Phillips believes science is but the natural working out of karma.

GO VISIT YOUR GRAVE

*A Story of Reincarnation
and the Problems it Brought to Three People*

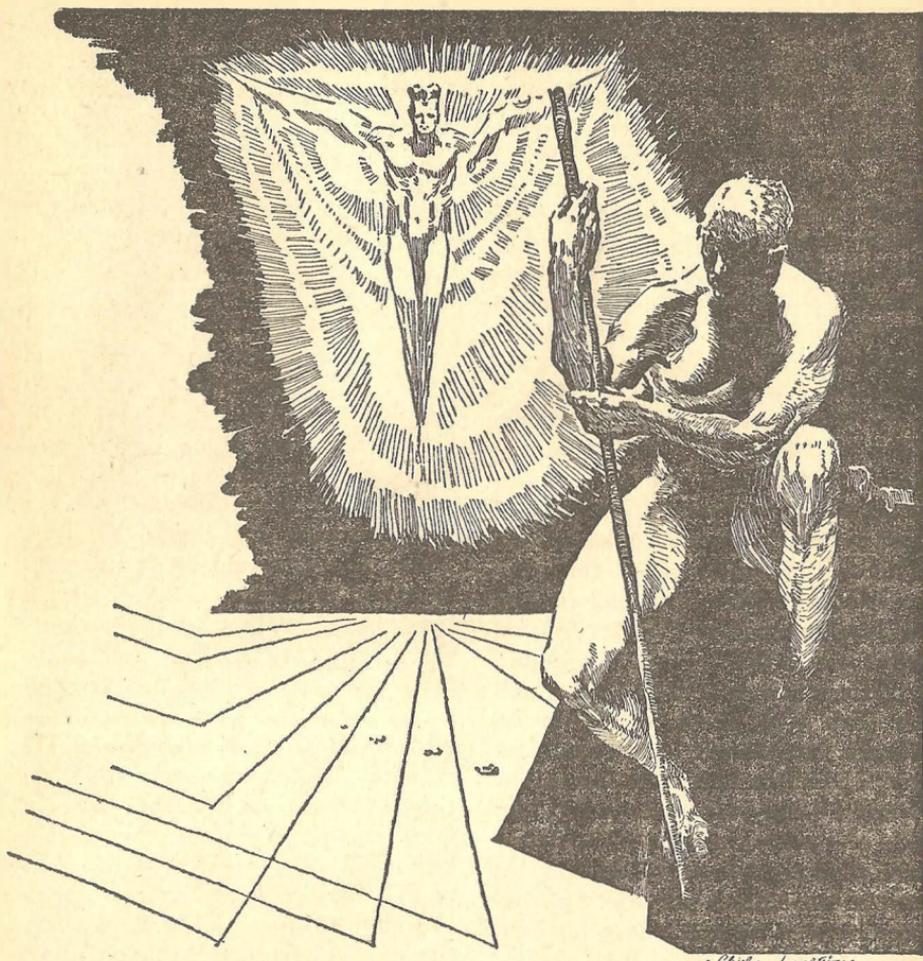
By Rog Phillips

"I DON'T want my fortune told," Bill Myers said. "I don't believe in that bunk."

Madame Olga shrewdly studied the young man sitting across the table from her. "You come to a fortune teller, yet you don't want your fortune told? Why?"

"I know how you do it," Bill

Myers said. "One-way glass in the armrests of my chair, carefully colored to match the rest of the chair arm. But underneath it is a scanner that reads fingerprints and sends the readings to a fingerprint bank, probably behind that curtain at your back. It identifies the prints and tells you what you



want to know about your customer through a hearing aid button concealed under your gypsy shawl."

"This is the twenty-first century," Madame Olga said. "We march with the times. But that doesn't mean . . ."

Bill Myers shook his head. "It's phony. I even know how you tell a

customer who he was in his last reincarnation. His ten prints identify him uniquely. You cut it down to eight or six or four or two, until the fingerprint bank can give other names. You narrow it until you have one other name of a person who died before the customer was born. The procedure is standard-

ized with you fortune tellers so that if the customer checks with another he will get the same answers. I know the whole thing."

"And therefore you don't believe in soul transmigration," Madame Olga said. "But I do. I believe its story is in the fingerprints of a person. I've learned my own past history, and found confirmation in — other things. But you didn't come here to let me convince you. Why did you come?"

"I want you to help me play a trick on a friend of mine, Madame Olga. And I want you to pass the word along to your fellow seers — just in case he decides to check up. There's fifty dollars in it for you."

Madame Olga hesitated, looked at him strangely. "What do you want me to do?"

"His name is Alfred Carter. I'll be with him when he comes in. Maybe somebody else too. But you'll identify him from his prints. What I want you to do is tell him he's the reincarnation of someone who died right here in Los Angeles and is buried in a grave at a cemetery here so he can go see his own grave!"

"I see. Do you have anyone particular in mind?"

"N-no one in particular," Bill Myers said. "I want to make it good though. Could you make it a convicted murderer?" He took out his billfold, extracted a fifty-dollar bill, watching Madame Olga's reactions.

Although aware of his stare, she

reached for the money. After he had gone she dusted the bill for prints and let the scanner read them. . . .

ALFRED CARTER spied Francine Ford in a booth near the rear of the cafe. He went back and slipped into the seat beside her. "Hi, Francy," he said.

"We're both early," she said.

"I came early in the hopes I would get a minute or two with you before Bill came," Al said. "Why did you come early? For the same reason?"

"You ask because you hope it's so," Francine Ford said, smiling. Then she frowned in concentration and seriousness. "We've been brought up to psychoanalyze ourselves and others continually — to trap our unconscious desires and motivations out into the open — and be skillful enough when we want to conceal our motives from others to do so. I'll be entirely frank with you on one thing, Al. I believe I could marry either you or Bill tomorrow and be quite sure of a successful marriage. And that's the trouble. I could, but neither of you could — until you've finished your competition and one of you has won me decisively."

Carter nodded. "And the loser *knows he has lost because of his own faults*. I believe you're right, Francy. Come to think of it, I would be disappointed in you somehow if you suddenly chose either of us out of a clear sky, but

it never pointed itself up consciously that way to me before."

"And I think you're right about Bill's motive for getting us together today," Francine said. She shivered in delight. "I'm going to enjoy myself—I hope. Now why did I add that qualification?"

She had no time to answer her own question. Bill Myers had arrived. "Hello, Francy. Hello, Al," he said. "Been here long? Ordered yet?"

"No," Al said to both questions.

Bill said, "Then let's wait to eat. I ran across a part of the city I'm sure you've never seen before. I hadn't. Mostly Mexican and Gypsy and stuff like that. I thought the three of us could have fun. All kinds of shops and dives with Mexican food and drinks, fortune tellers, and sidewalk artists who draw your portrait for fifty cents. One of the few places left that's just like it was in the twentieth century. Especially the fortune tellers."

Al grinned. "And cafes that serve chili warmed over from the last century, too—but, okay by me. How about you, Francy?" He smiled at her, knowing she remembered what he had said about playing along.

She was looking searchingly at Bill. "Fortune tellers?"

"Oh sure. They have lots of business down there. Some of those people actually believe in that stuff. Must be one in every block. I thought it would be nice to have

a Mexican dinner."

"I'd like that," Francy said. "Al, why don't you ever get an original idea?"

"You know," Al said, "I like the idea of the fortune teller. I've always wanted to go to one just to see what it's like. An aunt of mine went to one once, and according to Aunt Bessie the fortune teller knew her name and all about her without asking a single question."

"But *you* wouldn't fall for that stuff," Bill said.

"I don't know," Al said. He saw Bill's incredulous look. "No, no. I'm serious. There's a lot we don't know even yet about the mind. It would take other confirmation to—"

"Okay," Bill said, "we'll take you to a fortune teller while we're there, only let's get going so we can see most of it before dark."

Francy and Al smiled at each other. Bill had gained his point with supreme skill and they both recognized that fact. They also knew that some plan was obsessing his motivation pattern.

THEY ate a Mexican dinner, and saw all the sights except fortune tellers. Bill quite skillfully managed the dead-end pause in their sightseeing across the street from Madame Olga's and commented with a superior sneer directed at Al, "That seems to be all—except the fortune teller. That sign over there says two bucks a fortune. Ain't worth it."

"Oh, I don't know," Al said slyly.

"I'll pay the two bucks for Francy's fortune."

Bill concealed his triumph underneath a scowl of protest. "That isn't what I meant. I'll pay for all our fortunes if you're determined to go through with this nonsense. You must believe in the stuff."

"You're the one who seems afraid of it," Al said.

"Stop it!" Francine Ford said. "We'll go in. But I don't want to be first."

"We'll see what hogwash this Madame Olga hands out to Al," Bill said.

They went across the street and entered the feebly lit waiting room. A bell somewhere tinkled musically. Curtains parted, and a voice intoned, "Please enter."

Madame Olga sat behind her table, an eight-inch crystal ball before her, an astrological chart on the wall behind her. The "customer's chair" faced her directly, too heavy to be moved easily.

"Sit down, please," she said, pointing to the chair, "and place two dollars in the golden tray."

Al looked questioningly at Francine, then boldly sat down. The chair was designed in such a way that it was natural to place his hands in the proper position without doing so consciously.

Madame Olga, seeing his hands placed where the scanner could read his fingerprints, concentrated on her crystal ball. "You are Alfred Marvin Carter," she said. "You were born in Billings, Montana in

2031, which makes you twenty-four years old on your last birthday, September eighth. You are a car salesman, fairly successful, and are in love with a young lady whom you're not sure of. There are dark clouds in the crystal ball, signifying trouble connected with this young lady . . . perhaps tragedy? . . . that lies in the past." She looked up at Al questioningly. He shook his head. She looked down at the crystal ball again, frowning. "Yes. It's in the past and also the future. To get the meaning of the future we must go deeper into the past, to previous incarnations, for in this way we can understand your karma." She fumbled under her shawl and appeared to meditate. Suddenly her expression was transformed with surprise. Al, watching her very intently, felt sure the surprise was genuine. Bill felt instant admiration of her acting ability. "This is very unfortunate," Madame Olga said. "I don't like to give unhappy readings."

"Go ahead," Al said. He licked his lips.

"Very well. I see a man. He is you, Alfred Marvin Carter, but in your last incarnation. I can see his death. He is in a room devoid of furniture, in a chair not built for comfort. There are straps around him. He looks at a window through which faces are staring. Pale, serious faces. He breathes deeply. Suddenly his head droops limply. He is dead. This was on October fourteenth, of the year 2029. And his

name was Philip Strong. Now I see someone signing some papers to claim Philip Strong's body. I see a funeral, with few people attending. I see Philip Strong lowered into a grave, and it is in this city, at New Forest Lawn Cemetery." Madame Olga appeared exhausted as she stopped talking.

"You mean I murdered someone and died in the gas chamber?" Al said, horrified.

"Don't believe her," Bill said. "She made it up."

Madame Olga fixed him with a wise smile. "You think so?" she said as though there were hidden meaning behind her words. "Are you *afraid* for me to read your fortune? Perhaps it will be equally as interesting, William Myers."

"How did you learn my name?" Bill said, startled. "No, I don't want my fortune told. I'm not interested." But he knew by Al's and Francine's taunting expressions that he would have to give in. He took Al's place, but purposefully kept his hands off the chair arms.

Madame Olga looked into her crystal ball for several seconds without speaking. "It is as I thought," she said at last. "In your past incarnation you were with Philip Strong, and your name was Harold Wilson. Karma is a strange and wonderful thing. You, Philip Strong, were executed for a murder you did not commit. Harold Wilson, now William Myers, killed the woman and planted evidence to place the blame on you. *Didn't*

you, William Myers?"

"No! It's a lot of nonsense. We weren't those people."

"Who was the woman?" Francine said, her voice sounding strange.

"Sit down, my dear," Madame Olga said, suddenly gentle.

Without taking her eyes from the fortune teller, Francine sat down, unconsciously sitting erect, her hands almost flat in the proper position for the scanner to read her fingerprints.

But without any pretense of looking into the crystal ball, Madame Olga spoke. "You are Francine Martha Ford, born in Tucson, Arizona in 2033. Your mother died when you were four years old, your father five years later. You were raised by an aunt and uncle, and given the best of educational upbringing. In spite of that, there are many things you can't understand about yourself. You think they must be due to still buried factors of your earlier life, but you are wrong. They are part of your karma from past lives — a karma that, by the strange workings of Fate, has brought you three together.

"Yes, you were that murdered woman. You were Mable Farmer. Your grave too lies in New Forest Lawn. Three graves, within sight of one another. A helpless victim of murder, an innocent man sent to the gas chamber for that murder, and the murderer himself, who *died by his own hand.*" Madame Olga laughed, and it was the sound of cold whispering winds in

uninhabited places.

"You are quite — unusual, Madame Olga," Francine said. "I've never met anyone quite like you. May I come back again sometime?" She rose from the chair and half turned toward the exit, her eyes still looking questioningly at the fortune teller.

"Yes, you may come back, Mable Farmer. But first, *go visit your grave*. Or are you afraid it will bring back memories?"

"Yes, you are very strange," Francine said. "I think perhaps I might come back at that." She gave Madame Olga a goodbye smile and went out, Al and Bill following her.

ON the sidewalk Bill wiped his forehead with the edge of his finger and said, "Whew! What a sadistic creature she turned out to be!"

"Maybe not," Al said. He winked at Francine. "What if she was telling the truth? I was reading a very interesting book not long ago which advanced the theory that the fingerprints carry the record of past incarnations. It did a pretty good job of backing it up with proof, though that could have been faked, of course. In there when she told me about myself I was sure there must be a scanner built into that chair and a fingerprint bank behind the curtain at her back, with a hearing button concealed under her shawl. That idea was exploded, of course, when she told you about yourself before you

could lay your hands on the arms of the chair, Bill. It puzzles me. Either she *knows* things by some occult power, or — You didn't arrange this whole thing as a show to entertain us, did you, Bill?"

Bill's face turned beet red. Then he exploded into a laugh. "I suppose I may as well confess," he said. "I did. All's fair, you know, Al. Only —" he made a wry face, "—that unreconstructed maniac in there must have a hellish sense of humor. My little scheme backfired on me. Let's forget it, huh?"

"Then she did use fingerprints," Al said. "She must have gotten yours off the money you paid her ahead of time."

"Of course she used fingerprints!" Bill said. "I didn't think you would know about that."

"I don't believe she used mine," Francy said quietly. "But we can find out from the fingerprint bank at the Hall of Science. Let's go over there now and find out. The evening is young."

"Why bother?" Bill said. "I told Madame Olga to tell Al he was a convicted murderer. She followed *that* much of my instructions, anyway. I thought it would be enlightening to see how he would react."

"I'm reacting, Bill," Al said. "Francy and I are going to the Hall of Science. Coming with us?"

"And if we find she told the truth," Francy said lightly, "we can visit our graves in the moonlight. It will be moonlight until after

midnight, tonight. Full moon . . .”

“Awrrrh!” Bill growled, defeated and a little angry.

THE fingerprint booth in the Hall of Science was impressive. Charts explained the principles of fingerprint classification, and a plastic model showed the construction of the machine that picked up and stored fingerprints. The *brain* in which the billions of items were stored was, of course, the standard colloid gell unit created by du Pont in 1979. The closest thing to duplicating the human brain yet devised, but still a long way from actual ego-integration. It used the two gallon brain, which was the largest. Most servos used the pint size which could absorb and keep straight quite a few million items in motor-sensory association.

The card over the scanner plate read, “Please place all fingertips firmly against plate for accurate identification. This fingerprint bank contains the fingerprints of every living person, and is kept up to date. It will identify you and give whatever information about you it contains. Should any of this information be inaccurate, please notify the government on Info Form 162AAA.” And there was a stack of blank 162AAA’s on a table.

“I’ll try it first,” Al said. He placed all his fingers flat against the scanner plate. At once a pleasant voice spoke from a small speaker, telling him who he was, and giv-

ing the data about him that Madame Olga had given, in almost the same words.

Al grinned at Bill. “No wonder Madame Olga jumped with surprise. You had asked her to tell me I was the reincarnation of a convicted murderer, and her machine told her I really was.”

“Coincidence,” Bill said. “It won’t include Mable Farmer in Francy’s identification.”

But it did. And both Al and Francy looked at Bill, their faces a trifle pale.

“What do you want *me* to do?” Bill shot at them. But he knew there was no way out. He went through the routine. The speaker finally came to what, from his expression, Bill dreaded it would say. “Harold Prescott Wilson, 2005-30,” with several seconds of swift routine history, then, “Cause of death, suicide.”

But what hung in their ears after the speaker became silent, and kept their eyes opened wide in surprise, was an almost insignificant factual item just before the cause of death. It was, “Married Olga Paula Bancroft October 7, 2029.”

“Madame Olga!” Francy whispered. “Then—she’s your wife, Bill!” Francy nodded her head slowly. “All of these years she has lived, and today you walked in and gave her money to play a trick on someone. She brought out your prints on the bill and identified you — and then she knew you were

the reincarnation of her husband, who had killed himself. Why? Was it remorse at having killed me and framed Al for it? It must have been. Why did you kill me?"

Bill's lips worked, but no sound came out.

"This is getting us all worked up," Al said. "Let's calm down a bit. Let's go someplace where we can get a drink and relax and think this thing out."

FIFTEEN minutes later they were in a booth in a cocktail lounge, with Martinis in front of them.

"Now," Al said. "What do we have to go on? We have what seems to be incontrovertible proof that we three are drawn together through what the occultists call karma. A certain theory about fingerprints, when applied to us, tells us that in a previous existence Bill murdered Francine and framed me for it, then killed himself a year later. And all that right here in L.A. After dying, we were reborn in such places as Montana and Arizona and Illinois. But Olga Bancroft didn't die, and continued to live here, so she was here when we arrived at our meeting place.

"But is that true—or is it just according to a theory? Coincidence has a longer arm than most people think. If you sit down in a game of poker and get a royal flush dealt to you, you realize it's coincidence. Our trouble here is that we're wrapped up emotionally, and have

lost sight of the fact that we're a royal flush. Inevitable, when you consider all the possible groups of three or four people. But superstitions are built on things like this.

"How did it begin? Bill loves Francine and wants to win her, but I'm his rival. Francine is obviously waiting for one of us to show some admirable or the opposite quality so that she can definitely make up her mind and be satisfied she's chosen the right partner in life. Bill consciously reasons that all people are somewhat superstitious, and if he can get me into a situation where my superstition crops out, Francine will turn away from me to him. He thinks he will be secure in the situation, because he staged it. It didn't work out that way. We could get involved in an irrational scene, have something happen that knocked Bill off, and Francine and I get married feeling that karma had worked it out that way. But I won't have any of that. Francine, if you fall into that trap I won't marry you."

"It seems to me," Bill said quietly, "that we're already in that trap. We can rationalize it away, but the room for doubt still continues to exist. It's already in the process of being shoved into the unconscious in Al. He's planting directives with it." Bill made a wry face. "Maybe Francine has already discarded me as a possible husband on the grounds that I'm 'married' to Madame Olga."

"Nonsense!" Francine said, but

her face flamed red, giving the lie to her words. She calmed herself and went on quietly, "You are in the trap, Bill. If I reject you, you will believe it is for that reason, when it will be because you used unethical methods to gain an advantage over Al."

"And I used an unethical advantage myself," Al said. "I pointed it out to you behind his back. We're all in the trap. How are we going to get out of it?"

"We could go our separate ways and forget about it," Francine said, her eyes bleak.

Al smiled gently. "That violates the first principle of psychology. It would warp each of us for the rest of our lives. We have to resolve this situation completely or we're sunk, and *we all know it.*"

"But how?" Bill asked. The very desperation of his voice showed how firmly it had gripped him.

"First," Al said, a mirthless smile on his lips, "the cemetery. We're going to walk right into the teeth of — our insanity."

THE nightwatchman became cooperative for five dollars. He located the three graves in a directory and loaned them a flashlight, keeping his curiosity to himself.

"It's spooky," was Francine's diagnosis of the full moon and the graveyard.

"What will this accomplish?" Bill grumbled, his anger still gnawing at him.

Al, wielding the flashlight, merely chuckled. "We should have collected Madame Olga," he said. "Then we could have a showdown all the way around, tonight."

"Why don't we go get her?" Francine said, pausing.

"Why should we?" Bill grumbled.

"That's right, why should we?" Al said. "If our destiny's in the stars, and this is a rendezvous with Destiny, *she will be here.*" He made it sound like handwriting on the wall.

Francine gasped and looked ahead into the darkness as though more than half expecting to see the shawled figure of the fortune teller. Even Bill caught himself peering, and turned his head away with a short breath of exasperation.

They went on in silence, the flashlight an evil eye showing them the way ahead, until they reached the turn.

"Five tombstones north," Al said.

