

SCIENCE FICTION

A vibrant, retro-style illustration of a futuristic cityscape. The city is shown from a high-angle, isometric perspective, with buildings and streets rendered in a grid-like pattern. Numerous flying cars and spaceships are depicted in motion, leaving long, white, streak-like trails behind them. The sky is a mix of yellow and blue, with a large, bright red sun dominating the right side of the frame. In the lower right, a ringed planet, similar to Saturn, is visible. The overall style is reminiscent of mid-20th-century pulp magazine covers.

**THE GOD THAT
SCIENCE MADE**

by

**LLOYD ARTHUR
ESHBACH**

also

**ED EARL REPP
RAYMOND Z. GALLUN
EDMOND HAMILTON**

**15c
AUG.**

**AN
INVAD-
ING
SUN**

the
story
behind
the
cover

by

**EANDO
BINDER**

**A BLUE RIBBON
MAGAZINE**

PAUL

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ner Gear—Brakes—Whee Alignment—Knee Action—Steering Gear—Tires—Lubricants and Lubrication—Automotive Electricity—Ignition Systems—Magneto Ignition—Spark Plugs—Ignition Coils—Distributors—Automatic Spark Control—Ignition Timing—Generators—Starters—Generator and Starter Testing—Light Systems—Storage Batteries—Charging—Battery Testing.

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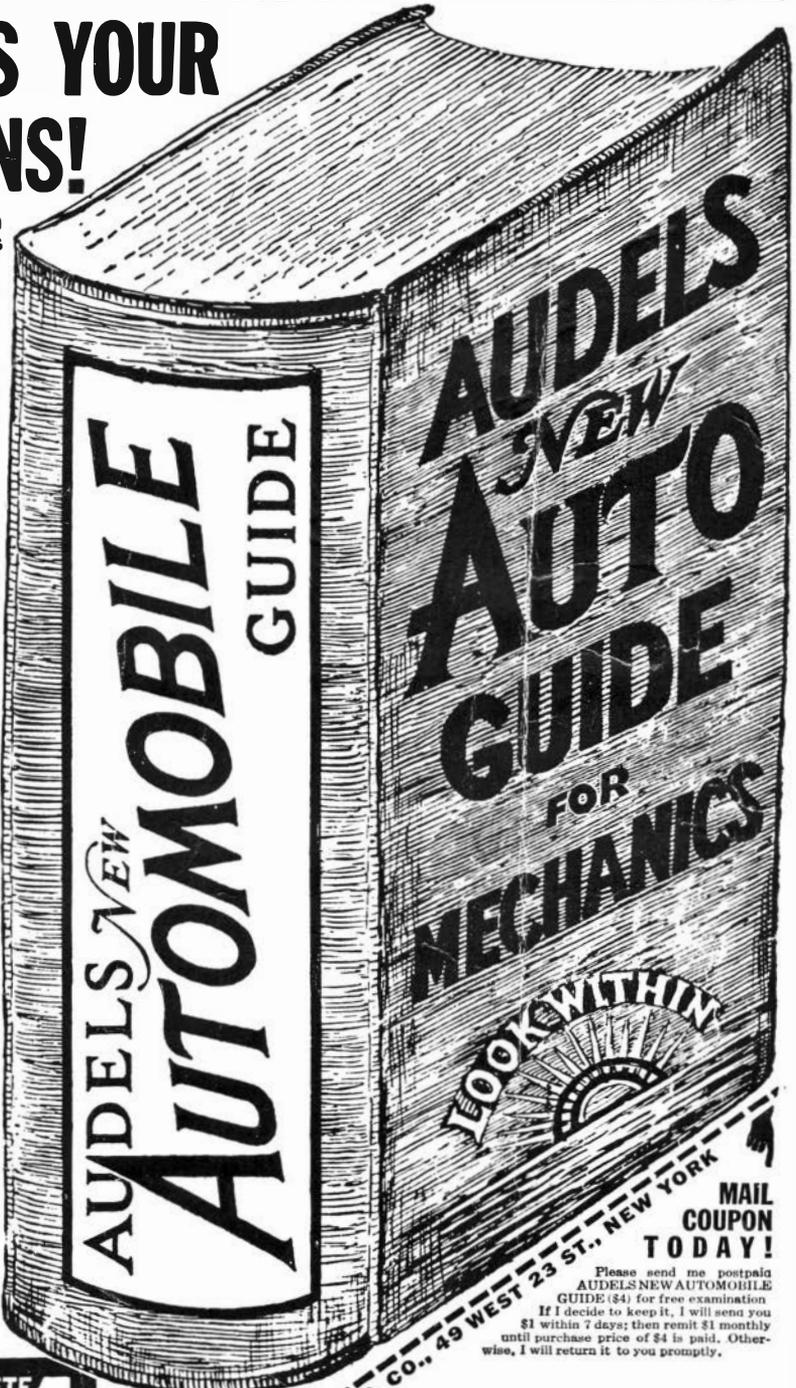
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Profits Typical of
the Young, Growing Industry

Going into this business is not like selling something offered in every grocery, drug or department store. For instance, when you take a \$7.50 order, \$5.83 can be your share. On \$1,500 worth of business, your share can be \$1,167.00. The very least you get as your part of every dollar's worth of business you do is 67 cents—on ten dollars' worth \$6.70, on a hundred dollars' worth \$67.00—in other words two thirds of every order you get is yours. Not only on the first order—but on repeat orders—and you have the opportunity of earning an even larger percentage.

This Business Has
Nothing to Do With
House to House Canvassing

Nor do you have to know anything about high-pressure selling. "Selling" is unnecessary in the ordinary sense of the word. Instead of hammering away at the customer and trying to "force" a sale, you make a dignified, business-like call, leave the installation—whatever size the customer says he will accept—at our risk, let the customer sell himself after the device is in and working. This does away with the need for pressure on the customer—it eliminates the handicap of trying to get the money before the customer has really convinced himself 100%. You simply sell what you offer, showing proof of success in that customer's particular line of business. Then leave the invention without a dollar down. It starts working at once. In a few short days, the installation should actually produce enough cash money to pay for the deal, with profits above the investment coming in at the same time. You then call back, collect your money. Nothing is so convincing as our offer to let results speak for themselves without risk to the customer! While others fail to get even a hearing, our men are making sales running into the hundreds. They have received the attention of the largest firms in the country, and sold to the smallest businesses by the thousands.

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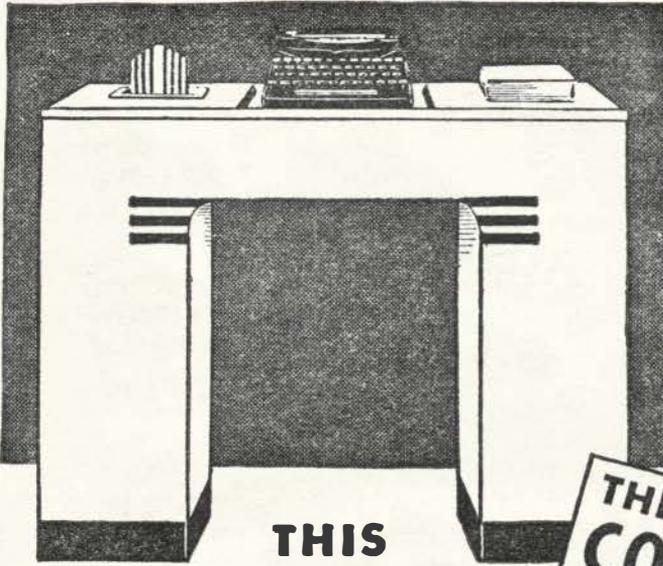
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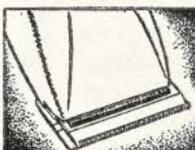
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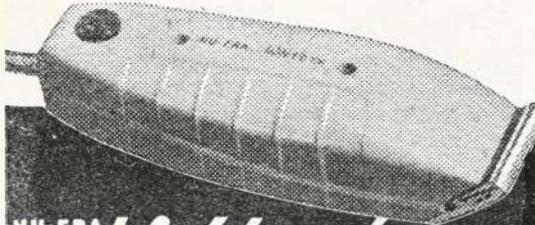
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Higher Accountancy | <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Law | <input type="checkbox"/> Business English |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Law: Degree of LL.B. | <input type="checkbox"/> Expert Bookkeeping | <input type="checkbox"/> Business Correspondence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Traffic Management | <input type="checkbox"/> C. P. A. Coaching | <input type="checkbox"/> Effective Speaking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Modern Salesmanship | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Stenotypy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Modern Foremanship | |

Name.....Age.....
Position.....Address.....





SPHINX SPACE

by ED

Raiders from the depths of the void
Drake, out to apprehend the nature of
self battling a race of creatures

*"My God!" he groaned. "They're committing
suicide!"*

CHAPTER I

MYSTERIOUS DISASTER

THROUGH critical gray eyes, Captain Luther Collins, grizzled old chief executive of the Greater American Interplanetary Lines, Inc., surveyed the neatly uniformed young officer at attention before him. Then in a tone that betrayed the despair gnawing at his soul, he spoke.

"Lieutenant Drake," he said, and his voice quivered. "I've called you here on a very important matter—

aye, a desperate situation that may lead to your death. Would you give your life to save others if called upon to do so?"

Lieutenant David Drake, United States Interplanetary Forces, Kitty Hawk Division, drew himself to his full height and flashed an amused smile at the old space adventurer.

"There's hardly a man on the force who wouldn't gladly risk his neck, sir," he said. "But why do you ask if I'm willing to offer my particular epidermis to a cause you haven't yet explained to me?"

A NOVELETTE OF SUPER-SPACE!



OF THE WAYS

EARL REPP

prey upon the space-lanes! Lieutenant the galactic gangsters, soon finds him from the annals of mythology!

For an instant there was silence as the Captain eyed him shrewdly, biting his fine old lips as if in debate. Dave studied him across the desk. The little patches under his eyes seemed to grow darker. Something troubled him desperately, he knew, and that was unusual for Captain Collins, who usually tackled his own troubles and whipped them to his own satisfaction. Now, a terrible thing seemed to have drained his strength.

"Because I know your record, son," he said finally, "and I want a

man who will stop at nothing to accomplish the impossible. I have a job to be done that is almost certain death for the man who undertakes it."

"That's mighty interesting, sir," Dave grinned eagerly. "I would volunteer in a minute if I could secure leave of absence and permission from the commander."

The muscles along Captain Collins' gaunt jaws hardened. His thin, care-worn lips parted in a ghost of a smile. In an appraising glance, his eyes again swept the tall, trim figure

of Drake, taking in his broad shoulders, powerful build, and sun-tanned fists. Dave shifted uncomfortably under the sharp appraisal.

"You really mean it, Lieutenant?" Captain Collins leaned forward hopefully.

"Certainly, sir," assured Dave. "Kitty Hawk routine has been proving rather dull. I'd like a change."

"It may mean your death," the executive reminded him.

"I've faced it before," Dave laughed. "I expect to face it again. I have no fear of death. But I doubt if Commander Blodgett would loan a government officer to a civilian enterprise."

"You came here at the request of Commander Blodgett, didn't you?" said Captain Collins slyly.

"Why, yes," replied Dave curiously. "He sent me a brief note asking me to see you at once. He did not say why, however."

He strode stiffly to a big window overlooking the expansive landing fields and hangars of the G. A. I. L. A monster interplanetary flyer, looking like a submarine, was being warped into position for a take-off into space. Men scurried around it like so many tiny ants.

Far to the left lay another ship, deserted, nose smashed, sides crushed in as if it had collided with a swarm of meteors. Sight of it gave Dave a start. He glanced inquiringly at Captain Collins.

"You saw the wreck, Lieutenant?" the executive grunted before Dave could speak.

"What smashed her up like that, sir?" Dave inquired.

Captain Collins shook his head gravely and stood up.

"We haven't the slightest idea, Drake," he said simply.

Dave stared at him incredulously.

"You mean you don't know?" he quizzed.

"Exactly!" Captain Collins snapped in agitation. "None of us know what happened to her beyond that our space flyer, the Vega, found her deserted and smashed and running in circles on the fringe of Area Z."

"What about the crew, Captain?" Dave was tense.

"Officers of the Vega reported no trace of the crew," replied the other gloomily. "Lieutenant Drake, of five of our flyers that have recently entered Area Z, that wreck out there on the field is the only thing that remains of them. Where the other four went, how they went or what happened to them, nobody knows. We have kept the news of their disappearance from the public hoping that the missing flyers would return. But we are getting desperate now and something's got to be done about them!"

LEAVING Dave speechless, Captain Collins stepped to a huge map of the skies that covered the entire wall on one side of his office. It was crossed and criss-crossed with countless narrow lines, marking hundreds of thousands of areas in space, many of them unexplored. Each area consumed, figuratively, a space of millions of square miles.

"Look here, Lieutenant," the executive invited. Dave walked quickly to his side and looked up at the great skymap. Captain Collins excitedly snatched up a long pointer. The stick quivered in his shaking hand. He pointed out a small disk which, by its location, Dave was able to recognize as the Planet Uranus.

"This is Uranus, Lieutenant," said the executive, "where the North American Mining Company has its radium mines and colonies. We have

been freighting for them for years between earth and Uranus. Area Z is over here bordering the southern side of the planet. It was here, a million miles out from Uranus that the Vega discovered the space derelict, took her in tow and brought her home, as you saw it on the field."

"But the Vega, sir," Dave gasped. "How did she happen to escape the same fate as the derelict?"

"The Vega had not entered Area Z prior to discovering the wreck," said Captain Collins. "She was returning from a flight to Neptune. On sighting the wreckage, its generators still running, the Vega swung into Area Z just long enough to investigate and take it in tow. There is something mighty strange and weird about the disappearance of the flyers, Drake. We have been in constant communication with our representatives on Uranus and they consistently report by radio-teletype that none of the five ships landed. Moreover, they report that the colonists are desperately in need of food and supplies. Something's got to be done immediately, Lieutenant!"

Dave nodded affirmatively.

"But," he said. "Couldn't the flyers have encountered meteor clusters and were wrecked?"

"No," replied the Captain. "They were a day apart and swarms of meteors large enough to sweep over such a vast space are, as you know, extremely rare, if they exist at all. There is something else, Drake. Had they encountered a meteor stream, there would have been no derelict for the Vega to find! The wreck looks as if some ray had crushed her in."

"Are you sure of that, sir?" asked Dave. "Who would gain by wrecking your ships with rays?"

Captain Collins threw up his hands in despair.

"If we only knew! If we only knew!" he almost shouted.

"And you fear dispatching another freighter to Area Z?"

"Exactly!" the executive stated flatly. "To reach the colonies on Uranus, our flyers must enter Area Z. Don't you think the loss of five ships and as many hundred men sufficient to cause us fear?"

"But what can I do about it, sir?" Dave's eyes were flashing.

"Risk your life in an attempt to solve the mystery of Area Z!" Captain Collins barked, sobering. He dropped himself into his chair and regarded Dave through narrowed eyes.

"You have done everything possible yourself to solve the riddle?" Dave strode forward.

"Yes! Everything!" the executive said. "We have a flyer stationed on Uranus for emergency. Our representatives report that the ship has searched the length and breadth of Area Z for the missing ships and found nothing—not even a trace. They have searched the planet itself looking for wreckage, but saw nothing to indicate that the ships might have crashed."

Dave looked at him silently, his eyes flashing with his eagerness to investigate the disappearance of the ships. Captain Collins lighted a cigar, chewed at it savagely for a time; then hurled it away from him in disgust.

"What do you say, Lieutenant?" he snapped at length. "Will you undertake the job of solving the mystery if I can get you a leave of absence and permission from your commander?"

"Of course, sir!" said Dave. "But why pick me out for the job?"

"On your record, Drake!" the executive barked. "I've studied it care-

fully. You did a wonderful bit of work two years ago in effecting the rescue of that government flyer in space. That's why I asked Blodgett to send you to see me."

"Thanks, sir," Dave grinned, appreciating the compliment. "Can you persuade Commander Blodgett to let me take the job?"

"Absolutely!" Captain Collins was on his feet again. "In fact, I've already received his verbal consent."

Lieutenant David Drake was pleasantly surprised.

"That's great, sir!" he breathed. "But what makes you think I might have better luck than anyone else in solving the mystery?"

"From what Blodgett told me," replied the executive, "you are a man of determination, and when you undertake to accomplish something, you stick to it until you do. That's why, young man!"

DAVE DRAKE was not accustomed to such glowing compliments and his flush betrayed it.

"Have you any plans for action, sir?" he asked.

"None whatever," said Captain Collins. "If you undertake the job, you will have to do it your own way. Every flyer in our fleet is at your service. Choose your own crew from our ranks or anywhere you like. How soon can you start?"

"As quickly as I can recruit a crew, sir," said Dave eagerly, "and arrange my temporary release from service."

"I'll take care of the leave of absence," said the executive. "Now, if I can make a suggestion . . ."

"Good!" Dave ejaculated.

"We have a new flyer, the Comet," continued Captain Collins with pride, "that has just undergone a series of successful tests. She is the fastest, most up-to-date interplanetary ship

in the skies. I suggest that you take her, Lieutenant, in your quest for the missing ships."

Dave was bubbling over with excitement. He was eager to be off on what he hoped would be the crowning adventure of his adventurous career.

"Great, sir!" he breathed. "I'll take her! Of course I do not expect her to be equipped for fighting."

"You anticipate fighting, Lieutenant?" Captain Collins arched his brows in surprise.

"I want to be prepared in case of necessity, sir," replied Dave. "One never knows what to expect out there among the outer planets. Can you have the Comet equipped and stripped for action?"

"As you command, Lieutenant," said the executive, snatching up a televiz instrument from his desk. He snapped some curt orders into the piece and faced Dave again.

"Drake," he continued, "the Comet will be ready for you within twenty-four hours. Good luck, my boy, and may Dame Fortune smile favorably upon you!"

"Thank you, sir," said Dave, taking the hand the executive extended to him. "I have one more request to make."

"Say it, young man, and it will be granted," Captain Collins smiled wanly.

"I suggest that you load an interplanetary freighter with supplies for the colonies on Uranus," said Dave quickly, "and have her ready to depart a half-hour before I take the Comet. I'll follow the freighter out of sight. If the freighter gets into difficulties in Area Z, I'll be right behind her to learn what caused the other ships to disappear. In other words, the freighter will act as a decoy to draw out any interplanetary

raiders that might be lurking in Area Z to prey on your flyers."

"A fine suggestion, Lieutenant!" agreed Captain Collins warmly. "I'll dispatch our largest flyer to the cause. She stands in the field now. Do you think raiders are at work in Area Z?"

"I suspect it, sir," said Dave, frowning. "At any rate, I intend to work on that suspicion. It gives me a lead to follow."

"Excellent!" said the Captain. "I wish you luck, sir!"

"I may need it, Captain Collins," Dave flung over his shoulder as he departed from the room.

CHAPTER II

DEADLY AREA Z

INCE beyond the earth's atmospheric envelope, Lieutenant David Drake, seated at the controls, increased the Comet's velocity in a tremendous leap. It shot forward, free of friction at last.

The Comet was a gravity ship of the very latest design, streamlined, trim and looking like a long, narrow aerie torpedo. From her sides protruded short air-foils for stability. Her entire nose was of thick, transparent crystal quartz, faceted on the outside in such a manner as to deflect the burning rays of the sun and in a way that did not hamper or blur the vision of those who stood watch.

The flyer was painted spotlessly from stem to stern with a white metallic paint to deflect the sun's terrific heat. Her hull was of cobalt steel which, when influenced by electro-magnetic waves generated by the super-high speed motors in her engine room, was able to overcome the attraction of gravity both in taking off and in landing.

A delicate arrangement of instruments in the control room made it possible for the Comet and other flyers of her class to be drawn from one planet to another by magnetic attraction. In taking off, the pilot merely had to set his course by adjusting the electro-magnometer to the gravitational pull of any planet in the Solar System.

The control room where Dave sat, personally handling the delicate instruments, was located just under the bridge. The room was a maze of levers, dials and ultra-sensitive meters. The floor under him was perforated with countless small holes. From them hissed a steady flow of fresh air from the flyer's oxygen compressors. Except for the open air-cock for the release of foul air, the Comet was absolutely airtight. The compressed oxygen served two admirable purposes. When necessary to combat the bitter cold of outer space, it was heated electrically as it left the pumps, warming the interior of the flyer and at the same time supplying the pulmonic requirements of those within it.

As Dave had requested, the Comet had been equipped quickly with regulation defense batteries that projected deadly radium rays which had been perfected for warfare as early as 1998, and he had for his chief gunner an ex-interplanetary service man who had mustered out of Kitty Hawk a year before.

Chief Gunner Barnes was an expert at interplanetary gunnery. The service had lost a valuable man when he mustered out. He was a big man, raw-boned, quick-tempered and somewhat enigmatic. Reserved, taciturn and not given to discussing his affairs with anyone, he was also one of those fortunates blessed with the capacity for sudden decision. He was

invariably courteous and agreeable, though impersonal enough to stand a good arm's length from those who sought to become intimate with him.

He had been with Dave during the eventful rescue of a disabled government flyer in space two years before, as had been several other members of his hastily recruited crew. Lieutenant Dave was not one to overlook or forget such valuable skymen and they had rallied to his call on this occasion not only because they admired the young officer, but for the adventure they saw ahead in his flight to solve the mystery of Area Z.

The Comet hummed along through black, star-studded space like a flameless rocket. Far ahead, scarcely visible to the naked eye, raced the big Uranus-bound flyer, the decoy that was to play an important and unfortunate role in solving the almost impossible riddle. A half hour ahead of its ominous convoy, it glistened when the sun struck it broadside, like a long, silver needle.

The heavens surrounding the Comet were a fathomless black. Stars, uncounted millions of them, studded the Stygian depths. The sun blazed in the black pit like a ball of burnished bronze. The earth, already small and insignificant, glowed phosphorescently far behind. As time passed, it was reduced to mere pin-point of pale, opalescent luminosity.

Barnes paced the control room deck restlessly. Aside from being an expert radium-gunner, he was a navigator of no mean ability and often paused before the charts and various navigation instruments to check the Comet's position in its approach on Area Z. The Comet had increased its speed so that she now was scarcely fifteen minutes behind the freighter.

"Area Z, one hour dead ahead,

Lieutenant," Barnes announced at length. His heavy, booming voice was made penetrating by his suppressed excitement. Dave looked up from the controls. His eyes flashed eagerly despite his weariness from loss of sleep.

"Good!" he grinned. "Maybe we'll see some action soon, Barnes!"

"You really expect it, sir?" Barnes inquired judiciously.

Before Dave could reply, a voice rang out sharply from the bridge above.

"Fire balls broad off the port stabilator! Fire balls off the port stabilator!" the man on watch droned out monotonously.

Dave stiffened. Before him on the dial panel, a tiny red light flashed intermittently, giving its ominous warning of an approaching meteor swarm. Quickly, he glanced at the distance indicator. What he read there caused him alarm. The cluster was hardly more than three minutes away and approaching at a terrific speed—and the Comet was directly in its path.

THE swarm illuminated the immediate heavens like a river of fire. The dull thunder of its approach was fast increasing to a hellish, miasmatic roar. Barnes' sun-dyed face went suddenly pale as he realized how near the Comet was to destruction—but he said nothing and watched the cluster over Dave's head, his booted feet planted firmly on the deck as if braced to meet the shock of a collision.

With deliberate calmness, Dave worked the levers in front of him. The Comet shot suddenly into an almost perpendicular dive. Thrown off the line of Uranus' gravitational pull, the flyer plunged headlong into space to escape the flaming menace.

Barnes made a desperate grab for a hand-hold to prevent himself from falling, missed, and went sliding on his back across the deck, to bash his head cruelly against the bulkhead that divided the control room and the radio-teletype compartment. Dave ventured a glance at him.

"Sorry I didn't have time to warn you, old man," he laughed. "Are you hurt?"

"Jeez, what a wallop!" Barnes shouted back, rubbing his head vigorously. "Except for a basal skull fracture and concussion, I guess I ain't hurt much!"

He sat on the deck, groaning. The Comet plunged on. Suddenly Dave thrust his face close to a speaking tube that would carry his magnified voice to every nook and cranny of the flyer, and yelled.

"Stand by for levelling out!" he ordered tersely.

He looked upward through the quartz panels. The meteor cluster was thundering away harmlessly, a long tail of vermillion flame behind it. Once again he thrust his face close to the speaking tube, his hands fixed firmly on the magnetic control levers.

"Here she goes!" he shouted. "Hold everything!"

Instantly, he pulled the levers down. As if some monster, invisible hand had reached out of space to stay its mad plunge, the Comet was almost abruptly halted. Once again she was under the gravitational influence of Uranus. For an instant, the flyer vibrated from stem to stern, her plates groaning under the terrific, invisible force that had brought her to an almost sudden stop. Then Dave pressed another series of levers and the Comet shot forward to the tune of her humming electromagnetic generators.

Blood streaming down one cheek from a gash on his scalp, Barnes stood up. Dave ordered him to the telescope to pick up the freighter. Unmindful of his wound, he peered intently into the instrument and grunted.

"Freighter is on the fringe of Area Z, sir!" he reported. "She's dead ahead fifteen minutes exact!"

Dave's lips parted in a grim, eager smile.

"Contact her!" he snapped. "Order Commander Allen to proceed slowly and with utmost caution!"

"Yes, sir," said Barnes, deserting the telescope and conveying the lieutenant's orders to the radio-teletype operator in the small compartment adjoining the control room. He returned in a moment.

"Message delivered, sir," he reported.

"Keep watch on the freighter," Dave barked. "Don't let anything in her vicinity escape your eyes, Barnes!"

Sensing the existence somewhere ahead of some malific entity that had been preying on flyers passing through Area Z, Chief Gunner Barnes again glued his eyes to the telescope. The instrument had two object glasses or eye-pieces like a pair of binoculars, but had only one tube and aperture. It was equipped with range-finders and a device that carried the object under focus to a reproduction screen on the panel in front of the pilot. But so powerful was the telescope, despite its compact smallness, that Barnes brought the freighter close enough to make out her name clearly and field of embarkation painted in the company colors across her streamlined hull.

For a brief moment, he checked the freighter's distance and position. The range-finders told him quickly

that the flyer was now twelve minutes dead ahead. The Comet had crept up on her to be closer.

"Freighter now in Area Z, Lieutenant!" Barnes said suddenly after glancing at the charts.

"See anything suspicious?" Dave inquired. He was not watching the tele-screen on the panel, but was relying solely on Barnes' reports for what lay ahead. Barnes scanned the space around the freighter, then replied.

"Not a thing, sir," he reported.

Dave yelled into the speaking tube.

"Chief Pilot Wilson!" he called tersely. He waited for a reply. Within a minute, Wilson's face appeared in a televiz panel that was arranged beside the tele-screen. He had been sleeping in his cabin. His eyes were dull and drowsy.

"Yes, sir!" he grumbled.

"Come on deck at once, Wilson," commanded Dave, "and relieve me at the controls!"

"Be right up, sir," said the pilot, stifling a yawn.

His face vanished from the screen as Barnes' voice boomed out above the hum of the ship's mechanism.

"Mysterious gray cloud off the freighter's starboard bow, sir!" he said in a surprised tone.

Then the man on the bridge sang out.

"Gray cloud off the decoy's starboard!" his voice rang through the Comet.

"Gray cloud?" Dave almost leaped from his pilot's chair.

"Yes, sir," said Barnes.

Dave studied the tele-screen for an instant. A strange, gray cloud was standing clearly in space not far from the big freighter. He looked at it through suspicious eyes.

"Clouds are out of place in this locality, Barnes!" he barked suddenly.

"I never heard of a cloud so far away from atmosphere."

"Neither have I, Lieutenant," agreed Barnes suspiciously. "What do you make of it, sir?"

Wilson, a tall, slender man of middle age, stamped up a short companionway and entered the control room. His brick-colored hair was tousled and awry and he lacked a shirt beneath his bright blue officer's jacket. He had, apparently, lost no time in getting to the control room.

"Reporting for duty, sir," he announced in a soft voice.

"Take the controls, Wilson," Dave commanded. "Remain on the set course until further orders."

"Right, sir," said Wilson. He eased himself into the chair which Dave vacated quickly. The lieutenant routed Barnes from the telescope.

FOR a full minute he studied the mysterious gray cloud. At no time in all his career as an interplanetary flier had he ever before seen or heard of a cloud in the great sea of space, nor had anyone else, for clouds do not gather where there are no air currents.

"That cloud will bear watching, Barnes!" he growled. "I've a suspicion that it is artificial. Get your crews together and stand by the ray guns for orders!"

Barnes departed quickly to carry out orders. Dave swept the freighter with the telescope for a close scrutiny. She seemed to be edging away from the mysterious gray cloud as if her commander suspected danger. The Comet was now approximately eight minutes behind her.

"Pull up to five minutes behind the freighter, Wilson!" Dave ordered.

"Right, sir!" Wilson grunted.

Dave spoke into the speaking tube beside the telescope.

"Everything set, Barnes?" his voice rang through the flyer.

"Ready for action, Lieutenant!" Barnes' voice boomed back at him through the televiz amplifiers.

"Good!" snapped Dave. "Train ray battery number one on the gray cloud. Distance five minutes exact range, vertical seven, horizontal three! Stand by to release rays!"

When he looked again into the telescope, his blood almost froze. The gray cloud was gone! Not a vestige of it remained, but in its place now floated five strange space-ships! Never before had he seen any flyers like them. He was stunned by their sudden appearance and fascinated by their abrupt strangeness.

His spine tingled as he studied them through the telescope. In shape they were like huge, gray disks floating horizontally in space. Their rims were rounded like the tires on the landing gear of an atmosphere airplane, but as transparent as the crystal quartz nose of the Comet.

In the center of each spun a flat wheel, gyroscopically. Attached to rods or tubes which extended upward to a point above the spinning wheels was a rather small red ball that flashed on and off rhythmically like a blinking light. Each flyer was equipped with such a blinking ball and try as he might, Dave could not identify their use.

Through the transparent rims, he saw forms moving about within the strange flyers. The Comet's powerful telescope brought the mystery disks almost close enough for him to make out the features of those within them.

As he watched them, his suspicions grew in leaps and bounds. He had no doubt in his mind but that he had encountered the ominous mystery of Area Z, and he was resolved

to solve it at any cost. Captain Collins was counting on him to solve the riddle. The strange flyers looked anything but peaceful. They were indeed hostile. But uncertain of the intentions of their commanders and crews, he hesitated in opening fire on them.

The ships hovered together for a moment and then suddenly broke formation. Dave studied them carefully as they began to form a half-circle. The freighter darted sharply off to the side, away from the ships. Instantly they darted after her, catching the freighter in the cradle of the half-circle and closing in. He saw the proud Uranus-bound flyer give a spurt of speed as if to escape. Then something happened so quickly that he stared wide-eyed and stunned.

Scarcely had the freighter increased her speed than a peculiar green beam of light stabbed at it from the blinking ball on one of the flying disks. Dave saw her tail twist into a jumbled mass of steel. Another beam shot out, crushing in her side plates as if some invisible pressure had caved her in. She slowed down at once. Then from another disk there stabbed a ray of a different color. It swept over the freighter like a lash.

SO VIOLENTLY weird and subtle was the strange ray that it made Dave's eyes smart. There was something unearthly, malignant about it that gave him a strange feeling that he wanted to die then and there. He felt an urge to dash from the telescope, throw open a hatch and hurl himself into space to his doom. But he struggled hard to overcome the feeling and succeeded. Sweat poured down his face. His muscles convulsed and his head reeled as he fought it off. Then the

ray vanished, but not before he saw a hatch on the side of the freighter open.

There was a rush of purple-jacketed men to the opening. Dave almost screamed when he saw them leap voluntarily into space to go hurtling, spinning to their doom.

"My God!" he groaned. "They're committing suicide!"