The flashlight counted them and settled on the fifth. They went slowly toward it until they could read the words on it. The name: HAROLD PRESCOTT WILSON.

"Here's where your body lies, Bill," Al said.

"What do you mean — *my* body?" Bill said angrily. "It's a lot of crazy nonsense!"

"Is it?" Al said. "Methinks thou protesteth too much. I wonder what thoughts went through your head just before you killed yourself. The futility of having mur-

dered Francy, and framing me for it?"

"Stop it, Al!" Francy said sharply. "That isn't fair!"

"But it is," Al said, "and you'll see it before the night's over."

Before the night's over! The thought hung suspended above the tombstone darkness, a deeper shadow than all the rest.

"Try and remember, Bill," Al said patiently. "Surely you can remember . . . dying?"

"Damn you, Al!" Bill said.

"Stop it!" Francy said, "or I'll march out of here and refuse to speak to either of you again!"

Both men relaxed a little.

"I think my grave is next," Al said. "Shall we go see it?"

"This is crazy," Bill said. "Our even being here is crazy."

"Is it?" Al said thinly. "It was your idea. Remember? Only, in the original version of your farce you were to be securely perched in the knowledge that it was all a fake, and I was to be cringing before the Great Unknown. I wonder from what region of your unconscious the formative causes of that idea came?"

"I know where I got the idea," Bill said. "I read a magazine expose of fortune tellers and got the idea from that."

Al directed the flashlight along the row of tombstones absently. "And what did you want to do?"

"Isn't it obvious?" Bill snapped. "I wanted to make you look like a sap so Francy would choose me!"

"Are you sure?" Al said. "A part of your mind must have been aware of leaving fingerprints on that money you gave Madame Olga. It hid it from you, trapped you. Why? *If your whole being had wanted success you wouldn't have made any mistakes.*"

"The fundamental law of psychology," Bill admitted.

"And true," Al said. "One of the surest ways of trapping your subconscious out into the open is to analyze your mistakes, your pattern of forgetting." They had been moving slowly forward. "Ah. Here's my grave," Al said.

The stone was a cheap marker with the name, PHILIP STRONG, on it.

"I wonder," Al said, "if I knew the truth when I died in the gas chamber for a crime I didn't commit? Did I know you had framed me? I could have known and been unable to do anything about it. The law had convicted me. Only I — and you — knew that the evidence was framed. I wonder if I died — bitter? Or did I believe that somewhere, somehow, in a brighter better world, the wrong would be righted? That's karma you know."

Francine spoke. "Shall we visit *my* grave?" she asked. "I think it's time. My watch says one minute to midnight. I feel the urge to stand on my grave in the moonlight. Surely I must have been a witch — to inspire the murder urge in a man."

They continued down the row. The tombstone was an ornate one with little cherubs on it. The name was there. MABLE FARMER. Francine stood in front of the stone, looking at it, obviously conscious of standing directly above the body six feet below.

"I wonder why I was murdered," she said softly, as though only to herself. "How awful it must have been, to die that way. Was I shot, or strangled in a fit of rage? Was I someone who deserved being murdered? Or was I an innocent, in someone's way?" She nodded to herself. "Yes, we should have brought Madame Olga. She must know the truth." She turned slowly and faced Bill and Al. "The truth about the past, I mean."

"She's already told us," Al said.

"She told us what she believes," Francine said gently. "But is it necessarily true? What are the facts? Philip Strong was executed for murdering Mable Farmer. Harold Wilson married Olga Bancroft shortly after Philip Strong was convicted of that murder. They lived together as man and wife, then Harold Wilson killed himself. Did he tell Olga he murdered Mable, or did she come to that conclusion herself? Did he kill himself because of a guilty conscience—or because he was unbalanced by some great grief? Let's analyze Olga's reactions. Hired by Bill, she turns the tables on him, having identified him with her dead husband. Isn't that significant, that her

husband returns to her from the grave after all these years and she treats him like that?"

"Isn't it natural?" Al said. "He was a murderer twice over, having framed Philip Strong."

"Suppose Philip Strong actually murdered Mable Farmer?" Francine said. "No—don't interrupt. I want to paint a picture. Suppose Harold Wilson (Bill) loved Mable Farmer, and Philip Strong (Al) killed her. That would make the picture somewhat different. Harold, overcome by grief, marries Olga who is in love with him. But he doesn't get over loving Mable. Maybe he comes to believe if he had done things differently Mable wouldn't have been murdered at all. From that it would be an easy step for him to accuse himself of her death as he disintegrated mentally toward the moment of suicide. Olga, not having his love, would react by hating him. She would come to believe in her twisted mind that he had killed himself to escape her—be with his loved one beyond the grave. *And that pattern fits more accurately to the present pattern.*"

"But it doesn't!" Al said. "Bill tried to frame me into the position he's now in! Karma works itself out—if you want to believe in karma. He framed me last time. He tried it again and this time I turned it against him."

"No," Francine said. "That doesn't fit *all* the facts. Let's go back. You warned me that Bill might have some plan to put you in a

disadvantageous light, and told me you would play him along and see what it was. That statement was designed to prejudice me in your favor from the start. *I recognized that and kept it in mind.* I even told you I recognized your motive. And after we left Madame Olga's you let slip that you had read a book lately on fingerprints and reincarnation. But it was Bill who got the idea for showing you up—he hoped. He got it from reading an article. Where did you get the article, Bill?"

"A magazine named FATE," Bill said, puzzled. "I probably still have it around the house. In fact I know I do. I kept it."

"But you can't remember how you got the magazine?" Francine asked. "That in itself is peculiar. Did you buy it at some stand? Is it a magazine you subscribe to?"

"No. I'd remember that. I didn't buy it. Somebody must have given it to me or brought it to my apartment and left it. Probably that. I would remember if someone had given it to me. It's a magazine I'd never read before."

"You left it there, didn't you Al?" Francine said quietly.

"Not intentionally," Al said, stony-faced. "In fact, it must have slipped out of my pocket. When I got home it was gone, and I had been several places including Bill's."

"*There are no accidents!*" Francine said sharply. "Don't you see? Deep in your unconscious you

planned it. You left the magazine with Bill. In a dozen subtle ways even you weren't aware of you built up the idea in him to the point where it emerged into consciousness. When the time was ripe your unconscious mind let the right things come to the surface to trick Bill. You didn't make a single error. Bill did. Why did his unconscious mind make him leave his fingerprints on the money? *Because it didn't condone trickery and was determined to expose his trickery and make him honest again!* Another basic aspect of psychology."

"Are you sure your thinking isn't becoming prejudicial?" Al said quietly. "There's another aspect of this testing. You yourself might be found undesirable—to both of us."

"The final reaction, Al," Francine said, smiling. "A threat reaction."

"I didn't mean it that way. Nor did I mean any of this cemetery stuff to do anything more than . . ." Al let his voice drift off, frowning.

"Bring our hidden unconscious motives into the open—where they are now," Francine said. "So in the end your total action results in exposing your falsehoods to yourself as you're conditioned to do. We all are."

"What about the fingerprint evidence?" Al said. "You don't believe any part of me knew about that!"

"No. It could be chance, like getting a royal flush in the first hand

you play in poker. Or reincarnation could be a reality. But it really doesn't matter, does it? Whatever is the truth there, should we let it dominate our lives any more than the theory that atmosphere is composed of molecules? Or perhaps it does affect me, to this extent — I'm convinced Harold Wilson loved Mable Farmer. In the years to come, if I think about reincarnation at all, I will think of that. If I am Mable, and Bill is Harold, our love survived death, to live again. Is that romanticism? Then this isn't: Bill isn't too good at deceit on the unconscious levels that determine whether marriage will succeed or not. I'll be able to figure him out, usually. With you, Al, I would always be wondering, never sure. Goodbye, Al." Francine held out her hand spontaneously. "And good luck. Take the flashlight

with you. We'll be along soon."

"Thanks," Al said, low-voiced. Then he turned and strode into the darkness. He carried the flashlight, but didn't use it.

Bill and Francine watched him disappear into the darkness, drawn together by their common bond of feeling sorry for him.

Then they were alone underneath the moon, the silence of the dead building a wall, off in the darkness. Two marble cherubs smiled at them in the ghostly light from Mable's tombstone, and Francine, holding out her hand in invitation, said, "Won't you stand upon my grave, my lover?"

A tender smile quirking his lips, Bill reached for her hand, enclosed his strong fingers around it — and abruptly pulled her to him, embracing her with loving roughness.

"Never, my darling," he said.

Editorially Speaking...

(Concluded from page 5)

brotherhood of evil; of the battle between the dark and the light, the good and the bad, the living and the dead!

Fiction, all of it—and yet . . . woven into the thread of thrills and chills, laughter and tears, excitement and adventure, mystery and yet more mystery, you may find something significant, something profound, something that is recognized by that strange sense that

asks you to accept what is beyond reason, beyond knowledge. If you do, you will be greatly rewarded by the thinking that such recognition will cause you to do. If you do not, you will certainly have the reading adventure of your life.

MYSTIC Magazine is *your* magazine, and it aims to please you. Let us know how we succeed!

—Ray Palmer

True **MYSTIC** *Adventures*

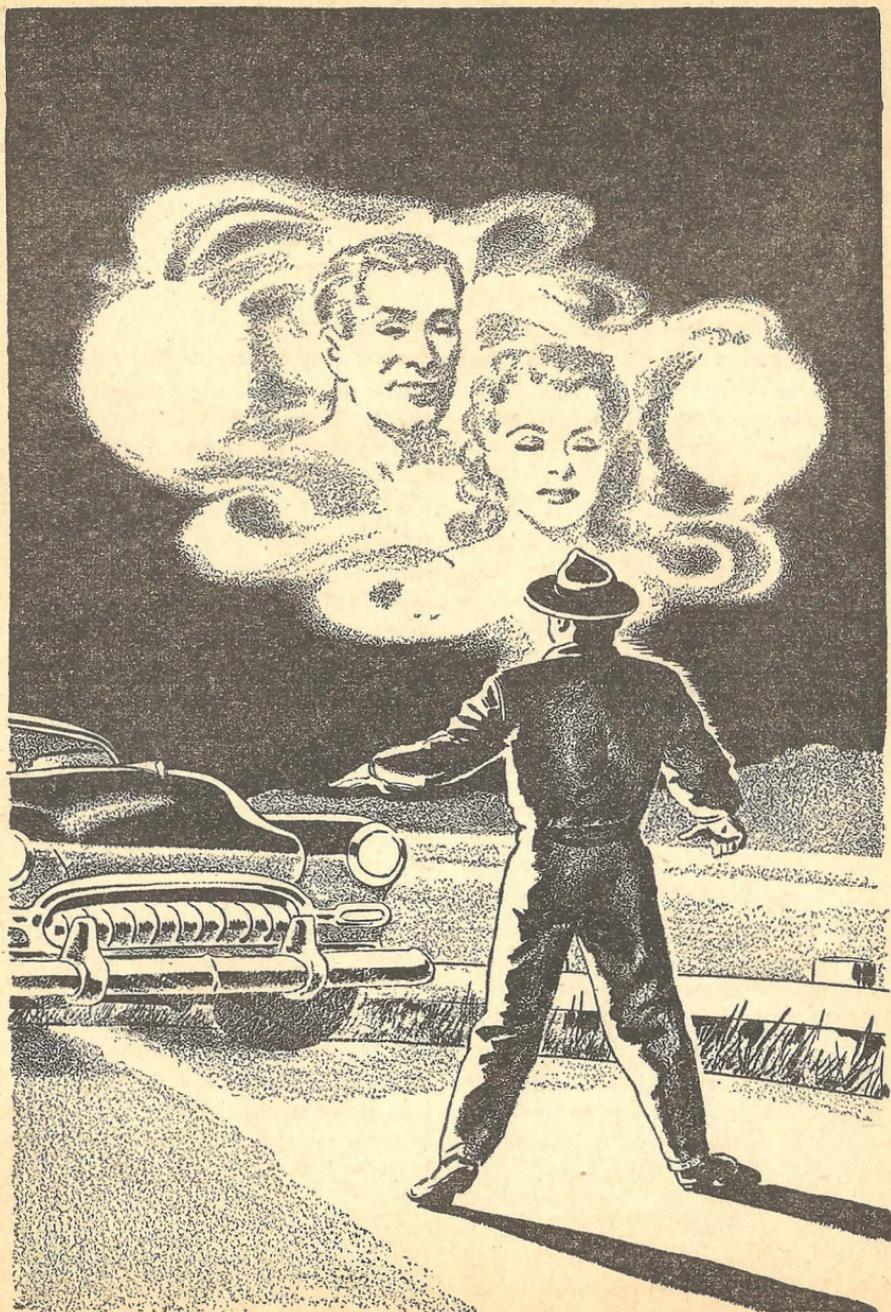
By Orfeo Matthew Angelucci

(As told to Paul M. Vest)

I TRAVELED IN A FLYING SAUCER

Here is the story of a California airport worker, whose experience is one of the strangest we've heard regarding the saucers.

Ever since Kenneth Arnold first brought the flying saucers to the nation's headlines, we have heard stories that have startled us with their unusual nature. We all know how the armed forces have investigated, how they have first claimed there was truth in some of the reports, and then claimed there was none—until we have grown dizzy trying to keep up with their changes of opinion. Because of this strange policy, the general public has been divided into two groups—the group which scoffs at the existence of the mysterious disks, and the group that believes they exist. Of the latter group, there are, again, two divisions—those who believe they are interplanetary, and those who believe there is a mystic explanation. Mr. Angelucci is one who says they fall into both classifications—that they are from space, from other worlds, and that they are also of a mystic nature. We want you to read his story, as he told it to Mr. Vest, and judge for yourself as to what is the basis for his experience. Whatever you think, one thing is sure, Mr. Angelucci has had one of the strangest mystic adventures we have ever heard recounted. He declares it to be true.



BEFORE my first encounter with the saucers less than a year ago I considered all of the newspaper accounts and talk about those mysterious objects as a joke. No one laughed louder than I at the "lunatic fringe" who were deluded into believing we had visitors from another planet. I gave no serious thought to the numerous reports of strange objects in the skies or the popular idea that they might actually be of extra-terrestrial origin.

I am a family man with a wife whom I adore, and two sons, Raymond, 15, and Richard, 12. I was forced to quit school in the 9th grade because of physical ill health, although I had an insatiable hunger for learning—especially in the field of scientific research. Later, when I was stronger and went to work, I took science courses at night school and continued my studies and experiments at home.

My present job is in the Plastics Department of the Lockheed Aircraft Company in Burbank, California. My work involves production of radomes, or plastic glass housings for the radar units of the F-94B and F-94C Starfire Air Force planes. Several of these same planes were recently reported to have established radar contact with "unidentified objects" in the skies over Japan. Unidentified objects to the Air Force, but I know what they are! **I HAVE TRAVELED IN ONE!**

As I tell you that in all sincerity

I wonder if you will accept my story. Can you possibly believe that a humble aircraft worker—a nobody according to all worldly standards—has actually established communication with the saucers? Can I convince you that a human being has traveled in one of those strange objects whose sightings have mystified men all over the world since June 24, 1947 when Ken Arnold sighted nine of the discs near Mt. Rainier?

I stand to lose absolutely everything and gain nothing but ridicule for giving out this account; but would a man risk everything he holds dear in life to swear to a lie? Would he endanger his job; lay both his family and himself open to public derision and cause his associates to question his sanity? No. I tell my story as it *happened* to me.

Many scientists and aeronautical authorities will declare that certain of my experiences could not be true from the standpoint of present scientific and aeronautical knowledge. Were one of those same men to travel back in time several thousand years and fly a Constellation equipped with radio, radar, television, etc. over Egypt, the learned men of Alexandria would declare that the huge flying ship, the television, radio and other equipment, as well as the natural laws which governed their operation, were all utterly impossible from the standpoint of *their* scientific knowledge and hence disbelieve all reports of the ship.

My story begins Friday night May 23, 1952. I was working the swing shift from 4 P.M. to 12:30 A.M. at the Lockheed Plant. I was very tired that night and welcomed the shrill of the quitting whistle. I took my car from the Plant parking lot and headed southeast on Victory Boulevard toward home.

As I drove I became increasingly conscious of nervous tension. I sensed a peculiar force of some kind about me. It was almost like being in contact with a mild electric current for it gave me an odd prickling sensation in my arms and legs and even up into my scalp.

At Alameda Boulevard I stopped for the traffic signal. It was then I noticed that my eyes felt strange and the sounds of the traffic were oddly muffled and far-away as though my hearing was affected. I wondered if I was going to be sick.

As I passed the intersection something drew my eyes slightly upward and I saw a faintly glowing reddish object directly ahead. It was so dim that I had to look twice to be certain it was really there. First I thought it must be some type of low-flying aircraft, but I soon realized that was impossible as the object just hung silently suspended in the air. I rubbed my eyes half fearing something was wrong with my vision. But the thing was still there — not sharp and clearly defined, but fuzzily luminous, oval shaped and reddish.

I continued on out Riverside

Drive, but I never seemed to get any nearer to the thing. I decided it must be moving at about the same rate of speed I was. I judged it to be about 100 yards ahead of me and about 25 feet in diameter, but it could have been closer and smaller or farther away and much larger.

As it was almost 1 A.M. there was little traffic on the road. Apparently no one else had noticed the thing as I saw no cars stopped to investigate. I wondered if I would have noticed it above the glare of the headlights if my eyes had not been drawn to it.

I drove across the bridge over the Los Angeles River with the object still in view. Just the other side of this bridge is a rather lonely, deserted stretch of road called Forest Lawn Drive.

The object stopped and hovered over the intersection of the Highway and Forest Lawn Drive. As I approached, it suddenly gained in brilliance and its red color grew deeper and more glowing. Also the physical symptoms I had noticed earlier became more acute. I was aware of an almost painful tingling sensation and a numbness in my arms and legs that again reminded me of some sort of an electrical current.

As I came nearer to the disc it veered sharply to the right off the highway and began moving slowly on over Forest Lawn Drive. I turned my car onto Forest Lawn Drive and followed the object. I was

thinking that the fantastic thing must be one of the saucers I'd thought were only a joke.

About a mile down Forest Lawn Drive the disc swerved to the right away from the road and hung in the sky over an unfenced field about forty feet below the road level. I drove off the road about thirty feet to the edge of the declivity. From there the glowing red disc was directly in front of me and only about thirty feet away. As I stared, it vibrated violently; then shot off into the sky at a 30 or 40 degree angle and at very great speed. High in the sky to the west it decelerated abruptly, hung for a moment; then accelerated and disappeared like a meteor.

But even as the glowing red orb vanished two smaller discs came from it. These discs were a soft fluorescent green and shot toward me like shooting stars.

They streaked down in front of my car and hovered about fifteen feet directly in front of me. I judged them to be about 30 inches each in diameter. Hanging silently in the air like iridescent bubbles, their green light fluctuated in pulsations.

As I gazed at those two eerie balls of green fire I heard a masculine voice—strong, well-modulated and speaking perfect English. The voice apparently came from between the two green discs.

Because of the tremendous nervous tension I was under at that moment which amounted almost to

a state of shock, it is impossible for me to give a verbatim account of the conversation which followed. The invisible speaker obviously was endeavoring to choose words which I could understand but even so there were many words and phrases which were not clear to me. I can only make a poor attempt to tell you the gist of what was said as best I can remember. Also, there is much that I cannot tell, because I feel it will be helpful to keep secret what I have informed certain officials who deem it "classified" information.

I do, however, remember the exact first words spoken which were, "Don't be afraid, Orfeo, we are friends!" The the Voice told me to get out of my car.

Mechanically I pushed open the car door and got out. Oddly enough I didn't feel fear, but I was so weak and shaky that I could scarcely stand. Perhaps I was frightened even beyond fear. I leaned weakly against the front fender of my car and stared fascinated at the twin circular objects hovering about fifteen feet in front of me.

The glowing discs created a soft illumination, but I could see no person anywhere. I remember vaguely that the voice then spoke again calling me by my full name in words of greeting. It further stated that the small green discs were instruments of transmission and reception comparable to nothing developed on Earth. Then the voice added that through the discs

I was in direct communication with friends from another planet.

There was a pause and I dimly remember thinking that I was expected to say something, but I was stunned into silence. I could only stare at those fantastic balls of green fire and wonder if I had lost my mind.

Then another incredible phenomenon began to occur. The twin discs were spaced about twelve feet apart. The area between them began to glow with a soft green light which gradually formed itself into a kind of luminous screen as the discs themselves faded perceptibly.

Within that luminous, three-dimensional screen there appeared images of the heads and shoulders of two persons, as though in a cinema close-up. One was the image of a man and the other a woman. I say man and woman only because their outlines and features were generally similar to men and women. But those two figures struck me somehow as being the ultimate of human perfection. There was a nobility about them; their eyes were larger and much more expressive and they emanated a kind of radiance that gave me a sense of wonder. Strangely enough the projected images of the two beings appeared to be observing me, for they looked directly at me and smiled; then their eyes looked about as though taking in the entire scene.

I had the feeling as they studied me that they knew every thought

that passed in my mind; I seemed to be in telepathic communication with them, for thoughts, understandings, and new comprehensions flashed through my consciousness that would have required hours of conversation to transmit. These things are difficult to put into words for my understanding of them was gained primarily through intuitive perception.

After several moments the two figures faded and the luminous screen vanished. Again the two discs flamed into brilliant green fire.

Bathed in cold perspiration and trembling violently from sheer weakness, I was on the point of blacking out when I heard the voice again. It was deep and more kindly than ever as it said something about my being understandably confused. But it assured me I would understand everything that had happened later on.

The thought flashed through my mind, "Why have they contacted me — just an aircraft factory worker — a nobody?"

The voice replied, "We see the individual people of Earth as each one really is, Orfeo, and not as perceived by the limited senses of man. The people of your planet have been under observation by us for centuries, but have only recently been re-surveyed. Every point of progress in your society is registered with us. We know you as you do not know yourselves. Every man, woman and child on Earth is

recorded in our vital statistics by means of our recording 'crystal discs.'

"From among you we singled out three individuals who, from the standpoint of our higher vibrational perception, are best fitted for establishing contact. All three are simple, humble and unknown persons. Of the other two, one is living in Rome and the other is in India. But for our first contact with the people of Earth, Orfeo, we have chosen you.

"We feel a deep sense of kinship, or brotherhood, toward Earth's inhabitants because the evolution of our planet has been along somewhat the same lines as that of Earth. In you we can look back and see our own world going through its 'growing pains.' We ask that you look upon us as older — much older — brothers!"

The voice continued then speaking rather rapidly. It stated that they were well aware that the "flying saucers" had been treated humorously by most people — as it was meant that they should be. In this way they wanted the people of Earth to become only gradually aware of them and accustomed to the idea of space visitors, if only from a humorous standpoint. They wanted us to receive them lightly at first for the sake of our own stability!

The voice stated that the discs were powered and controlled by tapping into universal magnetic forces; thus their activated mole-

cules received and converted energy inherent in all the universe. It further explained that the complexities of the apparently simple structure of a disc were so great that to an Earthling a saucer would be considered as having "synthetic brains," although each one is to a degree under the remote control of a Mother Ship. Also, most of the saucers are of a circular shape and vary in size from a few inches to hundreds of feet in diameter.

A disc, the voice continued, is able not only to relay whatever is transmitted to it from a Mother Ship, but also it receives all visual, auditory and telepathic impressions precisely as these come within the scope of the disc. These impressions are relayed to the Mother Ship where they are permanently recorded upon what Earthlings would term "crystal brains." Thus for centuries they had been able to record a detailed account of Earth's civilization and the evolution of individual persons.

The voice also stated that in addition to the remotely controlled saucers they also had space ships, some of which had been seen by Earthlings. The space ships were of four basic designs — spherical, hemispherical, oblong and torpedo shape. A few were combinations of these forms.

I distinctly remember the voice making some such statement as this, "Interplanetary ships and saucers can approximate the speed of

light.

"Traveling at the speed of light, Time, as known on Earth, is non-existent; hence in this dimension there are rapid means of space travel which are beyond the scope of man's present understanding, or mathematical computations."

Many of the saucers, the voice stated, were invisible to earthly eyes and could only be detected by radar. Also that any of the saucers could be rendered invisible at any time, or could be disintegrated by either explosion or implosion. Thus Earthlings had seen some apparently burst in a white flash while others seemed simply to disappear.

I remember wondering about Captain Mantell and several others who believed they had contacted the saucers. In reply to my thought I heard this reply, "Captain Mantell was not pursuing the planet Venus. He was endeavoring to overtake and capture one of our remotely controlled crystal discs. His death is deeply regretted but it was absolutely unavoidable.

"Several other Earthlings have accidentally contacted visitors from planets in your own solar system. We are not the only extra-terrestrials who have visited your planet! In one instance the man died in a mental institution, the true account of his experiences unbelievable. In another case the Earthling was stunned unconscious and slightly burned. We wish to tell Earth's people that visitors from other planets and of different

types of evolution occasionally explore Earth's dense, heavy, gaseous atmosphere. All are of kindly intent and none will harm man. But these intelligences can read thoughts and see emotions! Man believes himself civilized, but often his thoughts are barbaric and his emotions lethal. Remember this and do not attempt to capture, shoot down or attack any such entity or, as a warning you may be similarly stunned and burned as was Des Verges. Approach all planetary visitors with friendly, welcoming thoughts!

As I listened I wondered why these incredible beings hadn't landed several space ships at one of our large airports and thus convinced the world simply and quickly of their reality?

In answer I heard these words, "Cosmic Law actively prevents one planet from interfering with the evolution of any other planet. In other words, Orfeo, Earth must work out its own destiny! We will do everything in our power to aid the people of Earth, but we are definitely and greatly limited by Cosmic Law. It is because the life evolution of Earth is endangered now that we have made our re-appearance here in your solar system — the danger is far greater than Earth's people realize. The 'enemy' prepares in vast numbers and in secret. Once the rain of fire is unleashed upon Earth we will be powerless, and civilization as you know it may perish, as it did once

in the remote past."

For a moment the voice was still and then it said gently, "Among the countless other worlds in the Cosmos, Orfeo, the children of Earth are as babes, although many of them believe they are close to the ultimates of knowledge. Among the worlds, solar systems, and galaxies of the heavens are endless types of evolutions, each one utilizing and employing the predominant elements of its parent planet. Many of these evolutions would be utterly incomprehensible and unbelievable to Earth's people. But I reiterate we who are here now are from a similar type planet and of an evolution similar to mankind. As older brothers we will aid Earth's people insofar as they, through free-will, will permit us to do so. We are definitely not cosmic 'hot-rod' curiosities burdened with 'space suits' and equipped with deadly 'ray' pistols, as many people conceive of possible space visitors. We are just friends from a neighboring world.

"We'll contact you again, Orfeo," the voice said, "But for now, friend, it is goodnight."

With those words the two shimmering green discs faded almost out; then I heard a soft, low hum as they flamed brilliantly into glowing green fire again and shot up into the sky in the direction the larger red disc had taken earlier. In an incredibly short time they too had vanished, leaving me standing there alone by my car.

Bewilderment, incredulity, shock and downright fear flooded over me—sudden panic that I had lost my mind and gone stark, raving mad. What I had witnessed, I felt, couldn't have been! It just didn't make sense in the rational everyday world.

I raised my numbed hand and it was trembling violently. I saw by my watch that it was almost two o'clock in the morning. I climbed shakily into my car and kicked the starter. Panic was mounting in me. I twisted the steering wheel, gunned the engine and made a sharp, fast U turn to get back onto the road. The tires screamed and the car lurched.

I wanted to get home quick—I wanted to get back to the sane, rational world. I wanted someone to assure me that I wasn't going mad.

I drove with only a single thought in my mind—to get home! When finally I made the turn onto Glendale Boulevard and saw the lights of my apartment I breathed a heavy sigh of relief—no place had ever looked so good to me before!

I left the car in the driveway and ran into the house. My wife was waiting up, worried and anxious because I was so late.

She took one look at me. "Orfeo—what's the matter? What's wrong? You're white as a sheet!"

I just stood there staring at her unable to speak.

She ran over and grasped my hand crying, "Orfeo—you're sick

... I'm going to call a doctor."

I put my arms around her and drew her to me. I just wanted to feel her close and for the moment to try and not think of what I had been through. The mind and nervous system can stand only so much.

She looked up and pleaded with me to tell her what had happened.

But I could only whisper, "Tomorrow—maybe tomorrow, Mae, I can tell you . . ."

Finally we got to bed, but it was almost dawn before I finally drifted into a kind of half sleep.

Nearly all day Saturday I spent in bed. The shock of that fantastic experience was so great that I found it difficult to get back to actualities. I kept having the strange feeling that the every-day world I knew was a phantom world inhabited only by shadows.

It was not until Sunday that I could bring myself to tell my wife what had happened to me. Frankly, I wondered if she would think I had lost my mind. Thus it was with a sense of relief I heard her say, "If you say it happened like that, Orfeo, I believe you. You've always told me the truth. But this thing frightens me—and you looked so deathly white when you came in."

I could only put my arms around her as I replied, "I guess it scares me too, Mae."

Sunday afternoon I took my twelve year old son Richard and drove back to the spot on Forest

Lawn Drive where I had seen the discs. There in the loose dirt I found the deep skid marks the tires of my car had made Friday night.

Seeing those skid marks where I had gunned my car in panic to get away from the eerie spot reassured me of the reality of my experience. I was more convinced than ever that I had been in contact with beings from another world.

Monday night I went back to my swing-shift job at Lockheed. It felt good to be back at work again! The friendly banter, laughter and jokes of my co-workers were just what I needed.

Outside of my family I told no one of that first experience as I knew I would be ridiculed. In fact even at home very little was said about the saucers or my experience for the subject upset my wife and filled her with apprehension so even the boys refrained from talking much about the saucers.

But when I was alone I thought long and often about those incredible beings from that other world. The voice had promised, "We'll contact you again, Orfeo." Thus I wondered when they would get in touch with me again and how? Had they meant soon—or would it be months or even years? These and hundreds of similar questions clamored in my mind.

I wondered if I was under constant observation by them. If so, then I at first thought that through telepathy I could signal them to

return. One night I went back to that lonely spot on Forest Lawn Drive and tried to establish telepathic communication. But it was useless! No glowing red disc appeared—only the night and the empty skies that gave back no answer.

Weeks passed and still no further sign from them. Doubts began to trouble me. Time dulled the memory of that night and I began to wonder if my experience had actually been real after all.

Then early in July there was a fresh flood of well-authenticated reports of sightings of saucers in the skies over Southern California. Local newspapers carried banner headlines announcing **FLYING SAUCERS OVER LOS ANGELES!** Some people were convinced we had interplanetary visitors and looked for mass landings at any moment.

July 23, 1952 I didn't go to work. I wasn't feeling well and believed I was coming down with the flu. I was in bed all day, but in the evening I felt a little better and thought a walk in the fresh air would be good for me.

It was a little after ten o'clock. Beyond the Los Feliz theatre is a lonely stretch of vacant lots. The place is eerie and forbidding at night, for huge concrete buttresses rise from it supporting the Hyperion Avenue Freeway bridge several hundred feet overhead. The bridge casts dense, oblique shadows down below making it a shadowed no-

man's-land.

As I crossed the vacant lots in the deep shadows of the bridge a peculiar feeling came over me. Instantly I remembered that sensation—the tingling in my arms and legs! I looked nervously overhead but saw nothing. The feeling became more intense and with it came the odd dulling of consciousness I had noted on that other occasion.

Between me and the bridge was a kind of misty obstruction. I couldn't make out what it was. From where I was standing it looked just like a ghostly Eskimo igloo—or the phantom of an igloo. For it seemed like a luminous shadow without substance. I stared hard at the object. It was absolutely incredible—like a huge misty soap bubble squatting on the ground emitting a fuzzy, pale glow.

The object appeared to be about 30 feet high and about equally as wide. As I watched it seemed to gain substance and to darken perceptibly on the outside. Then I noticed it had an aperture or entrance like the door to an igloo, and the inside was brilliantly lighted.

I walked toward the thing. I had absolutely no sense of fear; rather a pleasant feeling of well-being possessed me. At the entrance I could see a large circular room inside. Hesitating only an instant I stepped into the object.

I found myself in a large, circular, domed room about twenty-five feet in diameter. The interior was

made of a sort of ethereal mother-of-pearl stuff, iridescent with soft, exquisite colors that gave off a soft light. There was no sign of life — no sound. And the room was entirely empty except for a huge reclining chair directly across from the entrance. It too was made of that same translucent, shimmering substance — a stuff so fine that it didn't even appear to be material reality as we know it.

No voice spoke, but I received the strong telepathic impression that I was to sit in the chair. In fact a kind of force seemed to be impelling me directly toward it. As I sat down I marveled at the texture of the material. Seated therein I felt suspended in air, for the substance of the chair molded itself to fit every slight curve or movement of my body.

As I leaned back and relaxed, that feeling of peace and well-being intensified. Then a movement drew my attention toward the entrance. I saw that the walls appeared to be noiselessly moving to close the aperture. In a few seconds the door had vanished and the room was apparently sealed with no indication that there had ever been an entrance.

The closing of that door cut me off entirely from the outside world. For an uncomfortable moment I felt lost to my family and friends. But almost immediately a warm, pleasant glow passed over me giving me once more that feeling of peace and security. I breathed

deeply and found the air cool and fresh. Vaguely I wondered what was going to happen next.

Then I thought I heard a far-away, soft, vibrant humming sound. At first it was almost inaudible, but it grew to a steady, lowpitched hum that was more like a vibration than a sound.

Next I was aware that my body seemed to be sinking more deeply into the soft substance of the chair. I felt as though a gentle force was pushing against the entire surface of my body. It was a peculiarly pleasant sensation that put me into a kind of semi-dream state.

As the humming sound increased slightly I noticed that the interior of the room was darkening as though a heavy shadow had passed from the dome engulfing the room in a twilight. As the light diminished I began to grow apprehensive. Suddenly I had the realization of how alone and helpless I actually was. For a bad moment I was on the edge of panic in the tightly sealed, darkening room.

Then . . . I heard music. It seemed to be coming from the walls. I just couldn't believe my ears when I recognized the melody as my favorite song. I wondered, how did they know my favorite piece? The song was "Fools Rush In," and it brought back tender memories. As I listened the panic faded for I realized how safe I was with them, who knew my every thought, dream and cherished hope!

Reassured, I settled back to enjoy the music. In a few seconds the interior of the room began to grow lighter again. Soon it was more brilliantly lighted than ever and the humming sound was almost inaudible.

"Where are they taking me?" I wondered, as I half listened to the music. For I was certain that the craft I was in must be moving although I never once felt any change in air pressure and the air itself remained as fresh and cool as though it came from a mountain top. Once I wondered if they were taking me to their world—or, if I was going to spend eternity in space in that pearly igloo.

While I was still wondering I felt the push against the surface of my body lessen—then cease altogether. The music stopped playing and the humming vibration in the floor died away too. I was certain that whatever type of motive power was used was housed somewhere below the floor as the faint vibratory hum definitely came from there.

Then smoothly and noiselessly the chair made a quarter turn toward the wall. Even as much as I trusted my unseen friends I was a little frightened at this. Tensely I waited, gripping the arms of the chair. Directly in front of me a circular opening appeared in the wall about six feet in diameter but everything appeared hazy through it.

As I stared, the lights inside darkened. Then either the entire craft or the seat turned slightly more to the left and the aperture widened about three more feet. I saw a huge globe surrounded with a shimmering rainbow. I trembled as I realized I was actually looking upon a planet from somewhere out in space. The planet itself was of a deep, twilight-blue intensity and the iridescent rainbow surrounding it made it appear like a dream vision. I couldn't see it all, for a portion at the bottom of the sphere was cut off by the floor line.

Now I heard that voice I remembered so well. "Orfeo, you are looking upon Earth—your home! From here over a thousand miles in space it appears as the most beautiful planet in the heavens and a haven of peace and tranquility. But you and your Earthly brothers know the true conditions there."

There was silence for a moment. Then I noticed that the room was apparently revolving away from Earth. Gradually the heavens came into view—an awesome, breathtaking sight from that tiny craft. All space appeared intensely black and the stars incredibly brilliant, set like jewels against black velvet—large, small, single and clustered. I felt lost in a strange, ethereal world of celestial wonder.

All was brooding peace, silence, law, order and indescribable beauty. A deep feeling of reverence possessed me. I had never been an ac-

tively religious man, but in that moment I knew God as a tangible, immutable Force that reached to the furthest ends of the universe. And I felt assurance that the beings in whose care I was at that moment were close to that Infinite Power.

Now I saw a fantastic object coming slowly into view through the "window." It resembled a dirigible except that it was definitely flattened at the bottom. It emerged gradually into view from the right.

I studied it closely wondering at its composition. It did not appear to be metallic like an airplane, but was definitely crystalline and gave the illusion of transparency. Its light properties definitely suggested perfect crystal alloyed throughout. I surmised it might be some sort of crystal-metal-plastic combination. When the entire ship was in view it appeared to be at least 1000 feet long and about 90 feet high, but it could have been a great deal larger for there was no way to judge how close I was to it.

I stared fascinated at the half-ethereal "ship," scarcely conscious that I was again hearing music. But as my ears caught a startling, unfamiliar strain, I listened intently—music such as I had never heard or could ever imagine. It is beyond description for it was not music as we know it nor was it played to our musical scale. It was strange, haunting drifts of melody that brought visions of star galaxies and planets spinning in perfect

unison.

The huge ship began moving upward and toward the left. One large "porthole" after another opened in rapid succession as the ship ascended until what appeared to be three decks were visible and I could catch fleeting glimpses of the interior of the gigantic sky ship. The inside appeared to be of the same luminous mother-of-pearl substance which made up the interior of the craft I was in. But I saw nothing more—no sign of life—no furnishings or equipment such as we on Earth know.

As I watched the ship I realized that the voice as well as the ethereal music had actually originated in the great sky ship. It came to me then that this must be a mother ship and that beings in the ship had remote control over the movements of the saucers that skimmed and skipped through our atmosphere. It awed me to realize what a high degree of intelligence and what expert hands were behind the saucer phenomena.

As the craft moved further out into space I noticed what appeared to be a kind of rotor at each end of the craft. I say rotor, but actually the things appeared to be vortexes of flame.

With my limited knowledge I judged these incredible discs of fire to be tremendously powerful power-plants whose terrific energy could be diverted to almost any purpose. The discs I had first seen were used as radio transmitters

and receivers; then as a huge three-dimensional television screen on which, through some sort of telepathic contact, it was possible both to see and hear. And now I saw those same discs apparently used as motive power for the vast sky ship. It was my guess that just such a power-plant had shot the very craft I was in a thousand miles out into space in a mere matter of minutes and without any discomfort to me. It was clearly evident that all of the bewildering and insurmountable problems of space travel that baffled our engineers and scientists had been overcome by these beings to such an extent that the entire trip into outer space was as simple as a ride in an elevator.

I wondered if they had discovered the secret of resisting gravity with its counter force; if not, then by what other means had they conquered or neutralized gravity? I remembered that Earth's scientists believed that a man in a space ship would be absolutely weightless and apt to float about. I lifted my hand, let it drop to the arm of the chair. I detected no difference in gravitational pull from what I would have felt on Earth. Thus I realized that they must have created an artificial gravity in the floor of the craft.

I wondered too how they had overcome the menace of lethal cosmic rays, meteors, sky debris, etc. Surely my ship carried no tons of lead shielding scientists declared necessary for adequate protection from cosmic rays. Also, I wondered

in what way they had mastered the terrific pressure and temperature changes so that I was never conscious at any time of variations in either? And their motive power — what was the fantastic secret of those green fireballs? Possibly they were vortexes of magnetic power which operated almost silently and with astounding efficiency. What a wonder world their planet must be, I thought as I gazed in awe at the crystalline dream-ship passing from my line of vision.

Slowly then the room turned back toward the left and the Earth appeared once more with its shimmering rainbow halo. Dimly I could make out the faint outlines of the Western Hemisphere in varying shades of deep misty blue. Also I could see faint puffs of light scattered here and there which I judged to be the larger cities of the North American Continent.

Two flying saucers darted into my line of vision and sped downward toward Earth. Just as abruptly they decelerated and hung suspended in space as pinpoints of light. As I was wondering about them I heard the voice say that one was over Washington, D. C. and the other over Los Angeles. Los Angeles — the word echoed strangely in my consciousness as I gazed at the faint brush of light that was a great sprawling city. I tried to remember that Los Angeles was my home, but it seemed only vaguely familiar — a place remembered somewhere in time.

"Tonight, Orfeo, you have explored a tiny way into the limitless highways of the cosmos. Through your own efforts the road may later be widened for you. Tonight you an entity of Earth have come close to the Infinite Entities. For the present you are our emissary, Orfeo, but you must act! Even though the people of Earth laugh derisively and mock you as a lunatic, tell them about us!"

"I will . . . I will," I whispered haltingly knowing that everything I said was heard by them even as all my thoughts were known to them.

The voice continued "Tonight a privilege has been yours, Orfeo. We love the children of Earth and it is our desire to help them as the hour of crisis approaches. But only through such harmless ones as you can we work.

"The aggressive men of Earth want our scientific advancements. For these they would shoot our crafts from the skies—if they could. But additional scientific knowledge we cannot give to Earth, as much as we might like to—not even the simple key to the secret of magnetic power. For man's material knowledge has far outstripped the growth of brotherly love and spiritual understanding in his heart. Therein lies the danger. To add to man's scientific knowledge now would be as foolhardy as giving matches to a thoughtless child in a room filled with gun powder. All that we can hope to give man-

kind is a deeper knowledge and understanding of their own true natures and a greater awareness of the life-and-death problem facing them. Whether they shall survive upon Earth—or perish to begin again anew! This has happened in the past and it is possible for it to happen again!