The raiders had betrayed no hint of having spotted the Comet. They seemed oblivious to her presence. She was a great distance behind the doomed freighter, but in several minutes she could pull up. Wilson had brought the flyer to a halt approximately five minutes away and Dave suddenly realized that to go closer, even to save the freighter and her suicidal crew, would endanger the mission of the Comet. Success of the mission, he realized, depended on his taking the raiders by surprise. Outnumbered five to one in mid-sky, he would have no chance now to engage the raiders and emerge from the fight victoriously. He was resolved to get at the root of the mystery of Area Z and decided to bide his time, following the raiders until he had his chance to destroy them and all further desire to raid flyers from the earth.

But the crew poured out of the big freighter in a steady stream. Recalling his own weird feelings while watching the malignant ray, it dawned upon him suddenly that it must have compelled the men to throw away their lives in suicide.

"Good Lord!" he gasped aloud. "It was a suicide ray! Something in the strange color of the beam must have filled the men with an unconquerable desire to die by hurling themselves into space! That's what it was, Wilson—a suicide ray!"

Wilson stared at the tele-screen

before him and said nothing. Men went hurtling into space from the freighter, singly and in numbers. Finally Dave recognized the form of Commander Allen standing alone in the hatchway. His face was white, his eyes wide with utter horror. Then he waved his arms wildly over his head like a crazy man and leaped into space. Dave watched the spinning body vanish in the distance, then he looked at the freighter. She was deserted and forlorn-looking, floating unmanned, a hopeless derelict.

Two disks swung down upon her like birds of prey. They landed on her top structure and clung there by some magnetic power. Strange forms scurried from the mystery flyers and swarmed over the derelict. Then another disk dropped down on the freighter's hull and clung there like a pilot fish to the belly of a shark. The other two flyers remained in space directly above.

Dave caught the flash of a short-wave ray as it cut open a hole in the hull of the freighter. Through it swarmed the strange raiders. His eyes dazzled like living coals as he watched, his lips curled in a snarl of hatred.

The freighter began moving forward, rapidly gaining speed. But it was not heading for Uranus now! The raiders were guiding her away from the planet which loomed in the heavens across Area Z. Dave clenched his fists and snarled an order at Wilson.

"Follow them, Wilson!" he said. "Follow them to hell and we'll get at the bottom of the raids! And when we do . . ."

He finished with a curse and saw the raiders and their huge captive swing onward. They moved forward in a closely compacted group. It

seemed to Dave that the three disks attached to her hull were towing her through the heavens. And so they were, as he soon learned, for as they swept away from the gravitational pull of Uranus, the two other disks dropped down to lend their aid in keeping the monster earth-flyer afloat in the space-sea. Then, at an amazing speed, they shot ahead.

CHAPTER III

THE CRIMSON SPHINXES

SUDDENLY, as if sensing that they were being pursued, the mystery raiders increased their speed in a headlong spurt. Dave swore and watched them through the telescope. Then a strange thing happened.

Around the doomed freighter and her fleeing captors there developed a gray cloud that swiftly whitened. Instantly the ships were hidden from view. Then the cloud changed again in a flash of yellow luminosity which suddenly vanished entirely. Lieutenant David Drake found himself into empty space! The raiders and their captive had seemingly vanished into thin air!

But he was not to be fooled into thinking that material bodies could simply vanish. He was too much of a physicist to believe that. Yet it had happened, right before his eyes. He smiled grimly, realizing that the raiders were merely hiding behind some protecting cloak that blended perfectly with the space around them.

"They've disappeared, sir!" said Wilson in amazement. He looked curiously over his shoulder at Dave.

"It's a trick!" barked Dave savagely. "They're hiding behind a screen of some kind! You've got your

instruments set on their course, haven't you?"

"Yes, sir," replied Wilson.

"Then follow on that course," Dave commanded. "They're heading somewhere, probably to a planet in outer space. They must think we'll quit following them!"

"Right, sir!"

"And don't be in a hurry!" added the lieutenant. "Keep right on at the same speed they were going when they vanished. I don't believe they'll slow up."

"If they do, sir . . ." Wilson grinned.

"Then you can kiss yourself goodbye, old man," snapped Dave. "It's up to you to keep the Comet out of a collision!"

He turned on his heels and strode quickly to the radio-teletype room.

"Send a message to Captain Collins!" he barked at the operator. "Tell him that the freighter has been captured by strange interplanetary raiders and the crew driven to death. Advise him that we are hot on the tail of the raiders and will get at the root of the mystery. Tell him we'll put an end to the raids or never return to earth! That's all!"

He waited until the the operator sent the message. In a moment he had a reply from the captain.

"Good God, Drake," it read, "Why didn't you do something to stop the raid on the freighter?"

Dave tossed the message into a wastebasket and growled at the operator.

"Tell Captain Collins," he ordered, "that the success of our mission depends on diplomacy and strategy, not upon engaging the raiders until we locate their home planet. Tell him that when we do locate them, we'll smash them on the spot! Give him my regards."

TIME dragged slowly for the tense crew of the Comet after the raiders disappeared with their captive. Dave paced the deck of the control room like a caged animal. Frequently he paused at the telescope to scan the space ahead for a chance glimpse of the hidden flyers. The mysterious raiders seemed to have been swallowed up entirely. He cursed softly to himself. His eyes, red from lack of sleep, glared determinedly.

Eventually they swept past Pluto, the outermost planet of the solar system. Its gravitational influence tugged at the Comet like an all-powerful magnet, but the pilot held her on the course taken by the raiders.

Dave realized that he and his men would soon be out of the earth's solar system entirely. No earthian man had ever ventured beyond it before, and he wondered if the Comet would hold together under the strain of a long, continued flight. He wondered if the raiders had maintained their course after capturing the freighter, or had they swung off at an angle leaving the Comet flying on a fake course?

Somehow he had a feeling that the Comet had not been observed by the raiders. She was much smaller than the freighter and the distance had been great. Perhaps the raiders' eyes were not so keen as those of the earthians, or perhaps they did not possess telescopes. He decided suddenly that the raiders had, as a matter of routine, placed their ships behind a cloak of invisibility. But where were they headed?

His tension increased as the Comet swept onward, drawn away from the Solar System by the magnetic pull of bodies in the Snake Chamber Constellations. Watches changed regularly. But Dave remained in the con-

trol room until he could no longer keep awake, then leaving Barnes in command, he sought his quarters and promptly went to sleep from sheer exhaustion of mind and body.

How long he slept he did not know, but he was awakened with difficulty by Barnes himself.

"Snap out of it, Lieutenant!" Barnes yelled at him in an excited voice.

Dave finally sat up with a jerk and rubbed his eyes.

"What's up?" he muttered sleepily.

"We're beyond the Snake Chamber Constellations, sir," said Barnes. "There's a mysterious body dead ahead."

Dave leaped from his bunk, thoroughly awake now.

"That far out?" he gasped.

"Yes, sir," grunted the gunner, "and we've sighted something that gave me the willies!"

"What?" demanded Dave, slipping into his trousers.

"Through the 'scope it looks like a floating island, sir," replied Barnes. "A flat world floating in space!"

"Bosh!" said Dave curtly. "You have got the willies, Barnes!"

"It's a fact, Lieutenant!" Barnes grimaced. "Come and see for yourself!"

They hurried to the control room. Dave went to the telescope immediately and scanned the heavens ahead. Far in front of the Comet floated a strang flat body that looked like land. So large was it that he could not see beyond, for the most distant side seemed to curl upward like the edge of a saucer. It seemed miles thick and stretched as far as he could see on either side. High above it stood four gleaming red stars that seemed to float in fixed positions as if hold-

ing the mysterious island in the skies by magnetic attraction.

As he appraised the island, Dave grew suddenly tense. He saw a brilliant flash of light somewhere above it. Then where the flash had taken place, he saw the mystery flyers with their earthian captive! They were so far away that he could barely see them, despite the super-power of the telescope. But they were landing on the flat, floating island! No doubt about it. He almost shouted in his eagerness to be at their throats.

"We've found 'em, Barnes!" he cried excitedly. "The raiders! They're landing on the island!"

Barnes breathed heavily as Dave stepped aside to permit him to look through the telescope. The gunner glued his eyes to the object glasses and peered intently at the island. After a moment he faced Dave.

"They've landed, sir," he said tensely. "What are you going to do?"

Dave's eyes narrowed.

"I'm going to investigate that island, Barnes!" he snapped. "I'm going to get at the root of the raids on Collins' freighters; then I'm going to give the raiders a dose of hell!"

"They may give us a taste of their suicide rays, sir," said Barnes with a grin.

"We've got to take the chance," said Dave fearlessly. "Man the ray guns and stand by for orders!"

Barnes stamped quickly away. In a moment Dave heard his voice coming through the amplifiers.

"All guns ready, sir!" the gunner reported grimly.

"Stand by to release rays!" snapped Dave. "We're going over the island!"

He turned to the man at the controls. Wilson had been relieved and Rankin sat in the pilot's chair like a

robot. His face was pasty; his eyes glowed with excitement.

"Take her over the island, Rankin!" commanded Dave. "Elevation one hundred thousand feet. Hold her directly over the spot where the flyers dropped. I'll see what's what down below!"

"Yes, sir," said Rankin in a tense voice.

THE Comet slipped through space like a white-mantled ghost, her powerful radium-ray guns trained on the five grounded raiders. Through the telescope, Dave saw them resting on what appeared to be solid ground. Between them lay the wrecked freighter. He cursed and swung the telescope to the right. There before his eyes lay another G. A. I. L. flyer, her sides crushed in, her nose twisted and smashed. Over it swarmed many grotesque creatures, evidently at work dismantling her. Apparently the presence of the Comet in the skies was still unknown to them, or if they were aware of it, they paid no heed to the fact.

Dave wondered if they had single-track minds or if the Comet was being lured into a trap by the disinterest of the raiders. It seemed incredible to him that they were not aware of her presence.

They were strange-looking creatures indeed. Dave recoiled at his first sight of them. At a glance they looked like so many dogs, but as he concentrated his telescope on one that lay on all fours like a reclining lion, he had the impression that he was looking upon a living sphinx.

Hurriedly and curiously, he adjusted the object glasses and brought the creature closer. He gave a perceptive start. The creature was a living sphinx, scarlet in color, head, shoulders and forearms as human as

any on earth, hind quarters like those of a lion. What astounded him beyond description was the creature's face and hair. Never in all his life had he beheld such a delicately beautiful feminine face, nor such a luxurious head of hair. It dangled down over the shoulders in flowing strands of crimson silk.

Astounded, he studied the incredible creature, then swung the telescope on another. This one likewise possessed the rare features of a goddess, but walked on all fours with the majestic grace of a carefree lioness. He discovered thereafter that all the creatures were females—female sphinxes. Not a male was in sight!

"A world of sphinxes, Rankin!" he said to the pilot. "I've always wondered where the ancient Egyptians got their idea for the sphinx. Do you think . . ."

He paused and looked squarely at Rankin. The pilot glanced up curiously.

"Do you think," Dave continued, "that these creatures could have visited the earth in the days of the Pharaohs and left such an impression that the symbol of the sphinx was adopted in reverence?"

"You've stumped me, sir," grinned Rankin. "It seems possible, though. But if they did visit the earth, why didn't they return later—during our time?"

"They might have been disappointed in the intelligence of the old Egyptians and did not think it worthwhile to return, even in later years," said Dave.

Rankin shook his head blankly and gave his attention to the controls. The Comet was almost over the flat world now and Dave studied the terrain closely. There were no villages, towns or cities to be seen and he marveled at their absence, wonder-

ing if the gargantuan creatures lived in the open.

But the Comet was getting too near the raiders now for further speculations as to their customs.

"Hold her, Rankin!" he ordered suddenly. Then he yelled into the speaking tube at Barnes. "Stand by, Barnes!" he continued. "Keep your guns on the five flyers! Give 'em hell at the first sign of hostility! We're going to land for a palaver!"

"Don't be a fool, Lieutenant!" Barnes' voice, suddenly angry, boomed through the ship.

"I'm in charge of this flyer, Mister Gunner!" Dave barked back.

"I know that, sir," replied Barnes, sobering. "But it's plumb foolishness to risk capture by landing here. Why not wipe 'em out first, then land?"

"I want to find out why they've been raiding Collins' flyers!" snapped Dave angrily. "We'll never find out if we annihilate them. We're landing, right now!"

"It's risky business, sir," insisted Barnes.

Dave swore.

"Are you yellow, Mister Gunner?" he snarled.

"Just cautious, sir," Barnes boomed back. "I'm with you, fight, run or die!"

"That's the way to talk, Barnes!" barked Dave. "I'll take a landing party for a talk with the sphinxes. You cover us with the ray guns—but don't release a ray unless necessary!"

"Yes, sir," said Barnes in a vibrant tone. "We're ready!"

Dave turned to the pilot.

"Land her, Rankin," he commanded. "Put her down vertically fifty yards from the flying disks."

Dave snatched up his ray pistol and belt from a gun-rack and called

a squad of men from below. They came up fully armed and ready for action. Dave looked them over and grunted with satisfaction. They were a determined, hard-faced lot and ready for anything.

"After landing," he ordered the pilot, "stand by to take-off on command!"

He felt a sudden jar and knew that the Comet had grounded. Expecting the raiders to start releasing their rays at the ship, he ran quickly to an airtight hatch at the side of the control cabin and pressed down a lever. Instantly the sound of compressed air hissed through the room. The hatch-door swung open with a rasp. At the head of his men, he stepped quickly out.

As if surprised at the unexpected appearance of the Comet, the crimson sphinxes stood in their tracks and gaped, lion-like tails curled up in beastly fashion. Guns ready to shoot deadly radium rays, Dave and his armed squad crouched near their flyer.

They were amazed at the earthly quality of the air on the flat world. It smelled a trifle of carbon, but was otherwise pure—and it was warm, though the four red stars above seemed too far away to shed any heat. The earth under their feet was hard and gritty, yet had no rocks larger than pebbles. These glistened underfoot like so many rubies in the weird, scarlet light of the four suns. Thin blades of crimson grass grew here and there in tufts. It was brittle and collapsed at touch.

Suddenly a beam of pale blue light shot out from the Comet's port side. Instantly one of the disk-like flyers crumpled in a mass of molten wreckage. Dave heard Barnes cursing within the Comet.

"That'll teach 'em a lesson!" the

gunner's voice rang over the terrain. "Watch your step, Lieutenant! They're a treacherous mob—I caught 'em in the act of releasing a ray! Do your stuff, sir! I got 'em covered!"

CHAPTER IV

A GRIM DUTY

THE crimson sphinxes gaped at their wrecked ship in amazement and then set up a beastly howling. Another flyer of the flat, scarlet world attempted to destroy the Comet with another ray. Barnes let loose a radium beam. The flying disk was lifted clear of the ground and fell back in a burning mass. Barnes was on the job and was taking no chances.

The sphinxes seemed utterly surprised at the deadliness of the Comet. The helplessness of their defenseless victims must have imbued them with the idea that ships entering Area Z were harmless. It appeared that they had not counted on such a display of deadliness from the Comet or any other flyer from the world beyond Uranus.

Suddenly the beautiful sphinx that Dave had observed reclining, came forward cautiously, her crimson hair dangling around her delicately crimson throat. She walked on all fours, like a lioness, her tail curled upward and twitching at the end. It was an incredible sight to see this half-human, half-beast stalking forward, shapely hands padding the gritty ground like forepaws. Despite his fascination, Dave trained his ray pistol on her and waited.

As she approached him, he strode forward a few steps to meet her. His armed squad remained behind, their eyes on the strange horde that fol-

lowed the miasmatic creature. They seemed unarmed except for the talon-like claws of their hind feet.

Coming slowly toward him, the crimson sphinx, evidently the leader of the horde, eyed Dave curiously. Then her ruby-red lips parted in a weird, beastly smile. Dave saw teeth that gave him a shock. Behind those delicate lips the sphinx had the fangs of a lion! Despite her beautiful face, he felt a strange nausea sweep over him at sight of the unsheathed fangs. He felt a sudden urge to unloose a ray and annihilate the incredible creature on the spot. But he held his fire.

Then she snarled something at him. It came in the voice of a jungle beast mixed with that of a human being. It was incomprehensible because of its inchoate animal thickness of tone, and it grated on Dave's senses like a steel file. She paused less than a dozen feet from him and dropped to the ground, her arms outstretched before her.

Dave stared at her. For a moment she made no sound. Her eyes grew suddenly beady and treacherous, but she looked like a sphinx animated with life. No earthly woman had ever possessed a more delicate, beautiful face. Her eyes were a shade redder than her crimson lips and hair. Her nose was perfectly molded and her chin had the lines of an Angelo masterpiece. But behind her crimson lips were sheathed a set of murderous fangs that he hated with a sense of horror.

"What's the idea of raiding our freighters?" he demanded thoughtlessly. Then he smiled grimly, realizing that there could be no conversation with the incredible creatures.

He crouched tensely as the crimson horde moved up around the sphinx. They began snarling like a pack of

angry lions. Dave wondered how such shapely, human-like throats could emit such beastly, hideous sounds.

He stared at them filled with misgivings at his rash impulsiveness that had brought him to land instead of wiping out these gargantuan things. From what he could see, they possessed but five flying disks, three now, after Barnes' rays had annihilated two. Apparently the destruction of the two disks had cowed the sphinxes, for beyond snarling viciously at the earthians, they made no other hostile moves.

But they were far from cowed. Dave and his intrepid companions were to learn that the female of the species, on the flat world as on earth, is more deadly than the male. Suddenly the crimson leader gave an inchoate snarl. Instantly the horde closed in on Dave and his men. The Comet was suddenly surrounded.

As though fighting a pack of savage jungle beasts, Dave and his men struggled desperately against slashing fangs, unsheathed claws and strong fingers that tore at their throats. The attack came suddenly, but Dave had expected it. It had been inevitable.

Barnes, ready for such a move, unloosed a battery of rays at the three remaining disks. They went up in smoke. The Comet's rays cut swathes in the ranks of the sphinx horde, but on they came, from out of the flat earth and apparently from all sides. Females all—crimson hair streaming over their backs as they loped forward.

REALIZING the desperate straits into which the Comet had been brought, Barnes suddenly ordered her aloft. Rankin shot her off the ground in a terrific, vertical leap. The con-

trol room door hissed shut as she went. Back and forth over the fighting, milling horde he swept the flyer, Barnes' rays wreaking a terrible havoc among the sphinxes.

Dave and his men fought in sheer desperation. The lieutenant had seen the Comet rise. His heart sank as he realized that he and his men were at least temporarily stranded on a strange flat world and at the mercy of the incredible creatures that sought to destroy them. He cursed at his own foolhardiness for having left the flyer. As he swore, rays from his pistol ploughed through the attackers, sending them to death in puffs of crimson smoke. He saw his own men go down under claws and fangs and the sheer weight of the attack. In a moment they were fighting back to back, ray pistols sending horrible vengeance into the crimson horde.

Suddenly the Comet swept by like a meteor scarcely a thousand feet overhead. Barnes' gun crews were at their deadly work. The radium rays sent clouds of crimson dust into the air. With them went red arms, legs, and beautiful scarlet heads!

Great trap-doors suddenly opened outward from the ground. Through them, as if coming from some underground domain, came a horde of flying disks. They shot upward to engage the Comet. Radium rays met them before they could scarcely leave the ground. The flat world became a bedlam. Masses of flaming metals crashed down as they shot through the traps. Sphinxes rent the tumultuous air with their death-snarls.

A ray from one of the disks struck the tail of the Comet. Dave saw her shudder from stem to stern. Her tail crumpled into a mass of twisted steel. He expected her to crash. But

she kept on, firing her rays with deadly accuracy. Barnes, once the pride of the Interplanetary Service as a gunner par-excellence, was doing his work well.

Dave felt a stinging, searing pain in his thigh as one of the enraged sphinxes slashed at him with bared fangs. His boot toe caught the pretty chin with a sickening smack. The fair demon shrieked and rolled over leaped at his throat. He jerked up his ray pistol and saw the crimson head vanish from a beastly body. The smell of burned flesh made him sick.

But he was fighting desperately for his life and he had no time for sickness. He soon forgot his nausea in the struggle to live. A ray from the Comet swept dangerously near him and his men. It cleared a wide path in front of him. He glanced up, hoping that Barnes was coming to their rescue. The Comet was dropping like a shot. His hopes soared.

"Here she comes, boys!" he yelled at his men. "Get out of the way and get ready to climb aboard!"

In a group, they ran down the cleared path, stumbling over masses of crimson flesh. The sphinx horde went after them like a pack of starving wolves. The Comet sent them scattering and Rankin brought her aground.

Dave and his men turned and raced back toward it and leaped through the open hatch. It hissed shut behind them. With a leap, the flyer rose into the air again. Rankin shot her back and forth over the milling, scrambling horde. Rays smashed into the crimson ground with deadly effect on the sphinxes. A flying disk tried to get in a suicide ray, but Barnes, ever on the alert and apparently seeing every-

where at once, was not to be caught napping. He stood beside a ray battery himself, and with his own hands on the controls, he sent the disk to destruction.

Eventually, as if commanded to disperse, the crimson horde made a mad scramble for the great trapdoors. Into them they swarmed to escape the deadly rays of the annihilator that had come upon them from space. Dave, standing on the bridge, yelled through the speaking tubes at Barnes.

"Give 'em hell, Barnes!" he shouted. "Put your rays through the traps! Blow 'em to the devil!"

But Barnes' rays were already searching out the underground domain of the sphinxes. The ground began to crumple. Smoke poured out of widening fissures. The underground domain of the raiders was being destroyed. With it had gone her flying machines. The flat world lay desolate below. The mystery of Area Z had been met and conquered. The great freighters of the Greater American Interplanetary Lines could once more ply between Earth and Uranus without fear of being raided in Area Z!

BUT why had the crimson sphinxes raided Collins' big sky freighters? Dave refused to leave the flat world until that part of the riddle had been solved.

"Cease firing, Barnes!" he ordered finally after the surface of the flat world had been cleared of all living sphinxes. He swung on Rankin and ordered the Comet down.

She landed shortly thereafter and once again Dave went out with an armed landing party. Cautiously, they approached one of the wrecked disks. The flyer had been struck a

glancing blow by one of the Comet's rays, and had been sheared in twain.

Dave studied it silently. Suddenly he heard a feeble moan coming from within. Dave's eyes flashed. The moan sounded almost human.

"One of the scarlet devils is alive in there, sir," said one of the men. "Shall I drag it out?"

"Bring her out, Martin!" said Dave. "We'll take her along back to Earth, if she's not too badly hurt."

Martin and two other men crawled into the wreckage and presently Dave heard them talking in excited tones. Then Martin hurried out.

"It's a man, sir!" he reported. "He's wedged under a girder."

"A man?" Dave gasped incredulously. "Good Lord! How did he get there?"

"It's a puzzle, sir," said Martin. "We need help to get him out."

"Give him a hand, you fellows!" Dave snapped at the others. "Bring the man out!"

He crawled in after them and helped. In a few moments they had the man out in the open. He was blood-covered. Both of his legs were crushed and mangled, but he was conscious.

"Who are you?" Dave knelt down beside him and gave him a drink of water from his flask.

The man's eyes fluttered weakly. He looked up at Dave like a man in a trance. He tried feebly to talk, but no words came from his bloody lips. Then suddenly he found his voice.

"We were trying to escape from those she-devils, sir," he said in a half whisper, "but one of your rays sent us down. I'm from the freighter Orion which was captured by the flying disks in Area Z. There were seven of us alive and we tried to get away in the flyer when we learned

someone had come to rescue us. Are the others dead?"

Dave nodded grimly.

"You were the only one alive in the disk," he said quietly. "The others are dead. We'll take you back home with us."

A prolonged sob escaped from the man's lips.

"Don't bother, sir," he gasped. "I won't last that long. I'm all smashed inside. You sure gave those devils a trimming, sir!"

"Any more of our kind in this damned place?" Dave snapped.

"There were only seven of us, sir," the man replied, growing weaker. "When the raiders jumped the Orion, they shot a strange ray at us that made us want to commit suicide by jumping into space. Seven of us were locked in a compartment by twisted steel and couldn't get out. We were brought in here and held captive by the sphinx devils."

"Did you learn why they've been raiding Collins' flyers?" Dave put to him hastily, hoping he would at last get to the bottom of the mystery.

"Yes, sir," the man mumbled. "They wanted the metal to use in building flying disks. The metals they have here are not tough enough to stand very long flights. It crumbles after certain exposures to violet rays. They wanted metal from our flyers to—"

His voice trailed into nothingness and Dave forced water between his lips. His eyes fluttered again and his lips trembled.

"They wanted metal from our flyers," the dying man gasped, "to build disks that would take them for a raid on the Earth. Seems like they once sent a flyer to Earth long ago and it never came back. They have the idea, I think, that we are holding

its crew for some reason and want to retaliate. They have no reckoning of time. They're a bad lot, sir. They kill and eat all the males after they reach a certain age. Only the finest and strongest of the males are kept alive for mating purposes."

"If they wanted the metal from our flyers," said Dave hurriedly, "why did they leave a derelict in Area Z?"

"Only two disks raided that freighter, sir," the man wheezed. "They were not strong enough to tow her here. They left her and came for help. When they returned, the freighter was gone."

Dave nodded.

"The Vega picked her up and towed her home," he said.

"The sphinxes have a big underground city, sir," the dying man struggled to pass on all the information he had gotten. "They keep their males in cages there. But don't enter the city, sir. They will annihilate you!"

"There is no more underground domain," said Dave savagely. "We wiped it out and most of the sphinxes with it!"

"Very good, sir," the man gasped thickly. He coughed a stream of blood. "Very g-o-o-d, sir-r-r" his voice dropped to a whisper and was heard no more.

His head sagged limply in Dave's arms. They dug a hole in the crimson earth and buried him and his dead companions in it. The grave was piled high with debris from the wrecked disk. Dave said a brief prayer and then ordered his men back to the Comet. To pay its respects to the dead, Dave sent the flyer twice over the grave and then ordered her homeward.

SCIENCE AND TRUTH

by DERWIN LESSER

EVERYONE who has studied science in any form knows that science itself is truth, or rather, the facts of science are truth, and the study of science is the search for truth. A thing that is true can be explained by some scientific fact—regardless of the nature of the particular truth.

In its search for truth, science has been baffled by many unexplainable mysteries. There are forces, such as "life" and "electricity," whose ultimate natures are not known, though we can observe and classify the effects of these forces.

There must be a reason and explanation for everything, and this leads us to believe that our mystification of many secrets of Nature is due to our faulty perception, or lack of perception, rather than any real insolvable mystery of the greatest scientific enigma.

Let us take a journey to Flatland. In this country, the inhabitants are made up of two dimensions only, and therefore can perceive but two dimensions, width and length. Let us suppose that a sphere passes through the range of perception of a Flatlander. What does he perceive?

We know that the Flatlander cannot appreciate a third dimension, mass, and therefore, everything appears to him as two-dimensional lines. When the sphere passes through his plane, all he sees is a tiny line that keeps getting wider, and then diminishes again, until the

line disappears and the sphere is past his plane of vision.

If we endow our Flatlander with intelligence, he will assume that spheres are lines that widen, narrow again, and disappear. He cannot imagine a third dimension, and therefore, the true nature of the sphere can never become apparent to him. The sphere we have just described is one that moved through his line of vision. Supposing that the sphere were stationary, the Flatlander would see but one steady line, and would not likely associate the moving sphere with the stationary one—thereby assuming two distinct objects, where there is really only one. We can see how a third dimension would unify his world—for he could then see that a sphere is the same object whether moving or not—but motion is a quality of the third dimension, and therefore would be as incomprehensible to the Flatlander as the third dimension itself.

Unless our Flatlander has a good imagination, he will assume that all Existence is composed of but two dimensions. We, however, know that he is wrong, because we ourselves live in a three-dimensional world. Science attempts to explain "our" world (the three-dimensional world), while philosophy delves into the nature of "the" world (more than three dimensions).

Why have we any more right to believe that the true world consists of only three dimensions, than the Flatlander has in his belief of only

two? Every "truth" of the Flatlander can be explained in two dimensions, and the mysteries that he cannot explain (such as the reasons why lines change their lengths) would be clear to him if he could perceive the third dimension. Every "truth" that we know can be explained in three dimensions, and the mysteries that we cannot explain (such as "life" and "electricity") would, logically, be clear to us if we could perceive a fourth, or fifth dimension.

Science explains things as we perceive them, but philosophy attempts to unify the sciences into an ultimate reason for all existence. Unity simplifies the Universe.

It is logical to presume that the perception of extra dimensions would indeed bring us this unity and explain the mysteries of Creation. We have seen that the third dimension would greatly unify the world of the Flatlander, and we can see by this that the perception of a fourth dimension would do the same for our world.

WE CANNOT describe this fourth dimension any more than the Flatlander could describe a third dimension. We can only as-

sume that it exists—that it must exist, beyond our realm of perception. The fourth dimension is that quality that unifies the third dimension. Perhaps there are mysteries even in this four-dimension world that require a fifth dimension for unification, but somewhere there is an ultimate world in which all things are unified and the last secret of Creation is laid bare.

Everything that we see consists of no more nor less than three dimensions—to us, a two-dimensional object is purely hypothetical, just like the one of four dimensions. Therefore, we can not perceive the true worlds as they exist on either side of us. Perhaps this four-dimensional world is co-existent with ours, but outside of our reach. To the creatures of four dimensions, we are purely hypothetical also, as they are to us—and this great breach must forever divide our separate Realms, so it seems.

But Science and Philosophy are daily uncovering new "truths," and it is always our hope that they will some day reveal the nature of this fourth dimension to us, where the great enigmas of our perception become simple truths.

The Future of Science Fiction

You who enjoy reading literature that is known as "scientifiction" are concerned, in a measure, with the future—the future of science, of mankind, and of natural forces. When you read science fiction, most of you are not particularly anxious to study the scientific details of any specific developments of the future, from a mechanical standpoint—you are interested in how the changes that are to come, both man-made and natural, will affect people, as thinking, active beings.

You get little glimpses of Tomorrow by reading science fiction. You know that many old stories have ceased to be science fiction, for their predictions have come to pass—just as many of the fantastic yarns you read today will be commonplace fact, sometime in the future.

Science fiction predicts the future—but you alone can govern the future of science fiction. You, by familiarizing your friends and acquaintances with the adventure and insight that pervades science-fiction stories, can help bring these unborn sagas to the masses of humanity—thrilling, realistic, enthralling narratives of What Is To Be!

THE MAN WHO SOLVED DEATH

by EDMOND HAMILTON

Dr. White promises his fifteen visitors—the greatest biologists in the country—that he will solve the secret of death—tonight! The success of the experiment would bring horror into the world—and the dead man's lips speak—!

A DOZEN cars had climbed the steep and twisting road that led up to the concrete residence and laboratory building on the squat mountain's summit. They were parked now in the darkness outside while in an electric-lit laboratory within, their owners, some fifteen of the country's greatest biologists and biochemists, listened to the incredible words of the man who lived and worked in this place.

He stood facing them beside a huge, complex mechanism beneath whose banks of lenses lay the naked, livid body of a man many weeks dead. The dead man had been middle-aged, but the man now standing beside him was young. Dr. Norbert White was indeed younger than any of the fellow-scientists he now faced, but his sharp aquiline face and cold blue eyes had all the assurance of an equal as he made his staggering statement.

"But Dr. White!" exclaimed Professor Ernest Durand, his gentle, elderly face a mask of perplexity. "You are surely not serious!"

"Dr. White is joking, of course," smiled a suave-looking man of forty, Dr. Leon Hansen.

"I trust that we've not been summoned here to listen to jokes," stiffly interjected a pompous-looking individual who was the world-famous cytologist, Wilson Dawkes.

Dr. White's blue eyes flashed his impatience. "I am not joking, gentlemen, and you may take my statement literally. I am going to solve death tonight!"