"But now it is time to go home again, Orfeo."

I was aware again of the gentle push of my body against the cushioned chair. Far away I could feel more than hear the pulsing vibration beneath the floor. I realized I was being taken back down to Earth.

In an incredibly short time the wall opened and I saw the familiar surroundings outside. Reluctantly I got up from the comfortable chair and left the strange craft. In a daze I walked away from it; then curiously turned to look at it from the outside once more. But it was gone. I looked up and there it was high in the sky faintly visible as a kind of fuzzy luminous bubble. Then suddenly it was not there at all, but high in the northeastern sky I saw a red, glowing disc which changed to green and then vanished.

For days afterward I was bewildered, confused and found it difficult to become interested again in my work and daily life.

I began telling people about my experiences as they had requested me to do. But everyone laughed at me. Several newspapers printed de-

risive accounts of "The Saucer Man." I did not mind for myself but it cut deeply to see the embarrassment and humiliation it caused my two sons. They knew people were saying their father was a "screwball." They didn't want to go to school because their companions laughed at them. I knew it all hurt Mae, my wife, too. But both she and the boys understood and believed what I told them. Never once did they criticize me or ask me to retract my accounts. For this I was deeply grateful.

I wanted so much to do something constructive but I didn't know how to go about it. I began calling various military and defense offices. The personnel of several of the smaller ones laughed openly and passed me off, I know, as a crackpot. But it was with tremendous relief I found the really important offices referred me to men who were genuinely interested. They questioned and cross-questioned me concerning "classified" information I gave them. As this information concerns the "enemy" it cannot, of course, be divulged here.

As a few people began to listen to me I started writing down my

experiences as best I could recall them and finally at my own expense published the account in a small paper I called "The Twentieth Century Times."

Since the publication of the single issue of this little paper a number of persons have become interested. Many of these are now convinced that I am telling the truth and also that I am not a "psycho." I am deeply grateful.

Max Miller, president of Flying Saucers International has not doubted my story and has been most cooperative and helpful. He has permitted me to speak each week at the open meeting of the Association held every Sunday afternoon at the Hollywood Hotel. I have appeared on several radio and television shows and I am so thankful that I am finding more and more persons who do not laugh at me in open derision, but at least listen with open minds.

I'm still working at my regular job at Lockheed, but in my spare time I am doing what I can to tell all who will listen what those beings from that other world are really like and report as best I can their message to us.

END

YELLOW FIREBALLS

Now it's yellow fireballs. At first they were green. At Marion, N. C., both Air Force personnel and civilians saw a brilliant yellow fireball, which winked out, then was replaced by a diamond-shaped

series of lights, twelve in number, in red, green and yellow. At Sequoia National Park, yellow fireballs 1000 feet in diameter caused all the switchboard plugs at headquarters to fall out.

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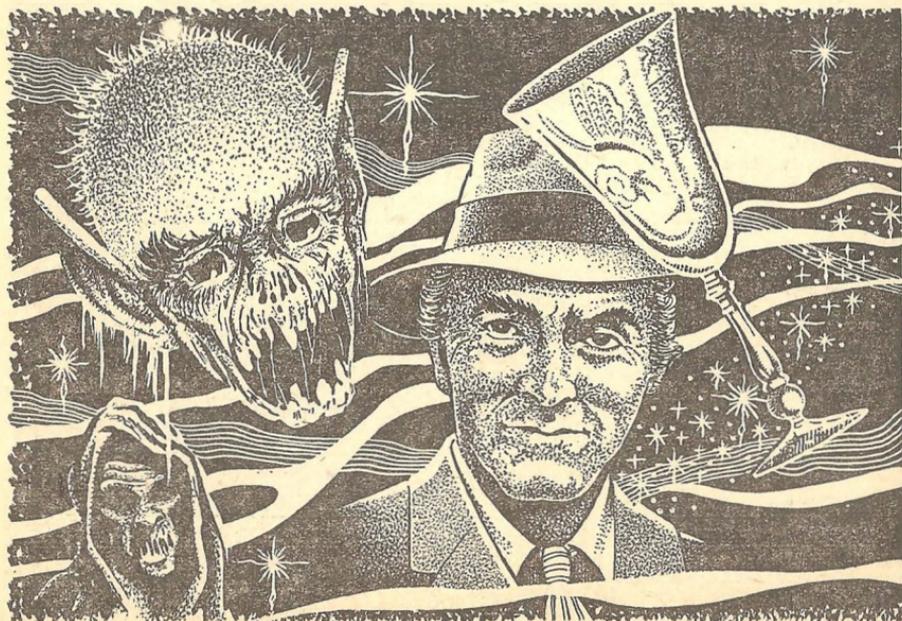
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LEAGUE OF THE LIVING DEAD

This is your wife, whom you have just buried, standing before you; it is really so, for her fingerprints prove it. But she is a stranger! Some *thing* has stolen her body!

Can a thing like this really happen? Can a dead body be inhabited by another entity? All through the dim mists of time there have been stories of the dead coming back to life—coming back as perfect strangers to those who knew and loved them. Are these just stories, or is there some basis for truth in them? And if they are true, just what is it that happens? What is a zombie, in actuality? What is a werewolf? What is a vampire? Are they not only different manifestations of the same thing? Is there room in science for the horrors that many hold superstitiously to be true?

Illustration by Eberle



by Randall Garrett



BARBARA had been dead for seven months when Martin saw her in the little club on Forty-second Street.

He was on his seventh double-bourbon-and-water, and his eyesight, poor as it was, was considerably better than his critical judgment. He squinted his eyes to get a better look.

She was toying with a half-empty glass and staring in rapturous concentration at the six-piece combo which was permitting its drummer the ecstasy of a rhythmic grand-mal seizure. Across from her sat two men; the one on the outside was tall and saturnine, the other somewhat shorter and wider across the shoulders.

Martin was immediately stabbed with twinges of jealousy. The fact that his wife couldn't possibly be there meant little to him at the moment; the fact that she was there with somebody else *did* mean a great deal.

He decided he had to have a closer look. He poured the remainder of drink number seven down his throat, and made his way toward the bar. On the way, he would have to pass the booth where she sat.

By the time he had arrived at the booth in question, his resolve to go to the bar had dissolved into the vague mists of some ethanolic Limbo. There was no longer any doubt in his mind that the woman before him was Barbara.

The hair in the page-boy bob; the crystalline blue of her eyes; the smooth, almost perfectly hemispherical curve of her breasts; the tilt of her brows— Every inch of her was Barbara. A man doesn't live with a woman for eight years and not know her—not even when he's boiled to the ears.

None of the trio at the booth noticed him at first. Martin was a six-foot two-hundred pounder who filled a tux nicely and could quite obviously handle himself in an emergency, but the dance had just ended, and the people milling around him as they came from the floor were doing a pretty fair job of camouflaging him.

The little group didn't see him at all until he placed his hands carefully on the edge of the table, leaned over, and said: "Honey, whatinhell are you doing here?"

It was an inane thing to say. It wasn't the thing you really ought to say to a woman you know is dead. But somehow, Martin couldn't think of anything else to say.

She turned those blue eyes on him with a look that carried no sign of recognition.

She said: "I beg your pardon? I don't think—?"

Martin just stood there, weaving and baffled, as the whole enormous insanity of the situation flooded over him. The last hastily-downed drink began to hit him, and his sight spun kaleidoscopically.

The girl's voice said: "Gregor,

he's sick. Call a waiter or something. Who is he?"

"Never mind," said the taller of the two men, "I'll help him. Come along, friend."

"Here, chum," came the other man's voice, "have a drink."

"Give him mine," said the girl, "then get him in a cab."

Dimly, Martin felt a glass being pressed into his hand, and he hastily emptied the contents into his stomach. Then the world went away on a blue-gray fog.

WHEN he woke up the next morning, he was in his own bed, fully dressed except for his shoes and coat. He felt exactly as he deserved to feel.

A double Bromo, a half-pint of tomato juice, two cups of coffee, and three cigarettes later, he felt well enough to get into the shower without having to sit down.

All the time, his mind was boiling. Had it been Barbara, or hadn't it? Logically, it *couldn't* be. Barbara was dead. He had been with her the night she died.

And he had held her hand, crying, until it was as cool as the chill atmosphere of death itself.

Martin towelled himself until his skin tingled, and walked back into the bedroom.

That was when he saw the Old Fashioned glass sitting on his dresser.

He knew instantly that it was the glass Barbara had been drink-

ing out of the night before. He'd emptied it and put it in his pocket.

He looked at it without touching it, trying to get the light just right. Sure enough, there were smudges on it. Impossible to tell whose, though.

But he knew how to find out.

He picked up the phone and dialed.

When the police switchboard answered, he said: "James Martin here. Give me Lieutenant Donovan, Homicide." He waited a moment.

"Hello, Donny. Jim. Look, can you get out for a cup of coffee? I don't know how important it is—yet. Okay. The usual place in half an hour."

He hung up and began to dress.

Donovan was already waiting for him in the Child's restaurant just off Times Square. He sat down in the booth, and said: "Donovan, you know me, don't you?"

The little detective looked at him over his coffee cup. "Well, the face is familiar, anyway."

"You know what I mean. As a lawyer, I've always played it square with the cops, and with you especially. I want to ask you a favor—unofficially—and I want your word that you won't say anything about it."

Donovan peered at him from slate-gray eyes. "Marty, you know I'd probably cut my own throat for you—but not without a reason."

Martin looked at him for a mo-

ment, then: "Here's the reason."

His right hand reached into his coat pocket and brought out the Old Fashioned glass.

"So?" Donovan raised his eyebrows.

Martin leaned forward earnestly. "Donny, all I want is for you to indentify any latent prints on that glass. And tell me whose they are. And—don't tell anyone else."

Donovan ran his tongue around the inside of his cheek. "Mind if I ask why? Whose do you figure they are?"

Martin leaned back. "If I told you, you'd think I was nuts. If it is who I think, you'll know the answer as well as I." He looked at his watch. "Look, Donny, I haven't been to the office yet this morning, and I've got work to do. Can you phone me there?"

"Sure."

Martin picked up the check and made his way toward the cashier.

Two hours later, his phone rang. He picked up the receiver. "Martin speaking."

"Look here, Marty," Donovan's voice came sharply over the instrument, "if this is a joke, I don't think it's funny! And if it isn't, I want an explanation!"

Martin felt something cold and paralyzing inside his brain. He knew very well what Donovan was going to say, even before he asked: "What do you mean, Donny?"

"I mean this glass you gave me! *What are Barbara's prints doing all over it?*"

The resistance to intense shock that had made James Martin the brilliant trial lawyer that he was came back in that instant. Calmly, he told Donovan everything he could remember about the night before.

There was a long pause on the phone, then: "Is that the straight dope, Marty?"

"That's the straight dope."

Another long pause.

"Marty, we're taking some time off. Remember that little place in Greenwich Village we used to go to when we were in school? Meet me there in half an hour."

"But, Donny, I —" He stopped. The phone was dead.

When Donovan talked that way, he meant it. Martin grabbed his hat, took the elevator down, and flagged a taxi.

DURING the ride, he tried to keep his mind focused, but it kept swirling around in unreal circles, confusing him. At the destination, he almost forgot to tip the cabbie, a thing he invariably did.

He pushed open the door of the bar and saw the little policeman wagging a finger from one of the rear booths.

He walked back and sat down. "Donny, what —"

"Don't say anything until you've finished your drink, and then let me do the talking," Donovan said with peculiar Irish logic.

Martin swallowed the bourbon

that Donovan had waiting for him, then looked at the detective expectantly.

Donovan stared at his fingernails as though he were undecided about where to start. Finally, he looked up.

"Marty, there's something screwy here. We both know Babs is dead. And yet, I know you well enough to take your word about what happened last night. But as a police officer, I can't touch it. I don't have enough to go on. The prints? Obviously faked. I can't start anything on evidence like that.

"And somehow—" he paused, groping for words, "— somehow, I don't think we want a police investigation."

Martin didn't say anything. He didn't even feel anything except the peculiar numbness of an unreal situation.

Donovan rubbed his chin nervously. "You've got the money for a private investigator, haven't you? Well, I know just the man for you. Come along." Donovan rose and Martin followed him out the door to the street.

They walked several blocks, turning a couple of times, and Donovan finally pulled to a halt in front of the entrance to a small office building.

He led the way up a flight of stairs, down a hall, to the door of a small office.

The lettering on the door said:

SEAN O'BRIAN
PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR

Come in

Following the sign's advice, they stepped into the outer office; an office which was not furnished in accordance with the shabby-genteel flavor of the rest of the building.

The walls were paneled in fine oak, and three tastefully chosen watercolors decorated them. The furniture was modern and expensive. The wall-to-wall rug was thick and luxurious.

And the lovely girl with the soft brown hair who was smiling at them from behind the reception desk completed the picture.

"Good afternoon, Lieutenant," she said, in a voice that sounded like the ripple of water over the lakes of Killarney.

"How are you, Miss McElhiney. Is Sean in?"

"He's busy right now, but he'll be ready in a few minutes."

"Fine." Donovan turned back to Martin. "Look, Marty, this is entirely out of my jurisdiction. I don't want to be told anything unless Sean himself tells me.

"Trust Sean. He knows his business, and he's a fine man. Tell him everything you told me and answer all his questions."

He chewed at his lip for a moment, then went on. "You're not going to like what you find, I think, but you've got the guts to take it."

Then he turned to the girl. "Miss

McElhiney, you can tell Sean that James Martin is a man he can trust with his life."

With that, he stepped out the door, closing it behind him.

Martin blinked. Somehow, things seemed to be happening too fast for him. What was all this incredible nonsense? Vaguely he heard the girl's voice talking over the interoffice phone, then he realized she was talking to him.

He wrenched his mind back into the room. "I beg your pardon?"

"I said," she smiled, "that Mr. O'Brian will see you now."

The inner office was similar to the outer in style. Along one wall ran a monstrous bookcase filled with books of every description; it looked as though Sean O'Brian had made a point of collecting a representative sample of every type of book published since Gutenberg.

O'Brian himself was a tall, muscular young man with light brown hair and deep-set blue eyes. He waved to a leather upholstered chair before the desk.

"Sit down, Mr. Martin."

Martin sat, not quite knowing how to begin telling his reason for being there. It suddenly occurred to him that he really wasn't quite sure why he was there.

O'Brian seemed to sense Martin's fuzzy state of mind.

"Mr. Martin, before you begin, let me ask you a question. Do you believe in the supernatural?"

Martin shook his head, wordlessly.

"Neither do I. There is no such thing. Everything in this universe operates according to the natural laws of this universe. We may not know all those laws, but they exist, nevertheless.

"Now, Donovan wouldn't have brought you here unless there was something definitely queer about your case. Something that seems supernatural. I don't handle any other kind of case. So, regardless of how silly it may sound, I'll listen to what you have to say without calling for the nearest psychiatrist. Okay?"

Something clicked in Martin's brain, and the fog that had seemed to cover it vanished, washed away by the matter-of-fact attitude of Sean O'Brian's speech. Martin relaxed.

"Okay, here it is. Last night, I was in —"

Martin went over the whole thing again, trying to remember as best he could exactly what had happened. As he did, Sean O'Brian's eyes began to narrow, and a deep inner excitement began to light them.

When Martin had finished, O'Brian said: "About that glass—did the girl hand it to you?"

"Uh—no; the man, I think. The tall one."

"Mmmm!" Sean seemed to find a great significance in that statement.

He flipped the intercom switch. "Alice, see if you can get hold of Lieutenant Donovan. He ought to be back at headquarters by now."

After a minute or two, the girl's voice said: "He's on the line, Sean."

O'Brian picked up the receiver. "Donny? Sean. Look, that glass Martin brought you—any prints on it besides the girl's? None but Martin's. I thought so. Look, isn't it queer that a wet whiskey glass should pick up prints? Okay, thanks, Donny. I'll let you know."

He hung up and looked back at Martin. "Martin, doesn't it strike you as odd that your wife—if it was your wife should be drinking a *warm* Old Fashioned?"

"Warm? I don't remember—I was too drunk to remember the taste. What makes you think it was warm?"

"Simple. A cold drink condenses moisture from the air. A wet glass doesn't pick up fingerprints too well, if at all. This glass had good, clean prints on it. Q.E.D.: this glass wasn't cold. Did you wife like warm liquor?"

"Good Lord, no! It made her sick. But what —"

"I'm going to make a broad guess. Your wife died of an odd form of anemia. For no known reason, the hemoglobin in her blood cells dropped drastically. The white count remained the same, the red count dropped a little but not enough to be serious. It was

the lack of hemoglobin that killed her. Right?"

If Martin had been the type to look flabbergasted, he would have done so right there and then. Instead, he nodded. "That's about what the doctor said. How did you know?"

"I didn't know. I told you I was just guessing. Where was your wife buried?"

Martin named the cemetery, and the detective wrote it down on a piece of paper.

"All right, Mr. Martin. We'll do what we can. I'll let you know if we find anything."

"Is there anything I can do?"

Sean looked at him sharply. "Yes, there is, if you don't mind going through with it."

"Anything. This is beginning to get under my skin."

"All right. I want you to go back to that bar tonight. Keep your eyes open. If you see anything or anyone suspicious, strike up a conversation. Don't let them know you suspect anything wrong. And, above all, don't give them your name; think up a good phony.

"I want you to see if you can find out who they are and where they live, but for Heaven's sake, don't make them suspicious."

Martin grinned. "I haven't been a lawyer all these years for nothing. I'll let you know what I find."

"Fine. I'll work on my end of it."

Somehow, the street looked unnaturally bright when Martin

stepped out into it. After the cool indirect lighting of Sean O'Brian's office, the afternoon sun was hot and harsh.

Nerves, he thought. My nerves are a little shaky.

He hailed a taxi, gave the cabbie his address, and sat back in the seat, closing his eyes.

WHEN he unlocked his apartment, the first thing he did was mix himself a Scotch and water. That, he figured, would help him relax.

He figured wrong. He couldn't seem to settle down; he paced the floor and smoked cigarettes as though he were an expectant father.

The whole thing was senseless. Babs was dead; he knew that. But he felt he had to keep telling himself or he'd forget it.

By eight-thirty, he was paying off a cab driver in front of the club where he had seen Barbara the night before. It gave him a slight case of the creeps to think that he might actually find her here again.

He checked his hat and picked out a table in the corner where he could command a view of the whole room. He ordered a drink, but is was beginning to get warm before he took more than a swallow or two.

It was not until well after nine that he noticed that there was another person in the bar who also seemed to be watching for someone.

He was a swarthy, astonishingly thin man of a little below average height with dark eyes and a face that looked as though it were made of old and well-used Cordovan leather.

Martin noticed him because the drink which the waiter had placed on the table before the dark-skinned man had not been touched. And the leather-faced one was also surveying the room.

There was nothing particularly abnormal about him; after all, lots of people come into bars to wait for someone else. But the thing that drew Martin's attention was the pills. Every so often, the dark-faced man would take a small bottle from his pocket, shake a small green pill into his hand, and swallow it without using any liquid to wash it down. The man looked as though —

Martin caught something out of the corner of his eye, and his head jerked in the direction of the door as though he had been jabbed by a bayonet. His heart jumped.

It was Barbara.

She was alone this time. Martin watched her quietly, forcing his nerves to steadiness.

She didn't look around, she simply stepped over to the bar and ordered an Old Fashioned. Without the ice!

Finally, Martin made up his mind. He finished his drink and walked over to the bar. He pretended not to notice her at first; he ordered another drink. After a mo-

ment or two, he saw her face in the mirror. She was watching him.

James Martin was a criminal lawyer with a brilliant record in the courtroom; in other words, he was an actor who did his best work under strain. He turned to her, smiling.

"Hello. I thought you looked familiar," he said smoothly. "I want to apologize for my behavior last night."

She returned the smile. "It was nothing, really. You seemed to think I was someone you knew." Her look was suddenly calculating and watchful.

"Did I?" He looked innocent. "I must really have been boiled. I don't think anyone else could look like you."

Her face softened. "Thank you."

"May I buy you a drink?"

"Why, yes, thanks."

After the drinks were ordered, she looked up at him coyly. "Let's go over to the table. I don't like to talk at a bar."

He followed her over and pulled out her chair for her.

The perfect gentleman, he thought. So far, he was doing fine, but he hadn't learned anything. If this woman was Barbara, she was doing a better job of acting than he'd thought Barbara capable of.

He hoped for a while that she'd quit acting when they were alone at the table; he kept throwing her the straight lines to some of the pet jokes he and Barbara had had

together. It didn't work; she missed every one of them.

Martin was so intent on his character analysis that it took him the better part of two hours to realize that her conversation did have one definite goal. The spark was missing from her small talk; there was none of Barbara's usual wit and brilliance. This Louise, as she called herself, simply didn't have any originality in her thinking. But, in spite of all that, he could see where she was leading.

She was about as subtle as a train wreck.

He couldn't help himself. The girl had none of Barbara's brains, but she did have Barbara's body or a reasonable facsimile thereof. And the Scotch helped, too.

IT was well after four in the morning when he woke up in the hotel room. His head ached and his tongue felt fuzzy, and it took him a few seconds to realize what had awakened him.

The door had closed. He looked around. The girl was gone. In spite of his head, he jumped up and grabbed his pants. The wallet was still there, undisturbed. He dressed quickly, eased the door open and looked down the hall toward the elevator. The door was just sliding shut.

Martin ran toward the stairway and went down them at a rate that would have broken his neck with one misstep.

The girl was just going out the

lobby door when Martin reached the lobby. There had been two things in his favor: she had had to wait for the elevator, and there were only three flights of stairs to run down.

He followed her to the street at a more leisurely pace. The street was pretty well deserted at that hour, and he didn't want to attract attention.

He didn't notice the car pull up to the curb behind him. In fact, he had no idea that there was anyone around but the girl until something slammed hard against the side of his head.

“WHAT shall we do with him?” said a voice.

“Seal him up until he dies. Then he can join us,” said another.

“We must hurry, then. It is late. Soon the sun will be up.”

Martin heard the words vaguely and tried to say something, but all he could get out was a groan. When he did, somebody kicked him in the head again and he went back to sleep.

The next time he woke up, there was a light shining in his eyes and a face looming over him. He tried to focus his eyes, but the pain in his head rose to a crescendo and he had to close his eyes.

“It's about time you came around. How do you feel?”

“Ooooh! Lousy.” Martin opened his eyes again and looked at the face. It was familiar, but he didn't quite place it at first.

Then it hit him. The face belonged to the little leathery-faced man who had been taking the green pills in the bar.

“Sit up,” the little man said, “and take these.” His hand held three white tablets.

“What are they?”

“Fifty milligrams of thiamine and two aspirins.”

He took them and washed them down with water from the glass the little man handed him.

As the pain began to subside, Martin began to take in his surroundings.

He was lying on a slab of marble in a large room. Around the walls of the room were a series of panels about two and a half feet square. He recognized where he was. It was a morgue.

Each of the panels concealed a drawer within which, presumably, there lay a body.

He looked at the little brown man. “Who the devil are you, and where are we? And why did you slug me?”

“Didn't slug you. Here.” He pulled out a billfold and spread it open. The card within said:

IBRIM GROME

Special Investigator

Sean O'Brian Agency

Grome popped a green pill into his mouth and continued. “You're in a morgue. I followed you when you left the bar with the girl. Followed you out of the hotel. Knew she'd leave before dawn. Saw you get slugged. Followed their car

here. Managed to sneak in when they brought you here. Can't get out now. Time lock."

The man talked like a Western Union message.

"What do you mean 'time lock'?" Martin asked confusedly.

Ibrim Grome waved toward the massive door of the vault. "On the door. Won't open until after sundown. They're getting smart."

"Who's getting smart?"

Grome's gesture took in the occupants of the morgue. "Them. Even got time locks on most of the drawers. Clever." He glanced at his watch. "You been out sixteen hours. Mostly whiskey. Almost sundown again now. We better hide."

Martin didn't feel up to arguing. Grome opened one of the doors along the wall just above eye level.

"They put you in here," said Grome. "Get back in. If they look inside, play dead. I'll leave door open a crack. That way, you can see. Don't give yourself away. They'll kill you."

Martin climbed inside and lay down, his head turned so that he could see through the crack in the door. The brown-faced detective climbed up to another tier, opened a cubicle, and concealed himself.

It seemed like an eternity before anything happened. Martin's head had almost quit hurting and he was getting restless.

Then there was a sudden chorus of *clicks!* The time locks had opened.

Somewhere, deep inside him, Martin knew what he was going to see, but on the surface of his mind was a block that refused to let the full realization come.

There was a scrabbling sound, something like rats in the walls. Suddenly, one of the doors popped open. Martin watched in horror as first a hand, then a head, appeared from the interior of the coffin. It was a very old man. As he climbed out, Martin could see that he was naked.

"Come out, brothers! It is time!" the old man's voice sounded hoarsely.

The others began to push themselves out of the coffin drawers.

Martin felt the back of his neck tingle coldly as the center of the room began to fill with — things. He couldn't think of them as human. Barbara was there, but he no longer thought of her as human, either. Not since last night.

He also recognized the two men Barbara had been with the first night he had seen her.

The dried and withered old man began to speak. "We have work to do, brothers. Bring out the New One."

Two of the others opened one of the doors and slid the slab out. The cadaver which lay upon it was a blonde woman in her middle thirties. Her eyes were half open and filmed. She was very obviously dead.

The rest stood around her in a circle and held hands, and then

two of them grabbed the blonde woman's hands, completing the circle.

The old man cut the lights, and the room was plunged into darkness.

There was nothing to see at first, but gradually a blue glow appeared. It seemed to come from the blonde woman's body. Slowly, it brightened until the whole room was filled with the weird blue light.

Then, quite suddenly, the glow faded, seeming to sink *into* the woman's body. There was silence for a moment, then the lights went on.

The blonde was sitting up on the table!

Everything seemed to go hazy for Martin after that. He was vaguely aware that the things were dressing and leaving one by one. He had sense enough to close his eyes when the old man opened the door to the cubicle he was in, but he only partially heard the comment about his dying soon.

For the fourth time in twenty-four hours, he passed out cold.

THIS time when he woke up, it was Sean O'Brian's face he saw. He felt a great deal better than he had the last time he'd come out of it.

"Whoop!" he said, "Did I have a screwy dream!" And then he knew it hadn't been a dream. "Where —"

"—are you?" finished O'Brian. "You're in my apartment. You'd better snap out of it, Martin.

You've spent most of the time asleep. Not that I blame you. After two clouts on the head and the shock of what you saw — plus too much Scotch, you've got a perfect right to pass out. But you'd better get a grip on yourself."

"I feel okay." Oddly enough, except for a tender spot behind his right ear, he *did* feel okay.

"I had a doctor in here to look you over," Sean explained. "He gave you a glucose injection. You hadn't eaten all day."

Martin sat up on the bed. Ibrim Grome was seated across the room putting a green pill in his mouth. "Chlorophyll," he explained. "Halitosis, y'know."

Sean handed Martin two sandwiches and a glass of milk, and Martin realized suddenly that he was starving. As he wolfed them down, the Irishman began to explain.

"I've been after this bunch for over a year now, but I didn't know any way to lay my hands on them. Stupid as they are in some ways, they're pretty clever at hiding out."

"But what in Heaven's name are they?" Martin asked.

"Vampires. Or at least," Sean corrected himself, "the basis for the vampire legend. Of course, in the passage of time, the legend has become so loaded with superstitious nonsense that ninety percent of it is false.

"The old legend claims that a vampire is one of the undead who can, at will, change itself into a bat-

like form and fly. It attacks the living by sucking the blood, and, in the process, the victim becomes another vampire.

"If that were really the case, vampires would have overrun the Earth long ago. They would multiply by geometrical progression; one becomes two, two becomes four, four becomes eight, and so on.

"Obviously, this hasn't taken place. Why?"

He paused, but the question was rhetorical; he took a drag off his cigarette and went on.

"The vampire *per se* is what might be called an electronic virus; a web of semi-intelligent electrical force; an energy disease. It has no sex—you noticed the way those things call each other 'brother,' whether the body they happened to inhabit was male or female—the method of reproduction is similar to that of a colony of bacteria. Given a suitable medium, it can reproduce and grow.

"In this case, the medium happens to be a freshly-dead human being. Not just any corpse, either; it has to be prepared by a partial invasion before death. Most people are immune to the disease. You are, for instance, or I wouldn't have sent you after your — after the girl.

"The result's the same as that from radioactive poisoning, though the physiology of the disease is a bit different. But when the body dies, the pre-invasion virus dies, too, making it necessary for the

cadaver to be re-impregnated after death."

Martin lit a cigarette with hands that were still shaking a little. He looked up at Sean when he had it going, and asked: "How come this disease hasn't spread fast enough to attract attention?"

Sean frowned. "Well, as I said, most people are immune, and it requires intimate contact with a dead carrier to get it even if you are susceptible."

Martin closed his eyes and shuddered.

O'Brian went on. "Just exactly how they manage to manipulate the body after death, I don't know. There are certain definite changes in the metabolism; the sebaceous glands of the skin dry up, for instance. Remember that glass? The woman's fingerprints were on it, but the man's weren't. He'd been dead too long."

"What about the warm liquor?" Martin wanted to know.

"They can't stand extreme cold — and to them, 'extreme' means anything below about forty degrees Fahrenheit. Another thing they can't stand is ultraviolet radiation; it disrupts their electronic co-ordination and puts them into a coma. That partially accounts for their purely nocturnal activity."

Martin shook his head. "After this, you'll have me believing in werewolves, ghouls, ghosts, leprechauns, troll, bogey men, and things that go boomp i' th' nicht. I

thought vampires were a species of bat."

Sean grinned. "I always wondered how the bat business got into the vampire legend myself, until I found that the order *Chiroptera* is the only animal besides man which is susceptible to the disease. In fact, it is even more successful with the bat because the death of the bat doesn't kill the vampire-virus and there's no need for a secondary infection.

"As for the rest of those things, the answer is that most of them do exist. There's nothing odd about a single-celled animal like the amoeba changing its shape, is there? Then why couldn't a many-celled animal do it? Werewolves do.

"There are plenty of animals with specialized diets. The koala eats only eucalyptus leaves; what's the matter with a ghoulish having a specialized diet?

"Ghosts? Simply another form of the electronic life that the vampire is composed of, except that they are more intelligent and don't require a host."

Martin frowned. "What do you mean 'more intelligent than a vampire'? Seems to me they're pretty smart."

O'Brian shook his head. "Their intelligence is very limited. It is dependent upon the brain configuration of the body it is inhabiting, which is why they prefer human bodies to bat bodies. But, even with a human brain to work with, they have almost no imagination;

their inventive and reasoning abilities are practically nil."

Ibrim Grome glanced at his watch, compared it carefully with the clock on the wall, and said: "Dawn in three hours."

Martin blinked. "Good Lord! What day is this?"

Sean O'Brian stood up. "Thursday morning. You haven't been out long. As soon as the vampire horde left, he dragged you out of there and brought you here."

Martin glanced at the emaciated-looking Grome. He hardly looked big enough to lift two hundred pounds of dead weight. Must be one of those wiry-muscled characters.

"Out of there? Where were we?"

"As I said," Sean explained, "I've known for some months that these things have been active in the New York area. Now, embalming ruins a body, and cremation destroys it; therefore, in order to propagate, the vampire must have control over the disposal of bodies after death and before embalming occurs. Obviously, that means a funeral home.

"The trouble was, I didn't know which home until you came to me. Then it was easy. I simply checked to see which one had taken care of your wife. I found that you, among several hundred others, had taken out burial policies with this place — Kimberly's."

"Time to go," said Grome.

"Yeah." Sean put on his coat.

Martin stood up from the bed.

"I'm going, too," he announced.

Sean and Ibrim looked at each other for a second, then Sean said: "Come ahead, then."

Ten minutes later, they were in O'Brian's car, heading for Brooklyn.

Martin, in the back seat, took a drag off his cigarette, inhaled deeply, and said: "I'll be afraid to go out after dark from now on. I'll never know when some werewolf or ghoul is going to jump me."

"Nuts!" snorted Grome.

"It doesn't work that way, Martin," said O'Brian. "A werewolf is as human as you or I—or nearly so. He can change his body a little—as far as the skeletal structure will permit. But that doesn't make a killer out of him. There are a good many werewolves who don't even know they're any different from anyone else.

"They don't change to wolves, you know; their bones aren't plastic. Hundreds of years ago, a few of them would make themselves look hideous to frighten the local natives in order to gain power. The religion of ancient Egypt was started by just such a group. That's where the Egyptians got those gods with the animal heads.

"But today, most of them are just as law-abiding as you or I. I'll admit they'd have a better chance to get away with it, but unless you get one sore at you, you're not likely to get killed by a werewolf—the chances are just as

good that some human will do you in.

"And as for ghouls, you have absolutely nothing to worry about on that score. They are a branch of genus *Homo* that split off from the main stream of humanity several hundred thousand years ago and became carrion feeders. They're related to *Homo sapiens* in the same way that the vulture is related to the eagle. *Homo necrophagus* would be the scientific name.

"They don't bother living people at all. Why should they? Their digestive systems require that the flesh be dead for a good long time; fresh meat is as inedible to them as rubber is to you.

"It's much easier to buy steak at the butcher shop and let it lay around for a few weeks than it is to go prowling through cemeteries at night. Besides, embalming ruins a body. Do you like formaldehyde in your *filet mignon*?"

"Oh, they'd eat human flesh all right, if it were available, but, when you come right down to it, what's wrong with that? They aren't strictly human, so it isn't cannibalism. And besides, what good is your body to you after you're dead?"

"You don't consider maggots, saprophytic fungi, hyaenas, vultures, and other such scavengers who keep the earth clean to be evil villains, do you? Then why worry about ghouls?"

Martin thought it over in silence. Put like that, it sounded logical, all right. And he could see

why such people would keep themselves hidden from the rest of humanity. Human beings, *en masse*, were still savages. The minorities — ghouls, *et al* — would be wiped out by *Homo sapiens* quickly. If human beings found such slight differences as color and religious beliefs enough excuse for violent persecution, what would they do to a different species of the same genus?

The car was speeding across the Brooklyn Bridge, weaving through the light traffic under Sean O'Brian's cool guidance.

It took them nearly ten more minutes to get to their destination.

THE Kimberly Funeral Home was a big, modernistic structure which covered two city blocks.

Sean wheeled the car on past it and pulled up on the other side of the street nearly half a block away. Then he turned and pointed out the back window.

"See that building behind the main structure? The one with no windows. That's where you and Ibrim spent the day yesterday.

"The vampires will be back before dawn, and it will be the only time we can get at them. The only way we could get through the time locks in the daytime would be with dynamite, and I don't think the Brooklyn police would approve of it.

"But the door will be open for a little while just before the sun comes up in order to let the horde

in. That's when we'll hit them."

Suddenly, Ibrim Grome's face appeared in the window. "We're all set, Ibrim. We've got the place boxed."

Martin jerked his head around. Ibrim Grome was still in the front seat. He looked back at the man in the window, and realized that the faint glow of light from the street lamps had led him astray. Although the man had the same dark, leathery face and the same smoky black eyes, he could see that it was not exactly the same face.

Another similar face appeared behind the first. "Are we ready to go, Sean?"

"Ready," said Sean. "Come on, Martin."

They all piled out of the car, and Martin followed Sean and the others toward the mortuary. As they neared it, Martin could see other figures — thin, lean, and brown — converging on the building in the pre-dawn darkness.

"Martin," whispered Sean, "Climb up that fire escape." He indicated a steel stairway going up the side of the main building. "From the landing up there, you'll be able to see the surrounding area. If there's any trouble, blow this." He handed Martin a small whistle.

Martin recognized it as one of those supersonic dog whistles which were inaudible to the human ear. Evidently, the Irishman had some sort of instrument to detect its noise.

Martin did as he was bid. When

he got to the upper landing of the fire escape, he found that he could see the street and the morgue building behind equally well.

The door of the morgue was open, and Martin could see one of the vampires sitting inside. He recognized him as one of the men with whom Barbara had been sitting that first night in the bar—the one she had addressed as "Gregor." The vampire was evidently acting as a lookout and guard.

For several minutes, nothing happened. Then, without warning, two figures converged on Gregor from the blackness outside the lighted area.

There was a short scuffle, and then the two little brown men dragged Gregor out into the darkness. Martin had seen that one of the little men was carrying an ultraviolet lamp. Evidently, it had put the vampire into a coma.

Martin could see almost nothing outside the illuminated area around the open morgue door, so for a while he couldn't be sure of what was going on.

Then, astonishingly, *Gregor walked back into the morgue and took his seat as though nothing had happened!*

Martin almost blew the whistle before he realized that the detective and his men must have everything under control or they would have warned him by this time.

Again Martin waited, casting an occasional glance toward the street

to make sure nothing was happening out there.

Then the vampires began to return. In groups of two or three, they came out of the darkness, spoke in hushed tones to the guarding Gregor, and climbed into their coffins. Martin turned his head toward the street, and he could see several of them walking toward the mortuary. They probably took taxis to some spot a block or two from the place and walked the rest of the way so that they wouldn't attract attention.

Barbara was one of the last to arrive. She was wearing an evening gown that showed off her curves to perfection. Martin shuddered again.

Finally, the last of the horrors had come home. Martin began to worry. Gregor's job, presumably, was to set the time lock on the doors after all the vampires were "asleep" and then climb into his own drawer. If Sean and his men didn't attack pretty soon—

But Gregor didn't set the time lock; he didn't even close the morgue door. Instead, he stepped outside and waved his hand. It was getting lighter now, and Martin could see that there were several dozen of the little men who looked so much like Ibrim Grome running toward the building.

Gregor let them all into the morgue, closed the door behind them, and walked away, leaving Grome and his friends in sole possession of the building.

A minute or so later, Martin heard Sean's voice calling from the foot of the fire escape.

"Martin!" His voice was soft, but imperative. "Get down here fast! The sun will be up pretty soon!"

Martin clambered down the fire escape, and he and the detective sprinted toward the car.

They got inside, but Sean didn't start the machine immediately. He stuck a cigarette in his mouth and handed one to Martin, who lit it with shaking hands.

"Is it all over?" he asked the Irishman.

"Just about."

"What did they do?" Martin asked dully. "Drive stakes through their heats?" He didn't like the idea of Barbara being mutilated like that.

"No." said Sean. "That's another

part of the medieval superstition. Vampirism is like hog cholera or hoof-and-mouth disease; you have to destroy the carrier."

"Burn them?"

"No. Look at it this way: Every life form has its natural enemies. The vampire is a dead thing that preys on the living. Its natural enemies are living things that prey on the dead.

"Ibrim Grome and his boys aren't human—they're ghouls."

Martin was quite suddenly sick. When he could get his breath again, he said: "What—what about Gregor—the guard? Why did you let him get away?"

"Gregor? He didn't get away. That wasn't him who let the boys in; it was me." Sean's voice was soft. "You see, Martin, I'm—a werewolf."

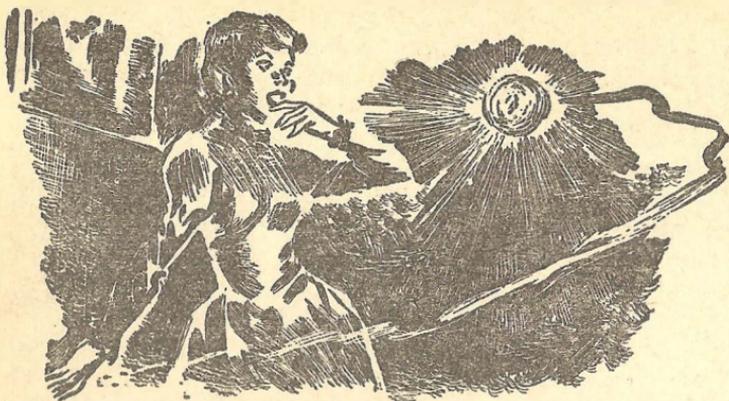
THE END

AIR TRAVEL—4,000 YEARS AGO

DID the ancient inhabitants of India fly 2,000 years before the Birth of Christ? The Sanskrit epic, *Ramayana*, which is many centuries older than the stories told by the Greek Homer, tells how an Indian king made a trip in a balloon. His carriage was called "*Pushpaka*," which in Sanskrit means "like a butterfly. The *Ramayana* contains a detailed story of the preparations for the flight and a description of the balloon.

Then the poem goes on to describe accurately the appearance of the cities and countries exactly as they would look from the air.

The collected writings of the Indian Agastya contain evidence that many centuries before western civilization knew of them, Agastya has discovered hydrogen, oxygen, and had invented the dry-cell electric battery, electroplating, kites, hot-air balloons, and propelled balloons.