There was a little silence in which the gathered scientists stared first at White and then at each other.

They appeared all to be in doubt yet as to how the statement was to be taken, and as he saw this, Norbert White's eyes became contemptuous in expression.

"Let me explain to you," he said. "You gentlemen all know that two years ago I retired to this place to take up special research."

"We understood that you were engaging in some new branches of cell-study," Dawkes said.

"And so I have been," the younger scientist rejoined, "but you did not know just what those branches of study were. I have been seeking to find the causes of death and decay in living cells, and when I did find them, I applied myself to searching for a

means to counteract the process and to revivify dead, decaying cells."

EXCLAMATIONS of surprise broke from the men who heard him. "You'll not try to tell us that you've succeeded in finding such means?" asked Dawkes incredulously.

"I have," said Dr. White calmly. "I have found a way of re-kindling in the dead, disintegrating cell the complex chemical change that we call life.

"I can start that change again in a cell in which it has stopped, by means of a highly complicated combination of electro-magnetic vibrations that re-arrange the inmost atomic structure. These vibrations start life again in the dead cell and fan it swiftly into full being."

"Such a thing's impossible!" said Dr. Hansen forcefully. "Why, if you could do that to dead cells, you could revive a dead animal, a dead man even!"

"And that," was the calm answer, "is what I am going to do here tonight. I am going to use that process to bring this dead man here back to the realm of the living, to revivify him with the flame of life, before your eyes.

"Think what that means!" A sudden frenzy of uncontrollable excitement seemed to pass over the young scientist. "Think of the long ages in which thinking man has wondered about death, has sought to lift the veil of mystery that nides the beyond from our gaze.

"Is there anything beyond death? Is there? That question has rung down the ages like a heart-wrung cry of agony from all our race. Like children, we have gone generation by generation into the unknown darkness, afraid because we knew not

what awaited us. We have wondered, hoped, feared, dreamed, but we have known—nothing.

"And now at last we are going to know. Tonight I lift for all time the veil from the mystery of the ages—tonight this man who is now dead shall come back, shall have the chemical change of life again kindled in his body, and we shall hear from his lips what lies beyond!"

The stupefaction of the fifteen scientists held them silent for a moment. Then a confused uproar of exclamations came from them.

"White, you cannot mean this!" cried Professor Durand, grasping the younger man's arm. "Surely you have made some mistake in thinking you can achieve the impossible!"

Dr. White shook his head decisively. "I tell you, I can do it. And I am going to do it! That man beside me is as dead as inert matter, as you saw for yourself when you examined him. I am going to revive him."

Dr. Leon Hansen made a scornful gesture. "This is theatricalism. That man is dead and all the laws of biological science assure us that he will remain so."

"And all the laws of biological science assured me yesterday that a dead guinea pig could not be revived," Dr. White answered. "Yet I revived it!"

"It could not talk, could not tell me what it had found on the other side of death. But a man can talk! Tonight you will hear from a man's lips what it is like to be dead."

"My God, I believe he can do it!" exclaimed one of the listeners. "The thing's ghastly, unholy!"

Even Hansen's face had paled as he listened. "White, if you actually are able to do this, there are still some limits beyond which scientific

experimentation should not go—" he began.

"You, a scientist, say that!" interrupted the other scornfully. "I tell you that science, the will to know, has no limits. Why shouldn't science explore the greatest mystery of all, the mystery of what lies beyond death?"

"But there are some things that even science should leave alone—" another tried to say, and was interrupted as quickly.

"I say there are none! What science can learn, let it learn! You men do not seem to realize that here, tonight, the science of man attains its supreme height, conquers the mystery of death itself!

"Is not that enough to justify anything? Is it not enough for you, who are scientists, to know that tonight science solves once and for all the greatest problem of human existence?"

There was a dead silence, and in that silence Professor Durand came forward to the younger scientist.

He faced Dr. White steadily, his gentle, elderly face set and illuminated by determination.

"My boy," he said, "I believe that you can do this thing. I believe that, incredible as it may seem, you have the power to bring a man back from death to life and to learn from him what lies beyond death.

"But you must not do it! For if you do, you solve the greatest mystery of human existence, it is true. But what if in solving that mystery you rob the human race of hope for all time?

"What if you find that beyond death is nothing? Then you snatch away forever Mankind's vague, comforting hope of a future and better existence. You destroy overnight the world's religion, take away all hope

of a better life, all fear of retribution, and deliver the world over to a frantic, joyless paganism!"

"I believe that even that is better than ignorance," the other answered him. "No matter how terrible it may be beyond death, no matter if there is nothing at all beyond, let us at least know! Let us not continue to march into death in blind ignorance like animals into an abattoir! I am going to go on with it!"

"You are not!" Professor Durand's ordinarily gentle voice cracked like a pistol-shot.

A LONG, keen scalpel had been grasped by his hand from a nearby table and was poised a foot above White's heart.

"Norbert White, I have admired you and loved you since your brilliant boyhood," the scientist said, "but I value more than you the hope of the whole race. If you make a move to bring that corpse back to life, I will kill you."

The others were petrified into watching statues, but Dr. White smiled without fear.

"I am not altogether without foresight," he said to Durand. "I thought some of you might get religious scruples and act like this, so I had my assistants prepare for it. Look at them, please."

Professor Durand's gaze wavered to the two white-jacketed assistants at the laboratory's end. They held automatic pistols directed toward him and the other scientists.

The scalpel dropped from his nerveless hand onto the metal table of the corpse.

"You see," said White, "you have no chance of stopping me. Any one of you who tries violence will be shot down."

He turned toward the huge mech-

anism beneath which the dead man lay. "The thing takes place now. I am going to project upon this corpse the complex of vibratory forces that will rekindle life in its every cell.

"The process will consume a half hour and during that time none of you will move from your present positions, nor will you attempt in any manner whatever to interfere. You know the penalty."

He walked to a switch-board at the room's side, flung over big copper switches in quick succession.

Somewhere in the building, great motor-generators began to hum and violet flame rose slowly in a bank of glass tubes beside the switch-board.

White donned dark glasses and metal foil gloves with rapid movements. Frozenly the others watched as he inspected the corpse's position beneath the lenses, then approached the mechanism's array of controls.

He twisted, turned, pushed, rapidly and surely. A fine violet brush sprayed from the mechanism's top and dull purple light poured down from the banks of lenses onto the naked dead man.

The young scientist operated the controls now more slowly, less surely, scanning dials, reading verniers, his body hunched in tension. The light from the lenses changed from purple to red.

It passed suddenly through a half-dozen different shades, then became a marvelous down-gush of white brilliance. It bathed the naked body in a dazzling glow and the watchers shrank from it, shading their eyes with their hands.

Dr. White, satisfied, leaned forward with eyes peering intently through the dark glasses at the force-bathed body. He glanced every few moments at a minute-clock on the control-board.

The minutes were speeding past. They seemed hours to the watching scientists. The brilliance of the force from the lenses still half-blinded them, prevented them from seeing the dead man clearly. The two assistants still covered them watchfully with the pistols.

Dr. White's attitude became more tense. He leaned closer to the body of the dead man, glanced more frequently at the clock. Then his tension reached a climax and he swiftly twisted back the controls, the dials' needles dancing back, the gush of brilliant light and force from the lenses dying.

He ripped off his glasses, bent over the dead man with his face taut with expectation. The others strained breathlessly forward. The body lay there beneath the mechanism, just as before.

But was it just as before? Did a rosy glow still cling around it from the force that had played on it, or was that the ruddy glow of life in the formerly livid skin? Was that slight motion of the body caused by a quivering of the metal table, or was it—

"Great God!" said someone among the scientists in a soft, choked voice.

White spun around to them, his eyes flaming triumph. "He's breathing!" he cried. "Do you hear, he's breathing!"

The dead man's chest was rising and falling gently before their eyes. His arms and legs were twitching a little.

White called and the two assistants came running with restoratives, instruments. Frenziedly, sweating with excitement, they worked while the others stared, unable to move.

Beneath the restoratives, the dead man's face quivered slightly, his mouth opened. Little, indistinguishable sounds came from it.

His eyes opened. They were blank blue windows into emptiness, all knowledge gone from them. Then as they stared upward, remembrance began to come back into them.

Remembrance came back into them like the rush of a leaping flood, and with it came an awful amazement, a stupefaction. The dead man made clutching movements with his hand.

White, trembling with excitement, passed his arm around him and helped him to sit up upon the table.

"He's conscious!" he cried. "A moment more and he'll be able to talk! A moment more and we'll know what's on the other side!"

"White, for God's sake!" cried Hansen, his suavity all gone. "You can't—"

THE dead man was making hoarse speech-sounds, as he looked about with remembrance and with horror mounting in his eyes.

He was clutching at White and struggling to speak, his throat choked with inarticulate noises.

"Speak, man, speak!" cried the scientist. "Tell us what we want to know, what it is like out there beyond death!"

"Death — death —" The hoarse words dropped one by one from the dead man's lips. "Death—dead—I have been dead—"

"Yes, you've been dead!" cried the scientist. "And I brought you back, I've made you one of the living again!"

"You?" The wide eyes were turned upon White in an expression that was unearthly. "You—brought me back?"

"Yes, I!" exclaimed the other in accents of pride. "With this mechanism I did it, a thing the world held impossible."

"Then you—you alone—know how to bring men back?" Each hoarse

word the dead man spoke seemed to cost incalculable effort.

"I alone!" The answer held all of White's proud triumph. "And I brought you back from the dead to hear what we want to know, what the world has waited ages to learn—what is beyond death? What is it like to be dead?"

THE wide, strange eyes of the dead man did not change as they stared but the hand that had dropped to the table's side came up swiftly with the long scalpel in its grasp.

The blade drove deep into White's breast. For a single moment he stared into the dead man's face with a gaze as strange as the others. Then he slumped over, and as he did so, the "dead" man jerked the blade clear and drove it into his own heart.

The two fell almost together, lay in a heap on the floor beside the table. The scientists and the two assistants, stupefied, stared down at them for minutes before Dawkes bent tremblingly down over them.

"Dead!" he exclaimed. "God, they're both dead!"

The lips of Hansen moved as in a dream. "White brought him back from the dead to learn death's secret from him—and he killed White and himself so that no other should ever be brought back, so that that secret should never be learnt."

"But why?" another cried. "What is beyond death that he wanted kept forever secret from the world of the living?"

"We cannot know, for none of us can run that machine," said Durand. "But White knows, now."

He pointed down to the scientist's still form lying beside that of his subject. "He has done tonight what he promised, after all. He has solved death."

The Mogu of Mars

by JOHN COLERIDGE

The Mogu God lured Greer Grayson into the depths of the Martian catacombs, where dwell the hostile tribes of Mogu savages! He seeks the protection of the mighty idol, as fate lands him on an altar of death!



The idol lit up with a colorful blaze that even blinded Grayson.

CHAPTER I

THE CATACOMBS

BLAST after blast shook the ship as the fore-rockets retarded speed. Greer Grayson landed his space-ship on Mars

after fighting, for three hours, the gigantic, permanent wind storms that had wrecked many previous expeditions. A combination of luck and skill brought him through safely, while in his mind had drummed the refrain: "The Mogu God!"

After twelve hours of hearty sleep

which he needed badly, he stepped out of the air-lock at the side of the ship. On his back was strapped a big knapsack loaded with food and some water. Underneath this were small batteries whose terminals connected to twin searchlights at each side of his belt. The bandolier over his shoulders held four holsters and their weapons, and the ammunition pouches were filled to capacity.

"A walking arsenal!" chuckled Greer Grayson, wondering how he looked. "But according to the last expedition, the Mogu: people are little better than savages, remnants of a once-civilized race that lived on the surface, in bygone ages. Degenerate people are always blood-thirsty."

A hearty gust of wind bowled him off his feet as soon as he let go of the bars beside the air-lock. Spluttering and cursing, he lifted himself to hands and knees and grasped the bars again. He stood there for a while, letting his lungs accustom themselves to the thinner air. Red dust whipped into his face and eyes.

Leaning against the wind, he trudged over the desert wastes, more bleak than the steppes of Siberia. The sky was a total loss, being a thick blanket of dull scarlet dust through which the rising sun barely stabbed with a few dim rays. A gloomy, storm-tossed world up here on the surface, thought Grayson.

Reaching the cave-mouth near which he had landed, he entered and followed its course downward, glad to be out of the dust storm. When the dim glow of the outer regions no longer illumined his surroundings, he switched on the twin lights. It was cold in the caves, as Grayson could feel on his face and hands, but his body was well protected by woolen underwear and the leather suit

that covered him from neck to foot.

As Grayson slowly advanced deeper into the bowels of Mars, he reviewed all he knew of the planet, that he had learned from the men who had been here two years before during the last opposition. There was no life on the surface—it was impossible to face the raging red dust that had conquered the upper regions. There was life, however, underground—rational as well as purely animal. The origin of the underground caverns was as yet a mystery, but they were reputed to honeycomb the planet to an unknown depth.

In these cold, dark caverns lived a variety of plant and animal life. There were also underground rivers that came from the polar-ice and flowed windingly among the labyrinths. Then most important of all, there were the Mogu—semi-intelligent creatures who lived a simple savage life, never knowing what the sun was. The last expedition had reported seeing some of the surface ruins mentioned by earlier explorers, and it was their belief that the Mogu were the degenerate descendants of the civilization that had once flourished in the sun.

But Greer Grayson was not particularly interested in such things. The Mogu God—that was the important thing to him. The previous explorers had penetrated the underground cave system and come upon a tribe of the Mogu who seemed to exercise a superiority over the other tribes by virtue of their possession of the Mogu God. It was an idol made of solid diamond, a full two feet high, as each of the explorers had solemnly sworn! As far as they were able to find out in the short time they sojourned underground, that idol was the universal god of all the

Martians, and its temple had become a veritable Mecca, where all came to worship.

GRAYSON stepped along lightly, for despite the paraphernalia he carried, he was lighter than his stripped weight on Earth, in the feeble gravity of Mars. He breathed deeply of the thin and cold air and dreamed of the day when he would have the Mogu God for his own. But his dreams faded out as he suddenly realized the problem facing him. He had yet to find the temple of the diamond idol. All the explorers had been able to tell him about its location was that it was in the south temperate zone, analogous to the Earth zone. The red dust on the surface had prevented any success in map making, and the subterranean catacombs defied all attempts at orientation.

Grayson's plans were simple, under the circumstances. He would locate some of the Mogu and attempt to communicate with them to find out, if possible, where the temple was located.

Up ahead in the glare of the twin lights appeared a cross-corridor. Grayson stopped and peered down each passageway in turn. One looked as good as the other. He extracted, from the front pouch of his belt, a small bottle filled with a glowing material. He pressed it against the rock wall of the cavern he had traversed. The plunger jabbed inward and squeezed out a thin stream of radium paint. Grayson stepped away and surveyed the cross he had made.

"That's that," he said. "Now I can find my way back when I get the idol."

Before he went on, he swung the

knapsack off his back, extracted a canteen of water and a short length of hard sausage. Emptying the canteen thirstily, he hung it on the belt and proceeded on his way, munching the sausage with the relish born of hunger.

At the next cross corridor he again painted his glowing cross, then whirled suddenly at the suggestion of a sound behind him. A lumbering dark shape careened past his shoulder as he side-stepped and a lashing claw scratched at his leathern coat.

Grayson swung about, needle-gun in hand, and sent three messengers of death at the creature as it leaped at him again in utter silence. The animal sank lifeless at his feet, killed by the touch of Sinol poison with which the needles were impregnated.

He thrust the needle-gun back into its holster and let the full glare of the lights fall on the creature. He gasped at the sight and shuddered. It seemed to be half serpentine and half seal, for it had flippers at the back of its long, thin body, which was covered with scales. Its head was particularly repulsive, being large and crocodile-like.

Grayson went on more warily. Next time he might not be so lucky and get mangled if he left himself open to attack. He hugged one cave wall as he advanced and looked back periodically. In his hand he carried a pistol with its usual explosive bullets. It worked quicker than the needle gun as a death-dealing weapon, but at the same time it was a dangerous instrument in such close quarters. The exploding bullet, striking a nearby wall, might fling deadly chips at him. However, he decided to carry it in view of the fact that attack could come so swiftly in these stygian depths.

CHAPTER II

THE CAVE PEOPLE

PROCEEDING in this way, Greer Grayson advanced many uncounted miles into the labyrinths of Mars. There was utter silence; a lack of sound that reminded him of the harrowing six days aboard the tomb-like space ship when even the squeaking of a cricket would have been welcome. As he rounded each bend he peered eagerly ahead, hoping to see some of the Mogu. But they were strangely absent. Only dark, slinking shapes scurried around the fringes of the light beams, attesting the abundance of animal life in the mysterious corridors.

Suddenly a thunderous booming reverberated all about the adventurer. In alarm he stopped and backed against a wall, drawing another pistol, for he had no idea what the stentorian noise might betoken.

In pulsing cadence, the dull drumming continued, seeming to vibrate in the walls surrounding him. A hasty surmise that some of the underground caverns were collapsing proved untenable because of the regularity of the beat. It sounded more like huge drums giving forth human-made notes.

The din, pounding into his ears ceaselessly, and intensified by the restricted surroundings, soon became obnoxious to Grayson.

"Damn you, stop that blasted thing!" he screamed down the corridor finally in maddened exasperation.

Then, surprisingly, it stopped, but for many seconds the echos continued to roll about, dying gradually into silence.

A number of vague theories as to the origin of the noise revolved through Grayson's mind as he continued his way once again in silence. Were the Mogu trying to scare him away? Was it their battle signal? Or perhaps (which was more likely) they knew nothing of Greer's presence and the drumming had some strange significance in their lives. On the other hand, could it merely have been a natural phenomenon, some upheaval of the interior of the planet? One thing Grayson knew positively was that the men who had been here before had not heard the drums; at least, they had not mentioned it.

But other things crowded out these conjectures as the adventurer toiled deeper and deeper into the caves of Mars. He came upon a phosphorescent underground river and decided to follow its winding course, on the chance that it might lead to some Mogu living center. For hours he tramped along the bank, careful to blaze his radium cross wherever there were two or more branches to follow.

Suddenly Grayson's pulse quickened as he saw before him, in a large level space, the smoldering remains of a fire. There were just a few dull coals buried in a heap of ashes, but to the adventurer, they meant much more. The Mogu had been here recently! He remembered that the previous explorers had mentioned the use of fire by the Martians, thus elevating them to at least the Stone Age level of advancement.

It was while he was tramping the river bank a little later that a form outlined a brief moment in his twin beams, then vanished with an arm flung before its eyes. A Mogu! The figure had been distinctly humanlike. Were there more ahead?

Grayson peered steadily along the

bank, with his lights off. In the dim, glow-revealed distance, he saw a group of shadowed figures. With a grunt of satisfaction, the Earthman strode toward them. Lights still extinguished, lest he scare them, he came close.

It seemed to be a hunting party, for there were some twenty of them, all carrying short spears which seemed to be their only weapon. Across the backs of some of them were hung the furry and scaly bodies of dead animals. They were naked except for crude thongs about their hips and shoulders.

Grayson checked the previous expedition's description of them as the nearing figures became revealed in the reflected glow of the luminous river. Short and thick-set creatures, they were, with almost globular heads bearing large elf-like ears, big owl eyes, and triangular mouths set with long curved teeth. Their heads swayed like top-heavy flowers on swan necks. From below each of the short arms extended a long whiplike tentacle which undulated about them like the feelers of an ant. From the hips down they were almost human, except for the feet, which were padded and untoed.

"No beauties!" muttered Grayson to himself.

He had his plans made as to how to accost them without precipitating battle. He stepped out in full view of the Mogu, when they were yet a ways away, out of range of a spear unless it were thrown by an exceedingly powerful arm. His lights were off, for he knew they would be blinded by its radiance.

The oncoming party spied him immediately, and stopped as one, all eyes riveted in his direction. Several spears came up but remained in hand.

OBVIOUSLY, the Mogu were awaiting Grayson's first move, ready to battle or run at a moment's notice. Then he moved toward them slowly with one arm empty and aloft. The Martians shuffled their feet a little, and the timid ones backed away—but one of them stood his ground, spear aiming for Grayson's chest.

He felt a cold chill down his spine. With those lights of his off, not blinding them, no doubt their aim would be accurate. One little slip and he would be a pin-cushion bristling with spears.

But his very confidence withheld the weapons of the Mogu, for obviously the stranger came without harmful intent. He paused ten feet from the foremost Martian and bowed his head slightly, hoping they would recognize the salutation.

Apparently the head Mogu did, for he dropped his spear and also inclined his head. Then he straightened up and seemed to question Grayson's presence. The other Mogu stood silent and motionless, watching the tableau with unblinking eyes.

The adventurer thought rapidly. He must somehow get in contact with these people and find out where the Mogu Idol temple was. That was his sole and solitary purpose on Mars. He was no scientist. Let others catalogue data on Martian life.

He thought of trying some sort of sign language, but realized how hard it would be. It was one thing to use sign language with unlettered natives of Earth who at least knew what a white man was, and quite another to attempt to converse with creatures that knew nothing even of the sun. In other words, there was no common basis of comparison.

But this much Grayson could do: Get these Mogu to lead him to their headquarters where perhaps their

leader or headman would be intelligent enough to grasp something of his meaning. The Earthman pointed in the direction the hunters had been going, then pointed to himself and moved his legs as though walking. Then he pointed to the nearby group of Mogu and swept an arm to show they should go on.

For a long moment the Martian remained standing without apparent recognition of the pantomime but finally he broke his trance, muttered a few rapid syllables to his men, and marched forward. Greer, greatly relieved, fell in step beside him.

In back the other Mogu began to murmur and converse, and the Earthman wondered, sometimes fearfully, if they were talking over plans to stick a spear in his back. After a time the leader branched away from the river and marched into a dark corridor at right angles to it. At Grayson's touch on his arm, he winced and flung up his spear. Behind the other Mogu also stopped on guard. But the Earthman calmly took out his radum bottle and smeared his flaming cross.

Then they went on, although Grayson noticed the head Martian craning his neck backward till the bend in the passageway hid the glowing cross. As they passed beyond the light cast by the luminous river, Grayson found himself in total darkness. Without thinking, he threw on the light beams. A howl arose that turned his heart cold and next moment he was alone, with the incredibly fleet Mogu vanishing in back of him.

Cursing the luck, Greer dashed down the passageway after several of the Martians. He glimpsed them at times ahead and once a spear landed at his feet. After many minutes of such running while he had

all he could do to keep them in sight, clumsily packed up as he was, they disappeared from view entirely.

Exhausted, Grayson stopped, wondering how he could ever contact such easily-frightened people. He'd have to locate one of their cities, or living centers. But right now, he found himself hungry and tired. On the bank of the river, he extracted from his pack several articles of food, including sausage and biscuit, and washed down the welcome nourishment with the sour waters of the stream. Finding a little alcove to his liking, he reposed himself in sleep.

He jumped to wakefulness, jerking out his pistols, as his slumber was rudely disturbed by the throbbing bedlam of drumming walls, tingling the very marrow of his bones. Again he found no sign of attacking creatures and concluded that the noise had nothing to do with him at all.

Looking at his wrist watch, he saw that he had slept ten hours. That was enough for him, and he left his temporary bedroom, thoughts filled with curiosity about the strange drumming that he had heard twice already. Then another thought struck him.

He pulled a small compass from his belt-pouch and took note of the direction the needle pointed. The previous expedition had determined that Mars had magnetic poles very nearly coinciding with the axial poles. With this aid, Grayson could at least follow a more or less straight course to eliminate the wastefulness of a possible circular trek.

"Small help," muttered the adventurer. "I know where north is but I don't know in which direction the Mogu Temple of the Idol is!"

But he stolidly plodded onward, confident that sooner or later he

would fall upon some clue that would lead him to the coveted diamond idol that had figured in many of his waking thoughts and dreams.

He made a practice of tramping some twenty hours, then sleeping eight or ten. For three sleeping periods he went on and on, cutting north-east, for he figured that having landed rather near the south pole and in the late morning, it would be most logical to find the Mogu Temple to the north-east. Back on Earth, Grayson had been greatly dissatisfied with those indefinite items of latitude and longitude given him by the previous explorers, but could do nothing about it, for they had been absolutely unable (as he had been forced to admit was natural) to measure by the sun, as it was invisible through the red dust that covered the windy planet like an impenetrable blanket.

Greer Grayson made a strange discovery during those days he steadily pushed his way north-east. The drumming noise occurred exactly every 24 hours and 37 minutes and lasted each time exactly 23 seconds. He immediately recognized in this the period of rotation of the planet on its axis. His suspicions that they were man-made notes, or rather Martian-made, were confirmed. He noticed too that each time he heard the ungodly racket, it seemed a bit louder and more aggravating, but he attributed this to his imagination and cumulative exasperation.

In this long stretch of travel, he came upon no signs of the Mogu except a few long-dead ash heaps. He began to surmise that the Martians were not a numerous race and that only by coincidence had he struck that first hunting party when he had hardly gone a few dozen miles.

CHAPTER III

KOLOKO

IT WAS after the fourth sleeping period that Grayson came upon more of the Mogu—three hunters with their shoulders loaded. He followed them, silently and with his lights out, as they traversed one bank of the river. Grayson wondered what he would do if they branched away into the dark passageways, but fortunately the river led directly to their "City," eliminating that detail.

From the top of a roughened slope, Grayson's eyes wandered to take in the lay of the "city." He blinked as he made out by close observation that their little huts, woven from vines, apparently, hung off the rock floor at about the height of a Mogu, five feet, being attached to the high cavern ceiling by thick strands of some tough plant. Scattered around on the floor space were heaps of things the Earthman could not define, and also a dozen dull-flamed fires. By the looks of the place, they were approximately at the Australian Bushman level of advancement.

After a long scrutiny of the sunken chamber taken up by the hanging huts, Grayson clambered down the uneven slope.

It did not take long for a horde of the Mogu to spy him and fearfully huddle in a group as he warily approached. Spears threatened him, but none was thrown as the stranger came so quietly and peaceably with arms upraised. The head man soon appeared, clothed more elaborately than any of the others, and faced him.

Grayson was pleased to notice that these Mogu, in comparison to the hunters he had first seen, were con-

siderably more refined looking. Possibly he could find out about the idol from them. At least, it was worth a try.

But Grayson had no more than started slowly gesturing when the booming of the drums burst through the cavern. At the first throb, the Martians, to the man, plopped to the ground on their stomachs and remained in that abject attitude with heads in the dirt for the full period of the drumming.

Grayson noticed one thing, even in his astonishment—that all the Mogu had thrown themselves down with their bodies pointing in one certain direction! As the drums went on, beat by beat, the Mogu lay as dead, only their twitching tentacles betokening life.

The Earthman ran through a series of speculations cut short by what next transpired. As the last throb echoed to diminuendo, the Martians struggled to their feet. The head man suddenly fastened his eyes on Grayson; then quite as suddenly barked a few terse words.

Grayson saw a hundred spears flash upward, saw a hundred arms draw back for the toss, heard a hundred throats hurl a threat of death. But when the spears shot toward him, he was not there.

He had not been an adventurer most of his life without becoming an epitome of quick-thinking and rapidity of action. A turbulent life had trained his brain and body to hair-trigger emergency. In the short time that the head man had barked the order and the spears had been drawn back, his nimble mind worked to save his life which was forfeit to judge by the fierce looks of the Mogu as they prepared to toss their weapons.

None of the spears had touched him for the reason that he had leaped

sideward where none of the Martians were stationed. His quick eyes saw his salvation in a trice. There a few feet away hung one of the thatched huts. He dashed behind it, jumped up and clung to the vines that made up its wall. He heard the thud of spears on the other side as the Mogu threw a fraction of a second too late.

His next lightning move took the Martians by complete surprise. He dropped his feet to the ground, still clinging to the vines, took a run and again huddled behind its walls. Like a huge pendulum, the hut swung in a big arc, bearing the Earthman as a bob. Spear after spear flashed to him, but the spearsmen seemed to be unnerved by the moving target.

What Grayson did next would probably go down in the folk-lore of what tribe of Mogu for centuries to come. Like an arboreal creature of the squirrel or monkey variety, the Earthman leaped from his swinging perch to another hut and from thence to another and another, completely bewildering the slow-witted Mogu.

Grayson chuckled aloud as the crisis was over and jumped from the last hut to the ground and thence up the slope to the safety of the upper reaches. As the Mogu dashed after him, he fell into a small rage.

“Why you blasted hell-hounds!” he bellowed. “Tried to kill me and still not satisfied! Take this and this and this . . .”

SUITING the action to the word, he sent bullet after bullet downward. But he did not aim at the men. He aimed for the rocks nearby and as a hail of chips flew from the impacts, raining upon the Martians, and as the thunderous noise of the explosive reverberated through the cavern, the Mogu lost their zest and

spirit and ran howling back to their huts.

Grayson looked at the "city" as he stuck his pistol back into its holster and laughed long and loudly. Not a soul was in sight.

"They're in their huts, shivering in mortal fear!" he hazarded as he took the first corridor away from the spot.

But now he felt an immense burden lifted from his mind. He now saw the important significance of the drums. They were nothing more than a call to worship. It was Mohammedism of a sort with Mecca, prostrate worship, and all, only still more systematized. The Earthman was reasonably sure that the direction in which their bodies pointed would run in a line with the diamond idol which they worshipped. His quick eyes had determined that direction before he left the community. Being parallel with the river, it was therefore almost due north.

Any doubts he had as to this supposition were utterly scattered; the drumming increased in intensity each time he heard it after that as he ran a course to the north. Three more sleeping periods and the noise evolved into a terrific thunder that caused him to stop his ears with his hands to keep out some of the volume. But it vibrated into his bones from the rock floor and it was all he could do to keep from screaming in agony during those long seconds that it pounded out its rhythmic stroke. He wondered how the Martians ever stood it, every day of their lives.

"Oh, well," he philosophized aloud. "I suppose it's a matter of custom and habit. On Earth if you live near a steel center you're worse off than these Mogu!"

The population seemed to center around that spot he was directing his

footsteps toward, for he came upon several tribes of the Mogu. These he avoided by using flanking channels around them as he had no more reason to have anything to do with them. Some few of the Mogu that he met in the corridors he scared away with his powerful searchlights, sending the beams into their eyes. A people that can see in the dark as it seemed to Grayson that they could, would naturally be totally blinded by bright lights. Later, more methodical explorers were to explain that "seeing in the dark" as the extreme sensitiveness of the Mogu eye so that it was able to utilize the faint glow of the radioactive walls which were universal on Mars; a glow that to Earthly eyes was absolute Stygian darkness.

Finally, one day, as he crouched behind a rock in shadow, a party of a score of Mogu sauntered by, three of which were clothed in a manner that elevated them to rank of nobility, priesthood, or some analogous caste. They flaunted gaudy robes of silken sheen, patchworked with bright colors of every hue. Their long tentacles bore little wristbands of shining metal for their full length so that they hung limp with the weight. On their heads they wore caps of long thin spikes of some woody composition, a popular adornment for those in authority, decided Grayson as he had noticed it many times before worn by chiefs of tribes. All the other Mogu were scantily clad and carried spears, being an obvious guard.

On the spur of the moment, Grayson decided to follow the party although its course deviated from the route he had been traversing. He was glad he did sometime later as they disappeared from view, descending to a lower level. He stepped up

to the rock rim and looked down into the chamber.

It was truly a cyclopean cavern, larger than any he had seen before. He saw the usual hanging thatched huts, noticed that two rivers intersected exactly in the middle of the floor, and made out the vague forms of a great number of Mogu. Then he caught his breath and grunted in satisfaction.

On a tall, pyramided structure whose details were obscured in the dimness, reposed something that gleamed like a fiery jewel, reflecting the luminosity of the rivers with manifold intensity.

"The Mogu God!" whispered Grayson in awe. "The Mogu God . . ."