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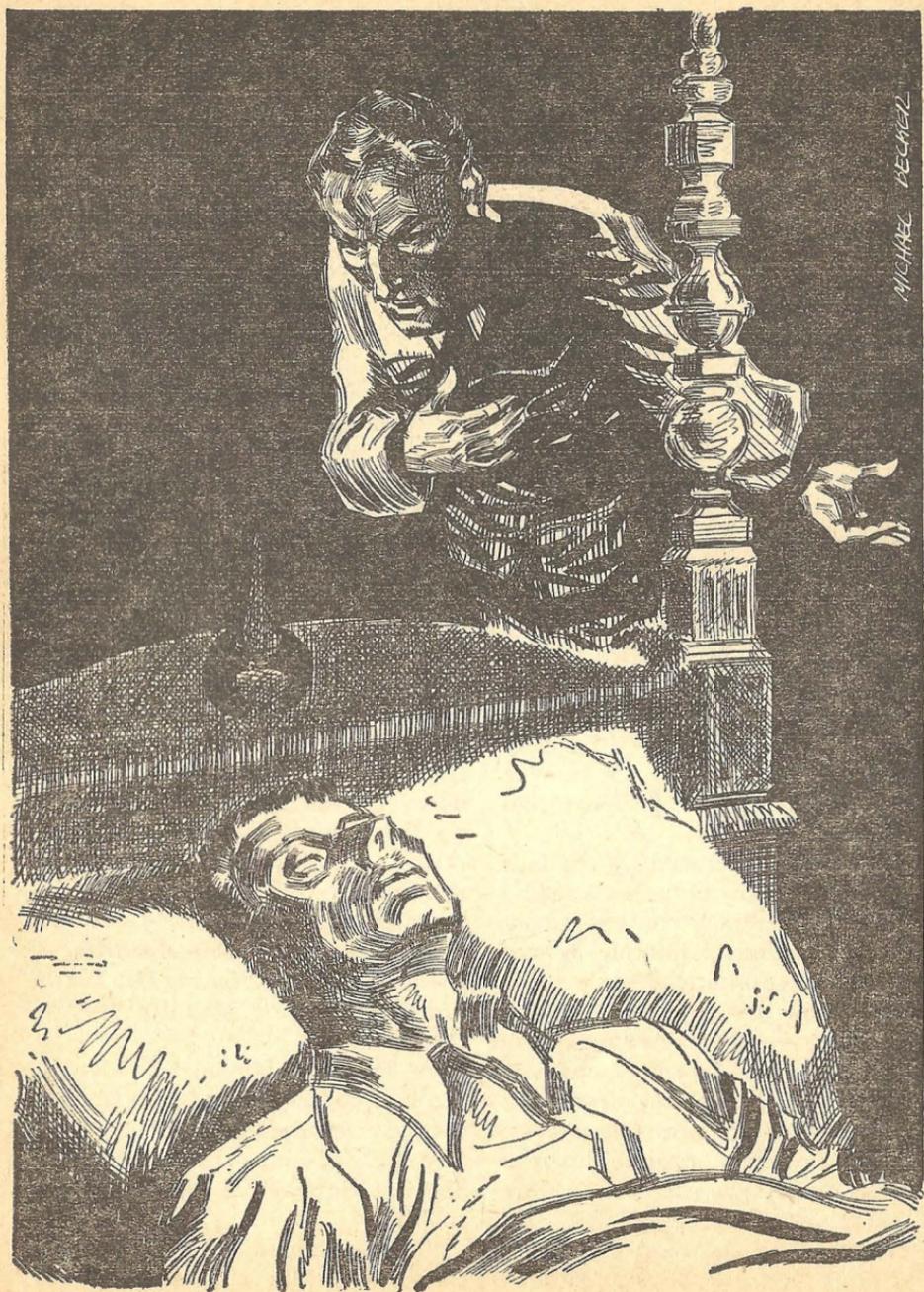


Illustration by Michael Becka

The Astral Exile

*There is a phenomenon known to occultists as astral projection. Sylvan Muldoon is one of the most famed examples of this ability. In brief, it is the ability to leave your physical body in spirit, and to travel about in perfect freedom, except for a strange psychic connection with the body, a silvery thread that projects from the head. In this story the author has given us a sensational theory to think about. Perhaps, even now, standing beside you, is a discarnate person, out of his body, unknown to **you**, impossible to detect—except for unexplainable thoughts or hunches you may have. Are there astral beings among us today?*

By Chester S. Geier



MICHAEL BECKNER

PAUL DUNN'S first sensation on the astral plane was that of floating quietly in silent darkness. He seemed to have just awakened from sleep, yet his impressions were strangely unlike those he usually had upon awakening.

He missed the warm pressure of the bed covers and the shade-softened yet insistent glare of sunlight against his closed eyes. Closed eyes? He knew his were open, but he saw nothing — neither the blaze of the sun nor the radiance of the moon. There was only the darkness, complete and impenetrable.

He tried to move but could not. He felt queerly immobile and helpless. It was as though his body were paralyzed. That would explain the floating sensation, he thought.

A cold weight of panic filled him. Something was wrong — horribly wrong. Why couldn't he move? Why couldn't he see? What had happened?

As though produced by the fear pulsing through him, he became aware suddenly of another sensation beside that of floating. It was a strong tugging at the back of his head. From this region something like a huge ripple started and passed through him like a convulsion. His mind was reeling from the shock of it when abruptly he felt himself fluttering rapidly up and down for all the world as if he were a sheet on a line being whipped straight out by the wind. And as he fluttered the pull at the back of

his head became a powerful jerking.

He was struggling to move his limbs, to break free from whatever weird force had him in its grip when a sound broke the tomb-like silence. It was the administration building clock, striking the hour. He listened as it struck three times, a little amazed that he could hear it after the unearthly quiet in which his body had performed its fantastic gyrations.

The last echoes of the clock were fading when still another impression registered upon Dunn. He could see — mistily at first, but then with increasing clearness.

Amazement crashed through him. The portion of the room he saw was familiar. He recognized the window with the framed pictures on the wall at one side and the oak bureau standing against the other. He knew where he was now — in his own dormitory room on the Elm Center nuclear laboratory grounds. But his position relative to the window told him that he was — incredibly — floating on his back some distance in the air. Not only floating but at the same time rising steadily toward the ceiling.

Again he struggled to move in the half-conscious fear that his uncanny weightlessness might desert him and let him drop to the floor. But his limbs remained rigidly immobile.

He abandoned his efforts as he discovered that a change in his

weird situation was taking place. His body was tilting forward, moving from the horizontal to the vertical. In another moment he found himself standing on the floor of the room.

He was trying to digest what had happened when he felt his paralysis leave him. His sense of sudden freedom was exhilarating. The tugging sensation at the back of his head remained, but he overlooked this in his relief at being able to move his limbs.

He turned toward the bed from which he had so inexplicably floated—and stared in wild disbelief. The bed was not empty. A sleeping figure lay in it—a young man, leanly muscular, with blunt, boyish features and thick, tousled brown hair.

The man was himself! There were two of him.

Stretching from himself to his double in the bed Dunn saw what appeared to be a palely glowing cable. This seemed to issue from the forehead of the sleeping figure and the other end, as far as he could determine, was fastened somehow to the back of his head. The presence of the cable at that spot evidently explained the tugging sensation he had experienced.

Eyes riveted on his double in the bed, Dunn tried to organize his whirling thoughts for an explanation of what this incredible situation meant. What possibly could have happened that there should be two of him? Had he—died?

Was it his earthly shell that he saw in bed?

As a nuclear technician, trained in scientific realities, he was inclined to reject this thought. He felt as solid and alive as he ever did. It was impossible to believe that he could be dead. Yet the fact that there were two of him was something he could not explain on a normal, physical basis.

Feeling suddenly that he had to talk to someone about what had happened to him, he turned and hurried toward the door. Vince Halleck lay sleeping in the next room. He would awaken Halleck, obtain proof that this was not just an unusually vivid dream. Or worse, that—

He halted in stunned surprise. He had been striding toward the door, his hand reaching for the knob. Now he stood in the dormitory hall—and the door was still closed. He had not opened it but had passed through it as if it were no more solid than fog.

A sense of disaster weighted Dunn's mind as he continued to Halleck's room. He swung his knuckles tentatively against the door—saw his hand disappear to the wrist through the apparently solid panel. In despairing resignation he pressed forward. Nothing impeded him as he stepped into a dormitory room similar in size and furnishings to his own.

Vince Halleck's stocky form lay quietly in bed and as Dunn approached he discovered that Hal-

leck was fully dressed. That was strange — but it was just one of several strange things Dunn had noticed about Halleck in the past week.

Ordinarily Halleck was friendly, talkative, as efficient a worker as the efficient nuclear devices he helped to build. But lately he had taken to speaking little, even to avoiding his intimates at the laboratory. In his work he had lost his sure touch, become fumbling and uncertain.

What was worse, Halleck had started drinking. Liquor was forbidden on the laboratory grounds. Men who worked on nuclear weapons needed a clear head and steady nerves. Yet Halleck evidently had been smuggling whiskey into the dormitory. Dunn had learned this just that evening when Halleck had invited him to his room for a drink.

Dunn had accepted, hoping to draw Halleck out and learn what was responsible for the change in him. He hadn't been very successful. Halleck merely had explained that he had grown tired of the laboratory routine. But it would pass, he had insisted. It was nothing serious.

Dunn had had two drinks, but from there on things were hazy. He could not remember having gone to bed. He saw that he wore slacks and a sport shirt instead of pajamas and he recalled now that his double in bed had been similarly dressed.

Bending over Halleck's sleeping figure, Dunn reached out to shake the man's shoulder. His hand met nothing solid. It was as though he grasped at a phantom, an illusion. As a last resort Dunn shouted into Halleck's ear.

"Vince! Vince! Wake up!"

Under ordinary circumstances the sheer volume of his voice would have startled the heaviest sleeper into waking. But Halleck gave no slightest indication that he had heard.

Dunn clenched his fists in sudden rage at his helplessness. Was there nothing he could do to gain attention? Was he doomed to remain unseen, unheard, unfelt — a nonentity inhabiting Halleck's world yet excluded from it in some baffling way?

A sudden flicker of motion drew his attention back to the bed. He stared as he saw what appeared to be a pale radiance rising from Halleck's body. In another moment he realized in amazement that the radiance had the outlines of a human form — that it was, in fact, a body rising from the body on the bed.

The glowing replica floated smoothly upward in a horizontal position. When some five feet above the figure in the bed it slowed, hung suspended for an instant and then began to teeter up and down along its length. Abruptly the floating shape descended feet first to the floor and stood motionless, turned partly away from Dunn.

Dunn involuntarily had retreat-

ed from beside the bed almost as soon as the first strange manifestations took place. He had not yet had a direct look at the features of the entity which—strangely like a butterfly from a cocoon—had emerged from Halleck's sleeping form. But recalling his own experience, Dunn took it for granted that the entity was Halleck.

The figure turned as if deliberately to confront Dunn. It now appeared quite substantial—as substantial as Dunn felt himself to be—and like the figure in the bed it was fully dressed. But with a numbing shock Dunn saw that the emergent entity was not Halleck after all. The grimly smiling, saturnine face that swung toward him was that of a complete stranger!

Madness piled upon madness, impossibility upon impossibility! Dunn no longer was certain that he was not experiencing a nightmare. What he had witnessed did not jibe with being fully conscious. It did not jibe with logic—even the logic of this eerie disembodied state. For though according to that logic it was possible for a person to have two forms—one material, the other immaterial—it was impossible that the immaterial form of one person could inhabit the material form of another.

But it did explain certain things about Halleck—his withdrawal from his friends, his drinking, his strange clumsiness on the job. A stranger had been inhabiting Halleck's earthly shell. That mystery

was cleared up, but at the same time another was created—what had become of Halleck's other self?

The saturnine-faced man was studying Dunn from narrowed black eyes. The humor had faded from his expression, leaving it hard and alert.

"I see that you are quite conscious—and that you comprehend . . . certain things," he said in a quiet voice which yet carried a distinct overtone of menace. His words had an oddly foreign flavor.

"Who are you?" Dunn demanded. "What were you doing in Vince Halleck's body—crazy as that may sound?"

The man bowed slightly. "Permit me to introduce myself. I am Colonel Leon Borchov of the Pan-Slavic Union, secret agent, scientist, explorer—and student of the occult."

A cold wind seemed to touch Dunn. A colonel . . . a secret agent—and this was Elm Center, one of the largest nuclear research laboratories in the country.

All possible precautions were taken at Elm Center to prevent espionage or sabotage by agents of the Pan-Slavic Union—yet Borchov had penetrated every defense. Dunn's insides knotted as he thought of what Borchov might have learned—of the opportunities he'd undoubtedly had to blow Elm Center sky high. Masquerading as Halleck, of course, nobody would suspect him.

Dunn's eyes sharpened on Bor-

chov in chill awareness of the man's potentialities for doing harm. What he saw was a lean, wiry man, slightly stooped, with dark bushy hair retreating from a domed forehead. His features had a distinctly Asiatic cast, the eyes slightly slanted, the cheekbones high and prominent. His appearance was somehow scholarly, intellectual, but his black eyes were unblinking and cold—a killer's eyes—and his thin mouth had a cruel, implacable twist. He gave the impression of knowledge, of wisdom, but his face showed it was an evil knowledge, backed by a ruthless will.

What Dunn glimpsed of Borchov's character made him think of Vince Halleck with new anxiety. "Where is Halleck—the man whose body you seem to have been . . . inhabiting? What have you done with him?"

"He is, we might say, wandering," Borchov returned smoothly. His smile was mocking. "Not dead, as you seem worried he might be, since that condition is incongruous here. I believe it would be most accurate to say that your friend is sleep-walking. As you should be also. Evidently my drugged highballs and hypnotic suggestions did not quite produce the desired results in your case."

"So that's it!" Dunn exclaimed. "I thought the drinks might have had something to do with what happened to me."

Anger and horror struggled in

Dunn. He controlled his emotions with an effort. Borchov seemed disposed to talk, to gloat. Dunn saw it as an opportunity to learn more about the man's motives and plans. He masked his grim purpose behind an expression of awed bewilderment. He asked:

"Is that what you used on Vince Halleck—the drugs and hypnotic suggestions, I mean?"

"Not directly," Borchov said. "It is impossible most of the time for astrals to affect those on the physical plane, or even to communicate, except through what are known in the West as mediums. A physical accomplice planted at the laboratory long before prepared the way for me. I but developed the technique as the result of knowledge which I gained from certain adepts in Tibet and India. They have made a science of such matters as astral projection."

Dunn ran his fingers through his already rumpled hair, looking incredulous. "You mean you deliberately separated Halleck from his body so that you could take over—that such a thing is possible?"

"Of course it's possible!" Borchov snorted. "You have seen the proof of that. And it is possible simply because astral projection is a natural rather than an unnatural process. Everyone undergoes astral projection more or less frequently, though few are conscious actually of doing so. All I have done is to accelerate and control this natural process."

"I still don't get it," Dunn said. "What benefit is there in taking over another man's body?"

Borchov said coldly. "You certainly cannot be as stupid as you seem. At present your technically advanced but politically bumbling nation enjoys unquestioned leadership in the development and manufacture of nuclear weapons. This, frankly, has been a strong deterrent to certain military plans of the Pan-Asian Union.

"The only solution was for the Pan-Asian Union to ferret out your scientific secrets and thus match your progress in atomic research. Using physical spies for this purpose has proved unsuccessful. Your government has learned to protect its secrets well."

Borchov's black eyes glittered with sudden emotion. "The Pan-Asian Union might have been doomed to disintegration as a result of its inability to end the stalemate. Then I, Leon Borchov, found the answer! Through my knowledge of the occult, I showed how it was possible not only for the Pan-Asian Union to obtain the secrets it needed, but also to sabotage the entire atomic program of the United States.

"The solution, of course, is to use astral rather than physical espionage agents. But in addition my plan is to obtain control of the bodies of technicians in certain key centers in all atomic laboratories. At the proper time these captive technicians will destroy reactors,

render atomic weapons useless. My astral agents will spread out along the atomic network of the United States to nuclear weapons stockpiles in allied nations. We will penetrate directly into your government, cause strife and confusion."

Borchov's voice rose exultantly. His sharp features were twisted in a Satanic smile. "And nobody will suspect. We will move unseen and unheard. Discarnate, we will glean every secret, every fact of organization and leadership. Incarnate, we will take physical action. We will constitute an astral fifth-column, the like of which the world has never known. We will be invincible. For while our enslaved physical shells can be destroyed, we ourselves are indestructible, free to seek out and take over other shells!"

Dunn felt sick. What he had witnessed already told him that Borchov's plan, however incredible it sounded, could very well succeed. And only he knew about it. Only he could do something to defeat it.

A deadly calm settled over Borchov. Studying Dunn from lidded eyes, he said softly, "You are wondering why I have revealed all this to you. You are even casting about for some way to interfere with my plans. I have taken no risks with you, for in your ignorance of occult matters you are harmless. As an astral there is no way in which you can communicate with those on the physical plane, except through a certain few

psychically developed and experienced persons. Any others would regard you as a mere ghost—and a mad one at that.”

Borchov smiled thinly. “But you will be given no opportunity to communicate with anyone. For although in astral form it is impossible for you to be killed, it is possible nevertheless for you to be... psychically incapacitated. In some this amounts to amnesia, in others catalepsy or coma—even madness. In any case, I shall see that you are in no position to be dangerous to me.”

Dread surged in Dunn. He was at a serious disadvantage here, only partly grasping principles and effects which Borchov understood out of a deep, evil wisdom. He did not know what force the man could use against him, but Borchov appeared grimly confident of his ability to carry out his threat to render Dunn helpless.

That must not happen, Dunn told himself desperately. Somehow he had to fight back. Somehow he had to warn others of Borchov's scheme. Everything depended on him—the freedom of millions, the very course of civilization. Only he could keep totalitarian barbarism from closing down over the nation he loved.

The knowledge filled him with an electrifying urgency. He was suddenly, vividly aware of the room, of the furnishings in it, of the distance that separated him from Borchov. Was there some-

thing here the Pan-Asian agent had overlooked, something Dunn could use to gain the whiphand, even if momentarily?

Abruptly Dunn remembered his physical counterpart in the next room. If he could don his earthly form as one dons an overcoat, he could spread an alarm—not the nightmarish tale of what had happened to him and what he had learned, but a logical story that logical men would accept.

He could explain, for instance, that he had discovered Halleck was a spy. There were witnesses who could testify that Halleck had been acting strangely. The laboratory authorities would act instantly, for espionage was a thing they understood, a menace that hung constantly over their heads. Halleck would be locked up for investigation—and Borchov would lose his physical vehicle. Before he could obtain another Dunn would have everyone at the laboratory watching everyone else for some strange word or action. Hints of an espionage network would spread the alarm to other laboratories and Borchov would find himself completely blocked. Halleck, of course, could be cleared later without much difficulty.

These thoughts shot through Dunn's mind as he tensed himself for a dash that would carry him to his physical body in the next room. But before he could move a development took place that rooted him to the floor in surprise.

Two men stepped through the closed door. One of them was a complete stranger to Dunn, but he recognized the other as a machinist named Tony Radek. The way the newcomers had passed through the solid door made it evident that they were astrals.

Borchov nodded at Radek. "You have done well," he said. He turned his attention to the other man. "I trust that you made the trip here from the embassy without complications, Shevkin."

The man nodded. "It is because you have prepared me well, Colonel Borchov. I am ready for the next step in the plan."

"Good." Borchov said. "We will take that step in just a moment."

He glanced at Dunn. "No doubt you and Radek are acquainted. It was he who made it possible for me to take over the physical form of your friend Halleck. He is one of a group of agents who have been carefully trained for this task. As for Shevkin, he is a nuclear expert who will now take over Halleck's body."

Borchov paused, his lidded black eyes surveying Dunn in sudden mockery. "That means I must move to another physical habitation, of course. It will interest you, my young friend, to know that I have chosen—yours."

Dismay and then fury swept Dunn. The thought of Borchov clothing himself in his own flesh was hateful. He fought back an impulse to throw himself at the man,

realizing that it was more urgent now than ever that he reach his body in the next room. He used the surge of violent energy to send himself leaping toward the wall that separated him from his goal.

Dunn heard startled shouts in his rear. The wall loomed before him and then was gone as he passed through it without hindrance.

His physical counterpart lay with closed eyes in the bed as he had left it. Hurrying up, he wondered suddenly how he would be able to enter.

That problem unexpectedly was solved for him. As he approached to within several feet of the figure he once more felt the powerful tugging at the back of his head. At the same time what seemed to be a magnetic force gripped him and lifted him off his feet. Again he was aware that he was rigid and floating.

He was guided directly over the motionless form in the bed, lowered down toward it—and suddenly dropped. Astral and physical merged into one—and in the instant of merging Dunn found himself in hell.

It was as if he had been dropped into the body of a man who first had been driven violently mad and who now was being burned alive. A maelstrom of pain caught him and whirled him crazily through an endless abyss of nerve-shattering horror. Demons shrieked obscenity at him with the voices of thunder. He was swept by holocausts of

agony, engulfed by vast tidal waves of unthinkable fear.

He screamed for escape, for release—and despaired that it would ever come. But as suddenly as if he had stepped from darkness into light the torment ceased, the fright vanished. He realized dazedly that he was rising into the air, gyrating as he did so to the accompaniment of a strong tugging at the back of his head.