Beyond a doubt it was that. Evidence was not lacking that this was the center of civilization, such as it was, of Mars. He saw the different details that had been described by the previous expedition: the shapes of monuments, boats and rafts on the rivers (the first marine devices he had seen on Mars), and the stone mansion at the intersection, the "palace" of the "king."

This then was the Temple of the Mogu God, the Mecca of Mars, the center of intelligent life much as Rome had been in ancient times, or as Alexandria had been before that. Grayson drank in the view eagerly, but his darting eyes seemed drawn by some magnetic force to the pinnacle of the pyramid, to its blazing apex.

There it was before his eyes, the object that had been the cause of a large expenditure of money, or a trying trip through space, of a fierce resolve to unwind the labyrinths and extract the priceless core. His for the taking! But was it? There down below was a legion of half-savage Mogu, probably willing to lay down their lives in the cause of their God,

for Grayson knew of the religious tenacity of the aboriginal mind. For a non-believer to so much as touch the object, thus defiling it in their fanatical eyes, would probably demand swift death.

But he was not the man to make elaborate plans before knowing something definite on which to base them. His temperament called for directness and simplicity. However, he decided to enter the community later. First he would sleep and eat. He soon found a small grotto a mile or so away and closed his eyes after lurching on his usual fare.

When he awoke, his hand darted to his belt and flashed up with a pistol, for a group of Mogu stood quite near, eyeing him and conversing excitedly. They noticed his quick draw and backed away, those carrying spears balancing them between tentacle and hand in throwing position. But as the Earthman remained on guard in this way for a moment, hardly knowing what to do under the crucial circumstances, one of the Martians, adorned with furs and spikes, advanced with both hands outspread in peaceful attitude.

Grayson pocketed his pistol and arose to his feet, also spreading his empty hands. The spears dropped.

The Martian, displaying a degree of initiative that Grayson could hardly credit, signified with gestures that he should accompany them. Wondering whether they considered him prisoner or guest, the adventurer nodded his head and fell in step with them as they moved along the river bank.

Just before they came to the cavern city, another party approached. A youthful Martian broke ahead, clothed in gaudy material but bearing no head dress, and stopped before him.

"You Eart'man? Come from bik worrld . . . outside?" he said in broken English, much to the momentary astonishment of the adventurer.

CHAPTER IV

THE IDOL'S ALTAR!

THEN in a flash Grayson knew who he was. The members of the expedition of two years before, had confided that they had taught a smattering of English to a Mogu youth who had proved exceptionally intelligent—a throwback to the ancient days when Mars had been a flourishing world and the people had been highly intellectual. This youth now stood before him and had apparently not forgotten what he had learned.

"Yes," answered Grayson eagerly. "You are the one those Earthmen taught our language a long time ago?"

The Mogu lad, Koloko by name, nodded violently so that Grayson feared his swan-like neck would snap short.

"But you no same . . . you ot'er Eart'man . . ."

"Yes, I'm a different one," agreed the adventurer. "But you can tell your people I come in peace just like they did."

He felt just the slightest twinge of his adaptable conscience. On the face of it, he had come in peace, but his ulterior motive was not exactly virtuous. But the twinge was only momentary. One could not always be a model of righteousness, no more among savages than among highly civilized peoples.

Koloko spoke rapidly to the other Mogu and then stepped to Grayson's side.

"Come, we go to Palome Morkol . . . he want see you."

He remembered the name from hearing it on Earth. Palome (pronounced Pay-lo-mee) meant "chief," and Morkol was the name of the Martian who virtually ruled the planet, although his actual authority did not extend beyond his one community. Other communities had other chiefs, called Palom (Pay-lome) out of deference to the great Palome. The dropping of the "ee" sound at the end of the title was a shade of a drop in caste.

"How is it Palome knows I'm here?" asked Grayson curiously.

"T'ey men"—Koloko waved an arm backward—"see you many time ago. T'ey send man back to tell Palome. He send me bring you 'cause I speak you!"

Grayson smiled as he made out the somewhat garbled meaning. The other Mogu had come upon him some hours ago, sent a man back to acquaint the chief of the discovery of an Earthman such as they had seen two years before and the great Palome had sent Koloko to greet him, as he alone could speak some Earth language. He smiled because the youth so obviously glowed with pride and exultation that his chief had honored him in view of his glorious knowledge.

Grayson knew all about Koloko. The previous explorers had taken him along to the surface on their return, shown him the ship and taught him his crude but effective English. His amazing mental dexterity had surprised them no little. He illustrated the heritage of intelligence, now so sadly degenerated into barbarism and idolatry, that must once have been the glory of Mars in the dim, hoary past when it was a young world.

Grayson was taken directly before

the Palome in his "palace," the only structure the Earthman had ever seen planted on the ground on Mars. With Koloko as a very willing interpreter, a series of greetings were gone through. Then the Palome, who was dressed in glaring splendor, wanted to know Grayson's reason for his gracious visit.

He answered that he came merely to look upon their wonderful world and view their beautiful God of which he had heard from his fellow-men who had been here last.

Koloko started a bit as Grayson mentioned the idol.

"You no shoultt talk froom Great God," admonished the youth with a significant roll of his large eyes. "My people, not like." He then turned to the Palome and translated, but leaving out the reference to the idol.

At this unfortunate moment, Grayson felt the ground tremble. At the same time all the Mogu thereabouts, Palome and all, prostrated themselves on their stomachs in worship.

The drums! But strange, not a sound could the Earthman hear! Only that queer trembling of the ground. His mind struggled with that inexplicable phenomenon till the worship was over.

Then his heart skipped. The Palome's guard, consisting of a half-dozen spearmen, lifted their weapons. He gave one quick glance around and saw the futility of resistance. At the door were more guards. Outside were thousands of milling Mogu.

"Koloko!" cried the adventurer. "Ask your Palome what is wrong!"

After listening to the rapid speech of the Palome, the youth turned to him. His face was sorely troubled.

"Palome, he no like t'at you no . . . no . . ." he waved his hand to indicate lying flat.

"But why?" asked Grayson puz-

zled. "The other Earthmen that were here did not lie down either!"

"I know," agreed Koloko. "I tell Palome t'hat, but he say High Priests haff say you must; say it was sin they no do; but you must."

Greer Grayson cogitated. "Tell your Palome I'm sorry, but tell him also that if he tries anything rash, I'll blow him to bits with this gun." He slipped the pistol out and pointed it toward the Palome. By the way he drew back, the Earthman figured he knew perfectly well what it was.

Koloko turned back from his Palome again.

"He say it all right," smiled the youth. "No do harm."

* * * *

Grayson was assigned a room of the "palace" as his own, as dimly lit as any of the others by the faint light that came in through the round holes that served as windows. Before Koloko left, Grayson asked him a few questions.

"How is it the worship drums are not heard here?"

Koloko's face clouded. He looked around very carefully before he spoke.

"It is not goott to talk froom Great God. I no talk, only litt', to ot'er Eart'man froom Great God."

"Oh, come, Koloko," said Grayson scornfully. "Surely it won't hurt to tell me a little. After all, you know, my fellow Earthmen told me you were different from your people. I think so too. You're more intelligent than the rest."

KOLOKO swelled with the flattery, which, however, was more truth than poetry. He immediately exhibited another proof of his intelligence: he succumbed to the flattery.

"All right. I tell you. Drum he

no sountt here 'cause he made t'at way. He made to make sountt only far away—outside Temple. Sountt he might make Great God angry.”

Grayson thought that over. Incredible as it sounded, these aborigines seemed able to send the drumming just as they pleased: through all the labyrinths and yet to keep it from resounding in this Temple of the Idol. That called for a degree of acoustic science ne could hardly credit to the Mogu. But then, Grayson recollected, what about the log drums of natives of Earth? Their remarkable ranges and feats? The savage mind can often transcend its logical limits in isolated phenomena that seem wonders to even highly educated minds.

“Now, Koloko, tell me all about your Great God.”

What Koloko told him may be more comprehensibly condensed into the following:

Many dim ages before the Great God had descended from the Red Region and come to dwell amongst the Mogu whom He had chosen as His people. The coming of the Great God had brought peace and plenty and had empowered the Mogu to overcome their most hated and feared enemy, the Black Martians, and to drive them back to remote regions. The Great God was all powerful, indestructible, and loved His people.

But Grayson made an interpretation of his own that ran something like this: many ages before a group of daring and spirited Mogu sallied up to the surface, came upon ruins of an ancient, highly civilized city, and carried back from it the diamond figure which had, in all probability, been only an exquisite work of art to the ancients. United in spirit by the reign of the Mogu God, naturally there had been less civil

discontent and tribal warfare. That the Great God was indestructible, Grayson had no doubts himself. Solid diamond is adamant to most common destructive forces.

One thing puzzled him and he asked Koloko for more explicit information about the “Black Martians.”

The youth explained that they were a race of people similar in all ways to the Mogu, but bearing a jet black skin. In the long ago they had been so numerous and powerful that the Mogu had constantly warred with them for possession of sections of the labyrinths. With the coming of the Great God, however, the Mogu had arisen in united might and had so thoroughly beaten and decimated the Black Martians that from thence onward, they ceased to be a threat to Mogu rule. However, even to that day, wandering tribes of the enemy would fall upon some community of the Mogu and wreak havoc with their abominable bloodthirstiness.

Grayson was left to himself then, and after thinking things over without coming to any important decisions, he availed himself of the opportunity to get some sleep, putting his knapsack beside him.

He awoke to feel immediately that something was wrong. Furthermore, his legs were bound together and he was lying on his stomach. There was a faint tinge of some sickeningly odorous substance hanging in the air. He could feel also that his holsters were empty, as he lay on them.

A little later, during which time he pondered the inexplicable circumstances, a group of Mogu came in.

“Koloko! Get Koloko!” shouted Grayson. “Bring Koloko, don't you understand? Koloko!”

But the Mogu, apparently acting

under orders, heeded him not in the least, and carried him between them outside the palace.

Puffing and blowing, the Mogu carried him between two lanes of massed Mogu and somehow, Grayson divined he was being carried before the shrine of the Mogu God. There was ominousness in the very atmosphere and from the crowd came a rumble of what sounds like imprecation and revilement.

The Earthman was carried to the pyramid upon which reposed the idol and placed flat on his back in a large shallow bowl half way up the steps on one side. He thought he smelled—blood!

Practically helpless, Greer Grayson twisted his head around. He could just glimpse over the rim of the bowl the vast concourse of Mogu collected all around the Great God and its sacred altar. Then his eyes riveted to an affair above his head. He had fought against the thought up till now but he could no longer deny the evidence above him. A huge, needle pointed spearhead attached to a short shaft hung directly over his heart. It was suspended by a thong to a rude framework.

He struggled then and bellowed madly. A human sacrifice! They wanted to offer Greer Grayson as a sacrifice to a diamond idol! He shouted again and again for Koloko, but impassive hideously-painted faces stared at him blankly. As he rolled himself around to get off the altar, several of the priests, for priests they were with elaborate robes, spiked heads, and painted visages, held his arms and feet so that he could not move.

He could not have given a very clear account of the next few minutes or hours or however long time he lay there bound. All he knew

was that before the worship drums came (the priests had been awaiting that event to accomplish the sacrifice), there occurred a great hue and cry and a sudden sound of scurrying as if a horde of mice were running across tile flooring.

He listened to the sounds in bewilderment and suddenly noticed he was alone; all the priests were gone. Then a welcome face peered down at him.

CHAPTER V

THE GOD OF MARS

“**K**OLOKO! Quick, untie me! What’s happening around here?”

Hastily the Mogu youth cut the thongs with a knife and, as Grayson sat up, he spoke rapidly.

“Black Martians! They haff coom! See, offer t’ere fighting!”

At the other side of the cavern Grayson could just about make out in the shadows a large number of figures, some of which revealed a dead black skin when the light fell upon them.

When next he turned to Koloko, there was purpose in his words.

“Quick, Koloko! Where are my weapons and my belts!”

The Mogu youth led the way to a room of the palace wherein Grayson found all his possessions that had been taken from him while he had lain in a drugged stupor. Grasping Koloko’s hand, the adventurer dashed out and raced to the top of the pyramid. Koloko tried to break away.

“Come with me,” commanded Grayson, dragging him along. “I’ll need you later. Stay here beside me. I’m going to help your people!”

Kneeling, and using the diamond idol as an elbow rest, he pulled out a needle gun and opened fire. Even in the dim light and with the disadvantage of the great range, his excellent marksmanship picked off the Black Martians one by one. After the first gun was empty, he tossed a pouch of needle ammunition at Koloko's feet and rapidly showed him how to load. Caught with the fire of the moment, the youth conquered his fears of the Great God beside which they stood and loaded the gun. As Grayson had two needle guns, he was able to keep up a constant fire; Koloko loaded one while he shot with the other.

At first the contesting parties at the other side of the cavern seemed oblivious of the silent death speeding unerringly from Grayson's guns. But as Black Martians, one after another fell in rapid succession, untouched by spear or club or knife, a great fear arose in the ranks of the attackers and the besieged pressed them back toward the caverns from which they had emerged.

Most of the fighting was taking place on the slope leading up to the corridors and the black-skinned Martians tumbled down in great numbers as Grayson methodically picked them off one by one. Dismayed by the fearful carnage, the black troops retreated and the slope swelled with their numbers as those who had pressed further into the cavern ran back after finding none of their number reinforcing them. They finally formed a solid line half way up the slope and prepared for a desperate sally.

He saw the move and jerked out his pistol. Carefully aiming at a point above the line of blacks where none of the Mogu were, he opened fire. At the first sound of the thun-

der of exploding bullets and the fearful havoc amongst the black ranks, one and all, they stopped fighting.

Greer Grayson stopped fire and rose to his full height beside the diamond idol, hand pointing toward the Black Martians like he were a god himself. A cheer broke from the ranks of the Mogu and they charged upward with renewed vigor. Simultaneously the Black Martians howled in fear and fled.

The Earthman sent a few more bullets toward them and then turned to Koloko whose eyes were shining in excitement.

"You're Great God has saved the day, Koloko"—and under his breath he added—"but I'm afraid you wouldn't like it if I told you why."

When the Palome appeared at the base of the pyramid a few minutes later, followed by his ten High Priests, Koloko attempted to slink down, fearing the wrath of the priest at the sacrilege of touching the Great One. But Greer held him with a hand of iron.

At that moment the drums, those drums which were to have marked the plunge of the hanging spear into Greer's heart while he lay bound on the altar, burst forth, shaking the ground with their pulsations.

Grayson looked around as the entire populace lay flat; even Koloko had promptly thrown himself flat. The Earthman alone in that vast chamber, alone on all Mars, excepting of course the rebel Black Martians, remained standing.

THEY were kowtowing to the Great God; but they were also kowtowing to him, for was he not beside the Great God, and had not his hand sent the death to the enemy from the exact position of the diamond idol? Grayson, foolishly

enough as he reflected later, felt a grandiloquence and godlike power then as never before or after.

When the period of worship was over, the Mogu arose. The Palome Morkol looked up to Grayson and the ten High Priests looked up to him and they all seemed to be waiting to hear something from the Earthman.

He took advantage of the opportunity.

"Tell your people this, Koloko:

"Palome Morkol and all the Mogu: . . . But a while ago you were going to sacrifice me to the Great God in ignorance and stupidity, not knowing that I am an emissary of your God. The Great God sent the Black Martians here to teach you that you were wrong and that I was not to be so sacrificed. Henceforth be careful that you sin against me no more."

Grayson listened carefully to the reply that the Palome gave after conferring with the priests, as delivered by Koloko.

"Palome he sorry. Aस्त you forgive. He not know you God yourself. Now he know. He very sorry. You not angry?"

He smiled to himself and then conceived a daring plan. The Mogu God, it was there beside him. If he could play upon the superstition and religious fear of these aborigines. . . .

"Say this, Koloko:

"I'm not angry and I forgive. But now I must tell the faithful Mogu why I am here. The Great God has called me down here from above. The original home of the Great God was above in the Red Regions. He descended to the Mogu and made them his chosen people and they waxed strong and mighty under him. But now the Great God's task is

done. He wants to go back to his rightful home above. He has called me here to do that."

This was one of the rare moments in his adventurous life when things hung by a hair. He had made a bold stroke. Would the Mogu submit? Or did they have more enlightenment than that? Could they distinguish between the natural and supernatural? He fidgeted as Koloko hurled down the audacious speech.

The Palome and priests showed their astonishment. They conferred excitedly for a long time, during which time Grayson turned hot and cold alternately. If they should refuse and resent his blasphemy. . . .

Koloko delivered the answer.

"T'ey not sure you right. Want to know why you look like Earthman if you God. Want to know why Great God call you. Great God he could go away himself."

That gave Grayson a gauge by which to measure the Mogu. If they had been more intelligent, they would have defied him from the first. The fact that they arbitrated and questioned showed their inherent superstition. One thing remained to be done: drive home that fear of their Great God's wrath.

"Palome Morkol, you have sinned again. Who are you to question the motives and methods of the Great God? Look!"—he placed a hand upon the crown of the diamond idol bringing a gasp from the Mogu below—"The Great God does not blast me to death. We are as one. He is your God and I am his emissary. He sent the roaring and silent death at the Black Martians through me. Beware, the patience of your God is not infinite. He will be wrathful if you attempt to argue and will com-

mand me to blast your whole city into ashes!"

Koloko's voice trembled as he delivered this weighty ultimatum.

Then Grayson noticed something that caused his heart to leap. He drew Koloko close to him as the Palome cogitated the words.

"You told me before that periodically the Great God flashes up when he is angry to let this people know his will?"

"Yes," nodded the youth. "When Great God he want talk to Mogu, he become bright. He blind us with light. I see it with my own eyes two time."

The reason for such a remarkable thing he could little fathom at the moment. Later he was to know that in the substance of the diamond was a trace of a peculiar radio-active material that flashed forth in momentary brilliance in periods of a little over nine years.

But Greer Grayson had seen an aperture in the back of the idol, large enough for one of his lights to fit. His dark eyes glowed as he revolved a plan in his mind . . .

The answer came, and it fitted into his plans like a glove.

"Palome he say Great God shoutt give sign that you no lie."

"Tell them, Koloko, that the Great God will give a sign, but first I must pray to the God."

It was done in a few minutes. Seemingly in an attitude of prayer, on knees with head bent, he unhooked one light, stuck it in the aperture and put a finger on the button. There was just enough length of wire to reach from the batteries to the aperture.

He was confident. In all the time he had been in Palome Morkol's community, he had not once used the lights. They knew nothing about

them; did not suspect in the least what a flashlight was.

Suddenly he raised his head, swung one arm aloft drawing the attention of everybody below, and pressed his other hand down on the switch, holding it there for three seconds.

The idol lit up with a colorful blaze that even blinded Grayson. Rays of all hues sprang forth and revealed the cavern in its immensity. The apex of the pyramid became a blinding sun.

When he stood up, hastily slipping his light back on its clip, he saw the Mogu lying in worship in the dust.

Grayson chuckled; then started a bit as he remembered Koloko. The Mogu youth, to Grayson's perturbation, was standing and furthermore there was a peculiar glint in his eyes.

"By the way, Koloko," he said. "Are you willing to keep the secret?"

Koloko put a straying tentacle on the light and seemed to be thinking deeply. Then he said: "I keep secret. yes. But no keep unless you . . . you take Koloko along wit' you when leave Palome!"

Then Grayson saw that the peculiar glint in his eyes was actually a twinkle of amusement. Koloko's intellect had finally broken the last strand of superstition and fear.

"Good boy! Certainly I'll take you along!"

CHAPTER VI

FIRE OF THE GOD

TWO figures strode the corridors leading away from the community of Mogu ruled by Palome Morkol. Grayson's body was bent forward from the weight of the huge diamond idol in his knapsack. Beside him tripped

Koloko; his hand stroked the needle gun in his waist strap that Grayson had offered him in place of his less effectual spear.

Both of them were elated. Grayson's gigantic coup had worked to his full satisfaction. He had the Mogu God. Koloko was thrilled to the depths of his semi-savage heart. He was going to another world!

Koloko turned his face to the Earthman; a slight frown creased his brow.

"Only one t'ing I no like, Grreerr. I hear before we leave—t'at High Priests he bit su'picious."

"Oh, that's all right," assured the adventurer confidently. "Soon we'll be so far away they'll never find us, if they should happen to change their minds."

Greer Grayson had no compunctions about talking freely to his Mogu companion. Koloko had admitted that his belief in the idol had always been tempered with crafty, hidden doubts. Koloko was a fully converted savage.

But the Mogu's worries were to materialize before they had gotten more than twenty hours' distance away from the former Temple along the trail blazed by radium crosses.

It was while they were following a river that Koloko put up a hand, cocking his head forward.

A moment later a spear whistled toward them and struck the wall at their side. Then with a demoniac yell a group of Mogu dashed out of a side passageway, hurling spears.

Grayson switched on his lights and swung them full in their eyes. Then he grasped Koloko's arm and pulled him behind a rock ledge. When the blinded Mogu recovered and charged with wild cries, they ran into a hail of needles.

But Koloko had not used his gun.

Although he had severed connections with his people, he could not bear to harm them. Grayson did the shooting, withholding his fire when the remnants of the ambushing party lost courage and fled.

From thence on they took a new route at Koloko's suggestion. It was shorter and would lead them to the same opening by which he had entered the underground world. It was the only way to escape the vengeful Mogu as they seemed to have divined the purpose of the radium crosses and could therefore ambush them time and again. The only drawback was that the new route led through territory long dominated by the hated and bloodthirsty Black Martians. It was the lesser of two evils, with the odds almost even.

Finally they came to a chasm that Koloko had told Grayson about. It was a deep gash separating two sections of the corridors from each other. The Mogu youth pointed to the long vine that grew from the ceiling of the chamber. Across this they must swing from ledge to ledge.

Greer Grayson carefully tested the precarious swinging bridge. It was solidly rooted to the ceiling. At Koloko's urging, he swung across first, landing against the opposite wall with a thump.

When the Earthman looked back, his heart grew cold. Down the corridor which was lit up by a river flowing at its other end came a group of Mogu on the run. Somehow they had trailed them.

"Jump across!" shouted the Earthman as Koloko stood a moment petrified in fear.

Just in time, the Mogu youth grasped the vine, took a short run and swung toward him. The approaching Mogu dashed up and hurled spears at the dangling figure.

Then Grayson cursed, for just before Koloko landed in his waiting arms, a spear thudded into his back.

Blindly, madly, screaming in intense rage, Grayson emptied his one pistol of explosive bullets, threw it down and emptied the second loaded pistol at the unfortunate Mogu.

Then he carefully pulled the spear out of Koloko's body and dashed a canteen of water in his face.

"Koloko!" muttered Grayson as the lad opened his eyes. "Koloko, are you badly hurt?"

Koloko rolled his eyes in agony.

"I die, Grrayzn. Don't feel batt! Watch out . . . for . . . Black Martians!"

There was a momentary twitch of his curling tentacles; then his head jerked back.

Greer Grayson tenderly laid him flat, arose to his full height, and spoke softly:

"The Mogu God . . . I'll always remember you, Koloko, when I think of the Mogu God!"

He looked across at the hashed remains of the Mogu who had killed his friend. Only one had escaped. He counted the figures with priestly robes. Five of them. Then there was only one of them left alive, for in the first ambush, he had accounted for four priests.

"At least I've avenged you, Koloko. Nine of those High Priests who incited the Palome against us after we left are dead. Let the other one live and remember the might of the taker of the Great God!"

* * * *

Grayson did not afterward know much of what occurred from then on till he escaped Mars altogether. He had got the Mogu God all right, but he paid a price.

THE adventurer became hopelessly lost after he left Koloko's dead body lying beside the chasm. Without his crosses to guide him, the Earthman could not tell one passageway from the next. He tried to reason his course by use of the compass, but he knew how futile that method was, for the labyrinths did not all run in the same level. Some were lower, others higher toward the surface.

Then to make matters worse, the Black Martians beset him periodically, and from these encounters he carried scars of spear cuts the rest of his life. At times, too, animals attacked and his ammunition ebbed lower and lower. When his food supply gave out, he thought that was the last straw and resigned himself to his fate, although he plodded on and on in the corridors, hardly knowing whether he was where he should be or perhaps under the south pole. But fate made him pay more yet. His batteries gave out and he stumbled along in the darkness.

He had to kill game with spears that he picked up from dead Black Martians, for the bullets would blow them to bits and the needles would poison them to unfitness for human consumption. In the oases it was fairly easy to get game even for an inexperienced spear-tosser as he was. With his large supply of matches he had the comfort of being able to build fires any time he needed them.

But the diamond idol stayed in his pack. Drag him to starved weariness though it did, weight his muscles to agonizing pain, he never let it go. And betimes he took it out and watched it in the reflection of the fire over which he cooked some reptilian or aquatic creature. It was his sole comfort; only one other thing gave him great joy: the worship drums were

silent. He never heard them again.

When Grayson later figured the time spent in the labyrinths from the moment he got the idol to the time he saw daylight, he was astounded. It was no less than five Earthly weeks!

Footsore, weary, half starved, racked by constant numbing pains, bruised from bumping into unlit walls, gaunt and thin, Greer Grayson and the diamond idol wandered in the corridors of Mars and the curse of the Mogu seemed upon them.

Then came that welcome sight. Far in the distance a glowing cross!

"Saved! Saved!" screamed the sobbing man.

How he ever fought his way from the underground entrance to his ship against the raging red storm, he would never understand. But finally he woke up to find himself in the cabin as if a benign spirit had seen his suffering and had taken pity on him. But he knew that it was his powerful, subconscious will that had driven him across the wind-swept plains to the haven of the ship.

For a week he ate good food, drank sweet water, and slept soundly before he got his strength back to the point where he felt able to challenge the forces of the elements in his ship.

He fought his way through the raging dust storms, cursing the red dust violently and the wind more, and soared into the comparatively clear upper reaches of atmosphere. Eagerly he gazed at the sun, the sun that he hadn't seen now for many weary weeks.

Then he went through the routine of escaping from the gravity of Mars, a process the same as he had gone through on Earth, different only in degree.

Deep silence greeted him, in space.

But Greer Grayson was not as lonesome and exasperated by the monotony and quietness as he had been coming to Mars.

HE EXTRACTED the diamond idol from his pack, set it up at his feet and talked to it, recounting everything he had gone through just for the amusement it now afforded him.

The big emerald of the Arab Shiek, the copper amulet of ancient Babylon, the Teakwood Chinese miniature of past centuries, the nine-inch solid gold Buddha from the Lama Temple of Tibet, the silver urn of the Incas, the golden statuette of Mayan origin, the alabaster vase of Byzantium, the Roman spearhead, the jewel-encrusted headdress of an Egyptian empress—all there, what can they compare with the Mogu God of Mars—solid diamond!

"At the head of them all, you'll go!" said Grayson, nodding at the idol. "Even ahead of the Golden Buddha, for you're the idol of another world!"

Then, strange as it may seem, the nine year period of the radio-active material within the substance of the idol came to its time, and the Mogu God flared momentarily in dazzling splendor!

The Swordsman of Saturn

COMPLETE BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL

By NEIL R. JONES

in the next issue of SCIENCE FICTION

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ANGER

by CHARLES D. HORNIG

“ONE, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten!”

That's you, giving yourself opportunity of allowing your anger to cool down, so that you won't let the fist fly, or commit slander, or perpetrate some other destructive action. You count to ten because it is the conventional thing to do, because you have always been told that it is the proper thing, in order to avoid trouble. But is it?

By repressing your anger, you are undoubtedly preventing immediate, practical trouble, but the very act of repression creates a very poor psychological condition in your own mind. By counting to ten, you are not ridding yourself of your anger, but are merely storing it in your subconscious. This repression works to distort your personality, poison your nervous system, and generally cause misery and unhappiness that is rarely attributed to repression by the conscious mind.

Aaron Martin Crane, in his book on "Right and Wrong Thinking," tells us that the emotion of anger itself creates a toxic poison in the blood stream. This poison has been isolated—it is a murky, brown liquid, more deadly than many laboratory poisons. And this poison pours through your system when you are angry!

If anger is not repressed, then it must be expressed—but what a bar-

barous world this would be if everyone went around fighting each other on the slightest displeasure! We see that expression of anger would mean death to civilization, and repression brings great danger to the personality. What, then, can be done about anger, if we can neither express it nor repress it? The answer is simple:

Avoid thoughts of anger! This is as simple as it sounds. The avoidance of anger and other discordant thoughts can be accomplished merely by the determination of the subject and the understanding of his situation.

No one will doubt that a sudden occurrence can bring anger into the brain instantaneously, in a flash. You have heard the phrase, "In a flash of anger." The psychologist says that any thought that can come into the mind suddenly, can leave the mind, just as suddenly. However, once an angry thought enters the mind of a person, he is reluctant to leave it until he has either satisfied himself by expression, or a repression that leaves him with the knowledge that he has been done an injustice.

How pleasant it would be to catch that angry thought just before it sank into our mind, and replace it with a pleasant one! With never an angry thought, our lives could be nothing but one round of happiness and contentment, for our philosophy must then be, "It's great to be alive!"

This state of mind is attainable by

anyone who will make the effort.

Here's an example of how it works. When I became convinced of the logic behind this argument of the psychologists, I decided to try it for myself.

One day, when I sat home working, I determined that I would test this principle the very next time I was tempted to become angry. About three in the afternoon, something occurred that would ordinarily bring me to the point of anger.

Several times during the past few months, some of the children of the neighborhood (in a busy section of town) would gather on my back porch and raise rumpus. In the past, I had chased them from the porch in no uncertain terms, for the noise disturbed my concentration. Each time I became indignant, the emotion would carry forward into my work far past the endurance of the noise.

ON THE day of the test, I had not been thinking of the noisy children. Then I heard familiar noises on the back porch. Now this time, I did not let anger even enter my mind. Naturally, the sudden occurrence of noise on the back porch and the realization that it was being made by the neighbors' children would have to bring some thought into my mind—for every perception must be accompanied by thinking. On past occasions, the thought of annoyance had dominated my perception of this disturbance, but on the day in question, I immediately thought of how I had acted as a small child, and by paralleling the experiences of my childhood with those of the children on the back porch, the thought that entered my mind was one of pleasant reminiscence, rather than indignation. Thus, my mind was not blinded by anger at the disturbance, and I perceived it in a more

clear-minded attitude. I realized that the places to play were scarce in the neighborhood and that the children frequented the porch only occasionally, and did not make it their headquarters. I remembered how the neighbors used to chase me away, and how hard it used to be for me to find places to play, at times. With these thoughts, I created a sympathy toward these children, rather than an apathy. I found myself smiling, and half-desiring to go out onto the porch and join in the play! I returned to my work, my mind filled with pleasant thoughts of kindness toward the children. I would no longer chase happy, carefree, harmless children.

It will appear to many at this point that a person who avoids all forms of angry thought (and remember, this is not repression) would be "walked on" by those who would take unfair advantage of a docile disposition. This is not so, for the avoidance of anger does not necessitate the loss of value between Right and Wrong. A person who always does what is right, can demand that the world treat him right. As a matter of fact, this will naturally follow, most of the time—for Nature has decreed that Right begets Right just as surely as "Crime does not pay." There are cases, however, when a righteous person will be faced with malice.

If malice is unavoidable, it should be met with understanding and justice—not with a hateful attitude of "getting even" or retribution.

When logic fails and a pitched battle is the only defense, a person can fight with a desire for justice rather than retribution—in such a fashion can he defend his rights and still avoid destructive thoughts.

The widest avenue to Happiness is the avoidance of discordant thinking.

STRANGE CREATURE

by **RAYMOND Z. GALLUN**

Sabakko was a poor, dumb native of the planet Jupiter; in a rightful revenge he killed Marlin, the one man who could free that pitiful group of Earthmen from the menace of an alien jungle!



His leap covered fifteen feet—an utter impossibility for a man here on Jupiter!

SABAKKO was in a jam. It was usual for Sabakko to be in a jam; and so he wagged his long, shaggy ears in a gesture of apology, just as he had done so often before. His vast shoulders hunched submissively as he licked the blood from his pendulous lips; the gaze of his wicked, horn-lidded eyes wandered with mild concern

from the mangled huddle of human flesh on the floor to the white visages of his terrestrial companions. Sabakko fully expected that in a moment he would be forgiven for his latest misdeed.

But presently he began to be puzzled. The men around him gave no sign that they were in a mood to grant a pardon. In fact, expressions

of dawning and fearful comprehension had come into their eyes. Except for the faint buzz of the air-purifiers here within the hull of the Traveller and the distant howl of a Gargantuan wind sweeping across the acrid twilight of Jupiter's wild terrain, lying just beyond the Traveller's external shell, there were no sounds.

Out of this comparative silence, and out of the austere glitter of instruments within the cramped interior of the great tractor-like vehicle, Sabakko's primitive mind seemed at last to draw a shadow of comprehension. What he had just done was different from his more ordinary pranks and mishaps. It was more serious, somehow, than the upsetting of a cartload of radium ore, or the failure to remember that laboring miners need drinking water. Just why this was true was not clear to Sabakko; but in a moment his intuitive intimation was confirmed.

"My God!" one of the terrestrials rasped thickly. "The devil's killed Marlin, the only man who was able to get us out of this hell! It's the end of us!"

"As everyone here knows, Richard Marlin certainly deserved to die," another stated defensively. The speaker was a tall, well-built youth named Mel Hawks. "Anyway, what has finally happened to him was his own fault. See that whip over there? And see those welts on Sabakko's hide? No wonder the old fellow got hopping mad. I saw him chew up Marlin; but it all happened so quick that there was no chance to do anything about it."

"Marlin deserved to die, all right," the first speaker admitted. "He crippled the Traveller, the dirty crook, just so that he could get us under his thumb and snatch all the radium and actinium we've mined! He's driven

us like slaves. But that doesn't alter the facts: he knew how to repair our engines; he'd have to do that eventually to get out of here himself, and he'd have to take us along as crew. We'd have had a fair chance of reaching Sadra or some other civilized place. But now—now we're here until we—rot!"

"Kill the beast!" someone yelled, and others took up the cry: "Kill the beast! Kill this damned Jovian monkey! He's doomed us all to slow death!"

SABAKKO watched the threatening tableau before him in bewilderment, his gigantic muscles, developed far beyond anything terrestrial, by a lifelong struggle with the ponderous gravity of Jupiter, relaxed. He made a little whimpering gurgle, deep in his throat. Considering his massive size, it seemed ridiculous—as ridiculous, almost, as if a volcano of the Dark Lands had made the chirping of a young bird. It was not a whimper of fear; rather, it was like the puzzled protest of a big, well-meaning dog that, knowing that it has displeased its master, is still not sure of the reason why.

"Don't understand," he complained in his mild, fragmentary English. "Sabakko don't unnerstand."

Being a native of the largest planet in the Solar System, Sabakko was at a loss to know how it was that these Earthians could be so fearful of the colossal natural demonstrations of Jupiter; her terrible hot winds, her crushing gravity, two and a half times as great as that of Earth; her vast lava seas, her gigantic storms; and the horrid monstrosities that grew on those steaming plains where the crust of the planet had hardened sufficiently to support life. All these things spelt but one re-

sult to human beings who were unprotected by the safeguards of their science. That result was death. Even the dense atmosphere, impregnated with volcanic vapors, was poison to them. But to Sabakko these were only the details of the environment which he had always known; and so, since he was only a simple savage, his puzzlement was understandable.

By judicious use of his tremendous strength, he might have swiftly subdued the fragile aliens who, maddened by fear, demanded his life. But he was too fuddled to do this, and the promise of destruction lashed out toward him like a bolt of lightning.

It came from a small pistol grasped by one of the men. The bullet thudded glancingly against Sabakko's horny skull, above his right eye. Blackness closed in upon his mind and he slumped weakly to the floor.

Only one thing had saved him. Young Hawks had stumbled toward Sabakko's would-be killer and had managed to strike up his pistol arm slightly, before the bullet had left the weapon.

Mel Hawks' face was grim. "We can't do that, fellas," he said with quiet self-control. "Our Jovian here may be the only means we've got of pulling ourselves out of our difficulties."

Resentful, unbelieving faces turned toward the youth.

"What are you talking about?" a white-haired old fellow demanded hoarsely. He was known as Stephen Montridge.

Once, not very long ago, Montridge may have been a civilized, well-groomed, and soft-spoken gentleman; but a short period in the dread environment of Jupiter's Dark Lands, chasing riches along with the other members of this expedition,

which was one of several that participated in the great radium and actinium rush, had changed him utterly. He was dirty and unkempt, and there was an ominous glitter in his squinted eyes.

MEL HAWKS was a patient. "Well," he said, "here we are, a good hundred and twenty miles from Sadra, the nearest terrestrial settlement. In between there are several dozen interesting ways of getting a free trip to the Place of Harps and Glory. Besides, we're a bunch of greenhorns. Two months back, until the easy-money bug bit us, we were just folks holding nice, safe jobs on Earth. None of us has sufficient knowledge to fix up the motors which our sourdough friend, Marlin, so effectively crippled. And without motors, the caterpillar treads of the Traveller won't move. So here we are, stuck until our food gives out and starvation gets us, unless we can think of a way to cheat the devil. No call for help can be sent by radio, for this crazy atmosphere has too much static in it. So I thought that, with Sabakko's aid, I could somehow get word to Sadra—"

"Sabakko would be a likely one to get a message through, wouldn't he?" Montridge rasped with bitter sarcasm. "In half an hour, he'd forget what he was doing and ramble off into the brush, never to return."

Hawks grimaced ruefully and glanced toward the inert form of the Jovian. He knew that Montridge had spoken very close to absolute truth. Sabakko was a strange paradox. For a brief time, he could be fiercely loyal; but like many primitive beings, he was fickle because he was forgetful. Strong, instinctive urges could easily alter any decisions made by his simple intellect. Generally as

gentle as a dove, he could explode into a fleeting fit of temper against which nothing known to man could be relied upon to prevail, except the mortal finality of some scientific weapon inflicting instant demise.

Mel Hawks nodded slowly. "I know, Montridge," he said. "But, you see, I figure on going along with Sabakko, to sort of keep him on the straight and narrow."

"You going along!" the old man scoffed wildly. "You couldn't get more than ten or twenty miles on foot! Don't you realize that it's hell all the way to Sadra? Jungles, lava flows, darkness, storms! And then there's the gravity—two and a half times Earth-normal. All I can say, Hawks, is that you are an imbecile!"

At this, Mel Hawks' brown features whitened a shade, and he swallowed hard; he realized, without Montridge's prompting, what he was up against.

"All right, you old fool," he growled, anger breaking through his self-control, "You think of something! This is serious business, and if I've got to die, I intend to do it trying to pull myself out of this tangle. It's better than just lying down and grumbling. I've got a couple of dim ideas; but if anyone here can make any suggestions that look half-way good, let him speak up!"

Young Mel Hawks was rather magnificent at that moment, with the glare of illuminators lending a theatrical gauntness to his stern, youthful face. In him was apparent that dynamic resourcefulness which makes those few human individuals of Earth the leaders of a solar system.

No one from among the unkempt score who composed the crew of the Traveller challenged him now. Their eyeballs only glistened as they looked

at him with new vision. Except for the sounds made by the air-purifiers, nothing was audible save that endless, sibilant scream of the wind, blood-chilling in its significance.

At last Hawks grinned faintly. "Sorry, fellas," he said. "And now if you'll take Sabakko to the brig and patch him up and fasten him securely before he gets his senses back and raises hob, I'll go up to my cabin and change clothes."

SABAKKO, mighty Jovian native, regained consciousness in a red rage. He remembered the pistol pointing toward him. In consequence had he been less effectively restrained, he would have added massacre to his justified crime of murder. But the walls of the tiny brig were stout and the massive chains that girded his arms and legs, waist and shoulders, were proof against even the most violent efforts of his tremendous physique.

Presently Mel Hawks, equipped with a respirator-mask and clad in an asbestotex attire, opened the door of the brig. The act was curiously like striking the percussion cap of a bomb insofar as the swiftness and violence of the results went. With a roar of fury, Sabakko threw himself against the chains that held him. The stout links creaked and snarled, as in one burst of violence after another, Sabakko sought to inflict vengeance upon the only human being in sight.

But the youth had learned a few things during his brief sojourn on Jupiter. Among those things was a fair knowledge of how Earthmen managed the mighty natives, inducing them, by deft diplomatic manipulations, to seldom show their darker natures and to work docilely, if clumsily, for the meager pay of food and a few trinkets.

Mel used that knowledge now. He approached the bestial monster, a smile curving his lips behind the transparent front of his respirator.

When he spoke, the crooning tones of his voice were softened further by the muffling effect of the mask.

"Sorry, Old Boy," he said. "Sorry they were mean to you and tried to kill you. I don't blame you for getting sore. But I'm the chap who saved your life, you know. I struck up the pistol, you remember. If I hadn't, you'd be dead now."

Mel wouldn't have bragged that way to a man; but Sabakko was only a simple Jovian and the technique required to win him was necessarily different.

Sabakko betrayed no immediate signs of subsiding. He roared, and his huge horny hands, that could have squeezed the life from a terrestrial lion, clenched and unclenched suggestively.

But Mel was undaunted. "We're going away from here, you and I," he breathed. "We're going back to Sadra where you joined our expedition. I won't have you abused by anyone. I'm the man who saved your life. Remember?"

So it went. A minute of gentle, sympathetic talk was all that was required to win Sabakko's fierce (if fleeting) loyalty. His monstrous muscles relaxed; his horn-lidded eyes softened; his shaggy ears flapped contritely.

Conscious of the soothing effect the act would have on his huge servitor, Hawks unlocked the chains which held Sabakko.

The pair left the brig. They shuffled down a now intentionally deserted passage which traversed the tractor-like vehicle that had brought the tenderfoot expedition to this ungodly spot. They paused before an air-

lock. Resting beside it were two supply-packs, one large and one small. Mel strapped the latter to his shoulders and indicated that Sabakko was to do the same with the other. When these preparations were completed, the Earthman worked the levers of the airlock. The pair entered the narrow compartment. When its outer exit opened, the scalding wind struck them like the blow of a hammer. One step more and they were ankle-deep in the red muck of Jupiter.

FROM the ports of the Traveller twenty men watched them until their figures vanished into the obscurity of streaming, blast-driven rain. In the hearts of those men there was no expectation of succor. They were doomed to perish in this awful region. No human messenger could ever cross a hundred and twenty miles of Jupiter's surface on foot. That the strange, fickle, gentle, explosive Sabakko could harbor so fixed a purpose for the necessary length of time seemed just as impossible.

Mel Hawks, however, was not entirely without hope. He had dauntless courage; he had a map, a compass, and sketchy food supplies. And, like many another intrepid pioneer, he was inspired by a fairly definite plan. His respirator contained chemicals which, for an indefinite period, could filter the poisonous volcanic gases from the dense Jovian air he breathed. Sabakko, who carried most of the supplies, had no need for such a protection, for as far as his native lungs were concerned, the natural atmosphere around him was just as wholesome as the filtered air aboard the Traveller.

Young Hawks' plan revolved around two facts: First, that to the east there moved a vast lava stream,

flowing from a gigantic crater; second, that contained in a small folder over his heart was a photograph depicting a group of humans and Jovians who composed almost the total population of Sadra. The picture was Mel's trump card. That this was so was at once pathetic, humorous, and a little stunning. When the time came, he would play this trump.

Guided by his compass, he started east, toward far-off Sadra. Behind him, plodding steadily and without concern through the blurred dusk of the eternal storm, was Sabakko.

The first half-mile seemed fairly easy to the stout young physique of the Earthman. He crossed the pitted red soil where he and his companions had discovered a rich deposit of radioactive ore—a deposit which would make them all wealthy, if they happened to survive and put in their claim. Thence he led the way into a gloomy gorge.

All the while, the gravity of Jupiter was doing its strength-sapping work upon him. Nor was this all that was burning up his vitality. Ponderous thunder roared overhead, to the accompaniment of dazzling flares of lightning. Both, by their constant, tense monotony, frazzled his nerves and weakened his morale. The wind was not so strong here in the gorge, but out of the dim murk around him, long, spiny tendrils belonging to forms of life that were neither animal nor quite plant, groped toward him hungrily.

Once a tentacle encircled his body, and his adventure would have reached an abortive end then and there, had it not been for Sabakko, who leaped into action with cold fury, tearing the rooted devil apart with horny fingers.

There must have been a vast difference between the attitudes of the

man and the Jovian toward their present experiences. Sabakko had returned to his native habitat. Comparatively, at least, his surroundings could have held few terrors for him. In fact, he seemed more than a bit puzzled at his human companion's weakness.

Two hours went by, and though pitifully little of the distance to Sadra had been consumed, Mel was almost spent. The pull of Jupiter, and the rock-strewn muck of the terrain were responsible.

"I guess—I guess you'll have to carry me for a while, old chap," he mumbled hazily. "My feet—hurt."

Sabakko, still fired by a scarcely diminished devotion, obeyed with a low whine of disturbed concern.

"You save life, Mel," he said in his uncertain English. "I do."

More hours went by. Ridges of un-eroded rock and jungles of spiny, low-growing life which had no counterpart on Earth, were traversed. Sometimes Hawks walked, and sometimes he was carried. Once Sabakko swam a raging torrent of almost boiling water, his human friend clinging to his broad, shaggy back. At irregular intervals, the pair rested and ate, Mel feeding himself by thrusting the food pellets through the exhaust vent of his mask.

The terrestrial's consciousness had become vague and shadowy. His sensory impressions were dim and jangled—but he still could feel the wind around him and the faint seismic shocks that disturbed the crust of this primitive giant of the Solar System. He knew when the five-hour night of Jupiter had come—bringing with it darkness that was a dense as the ink of a squid ejected into clear water, but his red fog-lamp could pierce it a little and the lightnings helped too, by their fitful, magnifi-

cent flares; and so he and the Jovian kept on, as they had during the wan ghost of day.

DIM though his mind was, Mel clung to his plan with a dogged persistence, for to let it slip from an uppermost position in his consciousness during his quasi-delirium could lead only to certain failure and death.

Otherwise Mel's thoughts rambled erratically. He pictured in his mind the vast crystal structure that covered Sadra, protecting it from the poisonous, violent atmosphere of Jupiter. He dreamed of Earth, of its green freshness and serenity, and of the girl he hoped to marry. Those dreams assumed in his weary brain a gentle vividness which, in some moments, made him wonder if it were not they that were truly real, instead of the mad monotony of the hell around him. He thought of Marlin, smooth, soft, and experienced, who had been engineer of the Traveller; and those thoughts aroused in him a kind of unholy satisfaction in the knowledge that Marlin was dead. Sabakko could never be legally punished for ridding Earth's great colonial empire of so great a scoundrel. There were witnesses who could testify— But there was no need to consider such matters yet. Not until, and if—a big if—the message had been delivered to Sadra, would there be any purpose in so doing.

Thus two Jovian days, totaling less than twenty hours, dragged their tedious course away. Not quite twenty miles had been covered—about a sixth of the total distance to Sadra.

At last Sabakko's loyalty was waning. He had grown sullen and resentful; he bore his master, when it was necessary, with a truculent carelessness. His gaze wandered con-

stantly through the blur of wind and rain and volcanic murk, searching crag and gully for signs that a compelling instinct demanded that he find.

Mel Hawks knew what was the matter. The primitive soul of his mighty servitor was yielding to the pull of his native haunts. No devotion to any man could ever smother that yearning attraction for long. Sabakko wanted his own kind; he wanted a mate.

Hawks knew that the breaking point was not far off, but he did not scold. He only talked ramblingly of Sadra, where Sabakko had spent considerable time. Meanwhile, with bloodshot eyes, he scanned the coiling mists ahead. At last his vigil was rewarded. A brightening red glow was stabbing through the mists.

HE WAS on foot then, and he quickened his stumbling pace, Sabakko moving in his wake.

The glow brightened until it was like an immense ruddy dawn. The ground was hot and dry now, and in it there was a constant, rumbling vibration that was like the turning of giant iron wheels. Cindery volcanic dust sifted down from above.

Mel's remaining strength was quickly sapped by his swift advance. His heart was pounding and his breath came in swift, short gasps. But in a matter of minutes, the cause of the fiery reflection in the sky was in sight, identifiably visible: a vast glowing river of molten lava, filling the dense atmosphere with a roaring, hissing tumult of sound! Cakes and chunks of pumice-like rock floated in it, being less dense than their supporting medium. They had broken from the shore of this infernal stream, undermined by the action of its hot current.

The magnificent spectacle, and the hope it gave him, almost made Mel Hawks forget Sabakko. With what seemed his last energy, he surged onward; but after half a dozen steps, he sank to the ground. His magnificent physique had done its best.

Still, somehow, he managed to turn his head and call feebly through his mask: "Sabakko— Come— I have something to show you. Merroah. Remember Merroah? In Sadra, Sabakko. In Sadra—"

He couldn't see the Jovian, for there was a strange, sickening darkness misting his vision—but after a minute he heard an irritable grumble at his side. What he had said had evidently interested his Jovian companion a little—enough to postpone his desertion.

Mei groped into the breast-pouch of the asbestotex suit he wore. Presently, from a little folder, he removed a photograph, and handed it to Sabakko. It was a group picture—fifty men, fifty natives—the populace of Sadra. Merroah was somewhere on that picture.

He repeated Merroah's name in the hope that doing so would resurrect from Sabakko's primitive memory, recollections of a past love.

He could just see the large, hunching figure of the Jovian, clutching in horny fingers the little printed rectangle and studying it intently. After a moment Sabakko began to coo and babble in ecstasy: "Merroah!"

Mel refreshed himself with a brief rest. "She's in Sadra," he said at last. "We can get there easily now. All you have to do is carry me down to the edge of the lava flow. There you can jump aboard one of the floating masses of pumice—the biggest one you can find. The stream moves about five miles an hour. It passes within a mile of Sadra. There are

guards watching it always for signs of its becoming dangerous. I have a flare in my pack. We can signal the guards with it."

Sabakko seemed momentarily stunned. Then, without comment except for an impatient whine, he picked up Hawks and rushed lithely toward the brink of the hellish stream. There he paused warily, his great feet, protected by asbestotex sandals, spread wide apart. After some minutes, a huge raft-like mass of pumice came along the flow.

Sabakko gathered himself together. His leap covered fifteen feet—an utter impossibility for a man here on Jupiter. He landed on a small mass of pumice and waited again until it drifted close to the large mass. Again he bounded, reaching the latter's flat, eroded edge. Some moments of climbing brought him to its summit. There he set Mel down.

The latter relaxed weakly, but at the same time he felt a fierce surge of exultation.

"Good boy, Sabakko!" he muttered hoarsely. "We'll be in Sadra in twenty hours. Just ride and rest. The lava'll never break up a chunk of pumice as big as this one!"

Apparently Sabakko didn't even hear, for he was cooing and mumbling over the little picture.

MEL'S mind wandered to many things: radium and actinium that spelled riches—succor for his friends out there on the Traveller—Dolores, far away in Chicago. So many dreams could come true now.

Mel Hawks stared at the broad back of his Jovian companion. The gratitude he felt just then might have made him weep, if it hadn't been for the doleful sounds issuing from the now lovelorn Sabakko.

Mel Hawks chuckled instead.



A reader's department of scientific controversy. You are invited to send in your science argument to THE ETERNAL CONFLICT, SCIENCE FICTION, 60 Hudson Street, New York.

NO ATOMIC POWER

by JOHN DEAKYNE

WHAT'S all this nonsense about "power from the atom?" Every other science story uses the myth of atomic power. All you have to do is push a button and the "energy" in a glass of water takes you to Mars! Phooey! I'm a pretty broad-minded fellow, but I know a little bit about science, and that little bit tells me that of all the scientific impossibilities, atomic power takes the cake.

I know this makes me sound like a heretic to all those science-fiction fans who have such great faith in the future, and the supposed blessing of atomic power in the civilizations of our children's children—so I'll try to substantiate my argument. I didn't mean to sound too vociferous, but this fairy tale of atomic power has always griped me. You might call it my "pet peeve."

First let's see what is meant by atomic power. This is supposed to be energy to be released by the destruction of atoms. In other words, the proper bombarding of an atom will knock it for a loop, explode the nucleus, and throw the electrons and protons every which way—thereby creating a lot of energy. That's the way I understand it. All of this

energy would be used as fuel.

So far, so good. I agree with the theory—so far as the fact that an exploded atom would release a tremendous amount of energy. But here's my argument—this energy could not be controlled! I sincerely hope and pray that the secret of the atom is never discovered, for God alone knows what would happen! Perhaps the destruction of the world!—but surely, not just a cheap form of power.

This is why I consider controlled atomic energy an impossibility. The exploded portions of the atom will fly into other atoms and destroy them in turn, almost instantaneously—as intended—but what is to prevent the atoms of the container of the fuel from undergoing the same transformation?—and the air surrounding the container, and the objects connected to the container—and so on until the entire Earth becomes one great blast of atomic energy? Atoms are atoms, I say, and there will be no stopping the spread of this atomic destruction, once it is started. Perhaps some of those flaring stars, the novae, that we see in the sky are merely worlds on which some intelligent creature discovered atomic energy, to the death of his planet!

I WANT TO DIE

by FRANK MARION

"I WANT to die!" No, I'm not contemplating suicide, and life is not treating me poorly. In fact, I'm getting along quite well—my health is fine, I'm young, my business is good, and I get along

swell with everyone. But I still say, "I want to die!"

Here's the catch—you'll notice I didn't say when I want to die. Surely, not now, not in three or four decades, but some day. If fortune treats me

right, I'll want to go on until I'm eighty or ninety—or even a hundred.

All this quibbling has to do with immortality, a favorite subject of science-fiction authors. In most of the stories I have read about life everlasting, the writers seem to think that immortality would be a great blessing to Mankind. Oh, how glorious it would be to live for a thousand years—ten thousand!

The writers explain how this can come about, and many of them give logical scientific explanations. They explain that old age is but a disease, the wearing down of tissue, and how medical stimulation will someday prevent old age and allow people to live for untold centuries. Others say that old age is caused by worry and the generally hectic existence of human activity, and that the life-span can be doubled or tripled by the elimination of all anxiety (like in the

story "Lost Horizon"). Still other authors conquer life by transplanting human brains into machines that can't wear out. (Ugh!) Anyway, I am convinced that immortality, to a reasonable limit, can be and probably will be, accomplished someday. It may pass the stage of experiment and be offered to anyone who desires to live "forever."

My argument against it is that people would get tired of living after a hundred years or so. Most old people have no fear in death, and even look forward to it with keen anticipation. Nature has taken the fear of death from the aged, and I think we had better leave Nature alone. A life everlasting would be a curse, rather than a blessing. After the novelty of living has worn off, say in seventy years, the purpose of life seems to disappear. Therefore, I say—"Death, where is thy sting?"

UTOPIA IS COMING

by VIVIAN LYNNE

LOTS of people think I'm a dreamer, and I guess I am, in a way. I dream of the future of Man, when his mode of living brings him to Utopia. I'm happy because of my optimism, and I don't see how anyone can find contentment in pessimism or fatalism. Someday civilization will reach a stage of perfection.

Past history has proven that we are slowly approaching this goal. O, I know that the world is in a mess today, seemingly, but Man's path has been ever upward, and, according to the science of sociology, he is becoming more civilized every century.

I believe in evolution—that Man has evolved from the beast. At present, he is the highest form of life in the world—but what is to keep him from evolving still further, into superman? I don't believe anyone has ever found a case of evolution ceasing—it is just Nature's way of improving her creations.

Of course, this Utopia can come only through universal peace (you can see that I'm a pacifist, too). In the early days of Man, when he lived

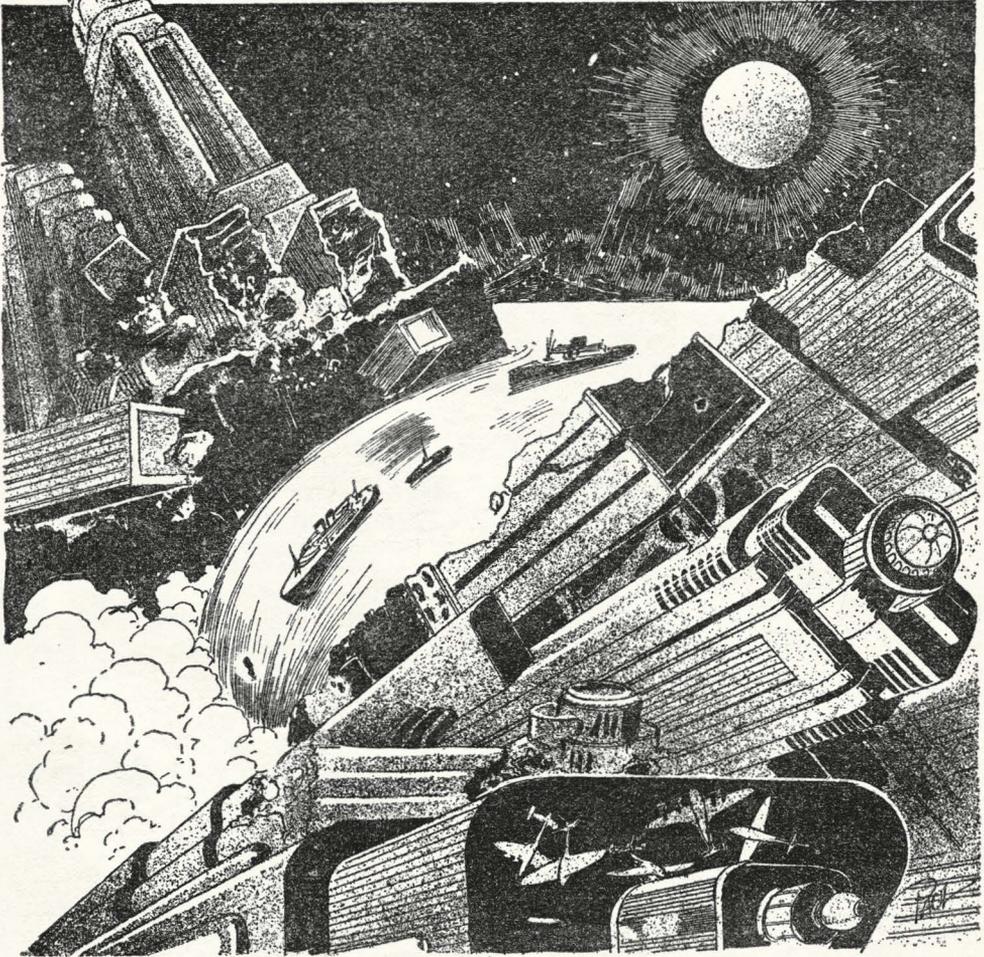
in caves, he was just like any other animal—taking everything by pure brute force. He had to fight for everything he wanted to possess. Then, in later eras, he learned to barter simple things, thereby avoiding much battle and bloodshed—and at that point he became an intelligent social creature. He also learned to till the soil and domesticate many animals.

We are in the third era now—where Man lives according to a medium of exchange—money—so that he can have the things he needs and wants by working at any type of work, regardless of its connection to the manufacture of his requirements. In other words, he can buy what he wants, minus any battling or primitive bartering. But I think that the use of money will pass away someday and every man will be given every necessity and every luxury without needing any money—but, of course, he will have to do some kind of work. If everyone works, there will be plenty of everything for everybody, instead of all the suffering and deprivation we have today because of unemployment.

The Jewels From the Moon

by EPHRIAM WINIKI

The huge fortune in gems that Bull Cassell finds on Luna undergoes a strange transformation in the atmosphere of Earth—a change that unlocks the past and brings forth a threatening horde that should have perished ages ago!



The American continent was rocked from end to end. Lake Michigan poured into the city of Chicago.

CHAPTER I

THE GEMS THAT MELTED

BULTON — “Bull” — Cassell, exile from Earth, stared out grimly into the gulf of space through the observation win-

dow of his lone flyer. For ten weary years he had wandered this hell-fired cosmos, driven to it by an extradition order—sent into space as a wanderer for a crime he had never committed. . . . Now at last he could return—and with good effect! Money could buy anything in the

ultra-modern world of 2714—even vengeance for his frame-up. That was what he was counting on.

A faintly cynical smile twisted the corners of his big, powerful mouth at the thought; his ugly, ruggedly hewn face lighted with anticipation. Ahead lay the moon, source of the wealth which he alone knew about. Lunar caverns . . . Rare gems . . . His thoughts went back swiftly to that day ten years ago when an accident had forced him to land on the moon. That was when he had found them.

"Guess it won't be long now!" he murmured reflectively, and turning from the window, he sat before the controls and disconnected the robot steering mechanism.

His eyes fixed on the instruments, he drove the short, powerful little space-vessel downwards in a long arc, curving towards the moon's brilliantly argent surface. He needed no experience in the art of landing on the satellite; struggles with the varied gravities of Jupiter and Mercury had given him judgment of uncanny accuracy.

Ten minutes later, he landed five miles west of the lunar Appenines and sat for a while gazing out into the sun-drenched lunar surface, raging at a temperature of 212° Fahrenheit. In the main, his attention was directed towards the lofty peaks of the Appenines. In the base of one of them was the cleft leading downwards to the cavern he had so fortuitously discovered. At length, he beheld it and a broad grin widened his face.

"Money, huh?" He spat eloquently on the metal floor. "Guess those money-grubbin' swines of Earth'll get all the gems their safes can hold before I'm through with 'em! This is going to be my turn! I owe you

plenty, John Masterson, and the account's goin' to be paid in full!"

A momentary bitterness crossed his face as he remembered the cold, ruthless engineer responsible for his frame-up—then with a shrug he turned aside and scrambled into his heavily armored space-suit.

Ten minutes later he was walking the ashy, scorching surface of the satellite, heading towards the range. Inside his suit the heat rose stifflingly and set the sweat pouring from his great, massively muscled body. He was thankful for the black, undiffused shadow of the cleft when at last he gained it.

For a while he stood motionless, accustoming his eyes to the ebon gloom after the blinding glare of the sun—then at length he looked down at the rocky defile leading inward to the moon's unexplored caverns—unexplored except by him. Luna was classed as a derelict by all spatial navigators.

WITH careful footsteps, judging as best he could against the sixth of earthly gravity, he traveled downwards, keen gray eyes studying every inch of the route. Presently he was forced to use his helmet torch. Its brilliant beam shone on dusty white pumice-like rock, aridly brittle moon-stuff, the same in these lunar tunnels as on the alternately scorched and frozen surface.

Tunnel after tunnel he followed, searching for and finding the undisturbed directional marks he had scored over ten years before. They led him at last to an immense cavern nearly three hundred feet underground, an unexpected and natural bubble in the strange, riddled mass of the moon.

Through his helmet glass, his face

was a study in blank awe as he gazed upon a solid wall of scintillating gems, their facets catching the glare of his helmet lamp. Vermilion, green, saffron, purest violet—colors beyond spectral comprehension—stabbed outward in bars of bewildering loveliness from the stones' lustrous depths.

He stepped forward, breathing hard, and stared closely at them. Even his irony unsentimental heart was stirred for a moment by a sense of things transcendently beautiful. Then the conviction evaporated and he was ruggedly himself again.

"Stones that'll make diamonds look like shore shingle," he breathed. "Untold millions in value, and only I know about it! Will this knock their ears off back on Earth!"

He speculated briefly on how the gems had ever gotten into such a strange place, then finding no solution, he shrugged his massive shoulders and set to work with his flame pistol. Ten minutes of steady burning work blasted a clean track around a six-inch square block of the stones. The rest was easy. He pried the block out, found it comfortably heavy in the slight lunar gravitation, then looked at the wall that was left.