And then, sick, weak, unutterably shaken emotionally, he found himself on his feet, swaying, some distance from the bed. The motionless figure in it gave no hint of the inferno locked within its flesh.

Dunn heard a shout of laughter. He turned to see Borchov watching him in derisive amusement from across the room. Behind the Pan-Asiatic agent were Radek and Shevkin.

Borchov laughed again. "I can see that you had quite a surprise, my heroic young friend. What you experienced was the special state of hypnosis in which I placed your physical body. I set up conditions, you see, that made it prudent for your astral self to vacate the premises—conditions also that would prevent you from resuming occupancy."

Borchov's sharp features hardened. "You have given me considerable difficulty—a fact which I do not quite understand. But I shall now see to it that you are rendered unable to interfere further with my plans. Certain forces on the astral

plane are available to those who know how to use them."

Abruptly Borchov extended his arms stiffly toward Dunn. A faint radiance flashed from the tips of his rigid fingers. Something like a physical blow struck Dunn and sent him staggering back. He was fighting to keep his balance, dazed, when the force struck him again. It had the impact of a club and yet it was a psychic thing that battered at the very foundations of his mind.

He fell to hands and knees. Pain flamed along his nerves and his head seemed filled with a coruscating darkness. Yet one thought remained clear—he couldn't go down. Too much depended on him. He had to keep Borchov from carrying out his plan.

With a tremendous effort of will Dunn pulled himself erect. Again the psychic club smashed at him—and again. It battered at consciousness and sanity with sadistic violence. Dunn reeled, fell. And then he was spinning, without thought or feeling, through a black infinity.

His astral form vanished from the dormitory room. For to this form only consciousness supplied reality. Walls were no barrier and floors gave support only because consciousness expected it. Without consciousness was . . . space . . . a drifting . . .

Light came mistily through the blackness around him and swiftly grew stronger. A distant murmur of sound swelled to a steady roar. Dunn was suddenly and sharply

aware of motion all about him, of life. He brushed the last clinging tendrils of a black fog from his senses.

He stood at the edge of a busy city street bathed in afternoon light. Hurrying crowds thronged the sidewalks and the wide paved space between them was filled with a jerky stream of cars. The air throbbed with the deep rumble of the human current bustling through the city's arteries.

Abruptly Dunn saw a car bearing down on him as it approached the curb. He leaped back instinctively—and found himself in the midst of the throngs hastening along the sidewalk.

Two men, striding hurriedly side by side, loomed up in front of him. He dodged to avoid a collision, found himself directly in the path of a woman approaching from the opposite direction. There was no time to avoid her. He stiffened for the impact.

Nothing happened. The woman passed through him as if he were not there at all.

That was strange, he thought. He groped for an explanation, tried fumblingly to fit together the jigsaw pieces of memory that tumbled through his mind.

There was a body in a bed, the body of a young man with tousled brown hair—a body which seemed queerly to belong to him, yet which was separated from him. There was the face of a man, a sharp, evil face with high cheekbones and slanting

eyes—the face of a man he hated. There was a terrible urgency somehow connected with this face, a terrible pain and a drifting through black emptiness. Dunn did not know how long he had been drifting or how he had arrived here.

He strode aimlessly along the sidewalk. People kept getting in his way as if he were completely invisible to them. At first he avoided them out of sheer habit, but after several more experiences with individuals passing harmlessly through him he ignored the crowd. He walked through the thronging figures as if they and not he were phantoms.

The afternoon passed as Dunn wandered without destination or purpose through the maze of streets, often doubling back upon his tracks. His memories were still hazy, but it seemed to him that there was some warning he had to give about the man with the sharp face and the slanting eyes. There was some great danger connected with this man, a danger that appeared to explain the burning urgency he felt.

Once Dunn came across a uniformed patrolman and tried to speak to him. But neither his clutching hands nor his shouts were noticed. He continued on in despair. He felt lost and alone. A bitter sense of defeat, of utter hopelessness, weighted his mind.

People continued to pass through him, but now he accepted it as a matter of course. He did not exist

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for them. He was a mere wraith, an inarticulate, intangible nothingness.

When abruptly he came into solid contact with one of the hurrying figures he was completely stunned with surprise.

"Oh!" a soft voice said.

Dunn found himself staring down at a slim, pretty girl with ash-blond hair and gray eyes. Her oval face seemed to reflect his own amazement.

"Why, you're an astral!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, that's it—an astral," Dunn blurted. The word somehow made a few of the jigsaw pieces click together in his mind. The urgency in him flamed higher.

The girl was studying him puzzledly. "You seem to understand—about being an astral, I mean," she said. "Most of them don't."

Dunn nodded, only half aware of her words. "I thought I was all alone here. I'd given up all hope of ever finding anyone I could talk to."

The girl smiled. She had a wide full mouth and even white teeth. Her smile was pleasant to watch.

"I felt that way at first," she admitted. "But we're not alone here. You have some surprises coming."

Dunn caught at her arms and shook them a little. "If there are others here—others like us—I've got to talk to them! There's something I have to tell them. It's terribly important. There's a man, you see, an astral—a spy. I've got to

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warn people about him. He —"

Dunn released the girl and pressed his hands against his head. His face twisted as he made a frantic effort to fit more of the jigsaw pieces together in his mind.

"I can't seem to remember," he groaned. "It's all there—but I can't get hold of it. He did something to me . . . something that made me forget."

"I think I can help you," the girl said, her small face concerned. "There's an astral aid station not far from here. The people there will have some idea of what to do."

"Astral aid station?" Dunn echoed as the girl took his arm and set off up the street. "What's that?"

"Sort of a public information bureau and receiving center all rolled into one," she explained. "What is called the astral plane is quite well organized, you see. There are institutions, a government, laws. Things actually aren't much different from what we've always known.

"But there are certain problems here. People arrive who refuse to believe they have become astrals and keep trying to return to their previous existence. They have to be found and educated. Others arrive in a psychopathic state from the shock and pain of accidents or fatal wounds on the battlefield. They have to be given special psychiatric treatment. Many who arrive are even quite unconscious. In fact, those who reach here as conscious and sane as you are the exception rather than the rule."

Dunn nodded, interested despite the nagging urgency within him. "I guess the astrals have their job cut out for them, all right."

"They have," the girl assured him. "The biggest job is finding new arrivals and fitting them into things. Most astrals serve as guides or teachers. The guides patrol hospitals, battlefields and other places. They bring arrivals to astral aid stations and others take up from there. I, for instance, was brought from a hospital."

"I see," Dunn muttered. He glanced at the girl, liking what he saw and for this very reason feeling a pang of regret. "Then you—your physical body—died?"

She shook her ash-blond curls and laughed a little. "That's the funny thing about it. I was in an auto accident—not seriously dam-

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aged except for a brain concussion, it seems. My body's in a coma. A couple of astral doctors are working on it—or, more exactly, working on the doctors who are working on it."

Dunn peered at her questioning-ly and she explained, "You see, astrals play a bigger part in affairs on the physical plane than anyone there realizes. They watch over things. They guide and help—those who are specially equipped by nature or training to do it, that is. It's a matter of being what is called psychic. Like telepathy, you know. That's the only way astrals can get in contact with people on the physical plane—unless those there happen to be psychic also. People with psychic ability are all too few—and they're badly needed here. There aren't enough to go around for all that has to be done.

"Even having psychic ability doesn't accomplish any miracles. Take the doctors working on the doctors who are working on my body. The astral doctors know what needs to be done. It's a matter of removing a blood clot from certain nerve centers. The problem is to communicate that knowledge as an idea or a hunch to the doctors on the physical plane. There's something about being physical that makes it difficult to . . . to receive.

"But that's the way the astrals work—and they have enough success, accomplish enough good, to justify what they're doing. They

bring certain knowledge within reach of certain people. They guide people to certain books, or they bring certain people together. They cause certain people to have ideas, hunches, and in this way a lot of important discoveries are made on the physical plane. Actually, you see, the astrals are working out a great plan that extends far into what we call the future. But, of course, only the psychic among them can do anything and these naturally are limited to a small number of key people or key points on the physical plane."

Dunn listened in fascination, glancing frequently at the girl's solemn face. Her gray eyes were intent on her words.

"Knowing all this has changed me," she went on. "I don't think I'll ever be the same again if I manage to . . . to get back. And if I remember . . .

"I used to wonder why people were so bad . . . why we had wars . . . why there seemed to be so much stupidity and meanness. I used to wonder why the world was in such rotten shape. I've learned that's just what we see on the surface—from the physical side, I mean. The world actually is not the way we have come to understand it and people are far more than most of us have suspected they were. There is order and system in nature. Nothing can exist without a definite function, without fitting into a definite

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scheme.

"But the most important thing I've learned is that people are not alone, whether they are physical or astral—two sides of the same coin, really. They do not exist completely by themselves, like children without parents. They are not neglected, not left to work out their destiny according to a blind, hit or miss system. Everyone belongs to a great partnership—a great co-operative. Nobody walks alone."

Nobody walks alone . . . nobody walks alone. The girl's words rang like music in Dunn's mind. Their message gave him a warm, exultant feeling. He had felt horribly alone, lost, marooned, shut away.

The girl was studying him. "How much have you . . . forgotten?" she asked. "Do you remember your name? Mine is Alicia Taylor."

Dunn made a frowning effort at recollection, but the memory he sought eluded him. All he obtained was the image of the man with the high cheekbones and slanting eyes. He felt a new surge of the urgency connected with that face.

He shook his head at Alicia. "I can't recall my name—but I do remember some things." He described the man with the slanting eyes. "He did something to me—something that made me forget. I know he's a spy and that I have to warn the authorities about

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him."

"Those at the station may be able to help you," Alicia said. "We're almost there."

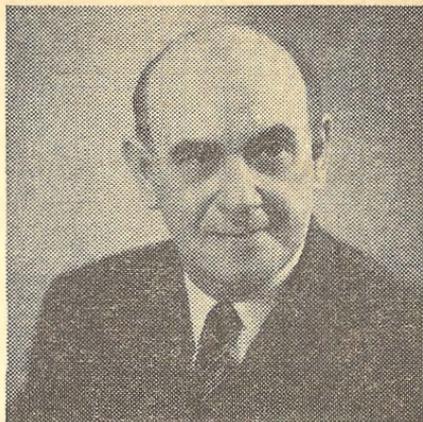
They reached a tall office building and Alicia led the way through the glass entrance doors. They passed impalpably through a crowd of business men and office workers emerging from an elevator. Alicia smiled impishly and beckoned Dunn into the car.

"This isn't necessary—but it's what I call carrying on in the old tradition," she said. "We get off at the fifth floor—even if the car doesn't stop there."

It didn't, but as it approached the specified floor Alicia pulled abruptly at Dunn's arm. Without any sensation of shock or momentum he found himself in a long hall. Alicia led him to a pair of glass doors that bore the legend "North American Information Bureau."

"This suite of offices is leased by a group of psychics," Alicia remarked. "It's the busiest place in the whole building, but the physical people here don't know that."

They entered a crowded reception room. All those present were astrals, Durin saw. Alicia spoke to a woman at a desk, describing Dunn as "a special case." A short time later they were ushered into the office of a gray-haired, athletic man named Bronson. Though he had the appearance of a top-flight business executive,



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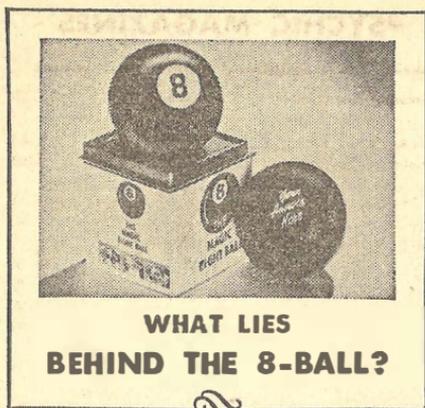
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there was a spiritual quality about Bronson that showed he was far removed from commercial matters.

Bronson listened with keen-eyed interest as Dunn told him of his fragmentary yet disturbing and urgent memories. When Dunn had finished he nodded slowly.

"It appears that you were subjected to a psychic assault by the man you describe," Bronson told Dunn. "This evidently happened because you had discovered him to be a spy. It argues a high degree of psychic development in his case, but the fact that you withstood his assault so well indicates that you have a great deal of natural psychic strength yourself. This power could be developed.

"At any rate, your story certainly is something we must look into. It suggests certain illegal activities which we make every effort to stamp out. We do have our own particular laws, you know. And it seems that this spy is aware of them. He must have been operating very secretly for us not to have gotten wind of him sooner than this. But then the world is a big place and we can't keep a constant check on everything that might be important or dangerous."

Bronson became grimly purposeful. "The first thing to do is to restore your memories in full. I don't think that will be difficult. Our psychiatrists know considerably more about the mind than

those on the physical plane, since extrasensory perception works without hindrance here. In addition, our mental experts can use certain energies that generally are not available on the physical plane. These energies accomplish the so-called miracle cures of psychic healers . . . We'll begin at once!"

Dunn learned shortly that things could move with bewildering speed in the astral world. He was turned over to two psychiatrists named Kraus and Stephens, who examined and questioned him at length.

Dunn then allowed Kraus to place him in a trance and it seemed to him while in this state that he and the two psychiatrists moved through his mind, flashing from scene to scene, each as vivid and real as an actual experience.

Suddenly he stood in a familiar room. A lean, saturnine man faced him, a man with high cheekbones and slanting eyes. Behind him stood two other men. On a bed across the room lay the body of a young man with tousled brown hair—himself, Dunn realized.

The saturnine man abruptly extended his arms and dimly Dunn was aware of pain—and knowledge. The scene vanished. Other scenes followed in which the man with the slanting eyes was present, speaking, gesturing, smiling in mockery. Then Dunn

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found himself drinking with a stocky man with sandy hair cut close to his head. Halleck, Dunn remembered, and he knew that Halleck's body was alienly tentanted.

Scene followed scene. It seemed to Dunn that he was moving back to his very childhood and even beyond that to an existence he could not quite comprehend. And then he was flashing back and there was light where there had been darkness, a knowing where there had been a forgetting. He awoke—and remembered.

Dunn reported back to Bronson, who listened with increasing gravity to the story Dunn told him out of his returned memories.

"The situation is even more serious than I thought it was!" Bronson exclaimed. "We must take immediate action against this man Borchov. What he's planning to do will destroy everything which we on the astral plane have been working for."

Bronson leaned forward, his face intense. "You're the key to the whole thing," he told Dunn. "I believe that in the final analysis the success or failure of our efforts against Borchov will depend on you. That's because he is using your physical body and only you can obtain certain results where your own body is concerned."

"I'll do anything," Dunn said grimly. "There's nothing I'd like better than to give Borchov a

dose of his own medicine."

Bronson nodded his understanding. "You'll need special training for the task ahead of you. The unusual psychic strength which you possess will have to be developed."

"Let's get started, then!" Dunn said.

Dunn went—to school. Not many years before, when attending college and faced with the approach of examinations, he had often wished it were possible somehow to compress into a few days or weeks the studies of an entire year. He found that on the astral plane it was quite possible. Time here—or rather the awareness of it—was different.

He learned amazing things about the mind and electromagnetic effects. The relationship between electromagnetic effects and gravitational effects already had been shown by one of the foremost scientists on the earthly plane. It now appeared, Dunn found, that there was a relationship between these effects and the mind, that all were merely different manifestations of a single, continuous field flowing like a mighty river through space-time. The effects operated to produce mind—and mind in turn operated to produce the effects.

Dunn learned mentally to manipulate small objects and to cause rapping noises—what on the physical plane were called

(Continued on page 112)

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poltergeist phenomena. He progressed in his mental operations until he could hurl huge rocks hundreds of feet into the air and shatter them with a single bolt of energy.

He spent almost all his leisure time with Alicia. The girl was going to school too, though for a different purpose. They took long walks through parks. They attended concerts or visited movie theatres. In this and other ways Dunn was reminded that life on the astral plane was not essentially different from the life he had always known. He heard casual remarks about other, higher planes, but it seemed that only a few highly developed astrals possessed detailed information about these.

Dunn felt that an ominous shadow lay over his jaunts with Alicia. He had no assurance that he would succeed in his efforts against Borchov and the thought of defeat weighed heavily on his mind. For among the consequences of defeat he now saw not only a kind of death for himself—a mental devastation which even experts like Kraus and Stephens could not repair—but also separation from Alicia.

Dunn reached a crucial point in his training. His instructors hurled the equivalents of lightning bolts at him—and he turned them aside. He . . . graduated.

His graduation was something for which Bronson had been wait-

ing impatiently. "Congratulations!" he said when Dunn reported to him. "Now we can go into action. Everything is ready. All our plans are laid. I've had investigators carefully scouting out conditions at Elm Center. As far as they could tell without risking detection, Borchov seems not to be up to anything unusual. It's difficult to say just how highly developed his extrasensory faculties are, of course. But we've learned enough about his habits to have been able to calculate the exact moment to strike."

"I'm ready," Dunn said.

Zero hour . . . With Bronson and a group of other astrals Dunn flashed through space. The sprawling structures of Elm Center appeared through the night. When the darkened dormitory loomed up in the shadows the party began separating to take up pre-assigned positions.

"It's in your hands from here on in," Bronson told Dunn. "Good luck!"

They shook hands briefly and Dunn, feeling a sudden hard knot of tension within him, moved forward into the building. The hall leading to his room appeared around him. He moved more slowly now, tautly alert.

A heavy, crouching stillness lay over the hall. Nothing moved under the wide-spaced ceiling lights.

Dunn crept up to the door of
(Continued on page 114)

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his room. Beyond it was his body—and Borchov. The stillness held. Lips tightening against his teeth, Dunn melted through the door.

A giant fist smashed at him. He went rolling across the floor.

With a frantic rallying of the strength that had been trained into him, Dunn threw off his shock. As he scrambled to his knees he saw Borchov poised cat-like beside the bed. Dunn saw that his pajama-clad body lay in it—and he sensed that something was frightfully wrong.

"Fool!" Borchov spat. "Did you not think that I would take certain precautions—erect certain de-

fenses? These told me that strange astrals were carefully observing my activities. Therefore I have made certain preparations. Observe!"

Now Dunn discovered exactly what was wrong. The body in the bed was wired lightly at head, wrists and ankles to make what appeared to be an electrical circuit. The wires led to two boxes beside the bed—one evidently a battery of some sort.

Borchov pointed to the other box. "This, my so persistent young friend, contains enough dynamite to blow your body, as

(Continued on page 116)

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well as this entire building, to atoms! I have set up the electrical circuit in such a way as to respond to certain energies which I can generate in an instant."

Strangely, in that crucial moment, Dunn relaxed. He repressed an impulse to smile. Borchov, he realized abruptly, had made a serious miscalculation.

The Pan-Asian agent had considered Dunn's body to be the focal point of the activities he had discovered. He interpreted Dunn's return as an attempt to reclaim his physical form—unaware that actually Dunn was playing for a far greater stake, one for which he was willing to sacrifice his body if necessary.

Knowing his advantage, Dunn acted. "Wait!" he told Borchov, glancing with pretended fear at the bed. "Don't do anything hasty. Let's talk this over. Maybe we can strike a bargain."

Borchov smiled thinly. "Perhaps. But first I suggest that you advise your astral friends to withdraw."

"All right," Dunn said. He lifted his voice in a call to Bronson and the others. Quickly he explained the situation and told of Borchov's demand.

"We'll clear out, then," Bronson called back. "You're on your own."

Dunn tensed. He knew that Borchov would be following the retreat of the other astrals to make certain that no trickery was

attempted. For a moment his attention would be diverted both from Dunn and his physical shell.

The instant momentary blankness came into Borchov's black eyes to announce that his attention had shifted, Dunn put his newly acquired powers into effect. He tore loose the electrical connections from the body in the bed.

Borchov sensed the action and was instantly alert. Despite his surprise he retaliated with furious speed. He smashed at Dunn with a club of force.

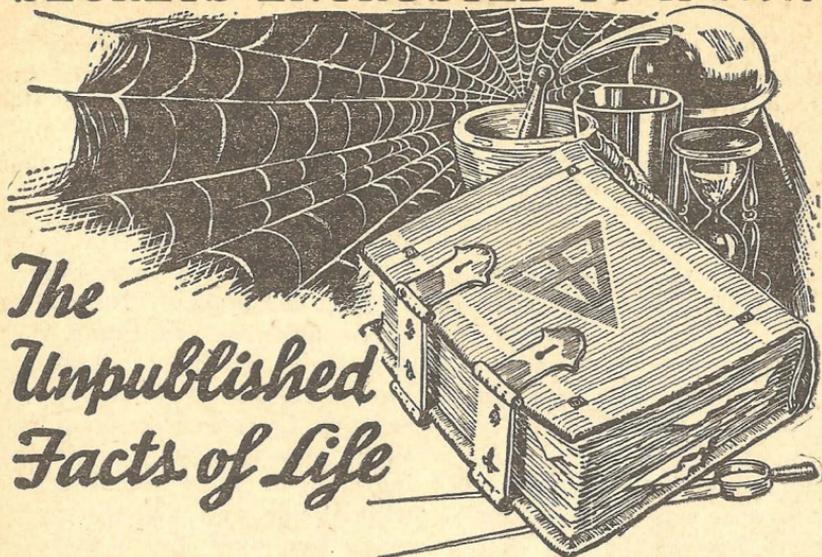
Dunn sent it glancing harmlessly aside. Amazement and rage flickered over Borchov's sharp features. Gathering himself for a violent effort, he hurled a bolt of shattering energy. Dunn turned it aside—but with dazzling swiftness another flashed at him. He could not act quickly enough to keep from absorbing part of its impact. He went sprawling, his mind filled with the clangor of great bells.

Borchov laughed wildly, in sheer relief at what to him appeared proof of his superior strength. The fleeting respite was all Dunn needed. He gathered himself for a supreme effort—

His bolt hurled Borchov from his feet. He pressed his advantage, as he had been trained to do, throwing bolt after punishing bolt. He beat down Borchov's defenses layer by layer, then went

(Continued on page 118)

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to work with the equivalent of his hands. He pummeled, battered, hammered. A red haze hung over his mind. In that haze the memory of the pain and torment he had suffered at Borchov's hands was violently alive.

And then he felt himself being pulled away from the limp form beneath him. As from a distance he heard Bronson's voice.

"That's enough, Paul—enough! It's all over. You've done a grand job—but save something of Borchov for us."

Dunn stood up, realizing abruptly that he was weak and shaken, spent. Despite the fury of the astral struggle, nothing of it appeared to have penetrated to the physical plane. The dormitory still was wrapped in night silence.

"We didn't go very far when we left here," Bronson was saying. "As soon as we saw that you had tricked Borchov and had gone to work on him, we started back. Caught a couple of his friends, incidently, when they came rushing to his help."

Bronson gestured and Dunn glanced across the room at the sullen faces of Radek and Shevkin, who were being guarded by several of Bronson's men.

One of the members of the group, a physician, approached Dunn. "You can take over your body at once, if you want to. I checked and there's no psychic damage or physical deterioration."

"Not right away," Dunn said.

"There's something I have to do first."

After a rest Dunn appeared at Bronson's office in the North American Information Bureau. Bronson grinned.

"I've got a lot of news for you, Paul. While you were laying down on the job, we've been busy."

"How is Borchov?" Dunn asked.

"A sadder and wiser man. We've questioned him thoroughly and have obtained details of the whole scheme. Our security men have taken over now and there's nothing more to worry about. Borchov will receive extensive therapy to make him over into a useful astral citizen. We need abilities like his, you know. He won't make any further trouble because, strangely enough, for all he knew, he didn't know just how well organized we were. He didn't want to risk discovery by exploring."

Dunn was puzzled. "You mean he can't return to the physical plane?"

Bronson shook his head. "He caught a fever in Tibet. His body was weakened by asceticism and couldn't fight it off. Shevkin can't return either, but Radek can. He'll be a changed man, though."

Bronson made a sweeping motion. "I said I had a lot of news. Item one is that we've located your friend Halleck at an astral aid station in another city. He was found wandering in a coma. He's being given therapy now and will be returned to his body,

not too much the worse for wear. He won't know what happened to him—and I feel that's best, after all. In fact, Paul, I feel it would be wise if you returned not knowing everything that happened, everything you learned."

"What do you mean?" Dunn asked in sudden apprehension.

"It's important for you to go back. You need to obtain certain experience that will be valuable here . . . later. But to get this experience you'll have to be a normal person, lead a normal life. You couldn't do that knowing what you know now."

"I guess you're right," Dunn muttered. He stiffened. "But what about Alicia? I can't just leave her!"

"Alicia is item two," Bronson said. "While we were taking action against Borchov the astral doctors who were working on her body finally managed to get through. The blood clot has been removed—and she's gone back. You are all she'll remember of what she experienced here."

Dunn was dismayed. "But I don't know where to find her! I was going to ask her what hospital she was at—physically, I mean, but now . . ."

Bronson grinned broadly. "Oh, she told me that before she left. Frankly, she made me promise to be sure to let you know."

"Then get my exit papers ready," Dunn said. "I've got a date!"

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SEARCHING FOR THE ELIXIR OF LIFE

by Drew Ames

THE key to premature old age itself exists in the rare new drug-hormones, Cortisone and ACTH, which physicians so far know to be a remarkable cure for arthritis, some forms of heart disease, hardening of the arteries and other diseases associated with growing older.

A world-wide hunt is underway for new sources of these revolutionary remedies which may change the whole future and outlook of mankind. So far only enough of these miracle drugs is available to treat a few hundred persons. To find more, men are searching into strange places of the world and are undertaking extensive chemical and biological research.

A U. S. Government expedition is underway to Africa to bring back seeds of a plant known as *strophantus sarmentosus*, which is a potentially unlimited source of the raw material for cortisone. The plant yields a material whose chemical configuration has been found thus far only in the adrenal glands of animals.

On another front, the Glidden

Paint Company has revealed that its chemists have made great progress in developing a simplified method of producing the precious drug from soy beans.

Cortisone is not a cure but must be given in daily injections. It is being distributed by a special committee to qualified institutions purely for research purposes. It is made from ox bile and is so extremely rare that the Merck Company is producing only about 200 grams a month, which is enough to treat only a few persons.

Another substance is ACTH, made from the pituitary gland of hogs. It produces the same effect as cortisone by stimulating the patient's adrenal glands to produce cortisone. ACTH is being isolated by a new process developed by Armour & Co., Chicago. Total production is only about 60 pounds per year, and to produce that much requires pituitary glands of 24,000,000 slaughtered hogs.

Production of *Sarmentogenin* from the *sarmentosus* seeds could eliminate this costly labor. *Sarmentogenin* has a chemical structure

much nearer to cortisone than the bile acid from which it is produced today. It takes 37 chemical steps to transform the bile acid into cortisone, but only 20 to transform *Sarmentogenin* into synthetic cortisone.

It is estimated that it would require one ton of *sarmentosus* seeds to maintain an arthritic person for one year. Heavy production of the seeds could become an enormously profitable industry for tropical countries, since there are an estimated 7,000,000 arthritics in the United States today.

When cortisone is available in substantial quantities, the long-sought search for a Foundation of Youth may be at last achieved. Though it will not guarantee immortality, it is certain to keep human beings healthy and well far beyond the periods when they ordinarily wither and die.

THE END

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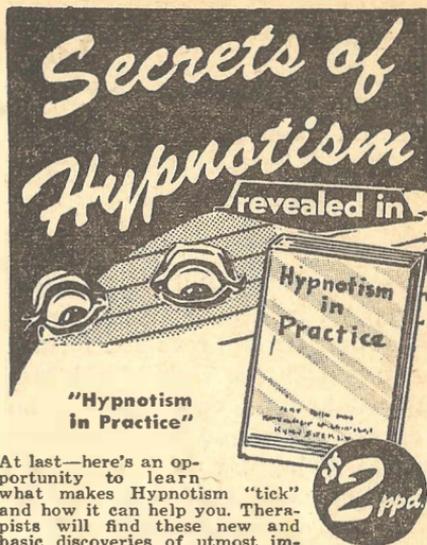
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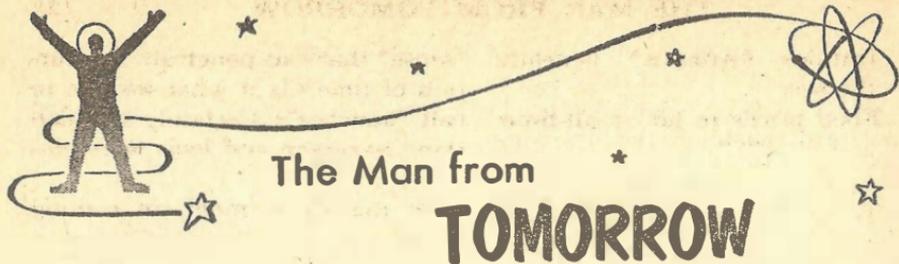
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ON October 10, 1951 your editor began writing a series of prophecies received from a source which, for lack of a better explanation, he called "the man from tomorrow," an imaginary personage living far in our future. What he actually did was to sit down and write whatever came to mind, with little regard as to whether it was reasonable or not. The following is a list of these prophecies which came true, as culled from the articles written for more than a year afterward:

1. The tremendous snowfalls of the winter of 1951-52, which set new records; especially in far southern states.
2. Famine in India; with the U. S. offering wheat, but making a political mess of the argument over whether or not it should be sent, thereby giving the Communist line a boost.
3. The excess of rain in response to attempts to make it rain, and the resulting arguments.
4. Specific mention of the record-breaking snowfalls in Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Chicago, Kansas City.
5. The new series of atom bomb tests, and the resulting bad weather, and the discussion about it that even went as far as a proposed congressional investigation.
6. The severe earthquakes in California and in other parts of the world. Special emphasis on severe tornado and cyclonic disaster.
7. Devising of a new type atomic weapon (the atomic cannon).
8. Development of actual atomic power plants in this country.
9. The discovery that the Earth has a faint ring around it, like Saturn.
10. The mysterious green fireballs in the southwest, and the great increase in "spaceship" and "saucer" sightings.
11. The use of radioactives in preventative medicine and research into the cause of diseases rather than just into their cure.
12. Failure of the Korean peace conferences, and their recess.
13. Revolt in Germany in 1953.
14. The worst hurricane in the North Sea in 500 years.
15. Finding remnants of lost civil-

- izations (Atlantis) beneath the sea.
16. Food prices to hit an all-time high in 1952.
 17. Our own magazine, **OTHER WORLDS**, to be forced out of business due to the pressure of business events.
 18. The spending of ten million dollars by world governments to listen to strange signals from space.
 19. The dramatic deaths and purging of high Soviet officials, the rapid changes in Soviet inner circles that made it impossible to predict future Russian acts, the inability of the world to make plans because of this doubt. The increasing incidence of rebellion and unrest in the satellite countries, especially Poland and Czechoslovakia.
 20. The earthquake in San Francisco.
 21. Starvation in India in 1953 worse than 1952.

All of these predictions came true. Many others did not. Many more have yet to be decided, but, on the record, many of them will occur. The percentage of hits is very high, especially among those "wild guesses" such as the now famous North Sea hurricane and flood, the green fireballs, the earthquakes in specific localities, the Earth's ring, the record snowfalls. How were these predictions made? Do all of us possess a strange

"sense" that can penetrate the curtain of time? Is it what we like to call "hunches"? Certainly no such thing as reason and logic were employed!

In this department, in coming months, we will publish more of our predictions and also the predictions of any of you readers who care to stick your necks out. We will select the most interesting, the strangest, and the most capable of proving that something is operating here which is beyond the present knowledge of science. Whatever happens, we will have fun doing it, and we predict, we will be very amazed at the strange accuracy we will encounter. So join with us, and let's see what *The Man From Tomorrow* has to say!

Our prediction for this issue (the date of this writing is July 20, 1953) is that there will be a severe business recession, attended by great governmental agitation, and a great hue and cry by Democrat officials for Republican blame for the recession, plus a severe deterioration in popularity among the people of the new administration, and particularly of President Eisenhower. The debt limit will be raised, and tax cuts will be negligible, if not non-existent. Many small businesses will fail. Biggest single factor in the recession will be a buying strike.

Our advice—don't stick your neck out too far on credit. The "big boys" will lop off your head if you do!

MYSTERY IN THE NEWS...

STRANGE things are happening every day in the world. Here are some of the high-lights:

* * *

Out at Brush Creek, California, on last May 20 two gold miners were minding their own business operating their small gold mine. The mine is actually near Marble Creek where Jordan Creek empties into it. The miners, John Van Allen and John Q. Black, were naturally perturbed when a strange aerial vehicle landed on a sand bar, balanced itself on a tri-legged landing gear, and proceeded to disgorge a little man wearing what they termed a "knee-length parka." Obviously his mission was a simple one, for he merely scooped up a pail of water and handed it to a companion inside the weird aircraft.

Then, while Allen and Black watched in amazement, the little man reentered his seven-foot by four-foot discus-shaped craft and it took off, its landing gear retracting as it went.

The gold miners investigated and found that the landing gear had left marks on the sand the size of elephant tracks.

On June 20, the craft returned, went through the same routine. Miners Allen and Black, having a feeling that the visit may become a monthly affair, which is carrying

sociability too far, have asked Sheriff Fred Preston if it would be okay to blaze away at the intruders next time they drop in.

"No," said the Sheriff, "but I'll inform the Air Force."

Which will be the last we'll hear of that!

* * *

Speaking of visitors, Mrs. Hilda Walker of Houston, Texas has been visited by a bat-man. It happened on May 18. Mrs. Walker and Judy Meyer, a fourteen-year-old girl, were sitting on the porch when a huge shadow crossed the lawn. Looking up into a pecan tree, they saw the figure of a man about 6½ feet tall with wings like a bat. He was dressed in gray or black tight-fitting clothes, and he remained in the tree about 30 seconds. He was surrounded by a strange glow of yellow light. Then the light died out, and little Judy screamed. At once there was a loud "swoosh" and there was a white flash like a torpedo-shaped object over the housetops across the street. It made off like a jet.

Another witness was Howard Phillips, 33, a tool plant inspector. "I saw it," he said.

* * *

May 25, 1953, Chicago. Thomas Grace, steamfitter, was using a pneumatic drill eleven stories above the ground. Suddenly it "kicked" and threw him into the

air. Down came Thomas, an ex-paratrooper, but this time minus a parachute. He broke a rib.

* * *

Mrs. A. M. Kornahrens and Miss Shirley McAdams of Boise, Idaho saw a greenish ball of flame proceed through the sky about 9 p.m. on May 21. Their story was supported by W. H. Smith, a taxi-driver. In spite of Dr. Donald Menzel, prominent authority, the strange balls are still there!

* * *

Once again it's Kenneth Arnold, this time with "electrified rain." Says Mr. Arnold, also of Boise, "I was driving along Mountain Home highway when it began to rain. I noticed that each drop that hit the car aerial created static. Then I noticed that a group of cattle in a field were jumping here and there as if they were being shocked by the rain."

Just "minor-league" lightning, Ken. A new invention of the "explainers of things that can't be explained." Most of us just haven't noticed that "rain static" is old stuff.

Or is it? How about it, readers? Your cows been doing any jumping in the rain lately?

* * *

Don't ever tell ghost stories to a Marine! Joseph Welford Cyr, rancher about 15 miles northwest of Lancaster, California, regealed AWOL William Marion Lawson of Campbell, California with "weird stories of the supernatural" until

he "couldn't stand it anymore." So William shot and killed him and tossed the body into a well. Said the Marine, "Cyr suffered from hallucinations. He saw flying ghosts and walking corpses."

Seems to us the cure was worse than the ailment!

* * *

The August issue of *The Reader's Digest* contained a story that was rather late in coming to light, since the events around which it centers took place in the days following February 6, 1951. The event was the wreck of the Jersey-shore commuter train, The Broker, in which 85 were killed and 500 injured.

Among the injured was Robert Stout. It was a possible skull fracture, and his condition was so critical that his life was despaired of. After a few days, an emergency head operation was decided upon, the chances for success almost negligible.

At the Sunday services of the Rev. Mr. Squire, pastor for the Stout family, a moment of prayer was called, and while the congregation concentrated, the Rev. Mr. Squire solemnly requested that the healing power of God accompany them in spirit to the Perth Amboy General Hospital. "Lay your hand on Robert Stout and heal him!" prayed the Rev. Mr. Squire.

At precisely that instant Robert Stout came out of his coma, and a specialist canceled the operation as unnecessary.

The SEANCE CIRCLE . . .

Letters from the Indeed

Dear Mr. Palmer:

True now says Scully's book is not true. But I saw a picture of a "little man" between two officers, handcuffed to them. The mystery is as deep as ever. How about the "monster" in West Virginia, and the case at West Palm Beach? Lots of material for a book.

L. F. Heasley,
Dorr, Mich.

Scully still says it's true. Take your choice. As for the little man picture, we saw that too, and it's pretty much a phoney. Any good photographer can tell you why. Nobody has explained the "monster," and the case of the scoutmaster being burned by saucer people hasn't been shaken either. Certainly is a mystery! And no doubt plenty of books will be written. As a matter of fact, we are in the process of compiling one of our own!

* * *

Dear Ray:

News has reached me via the grapevine that you are planning a new magazine in the mystic field. I am anxiously waiting for the first issue, as I know, that anything you put out will be good.

Marion Gonzales,
San Francisco, Calif.

Here it is, Marion! Hope we lived up to your prediction!

Dear Ray:

I just received a letter from Walter Wiers telling of your new magazine *Mystic*. I should like to be one of your first subscribers. Please bill me for a one year subscription. If it is better than FATE, I'll be hooked for life.

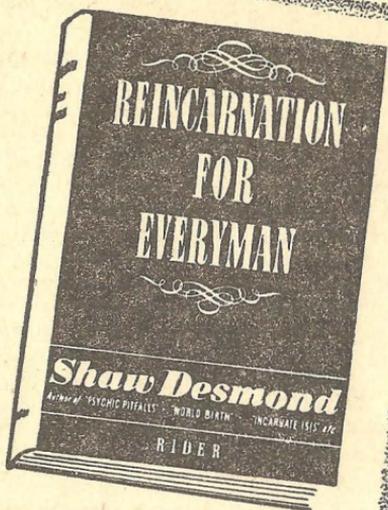
I've followed your words of wisdom since the "pre-Shaver" days. Just a silent admirer. I try to read between the lines and get your message—I get most of the ideas. You are, in your unusual way, doing a great thing for humanity—seriously. More power to you.

Carl McDougal,
Lynwood, Calif.

Walter is one of MYSTIC'S really big supporters, and we owe a lot to him. And you are our first subscriber! We certainly hope we've "hooked" you for life, as we intend to do our best. As for our "words of wisdom" you certainly flatter us. Better save that until you see how we make out!

And now, how about you readers getting in on the Circle and dropping us a line? We think this letter department can be vastly interesting, and result in some very intense discussions that will do a lot to clear the air. And it's your opportunity to help us make MYSTIC the best magazine in the field! So, write!

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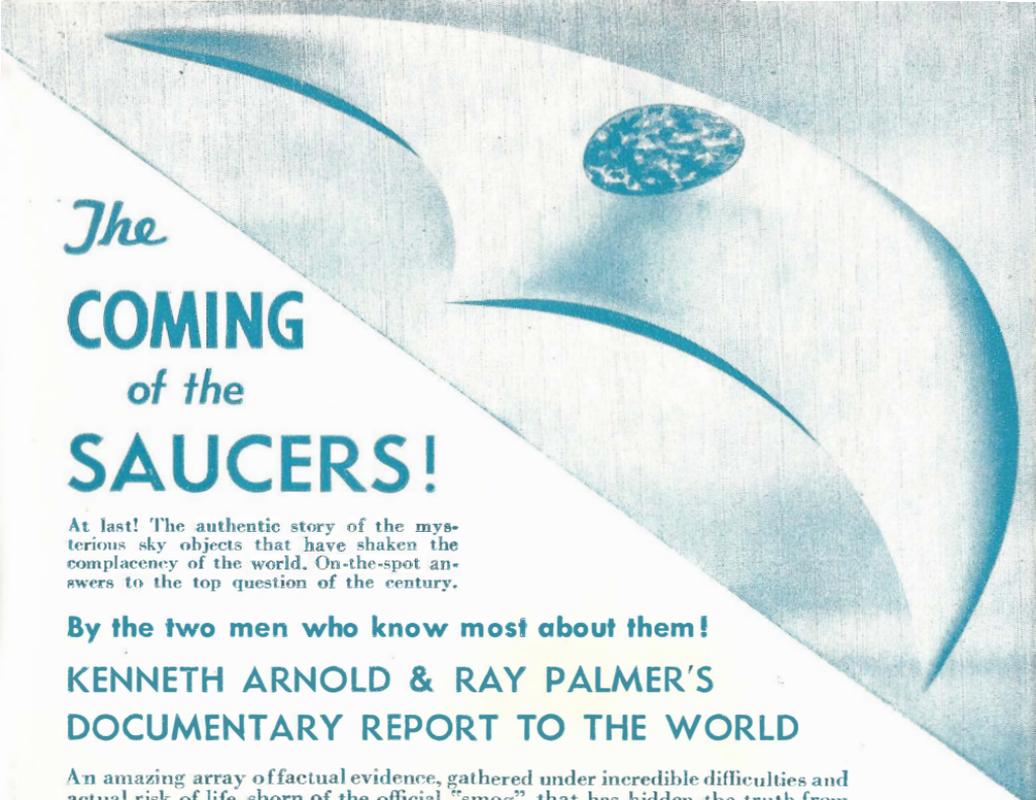
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