Just plain pumice rock. The jewels must be sticking to it like barnacles to a boat. Again brief wonderment touched him, then with another shrug, he thrust the gems under his arm and retraced his steps to the blinding surface. Thirty minutes later he was back in his machine.

Beyond another glance at the stones, he paid them no further attention. The possibility of them cracking or becoming defaced through warmth after the eternal cold of the moon's interior led him to put them in his storage refrig-

erator—then, satisfied that an incalculable fortune was within his grasp, he turned the bullet nose of his vessel towards the giant green globe hanging low over the ragged horizon. . . .

Night had fallen when he reached Earth. The stratosphere police let him through, and down on the space grounds outside Great New York, his papers were found to be in order. His exile time limit had expired. He was free to roam the gigantic straddling enormity that had taken the place of the plain New York he had once known.

Once through the inquiry barriers, he debated briefly. It was too late tonight to have the bulge under his leather coat valued. Only thing to do was to head for Rocket Ike's place over on the east side. He'd be able to drink and sleep safely for the night.

Immediately, he bent his steps in that direction, finding his way with some difficulty in the changed surroundings. Ten years ago Rocket Ike, the tough one-eyed ex-rocket man, had kept a questionable space-drifter's abode in the city's most squalid region—and, to Bull's delight, he found the place still there with Ike himself apparently not a day older.

Bull wasted no time and gave away no secrets. The small sum of money he possessed was sufficient to guarantee him a room for the night. Rocket Ike was affable enough in his coarse, uneffusive way—readily showed Bull to a shoddy little private bedroom at the rear of the place when he had at last made an end of his drinking.

Bull grinned twistedly as he found himself alone. Once he had securely locked the door and removed his deadly flame pistol from his waist-

belt, he pulled out the uncomfortable bulge from under his coat. The coarse quilt of the bed seemed a crudely worthless setting for the livid block of varicolored fire he tossed upon it.

"A few more hours and you'll be a fortune, my beauty!" he chuckled, tossing his massive body down beside it and relaxing with a sigh of relief. "And woe betide the guy that tries to get in this room tonight!"

He clamped his hairy paw over his flame pistol and gave himself up to thought. The sounds of the harbor drifted to him through the slightly open window. He had no intention of sleeping—but before long, the sweet security of Earth, its absolute solidity, lulled him into slumber. . . .

The noisy sounds of the den below began to quiet; rocket men and space-drifters—Venusians, Martians and Earthlings—rabble of the solar frontiers, drifted out into the dark, miasmic shadows. The main flood-lights dimmed in the mighty metropolis, the solid bulk of raging power quieted into a brooding, beacon-studded monster awaiting the dawn. Great New York slept, and so did Bull Cassell.

ROCKET IKE made no attempt to enter his guest's room. He had reason to remember only too well that Bull had a deadly aim and a fierce temper . . . but he did wonder vaguely about that bulge under the leather coat. Still, it was none of his business. No use risking his reputation and perhaps his life to satisfy a curiosity.

Three o'clock came and Bull Cassell still lay like a log in the gloom, the light having automatically shut itself off at one a. m.

But beside him something strange was happening to the jewel block!

Had he been awake, he would have stared in stupefied amazement.

Each jewel, and there were about forty in all, was undergoing an astounding metamorphosis, losing its vivid flaring coloring and becoming milky and opalescent, oddly curdled. The glory of the radiations had gone; instead it was clear that the gems, whatever their nature, were now infused with a mystic form of inner life.

For an hour, the strangeness went on—for two hours—and at the end of that time the whole jewel block had divided itself into forty distinct slushy segments, no longer gem-like, but doughy. There was another long pause, then with the faintest sogging sound, something emerged from one of the side jewels—a figure of incredible minuteness, no more than an inch long, but none the less flawlessly patterned in the style of an earthly man, wearing minute garments that covered him from head to foot!

He stood for a time in the gloom, apparently attuning his eyes to the light of the turning beacon atop one of the nearer edifices overlooking the harbor. As though satisfied with what he saw, he finally turned to the pasty mess beside him and became active, pulling the viscid substance with little hands until he had freed more living beings like himself.

One after another they emerged, some men, some women, making hardly any impression on the quilt and certainly not in the least disturbing the heavily sleeping man. When at last the forty of them had emerged from their incredible prison, they turned, scrambled down the bed leg, and made for the open window.

Without a sound, they passed to the sill outside and lowered themselves to a telegraph wire. Mysteri-

ously, their purpose unknown, they divided up in parties and vanished in the night — microscopic, perfectly dressed men and women, the majority of them classically good-looking. . . . And Bull still slept. . . .

CHAPTER II

UNSEEN POWER

BULL CASSELL became a raving maniac of fury when he awoke and found nothing left of his jewels except a sticky mess giving off an odor like rotten eggs. He jumped from the bed like an unwound spring, flame gun in hand, and charged to the saloon below. Rocket Ike was there, mopping the floor in readiness for opening.

"You blasted rocket-firing swab!" Bull roared furiously, seizing him by the shoulder. "You couldn't get the damned jewels so you turned a flame gun on 'em to stop me doing it, huh? I'll show you whether you'll get away with a cheap trick like that!"

Ike's one eye slitted viciously. "What in hell are you yammerin' about, Bull? I never knew you had any jewels, and even if I did—"

"Be damned to that for a tale!" Bull's tuft of short cut black hair seemed to stand up with the impotency of his fury. "You knew all the time! The door wasn't open, but the window was! Well, there was a fortune in them gems and I'm going to take pay for you melting 'em! Stand up and take what's comin' to you!"

His paw clamped down on his flame gun, but he wasn't quite quick enough in leveling it. With a vicious twirl, the powerful Ike twisted himself free and brought around his soaking-wet mop with terrific power. It struck Bull clean in the face and sent him reeling backwards with a

string of oaths. His gun went off and the flame neatly bisected a row of liquor bottles and mirror behind the bar.

Before he could recover himself, the mop jabbed viciously again and again, struck him in the throat and made his head throb with pain—then fell to his stomach and winded him. He dropped his gun helplessly. Then before he could collect his wits, Ike clutched him by the collar and swung him across the saloon. With a slithering crash he collapsed helplessly in the dirty road outside.

"Come back if you dare!" Ike warned him ominously, the gun held ready in his hand. "Lucky I got my pay from you last night. Get outa here and don't come back!"

Bull got to his feet, searing expletives rolling from his lips; then gradually a certain sense of coolness took possession of his outraged senses. After all, no man would surely melt a fortune in gems when he could just as easily have stolen them! Besides, Rocket Ike had no grudges to square. The thing didn't make sense. That thought sobered Bull up a bit and sent him mooching along the harbor side, bullet head bent in thought.

And the more he thought, the more baffled he became. What in hell had gone wrong with the gems, anyway? Solid things like that could not melt, surely, unless . . . Unless leaving them lying in warm air, close also to his warm body, had done something? After all, they had come from the airless cold of the moon. He remembered his efforts to keep them cold on the journey to Earth.

"You blasted fool!" he said out loud, and more than one passing docker bristled at his truculence. "It must have been the warmth that did it! Like snow in the sun! Gems!

Might as well bring home Jovian dirt and try and sell that!"

He scowled and marched on again, uncertain as to what to do. It rather queered his plans for vengeance. Of course, he could spend the time tracking down Masterson, or he could even go back to his ship and determine a new plan of action. But he needed some more Earth in his void-weary bones—plenty more drink and maybe a few women. They were always ready for the space-men.

That new thought momentarily banished the gems from his mind. Carnal pleasures were easier, too, than plotting vengeance. He still had some money. He brightened at the thought and turned his steps in the direction of the nearest liquor house, open in this foul, reeking quarter of the giant city from dawn until midnight. In half an hour, he was in the riotous weed-chewing company of two white-skinned Venusians and a scaly Martian—good guys all of them, and could they park their liquor . . .!

AND while Bull became more and more gloriously drunk through the perpetual sipping of Venusian vermint root extract, the products of his strange gems had disseminated to various parts of the city.

Unseen, inch-high, they moved unnoticed into the offices of some of the city's highest intellectuals. They invaded the chambers of three famous engineers and sat unseen concentrating upon them. They were present too in the private office of John Masterson, famous scientist—a gaunt, harsh-featured man malignantly crushing anything and everything that showed signs of blocking his path.

They were everywhere—in wall crevices, on picture rails, behind furniture, pursuing some inconceivable

plan of their own, all the more potent by reason of its very unexpectedness.

The results were not immediate, but the tiny invaders were untiring. They seemed to possess the capacity for endless hours of profound concentration without the need for rest or food. It was the same with either the men or the women. And despite the smallness of their brains, judged from normal standards, they nonetheless issued a potent hypnotic effect that finally began to have real significance.

The engineers found themselves drawing plans which were quite at variance with normalcy, utterly unaware of the end to which they were working. John Masterson in particular found himself working out a problem in advanced electrical machinery—so profound, so intricate, that he was half frightened at the ease with which he did it. The conviction of unknown powers surged through his brain; he ascribed his new-found genius to an "inner force." Had he raised his cold blue eyes from his notes he would perhaps have seen the "inner force" represented in four pairs of tiny eyes watching him unwaveringly over the top of the great walnut bookcase. But he did not. He went on working deliberately, long after nightfall. His office staff only received curt insults when they reminded him of the time.

None save those few selected ones were aware of anything unusual, and even they were so mentally controlled they did not detect the utter incongruity of the work they were doing. Where normally they would have finished the day's work and be at home, they were now working steadily, unmindful of food or drink, perpetually puzzled and yet half delighted by the incredible scientific ideas that sprang with easy facility to their brains.

Least of all to be concerned was Bull Cassell. By the time late evening had arrived, he was completely drunk, ready to fight the first man who crossed his path, ready to ray in twain any durned drifter from Mercury to Pluto. Yet deep in his mind was the soaked remembrance of his melted gems; every time they recurred to him, invective rolled freely from his vermint-stained lips.

He did not care what he did or where he went, once he left the saloon. Any alley would do. He moved arm in arm with a Venusian on one side—the second white-skin had got lost somewhere—and a Martian on the other. The three of them belowered a raucous space shanty at the top of their unlovely voices, the Martian's high-pitched falsetto blending wincingly with Bull's basso-profundo.

Then suddenly Bull saw it! He stopped dead and blinked, the bright electric arc high overhead casting his bleared face into a ponderous mass of shadows. But he was not mistaken; his piercingly keen eyes, trained through years to be accustomed to the slightest movements on other worlds, distinctly beheld an inch-high object struggling desperately to free itself from the drainage percolator at the side of the alley, the percolator being a flat metal sheet perforated with tiny holes, self-disinfecting.

Bull whispered an oath. "I've got 'em coming on!" he breathed shakily. "Must have! Do you see what I see? That way!" he wound up impatiently, as his Venusian comrade squinted vaguely overhead.

The white-skin failed to see anything—and certainly the Martian didn't. He was flat on his back, out to the world. . . .

Bull moved forward jerkily and dropped down with a bump that

stung his knees. Blankly he stared at the minute thing struggling in the drain. Sudden soberness descended on him.

Thrusting out a blunt finger and thumb, he closed them around the waist of the tiny thing, gave a little jerk and lifted it. Blearily he gazed at it; his intoxication was returning. He could have sworn that the object he was holding was a girl—and passing pretty at that, with fair hair and two tiny spots of blue eyes. She seemed to be dressed in a little silk garment. In the electric arclight he faintly distinguished her terrified face. . . .

Then, quite convinced that the vermint had been stronger than usual, he put the object gently on the road and headed off wildly into the shadows, unmindful of the Venusian who still gazed vacuously around him.

But the inch-high girl picked herself up, climbed the bordering curb, and also fled at top speed into the squalid darkness.

CEASELESSLY, week in and week out, while Bull Cassell roamed he cared not where in the city's cheapest quarters, returning only occasionally to his ship at the space grounds, the little people continued their activities.

Engineers and scientists, gifted with suddenly supernal powers, set about the construction of strange machinery which they themselves did not understand. Nobody in the outside world had any real facts to go upon—but information did leak out three months later that complicated machines had been transferred to the Azores. Why, nobody knew—but determined air pilots scouting the Azores returned with the amazing information that gigantic structures and machines were scattered all over

the nine islands and that all forms of normal agricultural life had been obliterated.

That started a veritable fleet of news and television hounds traveling eastward across the ocean, but the airplanes and ships thus employed never got within reasonable distance of the islands before they were blasted to atoms by an unknown form of energy radiated from lofty towers.

Immediately, the old familiar cry of war and invasion flashed across the world, until it became gradually evident that the tenants of the Azores made no attempt to be hostile unless they were directly or indirectly spied upon. Nonetheless, the destruction of American—and some British—boats and airplanes demanded some sort of reprisal. But what? Only fast-moving space-fliers could conceivably defeat those deadly energy rays and both governments were loath to risk such valuable machines when there was no real suggestion of impending war.

Finally, the various authorities went over the earlier photographs and studied in some perplexity the mechanical scenes they presented. From end to end, each of the nine islands was littered with fantastic machinery, together with numerous shed-like buildings and towers of gleaming metal. The study was followed up with an investigation of prominent people missing from New York. To their surprise, the police found that seven of the city's most famous scientists and engineers had last been seen sailing for the Azores in charge of strange equipment locally constructed, and had not been seen since. To be aware of this fact was one thing but to do anything about it was decidedly another. . . .

Then Bull Cassell heard about it.

He was sipping vermint as usual in an east side liquor den when the news indirectly reached him through rocket-hand Johnson of the Earth-Mars line.

"It can't be other-world invasion, anyhow," Johnson averred reflectively, over the stained table top. "That sort of thing's done away with—but it might mean that earthly scientists are getting sore at being controlled too long by boards and committees that don't know what they're talking about. If there is something starting from the Azores, it means trouble. They've got mighty powerful weapons there—things we've never 'eard of. Anyhow, the white-livered boneheads in control of our country and England won't risk space-machines against 'em. That does mean power—mark my words."

"Huh . . ." Bull grunted non-committally.

Johnson drained his glass, went on talking pensively. "There's some talk about those Azorians dredging off the coast of the southern island. Maybe it doesn't mean anything, but maybe it means a lot. You've heard about the scientists and engineers missing from the city, of course?"

Bull shook his head. "Nope. Seen no papers or television—heard no radio."

"I don't like John Masterson being among the missing," Johnson muttered depressingly. "He's too clever by far to be against us. Besides, now he's gone—"

He broke off, startled. Bull's glass had suddenly dropped from his fingers to splinter on the table top.

"Masterson!" he shouted fiercely. "Did you say Masterson?"

"Sure, but what—"

"That's the guy that framed me ten years ago!" Bull stood breathing hard, veins swelling angrily on his

thick neck. He went on talking swiftly, half to himself. "If there's any menace around those Azores, he'll be in it, sure as fate. But by Heaven, what a chance to get him! I was trying to figure some way, and now—"

"You'll never reach the Azores," Johnson proclaimed drearily. "Look what's happened to airplanes—and they won't use space-ships for the same reason."

"No?" Bull laughed thickly. "We'll damn well see whether a space-ship can get there or not. It won't be a lily skin at the controls; it'll be me—Bull Cassell!"

He spat the eloquence of his assertion, then with a grim nod of farewell, he strode amidst the groups of figures to the outer doors. . . .

CHAPTER III

THE GIRL FROM THE JEWEL

LIFE felt good again to Bull as he entered his space-machine at the grounds. He had a purpose once more—a motivating vengeance.

Quickly, he closed the air-lock and settled to the controls. The powerful rocket tubes roared and he went off in a streaking line of exhaust into the night sky, curved high atop the huge bulk of Great New York, then sped seaward with ever-mounting velocity. In using his space-machine, he had certain advantages—terrific speed and the opportunity to gain a height denied to ordinary aircraft, excepting the balloons of the stratosphere police. Thus it was that he zoomed upward to a ten-mile height before streaking like a silver bullet out across the heaving gray of the Atlantic.

It was impossible to see the Azores

at such a height and in darkness, but his numerous instruments, infallible to a hair's breadth, told him exactly when he had covered the 2,000-mile stretch. Then he started to dip, exhaust throttled to minimum.

The air whined against the window sockets; he opened his large mouth and let forth a bellowing scream to ease the body tension created by his plummet-like drop—then he flattened the machine out, wiped a trickle of blood from between his lips with the back of his hairy hand. His keen eyes stared through the observation window.

There were lights on the Azores. He could see them distinctly as a haze of twisting dots . . . and he too had been seen! His vessel became abruptly hot as the edge of a powerful energy beam atop an invisible tower below scraped the bottom plates—then he was zigzagging with brilliant skill through the occasional clouds, moving at such a stupendous pace that he was an impossible target.

As he traveled, he caught glimpses of things he could not understand—of flood-lit machinery working busily on the south island, of immense globes resembling bathyspheres being hauled from the saline depths by cables depending from long-armed cranes. He dared not linger to watch, for fear of destruction. Accordingly, he swung around and shot downwards to the quietest portion of the island, dropped lightly on the shore.

With grim movements, he locked the controls, then patted his flame pistol.

"Now, John Masterson, this is where you get what's coming to you!" he murmured. "You'll come back with me to the authorities and

give a full explanation for everything, including that frame-up. . . .”

HE PULLED open the vessel's air-lock and stepped to the exterior. The warm moist air clung like a wet blanket about him. To his right were innumerable metal huts of all shapes and sizes, brightly lit by an illumination that he could swear was cold light—still unbound by the scientists of 2714.

For a moment, he stood frowning, then glanced up at the lofty tower far above him. Evidently, his landing had not been seen. Chuckling to himself, he went slowly forward along the shore line, hiding behind occasional rocks, little by little gaining the vantage point of mechanical operations he had seen from the air.

He gazed in utter bewilderment. His first guess had not been wrong. The globes were bathyspheres, of immensely tough metal; with steady regularity, they descended into the ocean, ascending again within a few minutes. There were other machines, too, resembling gigantic dredging machines, constantly plunging mighty scoops to unguessable depths which arose perpetually amidst boilings of muddy water.

In charge of the operations were four men, none of them recognizable by face, all of them remarkably well built and around middle age. They were attired in curious tight-fitting clothing and moved with a certain efficiency and purpose, controlling the operations of the machinery by a collection of flood-lit switchboards erected on metal pillars imbedded in solid rock.

Bull turned slowly to look around him. As far as he could see, both on this island and the others, there were evidences of industry and super-science beyond his comprehen-

sion—almost resembling, in efficiency at least, the highly intelligent work of Martian scientists. But then the Martians were ugly brutes, nor had they any desire or need for Earth conquest. It could not mean that.

“Damned if I—” he began muttering, then he stopped short and clamped his lips shut as something prodded him sharply in the small of his back.

“Keep your hands off your gun and stand up!” The voice was masculine, very clear and distinct.

Muttering under his breath, Bull obeyed, raising his hands—stood staring fiercely in the cold light at a massive man of uncertain age, almost god-like in his blonde handsomeness, attired in a tight one-piece garment of dark purple.

“Strangers are not welcome on these islands,” he announced coldly. “Unfortunately, we missed you with the energy disrupters, but the ultimate result will be similar.”

“Yeah?” Bull's eyes narrowed; his powerful muscles quivered in the desire to act. “Who the blazes are you, anyway? Where are the engineers and scientists that came here? Masterson especially.”

A brief icy smile crossed the man's face. “In common with the others, he was put to death,” he answered implacably. “We alone are in control here. Once the engineers and scientists finished their hypnotically produced tasks, we exterminated them. A new dynasty has arisen, my friend, to take up the old threads where we dropped them.”

“What old threads? What are you talking about?”

“That is not your concern. You will be imprisoned pending the pleasure of our leader. Forward!”

Bull hesitated and clenched his upraised fists, but he was wise enough

to refrain from action. That complicated gun in his captor's iron-steady hand was no weapon to trifle with; it was obviously far more deadly than any flame pistol. . . . He turned awkwardly and to the accompaniment of various proddings wound his way in and out between the lighted metal shelters, noting as he passed that they were stored with all manner of amazing machinery.

Some were veritable power houses utilizing the ocean for a continuous source of energy. Just glimpses, but they impressed on Bull's mind that same conviction of science beyond his understanding.

Then, at a command from his captor, he stepped inside one of the buildings and found himself finally in the gloom of a great cage-like affair. Before he was allowed to turn around, his flame gun was whipped from his belt and the open end of the cage clanged shut.

"You will be studied from a distance by our ruler," came his captor's cold voice. It will then be decided what shall be done with you."

"I can hardly wait," Bull growled sourly, and he watched bitterly as the door of the building slammed, leaving him in total darkness.

BULL could not be sure how much time passed before his moody reflections inside the cage were finally interrupted. He sprang swiftly from his squatting position on the dusty floor as the shed door quietly opened and shut again. Followed the sound of light footfalls.

"Who's there?" he demanded sharply, tugging at the cage's tough bars. "Don't crawl around there! Show yourself! Give me what's comin' to me and get it over with, you lily-bellied—"

"Ssssh!" came an impatient in-

junction, and he noted in astonishment that it was a woman's tone. "Don't make such a noise!"

"Who—who are you?" he whispered, straining his eyes—and he descried a dim form moving in the gloom.

"I'm Lifania. Remember me?"

Bull puzzled. "Damned if I do; never met a dame of that name . . ."

He became silent, aware of her lithe body faintly visible by the cage door. In a moment the door was open. Gratified, he walked through the opening and her soft hand closed on his wrist.

"I'm releasing you for two reasons," she breathed softly. "Just listen—you fool!" she burst out in alarm as he unthinkingly flamed a match in his fingernails. Instantly she dashed it to the floor and stamped on it.

But in that instant, Bull had seen that she was vividly blonde and apparently young, attired in softly rustling blue silk, a golden band gleaming in the halo of her fair hair. These evidences stirred no remembrance in his memory—only an appreciation of her charm.

"Say, you're the goods!" he confided. "What about—"

"Will you keep quiet?" she pleaded earnestly. "I'm doing this because you once rescued me. I got trapped in a street drain when I was in miniature size. You pulled me out. I recognized your face tonight when my father had the infra-red screens tuned on you for the purpose of study. Remember me?"

"No; I guess you've been dreaming," he answered. "I pulled you out of a drain? When?"

"Some time ago. I was joining my people and I got into the drain by accident—I should have looked where I was going. . . . But I can't

tell you more here. Any minute now my father will have you released, and that means your finish. We've got to get away from these islands while your space-ship is still handy. I made sure that it's still where you left it before coming here."

He chuckled grimly. "So it ought to be. I locked the controls."

"All the better. Come on. . . ."

Bull hesitated on the questions that naturally rose to his lips, but before he could utter them, the girl had practically pulled him to the flood-lit exterior. For a time, she crouched in the shadows cast by the shed, looking about her, then with a little nod of her fair head, she began to advance.

Little by little, sometimes dropping flat on their faces, they managed to circumvent the occasional men and women they encountered. Dodging around the buildings, slipping through jet-black shadows, they at last gained the shore and clambered swiftly into the space-machine. Once within, Bull quickly twisted the air-lock screws.

"Where to?" he asked briefly, swinging to the control board.

"Set your course for the moon," the girl instructed in a curiously resolute tone. "I'll tell you why later."

"The moon!" Bull stared at her beautiful face for a moment, then he shrugged.

"O. K., sister, if that's how you want it. . . ."

He unlocked the controls, clamped his hairy hands down on the main switches. With a terrific zooming rush of power, the vessel catapulted upwards into the night sky, cleaved the stratosphere and hurtled into the outer moon-ridden dark.

Only when his course was definite-

ly set on the gleaming satellite did he set the robot steering in commission, then turned to the girl with questioning eyes.

She was seated now on the wall bunk, half smiling, half serious, swinging her shapely legs. She had the oddest Grecian appearance about her, as though she had been lifted bodily from the classics.

"Well, suppose you tell me a few things?" Bull questioned, setting the floor-gravitators to work. "Suppose you tell me what you and your playmates are doing on the Azores?—where you came from in the first place?"

"It's not a very difficult story," she answered quietly. "And to clear up one particular point, I might as well tell you that I learned English, in common with the others of my race, in a trifle under two weeks by the expedient of mind-reading. You see, my people and I—the forty of us at least who are at present on the Earth, came originally from a block of gems you brought from the moon."

"You—you what?" Bull yelled. "You don't mean that those gems which I found melted—"

"Exactly that. We were inside each gem in miniature form, like—like flies in amber. One night when you were intoxicated, you unwittingly saved me from death. Since you don't remember the incident, it doesn't matter—but it enabled me, on seeing your face in the screens, to remember you had a reliable nature. What matters is that your whole civilization is in danger, threatened with extinction by my people. That menace will grow to invincible proportions when the rest of my people come from the moon, and are enlarged."

BULL still stared. "After all, Lif, I'm only a plain man of space," he said ruefully. "I don't get your angle at all."

"You will soon," she said steadily. "Actually, my race is from the city your legends call Atlantis. We lived in that city thousands of years ago before a gigantic rupture in the Atlantean continent—which was then volcanic—produced tremendous changes. At that time we were the most scientific race on the Earth—the virtual masters of it. The coming of the disaster demanded that we must leave hurriedly. The nearest place of safety was the moon. Once inside the satellite, protected by artificial air and warmth, we could continue our lives until such time as the earthly tumults and earthquakes ceased. So we buried our most important treasures in Atlantis in sealed containers, incorrodible by sea water and able to stand terrific pressures. The metal also was semi-magnetic, detectable by special instruments no matter to what depth it sunk in the passage of time. Then we set out for the moon just before the city was overwhelmed. . . ."

"And then?" Bull questioned thoughtfully.

"Well, we domiciled ourselves in the core of the moon, erecting all manner of machinery within an enormous central cavern which must be standing even today exactly as we left it. But we were fighting a losing battle—one that led to no purpose. Another hundred years would see the end of our air supply. We debated whether it was better to spend that hundred years trying to prevent the seepage of air into the void, passing through the metal of our central home and thereafter through the pumice rocks of the moon—or whether it would be bet-

ter to call a halt until something new should happen. Study of Earth revealed it still in the throes of great changes, overrun by hordes of savages, survivors of the fine races overwhelmed in the cataclysm. No other planet was suitable for us, and so we came to our decision.

"We possessed machines to produce contraction by narrowing the electronic orbits of any organic or inorganic body. We had also a peculiar type of crystal found on the moon—identical in many ways to the crystals that form the rays and streaks of the main craters. These crystals resemble gems so long as they remain in an airless state, but after exposure to oxygen for a period of roughly ninety-six hours, they break down and melt, mingling with the oxygen and visibly melting into shapeless masses.

"It was decided that we would leave our laboratory sealed until such a time as it would be needed again, and pass into a state of suspended animation until some chance brought us to life to take up the threads. We placed ourselves in the hands of robots, who had full instructions as to what to do. We were all shortened to an inch in height, clothed just as we were; magnetic fields rendered us dead yet alive, emptied our bodies of all life substance, leaving enough chemical deposits only to start life going if we ever contacted normal atmosphere again. Our clothes, too, were similarly treated. The crystals were divided by fusion, their interiors hollowed out, and our bodies placed inside them and sealed up—gem-like coffins. Then, still carrying out their orders, the robots took the whole lot of gems and affixed them to the wall of an upper cavern by cohesive powers. Putting them there made it probable that some day they

would be found; deep down in the moon, there was hardly a chance.

"You know the rest. After thousands of years, we were resurrected by you. We hypnotized several Earth people to make machines for us and domiciled ourselves on the Azores so as to be close to the site of Atlantis for dredging purposes in order to recover our treasures. You understand?"

Bull nodded slowly. "Yeah—ninety-six hours would be just about the time that passed between my finding the gems and them breaking open in my bedroom. But where does the menace come in?"

"From my father. He was among the jewels you brought to Earth and is now making his final plans. But he can't put them into full effect without the remainder of the lunar jewels containing the rest of our people. I know what that means. My father is a ruthless and brilliant scientist; he will stop at nothing to bring about the return of Atlantean dominance. Our science is still far in excess of yours. I for one do not agree with my father and never have. I'll go to any lengths to stop him. Our race has run its course and there is no excuse for the subjection of a happy thriving world. I saved you for one very good reason, besides gratitude. You have a space-ship, and only you could unlock the controls. Also you'll have the strength to swing open a piece of wall existing in the moon jewel cavern. Single-handed, with so slight a gravity, I could not do it. To you it will be simple. I intend, briefly, to destroy the rest of my race and all the machines that are still buried in the moon. . . ."

Bull grimaced, glanced out of the window at the fast-receding Earth.

"Sounds ambitious! Pity is I

haven't my flame gun with me with which to do it."

"You won't need it," she answered steadily. "The plan I have in mind is perfect. It will not only mean the destruction of all the moon contains, but it will cause the Azores to be wiped off the face of the Earth."

"Suppose your old man chases you into space?"

"He can't. We haven't built space-machines yet. . . ."

Bull gave it up. There was something almost frighteningly purposeful about this newly risen maid from an age long forgotten. Quietly he turned to the controls, took away the robot steerage, and settled himself to guide the flyer towards the enlarging moon.

CHAPTER IV.

SACRIFICE

DURING the moonward journey, the strange girl spoke but little; she seemed entirely absorbed in her own grim speculations. It struck Bull as odd that she never once attempted to eat or sleep until she casually explained she and her people had overcome such primitive necessities ages before.

Bull himself slept at intervals and always woke to find her lost in thought—then as the pull of the moon became evident, she began to issue brisk directions.

Not that they were really needed. Bull brought his vessel down near the Appenines once more—clearly the jewel cavern was to be their first point of call.

He was right. He loaned the girl a spare space-suit and the pair of them headed across the blinding sun-drenched lava desert, gaining the

jewel cavern fifteen minutes later. Once within its depths, the girl headed to its furthest wall and studied it for a while in the light of her helmet torch. Then her voice came through the phones.

"This is the movable portion just here—on a natural pivot—but it will take your strength to move it. . . ."

She moved to a portion slightly rougher than the rest and pressed her shoulder against it—without avail. Then Bull swaggered forward, but even he had to add his weight to the girl's against the weak gravity before the barrier gave. Then an immense oval pivoted around and left beyond a tunnel leading into the honeycomb that comprised the moon's interior.

Still governed by unflagging purpose, the girl led the way, head-lamp shining on the pumice walls. She and Bull moved rapidly against the light gravity, traversed tunnel after tunnel, sometimes allowing themselves to float hundreds of feet down seemingly bottomless shafts.

Once Bull found himself conjecturing on how they were going to get back, until it occurred to him that perhaps the girl had no intention of them ever getting back! He could not decide whether that prospect was alarming or not.

Then his speculations were finally cut short as he and the girl entered the last and lowest cavern, nearly at the core of the satellite. With clumsy gloved hands, she operated a complex mechanism set deep in the rocky wall. There was no sound in that airless emptiness, but at length a portion of the wall slid back to reveal beyond a thick metal valve.

Presently this, too, slid aside, enabling them to enter, by means of three air-locks, the incredible machine interior beyond—a mighty

natural cavern shielded by a tremendous dome of absolutely incorrodible and pressure-resisting metal.

For a time, the girl fussed around, operating strange levers and valves—then, suddenly, light gushed forth from bowls in the lofty ceiling.

HER voice came through the phones. "We can take our space-suits off in here. Air pressure, warmth and light are all normal."

She set the example, and once she was unencumbered, set in action machinery which slid a mighty wall of metal across the closed door valve.

Bull stared about him in utter bewilderment. That such machinery could exist in the core of a dead hulk like the moon was something he could hardly believe. Machines were everywhere, from wall to wall of the great place, covering a floor area of some five acres. Much of the machinery he did not understand, nor did the girl attempt to explain it—until she led the way to two vast metal pillars supporting hooped magnets of truly enormous proportions, both of them connected by snaky wires to lensed devices resembling supertelevision projectors. Beyond these again, connected by further myriad wires, were machines which Bull recognized as transformers, armatures, dynamos, and electrical equipment transcending the scope of his limited knowledge.

"You've heard of cosmic rays, of course?" the girl asked suddenly.

"I've done more—I've felt 'em," he answered laconically. "The damned things penetrate eighteen to thirty feet of lead out in space."

"Quite right, which is one reason why on the moon here, even at this depth, they penetrate freely and are unimpeded by atmosphere. These two pillared magnets are cosmic

wave attractors. They gather cosmic waves and pass them on to the transformers and other equipment. After that, they pass into the projectors and focus directly into the center of this globe through specially designed apertures."

She indicated the enormous sphere that reposed between the two projectors, composed of some metal of almost unimaginable hardness.

"The effect of the cosmic rays is to produce terrific heat such as exists only in the core of the sun itself," the girl went on. "It is produced by increasing the pace of electron change to the point of actual coincidence with the nucleus. Inside the globe is a matrix, designed to hold a small piece of metal. As the metal is increasingly heated, the globe also contracts by the passage of an electrical field through its oddly fashioned atoms. It continues to contract with inconceivable power, producing a pressure that easily withstands the actual utter annihilation of copper itself. . . . So far, my people have never really annihilated matter; they have only used the device for the fusing of very tough metals—such as the metal which gives this cavern its support. They refrained from absolute annihilation of matter because they knew it would bring about the very thing I'm hoping for."

"What's that?" Bull questioned—and she smiled vaguely; asked an odd question, yet somehow half expected.

"Are you afraid of death, Bull Cassell?"

"Me? Hell, no! I've been playing with it all my life. Why?"

"Because if you are, you'd better head back for the surface and leave me to work alone. After all, you've done your part of the work."

Being human Bull was slightly afraid, but to admit it to a slim Atlantean girl with immeasurable scientific knowledge and courage? Lord, no! Besides, he mightn't find his way back anyhow. . . .

"Better get started, sister," he growled. "I'm not heading back."

She said nothing, only smiled gratefully. Bull watched while she opened the giant globe and made adjustments to the complicated matrix within, fixing inside it a selected four-inch square cube of copper.

Satisfied, she clamped the sphere shut and for a time contemplated the foci of the projectors, made infinitely delicate adjustments—then at last threw in the massive bladed power switches. The peculiar transformers and dynamos hummed a mounting song of steady power, concentrating two faintly visible violet beams through the sphere's special apertures, focusing identically on the cube within.

Bull watched interestedly, and after a while the view through the open inspection plate revealed the block as a blinding mass of flame.

"Two thousand degrees Centigrade," she said briefly. "The pressure, as it increases, will achieve that of two million tons to the square inch. That and the heat will destroy the copper utterly, blast its matter right out of being. . . . Here, you'll be needing these." She handed him a pair of heavily smoked goggles.

IN SILENCE, they continued watching. Beating waves of tremendous heat began to enfold them. The huge machine cavern became intolerably hot as the temperature inside the contracting globe rose to terrific heights.

With startling speed, the temperature rose to 6000° Cent. The thing

in the matrix was no longer safe to gaze upon, even through glasses.

Bull waited tensely, only glancing sideways ever and again at that searing, unimaginably hot piece of copper. Higher rose the temperature, switching over automatically to the tens of thousandths scale. The flaring energy that had been copper was forced to give up battering radiations of X-rays, and then gamma rays.

Bull turned and glanced at the girl's face. She endeavored to speak, but her voice did not carry over the searing, crackling din of inconceivable heat and pressures.

The copper was being entirely annihilated. The nuclei of the very atoms themselves were collapsing—protons and electrons being forced conceivable heat and pressure.

The thousandths thermometer stopped at maximum, but the heat still rose—into the millions of degrees, building up into the inconceivably furious energy existing only in the cores of the hottest stars.

It must have ranged somewhere around 150 million degrees Centigrade when something abruptly happened. Bull only glimpsed it for a moment. At that identical point, the matter of the copper ceased to be, was changed absolutely into pure energy . . . but with it went the vast compression globe. Titanic shiftings of matter itself followed as a literal wedge of new energy was forced into the normal structure of matter gathered on every hand.

Instantly, following immutable laws, that matter partook also of the new energy—shifted and changed like the unstable presentations of a dream, stirred by new forces, newly released energies that ordered the things of existence to change.

Bull knew nothing of these things, but Lifania did. She had known this

would happen and was smiling happily, peacefully . . . but before she could utter a word, the change was suddenly complete. The new energy abruptly assimilated itself with the basic electrons of the surroundings.

Bull felt his body snap backwards and then flow weirdly, form into fusion with suddenly slithering, crawling surroundings! Metals, rocks, lights—all of them were moving into a new union. The Atlantean girl, still smiling, was flowing too like golden honey, all shape and form and clothing one hideous plasma. . . .

And beyond was the darkness for her and Bull.

But the thing the girl had started went on. It changed the entire matter formation of the moon, forced it to conform to the new energy level.

Rocks, maria and mountain peaks sloughed and drifted into one another, changed the satellite into a globe 1000 miles less in diameter but of materials balancing exactly those of old in a smaller compass. But it did one thing—sealed and crushed forever all traces of any life, machinery or science.

On Earth, too, the girl had foreseen correctly. The wild changes of the moon during its metamorphosis wrought tidal havoc and earthquake in all directions. The American continent was rocked from end to end and thousands died in the smashing buildings—but the survivors far outnumbered the dead, as would certainly not have been the case had Atlantean science gained dominance. . . .

As for the Azores—when the upheavals subsided and air and sea traffic resumed, it was reported that the Azores had utterly disappeared into the Atlantic, taking with them all traces of those malignant scientists unwilling to admit that their age belonged to a past long dead. . . .

The God That Science Made

by LLOYD ARTHUR ESHBACH

Barney Kerigan and Dr. Whitney, deep in the jungles of Brazil, find themselves at the mercy of the mad Cabral and his evil monster-god that science made! What is the unholy relationship between the man and the beast?



The monster leaped high into the air, hissing shrilly.

THE last faint whisper of the eery cry died in the heavy air, and the high-pitched multitude of jungle noises burst forth with renewed vigor. Several

bright-colored periquitos rose from the nearer wall of vegetation and flew swiftly downstream, screaming defiantly.

Barney Kerigan rested his paddle

on the gunwale of the narrow canoe and half turned toward the man squatting behind him.

"D'you ever hear anything like that before, Doc?" he demanded. "Sounded like a first-class imitation of a banshee, if you ask me." He dipped his paddle into the muddy water and drew it back with a powerful sweep of broad, muscular shoulders. "Guess I'd turn an' run if I bumped into something that talked that kind of language," he added solemnly. "Be scared stiff!"

Dr. Aaron Whitney cleared his throat, and there was a hint of annoyance in his high, thin voice. "No, Bernard," he replied, "I can't say I have—and I thought I was reasonably familiar with South American fauna."

Dr. Whitney paused, and Barney could almost see his eyes narrowing behind his horn-rimmed spectacles, his lips pursing in thought. In about ten seconds, he'd launch into a dry-as-dust and academic dissertation upon something or other.

"I think we'll see it around the next bend, whatever it is," he interposed hastily. "Have your gun ready—and see that mine's all set, too, if you don't mind. Maybe it's a parrot with a cold, and we might be able to get a shot at it."

The canoe leaped forward under the driving power of Barney's paddle, skimming the muddy waters of the Rio Moju. The frowning walls of Brazilian jungle crawled past them, heading downstream. They swept around the bend—and abruptly Barney's paddle trailed forgotten in the river. He stared in rigid amazement, a muttered, "Damn!" on his lips.

Directly ahead, not more than fifteen yards distant, lay a soft, muddy sand-flat like a patch of brown cor-

duroy ribbed with cast-up river debris. At its nearer end cowered a naked native in a paralysis of terror. Heavy thongs about his arms and waist bound him securely to a tall, thick stake. Above him towered a monster like a throw-back to some prehistoric world, or a grotesque product of reptilian evolution.

Barney's startled eyes surveyed it from its huge three-toed feet to the top of its flat, horny head ten feet from the ground. It resembled nothing more than an unnatural cross between a kangaroo and a lizard. Its powerful, curved legs, its stubby, massive tail arched behind it, its baggy paunch, its short, muscular, semi-human arms—all suggested a huge kangaroo. But there all resemblance ended. The broad head with its wide, fang-lined alligator's mouth, its staring, yellow, reptilian eyes overshadowed by ridges of horny hide—the stubby paws with three webbed and taloned fingers—the claw-tipped bird's feet, webbed like the hands—they were definitely reptilian. So were the blue-gray armor plate of overlapping horn which covered neck and shoulders, back and tail and limbs—the wrinkled, leathery hide of dirty yellow which covered the protruding belly.

The brute stared fixedly at the native, its head swaying back and forth, almost as though it were deciding where to begin. Barney could see the puffy paunch rise and fall with slow, steady breathing. He could almost feel the tensing of that tremendous body. The hair at the base of his skull was rising over crisping skin, while a strange numbness settled upon him, checking his thoughts.

Almost without realizing their significance, he saw four canoes about two hundred yards upstream, their

occupants watching the sand-flat, while with slowly moving paddles they held their position against the current watching a sacrifice!

THE tableau held for dragging moments; then Barney heard the excited tones of Aaron Whitney, Ph.D., and his faculties leaped back to sudden life.

"Remarkable, Bernard! Truly amazing! A monstrous survival of prehistoric times. One of the—"

"My gun, Doc!" Barney snapped hoarsely, reaching swiftly behind him. "We'll blast its eyes out!"

The touch of cold steel felt reassuring, and he whipped the powerful Enfield to his shoulder and fired. At the same instant, a shot roared behind him, and the monster leaped high into the air, hissing shrilly. Great cables of leg muscles tautened, and it sprang for the river. While they emptied their weapons into the fleeing reptile, it floundered beneath the surface, disappearing into the red-stained waters.

A faint, incredulous, thankful cry rose from the man at the stake; and from the canoes upstream came another cry, wrath-filled. A single report, like the snap of a flag in the breeze, echoed over the river, and a puff of smoke drifted away from the central canoe.

Barney Kerigan grinned broadly, as though at an excellent joke. "My, my," he said slowly, "it looks as though they didn't want us to shoot that little alligator! Hope they don't want to fight—I'm always scared of fights."

Dr. Whitney snorted with exasperation. "Alligator, B e r n a r d ! Don't be absurd! There is little or no similarity between this creature and the genus Caiman, the South American alligator. The monster,

whose very existence, I must confess, seems impossible, is quite obviously a survival of a primitive life form. Both it and the alligator, I'll concede, belong to the lizard family, but—"

"I'll meet the family later, Doc," Barney interrupted. "Right now, I'm going to cut that brown boy loose." They had been drifting slowly downstream; with short, powerful strokes, Barney sped the canoe to the sand-flat. As he leaped out, he slipped a couple of cartridges into the Enfield and snapped:

"Keep an eye on the bleachers, Doc. Some of those birds may start throwing pop bottles."

Barney's eyes met those of the native as he bent forward to sever his bonds. The man was almost speechless, but his gaze expressed volumes of gratitude.

"It's okay, buddy," said Barney. "You'll be out of this spot in a split second." His keen-edged hunting knife slashed the thongs and the coboclo stepped free.

He crouched for an instant, chattering excitedly in a staccato dialect the tall American could not understand. His words were accompanied by swift gestures upstream. Barney glanced over his shoulder and turned hastily. The canoes were bearing down on them like a miniature war fleet, bristling with spears and machetes. A lone white man squatted in a central craft, armed with a rifle.

"If they get too frisky, Doc," Barney called, "plug the white man."

"Never fear, Bernard," replied the Doctor gently.

The water splashed behind Barney, and glancing over his shoulder, he saw the smooth brown body of the native cutting the current with powerful overhand strokes, heading shoreward. His eyes narrowed. That took nerve. The river was alive with

needle-toothed piranhas; and only moments before, the monster had disappeared into the water's depths. Only a driving fear or a deadly need could cause a man to take such a chance. He hoped the native would make it—but right now he'd have to do something himself.

He leaped behind the partial shelter of the heavy stake, aimed his rifle at the bulky figure of the white man and waited. The canoes checked a dozen feet beyond the sand-flat and the white man stood up, his rifle held in one hand, pointing skyward. There was a smile on his thin lips, and Barney decided he must mean it as a smile of welcome. A shot roared toward the heavens; and dropping his weapon into the canoe, the stranger exclaimed:

"Buenas dias, Senhors! Mi casa e suas ordenas!"

Whitney answered in Portuguese and there followed a rapid interchange of conversation. Barney watched intently, keeping a firm grip on his weapon. He didn't understand Portuguese—but he did know men—and he didn't like the looks of this heavy Brazilian and his soapy smile.

Funny! He looked strangely familiar, yet he knew beyond question of a doubt that he had never seen him before. Suddenly it flashed upon him. The man reminded him of the reptile they'd shot! The awkward, massive body—the flat head and wedge-shaped face; eyes like golden marbles—a little nose with wide nostrils that moved with every breath. His manner was suave, insidious.

"Say," he interruptedly finally, coming from behind the stake, "How 'bout letting me in on this? What's the dope?"

The stranger turned quickly, with a thin-lipped smile. "Si, senhor! I am mos' sorr'. I jus' tell your frien'

I am so glad you come. These cobocles, they wan' sacr'fice man who do some wrong. They call reever-god. Me—Ludovico da Silva Cabral—I am jus' wan—I can do notheeng! I try stop them—but they say no, so—" He shrugged. "So I glad you come."

"Yeah," Barney growled, "so glad that you just had to take a pot shot at us! Or was it my case of color blindness coming back to annoy me?"

The Brazilian's strange eyes widened in amazed wonder, almost popping from his swarthy head. "But no, senhor! I jus' shoot the welcome! Now I wan' you stay weeth me!"

"Of course, Bernard," Aaron Whitney, Ph.D., interposed, "you know of the custom. It was merely a gesture of welcome. And there's nothing unusual about it. I remember—"

"Oh, sure, sure," Barney agreed hastily, "you told me about that. It's okay with me—except that I want to sleep closest to the window. I always did like lots of fresh air at night." He bowed to Senhor Ludovico da Silva Cabral. "Lead on, MacTavish!"

Moments later they were again headed upstream, the native canoes leading the way. Barney and Doctor Whitney had resumed their customary positions in their own boat, and everything appeared calm and peaceful on the Rio Moju.

BUT Barney Kerigan's thoughts were anything but calm and peaceful. There was cold fury in his heart, and cold hatred stared out of his narrowed eyes. Senhor Ludovico da Silva Cabral! That was the name of the man on whose plantation his brother Terry had been staying when he had last been heard from—

the name of the man whom Terry had mistrusted, the man who had reported his death—by fever.

Barney's eyes bored into the broad back of Senhor Cabral. He'd come to Brazil to learn the answers to two questions—and he believed they rode in the canoe directly ahead!

. . . There had been several letters from Terry, short, terse notes which said little but meant a lot. The first had told of his meeting Cabral and had hinted of a tremendous discovery which Terry believed he had made—a discovery which would put his big game hunt with a movie camera in the background—though he'd had luck in that line, too. The next note had mentioned some difficulties with the Brazilian, the fact that Terry had staked a mining claim on the very border of Cabral's property, and the belief that his discovery would be everything he hoped. A third note had followed, accompanied by a small, square packet. The latter had contained a reel of motion picture film, and a lead box filled with fragments of some tar-colored mineral. The box had cracked in transit, the film had been fogged, and the black mineral, when analyzed, had proved to be pitchblend, the radium ore, incredibly rich in the more than precious element. Radium emanations had fogged the film . . . And in the letter accompanying the film, Terry had told of some of the most amazing shots he'd ever taken, and of a horrible practice of the Brazilian—something so repulsive as to be almost incredible. Indeed, he had not described the practice because it was too brutal for belief. Instead, he had sent the film. By way of explanation, he had said he had happened upon the scene while unarmed, and had been powerless to interfere. What that scene had been, Barney

did not know, but he had a damned good idea, now!—a sacrifice to a monstrous reptile.

As for those two questions whose answers he sought—first, he wanted to know just how Terry had died. He could have died of fever—but he'd been expecting foul play—and he might have been killed by Cabral. He'd find out, or else! And the other question—that tremendous discovery about which he had hinted—radium—there was something there that also needed explaining.

The high-pitched voice of Dr. Whitney came softly to his ears. "Bernard, I've been thinking about that reptile—and it annoys me. Its very existence is an impossibility. Its race has been extinct for incalculable centuries. Then, too, if it isn't even a sane survival of a prehistoric life form. It seems to belong to the dinosaur family, resembling, on a small scale, the Tyrannosaur—but it has some anatomical features utterly foreign to that creature. As I recall it, the dinosaurs were not aquatic—as this monster is. According to records—"

"Pardon, doc," Barney interrupted "but can't you save the records till we get back to civilization? Maybe we can pick up a talking machine somewhere, cheap, an' really do justice to them!"

Dr. Whitney grunted disdainfully, but any remark which he might have made was cut short by the exclamation of Senhor Ludovico da Silva Cabral, drifting close to shore.

"Thees way, Senhors! We 'ave reach' my barracao!"

The home of the Brazilian lay on the top of a conical mount thrusting its head above the surrounding country—a strategically chosen position, high above the river, and probably

higher than water level during the rainy season.

Senhor Cabral sprang from his canoe, followed by the natives. With a single guttural word, he dismissed them, and they vanished like smoke into the thicket. More slowly, Barney Kerigan and Dr. Whitney stepped to the sloping shore. A rough pathway had been cut through the jungle, half skirting the hillock, and climbing steadily toward the house. Carrying their equipment—guns, machetes, medicine chest, and the rest—they followed the Brazilian.

Cabral kept up a continual flow of conversation, chiefly with Dr. Whitney, apparently working overtime in an attempt to make his visitors feel at home. Several times, the Doctor referred to the thought uppermost in his mind, the dinosaur, but the Brazilian smoothly side-stepped every question. Barney said little, listening frequently to their host's voluble wordage, his attention occupied mainly with a strangely oppressive silence which seemed to brood over the jungle like the wings of some great black bird of ill omen.

It was odd, but when he closed his eyes and ignored the heat, he could almost imagine himself walking through a silent pine forest back in the States—no buzz of insect life, no whirr of wings or bird notes, no rustling of the underbrush. It was as though something monstrous had crawled through this place and had swept it free of animal life. Barney again saw a vision of the dinosaur towering above its victim, and he glanced sharply into the shadowed thicket, intertwined with bushrope and creepers, matted into a solid mass of vegetation. Damned unhealthy looking place—but a place made to order for Cabral.

Once within the confines of the

Brazilian's barracao—a dwelling unusually spacious for the Amazon wilderness, with strong bamboo construction and a half-dozen large rooms—they sat and talked over cups of black coffee until the shadows of dusk stalked over the jungle. Barney spoke infrequently, sitting in a darkened corner smoking his pipe. Finally Cabral showed them to a room where they could fasten their hammocks, and they turned in for the night, Barney, jokingly, taking the position nearest the window.

They had lain for dragging minutes in utter silence, when Barney spoke guardedly.

"D' you know, I've been thinking—" He paused, straining his ears for a faint rustling sound he thought he had heard outside the window, like someone brushing against the wall.

"What were you thinking, Bernard?" Aaron Whitney inquired. "Though I'll admit the fact in itself is quite worth mentioning."

"I've been thinking it was a good thing for us that that alligator didn't show fight. I always was afraid of alligators. Especially big ones."

Dr. Whitney snorted his disgust. "I suggest we sleep, Bernard," he said. "Tomorrow, obviously, is another day, and we shall need all the energy we can muster. According to Dr. Gratz, expert on the subject, the human body—"

"Okay," Barney exclaimed ruefully. "Let's sleep."

A CREATURE FROM HELL

BARNEY KERIGAN opened his eyes and stared drowsily toward a palm-thatched roof. He frowned, grimacing with self-disgust. He didn't make a habit of dreaming, and he'd just had the

most vivid dream he had ever experienced. He had seen himself tied to that stake on the island in the middle of the Rio Moju, and a huge reptile had come up out of the river to crouch a dozen feet away. Only this had been an unusual reptile, for its head had been the head of Senhor Ludovico da Silva Cabral! Clammy sort of dream.

He sat up in the hammock—and a sudden involuntary chill tingled his spine. Not six feet away sat that same Senhor Ludovico da Silva Cabral, watching him with unwinking, golden eyes! His jaws clicked together as he swung to the bamboo floor.

“Good morning, MacDougall!” he greeted smoothly. “Am I in time for oatmeal? Never like to be called late for breakfast. So glad you dropped in. Hospitable cuss. Nothing too good for your guests and all that.”

He heard a sound behind him, and turned to greet Dr. Aaron Whitney just sitting up in his hammock and adjusting his spectacles.

“Morning, Doc! How’d you sleep? Dream about alligators—or don’t you dream?”

He saw a look of startled question flash into Whitney’s eyes, and he lowered one eyelid warningly. Whitney’s face cleared and he smiled a drowsy smile, blinking behind his spectacles.

“Slept like the proverbial top, Bernard, my boy.”

“Buenas dias, Doctair Wheetney. Buenas dias, Senhor Bernard,” the Brazilian interrupted, smiling suavely. “Madre d’ Dios—but thees Senhor Bernard ’e talk so fas’ I can no say wan word. Breakfas’ she ees wait!”

As they followed their host into another room, Barney frowned with thought. Had Cabral tried to hypnotize them while they slept?—or

had his presence in the room been sufficient to cause that vivid dream in both his and Doc Whitney’s mind?

While they ate, Barney decided upon a course of action. He didn’t trust Cabral, not one little bit—nor did he like a stealthy, underhanded manner of fighting. Accordingly, as his first step toward a solution of the mystery surrounding Terry, he’d bring the battle out into the open. If it didn’t do anything else, it would bring about results more quickly.

“Senhor Cabral,” he began casually, though his keen eyes watched for every change of expression on the swarthy face before him, “I wonder if you could give me some information? First, I think you should know that my name is not Bernard, as Doc Whitney may have led you to believe. It’s Kerigan—Barney Kerigan. I’m trying to find out something about my brother Terry. According to letters he sent me, he once owned a strip of land bordering on your property. I haven’t heard from him in three months, and I’ve been wondering if something might not have happened to him.”

NO SURPRISE appeared on the Brazilian’s face at the revelation of Barney’s identity; indeed, his expression remained unchanged, unless there might have been a barely visible stiffening of the thread-like line of his lips.

“But, si, Senhor! Thees Terree Ker’gan—’e’s—I am mos’ sorr’—but ’e ees dead. ’E ees pass away un’er thees ver’ roof.” He shook his head sadly. “’E was mos’ good frien’—but the fever, she’s tak’ ’eem.”

Barney bowed his head. “I was afraid of something of that sort,” he said in a low voice. “It wasn’t like Terry to break off his letters without an explanation.”

"But I write you, Senhor," Cabral exclaimed, frowning, "an' tal you your broth' 'e die. The letter, she mus' 'ave been los' een mail. Four— five weeks ago I write."

Dr. Whitney cleared his throat. "South American mail service is notoriously bad, if you don't mind my saying so. I recall an incident—"

"Yeah," Barney interrupted hastily, "it must have been lost in the mails."

For several moments they ate in silence—all, that is, save the Brazilian, who ate quite noisily. Then Barney said:

"Did my brother ever mention anything to you about a discovery he had made—some valuable mineral deposit?"

Senhor Ludovico da Silva Cabral looked up in guileless wonder. "Ees that what 'e was doing? Orcheeds an' bugs I theenk eet was 'e 'unt. An' peecture 'e tak'." He shrugged, and stared down at his coffee cup with a shame-faced smirk. "Me, Ludovico da Silva Cabral, I theenk so much Senhor Terree like orcheeds, I bur' 'eem where t'ousand orcheeds grow. You weesh to see where 'e sleep?"

Barney nodded. "Yes, I'd like to. Right after breakfast, if you don't mind."

"Si, Senhor, I weel show you."

Doc Whitney took up the thread of conversation with an inquiry about reptilian life in the vicinity, and Barney gave his undivided thought to his problem. One thing was certain—the Brazilian knew more than he admitted. Bugs and orchids! That was entirely too thin. No one dug into the earth for either, and Cabral must have seen the results of Terry's labors on more than one occasion. . . . That grave offered interesting possibilities. Beside his

natural desire to see Terry's final resting place, Cabral would be leading them to his brother's strip of ground. There was a matter of four trees which Terry had mentioned in one of his letters. . . .

Breakfast finished, Senhor Ludovico da Silva Cabral led them down the hillside toward the river over the path they had ascended on the previous day. As they entered the stretch of silent forest—silent even now when everywhere else the multitude of insect noises were mounting toward their zenith—he swerved from the main path and followed another, narrower, winding its course parallel with the stream. For several minutes, they followed this path, that strange air of the unearthly, of an oddly weird and indefinable something, increasing with every passing moment. It hung over the jungle like a chill, tenuous mist—felt but unseen.

At last they halted in a little natural clearing, rock-strewn and barren. Huge boulders and scattered mounds of stone combined to form a terrain on which even the rapacious jungle growths could not find foothold. Beyond it rose a cliff, a hundred feet high, its face veiled by the orchids Cabral had mentioned. Countless gorgeous blooms in innumerable combinations of shades and colors covered every foot of the rugged surface with their parasitic glory. They were of tremendous size, radiating an unearthly beauty—a blaze of color. Yet somehow they did little to dissipate the air of eeriness which hung over the clearing. There seemed to be something queer about the cliff—and abruptly Terry realized what it was. No growth other than the orchids clung to the rock and earth; and there was no other vegetation visible on the clifftop.

The Brazilian pointed toward a wooden cross marking a comparatively level spot at the base of the cliff.

"I bur' 'eem there un'er orcheds—for 'ere I know the trees, they cannot come. 'E was my good frien'—an' 'ere on my property 'e ees close to my barracao."

Barney stared at the rude marker with mixed emotions—grief at the thought that here lay all that remained of his brother Terry, anger at Cabral's hypocrisy, and a vague and inexplicable doubt, an inability to convince himself that his brother lay in a rocky grave before him.

Cabral said softly, "I weel leave you weeth your thoughts, Senhors. I know—" He broke off sharply as a faint, shrill scream ripped through the jungle. There followed another cry, hoarse, furious—and the crack of a rifle.

"Trouble weeth the men!" Cabral exclaimed angrily, leaping toward the path. "Eef you weel wait—" His words trailed after him as he vanished into the thicket.

Doc Whitney cleared his throat. "A very excitable individual, if I may be permitted the observation—very excitable indeed." He moved over to the cliff wall and looked closely at the veil of orchids. Suddenly he exclaimed in excitement:

"Bernard, these are the queerest orchids I have ever seen! They seem to have made their own laws of growth. Here's one with six anthers—and here's one that has no column at all!" Whitney's excitement grew. "They seem to be mutants, Bernard — completely new life forms!"

"Interesting," Barney said mechanically.

"It is, most assuredly," the scientist continued, "and I believe I know

the cause of their mutation. It's the radium in the rock! I'm reminded of the work of Dieffenbach who, with X-rays, caused mutation in fruit flies. The same thing has occurred here—a sudden change of species caused by radium emanations.

"There is a possibility that I am wrong, of course, but I see no other logical explanation. It is true that, ordinarily, radium ore is as inactive as so much granite; but at the same time, it has always been my belief that an ore sufficiently rich in radium, thorium, and palladium could emit radio-active particles in quantities large enough to exert an influence on its surroundings. Now—"

"All right, Doc," Barney interrupted Whitney's tirade. "I have more important things to think about than orchids and fruit flies. In one of his letters, Terry mentioned this same expanse of rocks—and he said it was part of his claim. There were supposed to be four big trees standing in a straight line at one edge of the place, and a cliff covered with orchids formed one of its boundaries. He said this entire corner of his claim was loaded with the richest sort of pitchblend."

Doc Whitney pursed his lips. "Well! There are the trees and the cliff!"

BARNEY nodded. Wordlessly, he bent over the rough cross, looked at it closely. With a sudden tug he wrenched it from the earth. Critically, he examined the fresh-cut end. Whitney watched him in silence.

Barney nodded grimly and grinned with one corner of his mouth. "I certainly appreciate Cabral's thoughtfulness," he said. "Guess he figured I'd feel bad if he couldn't show me Terry's grave. That's why he stuck this

cross here last night or this morning. Hell! The wood's hardly damp!"

Whitney frowned, inspecting the cross. "Peculiar type of wood, that. An exceptionally fine grain and an unusually dark green tinting. Possibly a specimen of *Ucuuba*, of the genus *Virola sebifera*." He paused. "Barney," he demanded suddenly, "did you dream of that Tyrannosaur this morning—a reptile with Cabral's head?"

Barney nodded.

"I thought so. Hypnotism! According to Schwartzkopf, the Austrian psychiatrist—"

"To hell with Schwartzkopf!" Barney snapped. "Look, Doc—we've got a job ahead of us. This Cabral—he must have killed Terry—I'm afraid he finished him like he tried to finish that native out on the island! Now, with this faked grave and his cock-eyed yarn about his friendship for Terry, he's trying to sidetrack us so we'll clear out and leave him with the radium claim."

Barney's eyes were black slits of fury as he glared back along the jungle path. "Y'know, Doc, I hate reptiles. I get a big kick out of killing 'em. And I'm going to get the biggest kick of my life out of killing a dirty, stinkin' Brazilian reptile named Ludovico da Silva Cabral. Before I kill him, I'm going to choke a little first-hand information about Terry out of his greasy throat. C'mon!"

He took a step toward the path—and suddenly froze, an involuntary chill rippling his skin. A cry, desolate and melancholy, slashed the silence—the cry they had heard on the Rio Moju!—but now it was close by, loud, rising somewhere within the thicket before them. An indescribable sound, it was, part hiss, part

shriek, part wail—and altogether dreadful.

Barney drew his automatic; his eyes roved from boulder to shadowed thicket to matted undergrowth, searching. "I think we'll be having company," he said quietly. "Sounds like one of MacCready's big brothers. Shoot straight this time, Doc."

"Have no fear, Bernard. I feel quite confident that if our friend the dinosaur gives us half an opportunity, he'll lose his ugly head. I shall take keen delight in examining his carcass. A unique opportunity."

Barney half grinned. A unique opportunity—yeah! Waiting for a monstrous dinosaur to appear—planning to shoot him with a pair of automatic pistols! The grin vanished as he continued to scan the jungle. He felt as though a tremendous weight had come to rest upon his chest, making breathing a conscious effort. It was nerve-wracking, this waiting for a reptile which had no right to live in this modern world.

If only he knew where Cabral was! Now that he thought about it, that shooting seemed too nicely timed—an act staged to let the Brazilian slip away. He probably had a gun trained on them at that moment, so that even if they were lucky enough to kill the dino, he'd pump a few slugs into them from ambush. The thought sent a chill rippling along his spine.

Barney heard a gasp from Doc Whitney, and he turned. To their right, the jungle heaved—and with majestic slowness, the titanic creature thrust its ugly alligator's head into sight. Wicked yellow eyes stared down unwinkingly at the two men as the great body lumbered out of the shadows.

As one, they flung up their weap-

ons—pointed—squeezed—and stared dumbly at their silent automatics. The hammers had clicked against empty chambers!

Realization flashed through the mind of Barney Kerigan. Cabral had emptied their automatics while they slept—while his damnable hypnotic power had held them in the clutch of an eery dream. They, like trusting children—or because they had been hypnotized — hadn't even inspected their weapons!

The monster drew steadily closer, his eyes moving from one to the other. He did not hurry; it seemed as though he knew that they could not elude him. Barney glanced hastily around — saw possible escape blocked by huge masses of rock. They were in a pocket! If they charged ahead, they might make it; but that anachronism before them could move with startling speed if it wanted to! Yet they'd have to chance it if—

"Bernard! Quick!" Aaron Whitney's sharp exclamation drew Barney's attention. The scientist had retreated to the cliff wall—had drawn into it! The screening orchids had concealed a crevice in the wall big enough to hold them! Hastily, Barney leaped into the opening, grinning with relief. Together they turned and peered out of the dark recess—then involuntarily fell back as the dinosaur charged thunderously.

The cliff shook as the battering ram of flesh thudded against it—the two men staggered backward into the darkness—and suddenly the earth fell from beneath them and they felt themselves dropping through emptiness! A breathless instant—a jarring impact—and Barney's head struck something with stunning force. Consciousness left him in a flare of light.

BORN OF SCIENCE

FAINTLY, Barney Kerigan heard his name, dimly felt someone gripping his shoulders and shaking him.

"Wake up, Bernard! We've stumbled into the reptile's lair!"

Instantly awake, Barney sat up, mechanically rubbing the bruised spot on the back of his head, vaguely aware of a strange, fetid odor filling his nostrils.

"The alligator's hole, eh?" he grunted, rising to his feet. "Delivering fresh meat on the hoof! Accommodating—" He stopped short as a sudden chorus of shrill native jabber came to his ears.

"Not only that," Whitney continued excitedly, "but we've stumbled upon what I'll wager is the key to everything Cabral has done—if we're clever enough to use it. Look around you."

Curiously, Barney inspected the cavern into which they had fallen. Light came from an oval, yard-wide hole in the roof and from a gaping aperture in one wall. The cave itself was enormous, a great dome-like chamber carved by Nature from the black earth and rock. Its floor was comparatively smooth, except for a matting of rotten humus and many scattered, splintered bones. At his feet lay a mound of earth which had fallen with them from a rough opening a half-dozen feet above their heads.

But the most remarkable feature about the cave was a shadowed niche set in the farthest recess of the cavern and screened by a barrier of heavy logs. It was through spaces between the logs that the flood of native words came—excited words, eager, pleading, terrified—some in feminine tones.

With one accord, the two men crossed to the ponderous doorway and peered in. They could see little—only a glimpse of brown flesh where the faint light struck a naked body. The doorway itself was less than two feet wide; they had no way of determining how large the space behind it might be—but from the volume of noise, at least a dozen natives must be imprisoned there. Barney noticed a heavy, modern padlock fastening the door.

"The key to everything," Doc Whitney repeated triumphantly. "If Cabral merely wanted a prison, he could find one without all this trouble. Why would he construct something of this sort in what must be the dinosaur's lair, if there were not some important reason for his doing so? I'm reminded of the time—"

"Okay, Doc!" Barney interrupted. "I'll agree with you. Though," he added slyly, "there's a bare possibility that they might just be kept here as a food supply for the big alligator." As Whitney snorted his disgust, Barney said, "Be that as it may, I think we'd better be moving. If MacLeod's reptilian friend comes home to find us visiting, he might give us a warm reception. Let's scam!"

Briskly, he started toward the entrance. A dozen steps—and a shadow fell across their path, a man outlined against the ring of light that fell from the opening in the cavern's roof. They looked up.

Senhor Ludovico da Silva Cabral grinned down at them from behind a leveled rifle.

"So, my frien's! You fin' the cave where leeves the reever-god! Ees too bad she's 'way—but you jus' wait, an' 'e com'. Me, Ludovico da Silva Cabral—I eenseest you wait!" The last phrase was a hissing snarl.

"Like hell!" Barney growled softly. "Make a break for it, Doc. When I say 'Go', you head for the right wall. I'll take the left. We'll—" The words died on his lips, for in the entrance before them bulked the terrifying figure of the monster!

A stunned, soundless instant—and the Tyrannosaur charged!—a silent, savage rush! The two men sprang in opposite directions, in almost hopeless flight. . .

THERE came a piercing shriek—and something hurtled down directly in the reptile's path! The Brazilian! He struck the rocky floor with a sickening thud. A mighty, taloned foot landed with full force on the prostrate form, crushing it to a crimson smear.

The brief interruption gave Barney and Doc their chance; they reached the opening that led to safety. They sprang out—then checked themselves, whirling about as a shot roared in the cavern.

Incredulously, they saw the monster blindly clawing the air in the center of the cave while his weird cry slashed their ears. A second shot roared—a third—and the great saurian plunged forward on the crimson blotch that had once been a man.

Barney's gaze leaped to the opening in the cavern roof, and his jaw fell. A lean, bearded face with high cheek-bones and deep-set eyes looked down at them. An arm waved a greeting and a deep voice called:

"Hi, Barney!"

Barney Kerigan's eyes widened joyfully. "Terry!" he cried. "Terry Kerigan!"

The three were seated in the bar-racao that once belonged to Senhor Ludovico da Silva Cabral—Doc Whitney and Barney and Terry Kerigan. Greetings and small talk over,

they were discussing the mystery surrounding the Brazilian and the great reptile. Terry had the floor.

"Well, Barney," he drawled, "where should I begin—since you want some explaining done?"

"Tell us about yourself. How the Brazilian snagged you—the claim—everything."

"Well, as for the claim, I think it's the richest radium deposit in the world. The stuff spreads out over a wide area, but that natural clearing and the cliff beyond it are at the very heart of the deposit. But Cabral wasn't interested in radium for the wealth it would give him."

"Then what—" Whitney began.

"I'll get to that in a minute," Terry interrupted. "Cabral acted queerly from the very first moment. He didn't like me, and I knew it. Then one day I saw him sacrifice a native to that reptile—you must have seen the pictures, Barney—and I also discovered the secret of the cave. That wasn't so bad, because he didn't know what I knew; I tried to free those poor creatures that we let out of his dungeon, and he caught me at it. Sneaked up behind me and tapped me with a pistol butt. Kept me tied and gagged in a hole under this shack. Don't know why he didn't kill me right away, unless he was saving me as a feed for the reptile. Guess I'd still be there if it hadn't been for Archie."

He strode to the doorway and whistled shrilly. An instant later a grinning native padded in—the man Barney had freed from the stake on the mud-flat in the river.

"This boy cut me loose, telling me about you and Doc in the cave, and begging me to help you. Seems to think he owes you something."

"He does," Barney commented,

and told how they had saved him from the Tyrannosaur.

"That explains things," Terry said. He spoke a few rapid words to the native in his own tongue. He scurried away.

"But, Terence, it doesn't explain why those men and women were kept in the cave," Aaron Whitney objected, "nor does it explain the existence of that saurian."

Terry nodded slowly. "You're right, Doc. And I don't know if I can actually explain it myself. It all hinges on the radium. If you'll remember, we released six men and six women. They were husbands and wives, all young. Cabral kept them there because he hated all natives, and because—but I better start at the beginning.

"The story goes back about thirty years. An old native told it to me, so it may or may not be true. At that time this was pretty hostile country. Cabral's father and mother, newly married Portugese Brazilians, came up the river to start a rubber plantation. To save their lives from native attack, they found refuge in that big cave. You may not have noticed it, but its mouth faces the river directly opposite that mud island where Cabral made his sacrifices to the 'River God.' They lived there almost a year, and a precarious existence it must have been.

"Cabral was born there, so the story goes, together with his twin brother. His mother died in childbirth under what must have been rather terrible circumstances. The shock, combined with—other things, was too much for his father, and his mind cracked. His madness fixed itself upon the natives—blamed them for everything that had happened because their hostility had confined them to the cave. He remained suf-

ficiently sane to raise Cabral, but he raised him with only one thought—that he might somehow gain revenge upon the natives.”

Terry paused momentarily, frowning. “I don’t know a great deal about it, but it seems to me that I read somewhere about a scientist who performed some experiments with fruit flies and radiations. Created mutants, new life forms—”

“I told you so, Barney!” Doc Whitney exclaimed triumphantly. “I told you about the fruit flies and those queer orchids, but you would not listen.”

Terry seemed not to have heard the interruption. “As I’ve figured it out, the radium emanations in that cave, acting upon the woman for almost a year, exerted a strange influence on her unborn children. When they came into the world, they were not—normal. Cabral was only queer. His brother was a mutant, a new—old—life form.”

Barney stared at Terry incredulously. “You mean—?”

Terry nodded. “That monstrous

reptile was Ludovico da Silva Cabral’s twin brother!” He grinned mirthlessly. “Not identical twins, of course.”

“And those natives—” Momentarily words failed Whitney.

Again Terry nodded soberly. “Those natives were to conceive other monstrous mutants. Cabral planned to create a horde of nightmare creatures who would prey upon the natives who gave them life—would wipe them out.”

Barney scowled. “Isn’t there a chance that the damage has already been done—if your yarn is actually true?”

Terry nodded, then shrugged. “There isn’t anything we can do about it,” he said. “We couldn’t kill those poor women in cold blood. Only time can tell what kind of a heritage Cabral left to the world.”

There was a prolonged silence. Doc Whitney cleared his throat. “I’m reminded of a statement of Dr. Higgenbotham,” he began—and for the first time that either could remember, Barney did not interrupt.

THOSE DARNED MARTIANS!

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Are Fans a Menace to Science Fiction?

by THOMAS S. GARDNER

THE two classifications of the science-fiction field are readers and publishers. With the publisher, the main object is to put out a magazine that will sell and make a profit. They are under no delusions as to any mission or non-material teleological ends in their work. They are perfectly correct in their attitude. Any magazine that does not fulfill a special need, such as a technical magazine, and that does not make a reasonable profit, should disappear from the market—no matter what a small group of its readers believe in regard to the magazine. So the viewpoint of the publisher is the only one that can be maintained. The hybrid reader field, however, presents many varied aspects. The reading public of science fiction consists of fans, steady non-fans, and the casual, time-to-time readers. The fans are not over one-

third of the reading public of science fiction. (In fact, the estimate of one-third is quite generous from the known fans, and allowance is made for fans that do not make themselves felt through clubs, organizations and via the mail bag to the editor's desk.)

The editor of a science-fiction magazine is influenced by the letters he receives from his readers. Practically all the letters received are from the fan group. The fans thus mold the opinion of the editor and thus directly, via the editor, the policy of the magazine. It is easily seen that fans exert far more influence on the policies of the magazine than their proportionate number of readers would warrant.

There is no reason for believing that fans mirror or represent the needs, desires and wants of the non-fan readers. In fact, there is much evidence to the contrary. Fans are usually readers of science fiction over a long period of time. They collect magazines as a hobby—the same as a philatelist collects stamps, others collect antiques, first editions of books, etc. Fans are simply the expression of the collector's instinct and therefore are more critical of science fiction than the non-fans—but that does not necessarily mean that policies that suit fans are the ones that allow the magazines to make a profit so that they can continue to publish science fiction. The fact of the matter is that the fans are too good. They want science fiction as a literature with a respectable standing. The perfect analogy is found in the great literatures of the world. It is admitted that Thackeray, Stevenson, Voltaire,

Coleridge, Shakespeare, Bryant, and a host of others constitute the heritage of mankind in good literature—and almost everyone refuses to read them to such an extent that they are read by force, viz., if one wishes a diploma from high school or a degree from college, a requirement is made to pass so many hours of Literature which consists of reading, analyzing, and criticizing the great writers of the past. After school days, very, very few ever read any of the so-called "Good" literature.

If one reads modern fiction, the subject matter is the kind that any English teacher will point out is not permanent, of general and temporal interest only, and cannot be classified as literature in the highest sense of the word. Similarly, the fans are experts on science fiction, they know it as a literature, and enjoy it the same as an expert in other forms of literature enjoys his specialty—but few outside of the experts glance at it seriously. So the fans tend to mold the opinion of the editor, who changes his policies to suit what he thinks is the demand of the field; he publishes science-fiction literature, and consequently his major buying market, who are not fans, cease to read the magazine. The magazine fails and the editor hunts another job. This has been borne out by the past year's crop of science-fiction magazines. Many of the fans, who are experts, pronounce them lousy and use even more opprobrious terms to describe them—but remember that experts cannot prescribe for the general public. The public knows what it wants and contrary to the wishes of the fans, either will get it or stop reading the magazines.

The answer is that the editor should try to please his public as a whole, and never be influenced unduly by the letters he receives from fans. He should always remember that the fans give fairly expert opinions that fail when applied to all the readers.

The final test is the survival of the magazine.

(Mr. Gardner's opinions in the above article are not necessarily those of the editor. We invite criti-

cism of this item from other fans.—EDITOR.)

World Science Fiction Convention

THIS news is addressed to those of you who secure this magazine prior to July first:

Science-fiction fans in the New York area are organizing a World Science Fiction Convention to be held in conjunction with the New York World's Fair during the first week of July. Convention committee members have been busy with propaganda for several months and are assured of attendance to the Convention by science-fiction fans, authors, and editors from all parts of the United States—also from England, Canada, and Mexico. If you want information about the World Science Fiction Convention, which is to be the greatest concentration of science-fiction talent and fandom ever held, send a 3 cent stamp to Sam Moskowitz, 603 S. 11th St., Newark, N. J.

Fantasy News

JAMES V. TAURASI, number one fan of Flushing, N. Y., issues a weekly newspaper for science-fiction fans. The fortieth issue appeared on March 26th, as this item is written. Neatly mimeographed on four to six large sheets, Fantasy News is by far the most worthy news-sheet for the science-fiction fan. Taurasi's address, as well as other information about Fantasy News, appears in "The Telepath" department in this issue of SCIENCE FICTION.

D'Journal

BOB TUCKER, Box 260, Bloomington, Ill., issues a bi-monthly mimeographed magazine of about sixteen pages, filled with real science-fiction humor and satire. Any fan with a sense of humor will get a great kick out of this publication. Hoy Ping Pong and Ray Bradbury—masters of science-fiction wit—are featured in each issue. Price one dime.

THE SILENT WORLD

by GUY ARNOLD

Jeff thought he knew the ropes—but Irma comes to his little Asteroid to lead them both into an odd civilization, a realm where their forms become monstrous and their voices are as peals of thunder!



He glimpsed tiny lighted windows, caught a blur of midget bodies.

BIG JEFF SANDERSON sighted the spaceship floating down over the Lazy Knife range and cursed under his two-weeks' growth of beard. The sun was glaring down from interplanetary heights upon the tenuously atmosphered asteroid known as Wonthon. Not a sound, not a single movement, betrayed the danger for the newcomer. Big Jeff dragged out a high-powered ZL-gun and eyed the distance from his own moored space-vessel speculatively. Then he adjusted the long range sights and kept watching through the binoculars.

Just as he expected, an airlock opened in the ovoid structure and a

figure emerged, not in space-suiting, for the thin atmosphere was livable, but in trim cellulin toggings with high metal boots and a flimsy sun veil.

He saw the figure turn around thoughtfully several times. Whoever it was finally caught sight of Jeff's ship. Without pausing for as much as to shut the airlock of his own cruiser, the man began leaping from boulder to boulder, coming straight across the valley floor.

Presently he was running. The sun was heating the heaps of flat rocks under direct exposure and his soles were probably getting hot. Big Jeff grunted and waited.

He was prepared when the big yellow puff-ball slithered suddenly from a crevice in the rocks, bristling with long barbarous spikes.

The formidable apparition placed itself squarely in the way of the terrestrial. Then when the newcomer tried to move to one side, the barbed demon departed among the crevices and presently emerged in front of him again, moving with him. When a gasp of horror escaped the man's frightened lips and he turned around to make a run for the spaceship, the yellow puff-ball moved with incredible speed, disappeared among the cracks and niches, only to pop up again on the other side of the earthman, and as always, squarely in the pathway.

Big Jeff knew death when he saw it. He knew that just one of those hook-leech quills would poison a man's flesh, paralyze it hopelessly. The only thing that kept the hook-leech from charging was its inability to move on the upper surface. Yet it could worm its way through crevices with amazing alacrity, simply by expanding and contracting the flexible quills. Furthermore, the terrestrial watcher knew that the asteroidal hook-leech would circle its prey for hours and even days, waiting for the moment when the impatient victim either died from exposure of the direct sun, or became so unwary as to come within striking distance of the barbed death-quills.

The tiny whorls of its button-sized head were writhing voraciously. The hook-leech clearly anticipated an easy victory. One thrust of a lethal spike, and the diminutive head would feed for days on the resulting carcass until every scrap of meat was gone.

It wasn't a difficult shot. Big Jeff had made better in ordinary target

practice, but he sighed with relief when in response to his pressure on the trigger, a long needle of whitish intensity had leaped out and the hook-leech vanished into a yawning, blackened orifice.

All this had transpired in the utmost silence. Even the disintegration caused by the ZL-gun was soundless.

The intended victim of Wonthonian barbarity stood uncertainly for a few moments, then turned his steps and came back again in Jeff's direction, leaping from rock to rock. Big Jeff covered the other's advance. He could pick off the hook-leeches as they appeared, but there were other forms of life in this silent world that were just as dangerous, against which his disruptor beam was powerless.

THE newcomer was gasping for breath when he climbed up the shelving promontory and came into speaking distance. Big Jeff lowered the leveler of the ZL-gun. He was surprised to see that the other's features were flushed as with wrath.

"Are you Jeffrey Sanderson?" demanded a clear bell-like voice that shattered the silence. "If you are, what's the big idea?"

Sanderson frowned. He had been expecting thanks and the other seemed angered. He let his gaze run along the trim outlines of the figure as revealed by cellulin garments. The features were rather indistinct behind the flimsy sun veil. He rose, stretched his angular body with unconcern, then patted the weapon.

"Don't get excited," he bade the other. "I just saved your life. If you aren't grateful, the Earth Trading Company is. That's who I work for."

"Two mistakes!" retorted the new-

comer. "In the first place, you didn't save my life. If you'll look in my belt you'll see a holster disruptor. I've heard of hook-leeches before and I was just testing this one out. I could have disposed of him at will."

A slender hand went to the waist. Big Jeff found himself staring at the tiny, deadly weapon that slid from the girdle of thick leather. He squinted his eyes quizzically, then tugged at his long nose. If this fellow were trying to ruffle him, he'd picked the wrong person.

"That's just one mistake," he drawled softly.

"The other is that you are working for the Earth Trading Company," came the response. "You're not! The company's undergone a change of management. You're working under me!"

A slender hand went up, jerked away the sun veil, and he found himself gaping at a tangled mass of russet hair. Star-blue eyes were glinting dangerously from beneath long, jetty lashes. The ovoid features were clear-cut, flawless, but the tiny chin was as firm as chiseled marble. Sudden suspicion tugged at Jeff's thoughts, and a choking sensation came into his throat. She put away the weapon.

"You're Hal Bates' daughter?" he questioned.

She nodded. "Yes. Hal Bates is dead. There's no use being dramatic about it. I hated more than anyone else to see him go, and I had more to lose than anybody else. I was never satisfied with the way things were going under the old Company. You're sent here to gather fungus-flame, which happens to be invaluable in making synthetic perfumes that can't be reproduced synthetically by the chemists on Earth. You do it by bartering with the na-

tives. The method's no good! You've got to speed up production!"

Big Jeff was broad-shouldered, and had long powerful arms. He would have made two of her by volume. If any man had spoken to him in that tone of voice, he'd have been in dangerous territory. He'd been making trips to the asteroid for more than two years and now she had come and was going to tell him how to run things right off. It was impossible, of course, to guess how dangerous an asteroid could be, for all of its tense silence. So he protested calmly, hiding his chagrin.

"There's none who know where the fungus-flame grows. Maybe it's on the surface of Wonthon, and maybe it isn't. It is only these primitive beings we know as the 'asteroid elves' who really know. And they're willing to gather the flame-plants in exchange for cheap, glittering baubles—little glass trinkets that have strange colors for this drab, silent world."

He knew that she was angry by the expression on her face. From her general attitude, he gathered that she considered the old methods clumsy and inadequate. She considered any habitable planetary body the rightful property of terrestrials—and Wonthon, for all of its tenuous atmosphere, was habitable. It was a very tiny asteroid, and rather dense, but even its fifty-miles of diameter could never have afforded space or mass enough for habitation were it not for its extremely erratic orbit. Once every eight months it circled close enough to the gaseous planet of Jupiter to capture a weak layer of air that dissipated slowly.

"S. O. S. in space! All hands to the life-boats. For God's sake, Captain, don't forget the women!"

That startled her. He saw her

hand tighten over the butt of the disruptor.

"What's that?" she demanded, turning in every direction. Big Jeff chuckled at her discomfiture, and that didn't add to her composure.

"That's Gertie," he explained. "It's a Jovian sphinx, and a nuisance at times. But I keep it to break the loneliness out here."

THE sun was glaring down over his shoulder. In the rarefied atmosphere on Wonthon, it encountered very little resistance. Consequently, the shadows cast by the ovoid spaceboats were black and impenetrable. The sphinx soared suddenly out of the darkness and landed plump on Sanderson's shoulders. While the new owner of Earth Trading Company glared her astonishment, the tiny womanish face ignored her completely. Slowly, deliberately, the sphinx preened one wing, then the other, and finally began washing its face with its paws. The tiny lips parted.

"Calling all ships," she said calmly. "All ships. Have you seen the new styles the women are wearing, Captain? It'll really be a scandal in 2024."

"What does it mean by that?" burst out Sanderson's new employer, frowning her distrust and keeping at a safe distance.

"Not a thing—er, Miss Bates," snapped Sanderson with secret amusement. "I suppose I might as well call you Irma. Your father spoke often of you. It doesn't mean a thing. It's a radio cat!"

"Hmmp!" commented Irma Bates contemptuously. "I suppose it gives horoscopes."

Without a word of farewell, she turned and retraced her steps across the valley floor. Sanderson could

have explained more, but was not in the frame of mind. He could have revealed that the sphinx's normal means of communication on the Jovian planet was by vibrations of Hertzian radio waves. Through association with human beings, these cunning little animals can learn to receive radio waves and mimic the vocal tones.

A purple mantle of wrath suffused his countenance when he saw that Irma Bates had not stopped by her spaceship but was setting out on an exploratory trip along the valley floor.

"Well, you hot-headed little minx!" he exploded. "Go ahead, if you want to. You're one of those new-fangled females that think you can handle everything. Go ahead, if you want to!"

She disappeared at last behind the handle of the Lazy Knife range, and Sanderson went inside his spaceship, slamming the valve port. He s'amped furiously around on the gravity decking, dropped a vita-pill in a glass of water and opened a can of synthetic soup for luncheon.

But he couldn't eat. His appetite was gone. He kept remembering the vague resemblance of her features to those of old Hal Bates. The old man had been fiery by nature. Damn it, when he came right down to it, she came by her temper naturally. He owed something to the memory of old Hal.

The awesome silence of a sepulchre held sway over the asteroid when Big Jeff Sanderson made his way cautiously down the equatorial spur of Wonthon, and his eyes were furiously alert, especially when he was forced to leap some tiny gorge or yawning crevice.

The sun was sinking fast, and it wouldn't be long until the cold four-hour night set in. In all that dis-

tance that lay spread before him, not a pebble rattled, not a breeze stirred. In some distant past age, volcanic upheaval had torn jagged craters in the asteroid. Internal outburst had formed rugged spurs of granite and lava-basalt. Yet all of that violence now seemed a thing of the long dead past, and beneath the hovering quietude, he sensed the invisible threat of life below the surface, lying hidden beneath the promontories, waiting for an opportune moment to leap out upon some incautious prey.

A compact space-radio was strapped to his belt. Time and again his huge fingers slid over the dials, hoping that he could contact the girl through a similar apparatus, part of ordinary spaceman's equipment.

When an Earth orchestra began to blare forth with swingly music, he snapped it off in disgust. Such harsh blatant sounds would only advertise his presence to the very things he feared most.

Once he knelt by the ruins of what might have been a tiny doll house, built of mud, and for a long while he looked for signs of recent tenancy. He sighted other miniature ruins, which were generally to be found around the dead craters of ancient volcanos.

"The Phylans!" he muttered apprehensively. "I haven't seen traces of them for some time. Yet I wonder—"

There was a time when he heard a showering of pebbles in the distance. In the colorless vacancy of the asteroid's sky, the sound was like an audible torrent. He turned the corner of a ragged spur, projector in hand, and found three of the asteroid elves standing on a ledge, watching him. The elves were tiny furry creatures, with bulbous heads that were all eyes. Foolish mouths began to writhe excitedly, but no

sounds issued forth. These voiceless creatures could only manifest their consternation by making foolish grimaces and slashing at the air with their hook-shaped fingers and toes.

HE HALTED, stared at them suspiciously. They returned his gaze, not aware of the menace of the ZL-gun.

"Dumb-heads!" he muttered, and as the unaccustomed sound of his voice rasped out, they dived simultaneously for a hole burrowed in the ledge. Three bulbous heads bumped in unison. Three heads came up in silly surprise, looked at each other incredulously, then stared back at Sanderson.

"Goof-nuts!" he muttered. "Scat!" If he had hurled an explosive the result would have been no more instantaneous. Luckily, one of the elves was nearer the orifice than the others and they all went down the smooth cavity like greased lightning, with only a rustling whisper to mark their going.

"About eleven inches across," murmured Sanderson, measuring the orifice with his eye. "No, they didn't get her down that hole, unless she went in pieces. And I don't think the elves are dangerous. The silly little devils are hardly smart enough to gather fungus-flame."

"Look, Captain, we're heading directly into the sun," came a surprising answer to his soliloquy. Gertie was perched on top of the ledge, gazing blandly upon him. "And if Smith's inter-astral styles in cellulins aren't the best buy in nine planets, you get your money back. The goods will be sent without expense to you."

Every rasping tone made him want to jump up and wring its neck.

"Beat it, Gertie!" he choked. The sphinx must have flown overhead and

had perched there waiting for him. "You always show up at the wrong time!"

"I think," observed Gertie calmly, "that we might as well go around to the other side of the moon and park. Those nosey sky-cops are going a little bit too far. And now, signing off."

The sphinx spread its wings, soared down to its favorite perch and began rubbing its cheek against his. Sanderson reached up, seized its tawny body in both hands and flung it high into the air.

"Signing off is right!" he burst out. "I hope you get the idea."

Apparently Gertie did. The sphinx's tiny lips pouted as it fluttered in mid-air. Then it regained its balance and soared out of sight in the heavens. He'd have to make up to it later someway.

He went on, wondering if the fungus-flame grew and flourished at some unknown depth in the elfin burrows, nurtured in deep pocket gardens and finding succulence by means of penetrating cosmic rays. Jeff suspected just that, for he'd never seen a single trace of it growing on the surface. He decided that he must have done business with at least one of the elves—he'd glimpsed a string of red glass beads dangling around a furry stub throat.

The sun sank swiftly. Every moment was like an aeon of suspense for the anxious earthman, though night came almost instantaneously. He had brought a tiny ato-beam cylinder along for just such an event, but he used it reluctantly. Before long a silvery orb the size of a grapefruit began edging into the black heavens. It was the asteroid Juno, just coming into opposition—but to Sanderson it was a godsend. It

meant that he could see dim outlines beyond the circle of the beam.

Without warning, the ground shuddered. He heard low thunder from the direction of the black bluffs of the Lazy Knife range, saw a brief flickering glare that dissolved in the sky. He knew the sound for what it was, an avalanche. The flickering glow had come from the muzzle of a disruptor. In that quick flash, he'd glimpsed a monstrous carpet of tentacular claws, crouching high on the cliff-wall.

He called, "Irma! Irma!" in panic-stricken tones, for whom else could have discharged the blast? The avalanche had been short-lived. His voice was thrown out over the deathly stillness with clarion clearness.

Then he heard footsteps racing in his direction. He jerked up the lance of the flash, caught a glimpse of a running cellulose-togged figure. Her eyes were wide and startled, yet he plainly saw an expression of relief come into them as she stumbled exhaustedly into his arms and sobbed on his shoulder.

"You got it, didn't you?" he asked sharply, peering into the thick shadows from which she had emerged.

"Yes, Jeff," she sobbed. "I hit it square! It blew all to smithereens! And I'm acting like a little baby! I'll never come this far from the ship again."

"You've learned your lesson," said Sanderson, and under his voice he added, "I hope!"

"I would have come back sooner if it hadn't been for the little lights," she burst out, drying her tears suddenly. Her voice was shot through with excitement. "Tiny little pinpoints, like the lights of little cities. I saw them over a hill-top."

"Jupiter!" burst out Jeff. "Phylans! We'd better get back to the

ship, and make it fast." He tried to hide the tremor in his voice. "Let's go!"

HAND in hand, they made their way forward as fast as was possible under the light's gleam, not separating except at times when it was necessary to leap the crevices. He guided their course by the position of Juno's glittering sphere. Yet their pathway ascended into unfamiliar territory, and he dared not voice his aroused suspicions. Juno was at zenith now, straight overhead, and he might have circled in the blackness.

The ground rose sharply. He felt her hand tremble in his own.

"Look!" she cried eagerly. "The little lights! See them! We've found more of them."

He didn't tell her that they must have circled around upon the same ones she had glimpsed previously as the sun sank.

It was easy to see the glinting specks of illumination. Back on Earth he had gazed from mountain roads at night, looking down on real cities, big cities, and the widely flung motes of light had been similar in aspect. Yet now they might be staring into a tiny gulley that lay at their feet, and the miniature cities might lay within the span of a few steps.

"Run, Irma!" he cried. "Don't ask why, but run. We're in horrible danger. They're the Phylans and—"

But the girl was stumbling in the dark, had cried out in sudden pain. Her hand was wrenched from his own and the light cylinder went flying in the dark.

He groped forward frantically, feeling for her. Then he tripped, sprawled forward. In the oblivion below, something like a taut string of steel wire had been stretched across

the way. Tottering, he saw the tiny lights hurling themselves upward. Tiny, doll-size structures crackled and were crushed beneath his weight.

As in a nightmare, he glimpsed tiny lighted windows on a level with his eyes, caught a blur of midget bodies.

In the hysterical moments that followed, he kept bellowing Irma's name at the top of his voice. Jerking one hand toward his face, he strove instinctively to regain his feet. Hot pain raced up the wrists. A tiny chapel-like building tottered ponderously. Tiny beings on the roof leaped over the edge into the depths below. There was no sound save a rustling as of crumpling paper. Then he saw that a gossamer filament of wire ensared his hand.

From the tiny canyon depths of the diminutive metropolis a small vehicle that resembled a Lilliputian gyroplane was rising. Below the whirling vanes he glimpsed an unrolling thread of cable. The vehicle rose to a level above his head, moved horizontally, and descended. He felt the tiny cable drawing tight with incredible rapidity.

The gyroplane ascended again. He shut his eyes, braced his muscles, jerked and struggled with all of his might. A cord loosened around his right leg. A large span of little edifices was demolished. Another line was drawn tight.

He saw Irma's gargantuan face looming down the canyon of a cross street. Her eyes were big with wonder, and she wasn't struggling, but perhaps that was because of the numerous metallic threads that were drawn about her. Perhaps she had been too startled to offer much resistance. After all, he had not had

time to tell her of the menace of the Phylans.

Finally he was so exhausted and so thoroughly bound that he couldn't move a limb.

"What's going to happen now, Jeff?" wailed Irma, her voice thundering over the tiny thoroughfare.

JEFF managed to shake his head, and winced as hot pains streaked across his neck. At least his lips were free. He could talk.

"I don't know," he answered truthfully. "We'll have to wait and see."

"Hasn't anyone ever spied on their actions?" demanded the bound girl hopelessly.

Sanderson did not answer for a pause. Then he decided that he might as well be frank.

"Not to tell about it," he said quietly. After that, neither spoke for a time. A procession of tiny beings was rounding a street corner, was advancing nearer. Upon closer appraisal the Phylans were not altogether humanlike. They more closely resembled tiny puppets made of dough. Their faces were blank, and utterly devoid of ordinary characteristics such as eyes, nose and mouth.

Yet they did wear tiny garments. And as further evidence of their advanced intelligence tiny conveyances appeared, moving in and out of the throng.

"Sound a warning, Captain, we're headed into a meteor storm," spoke up a familiar voice. "You should have seen that one that just sailed by. I could have raised a family on it."

"Gertie!" exclaimed Sanderson. By twisting his face to a position where he could just bear the pain, he saw the sphinx sitting placidly on the rounded dome of a structure that

was a skyscraper in comparison to the ones around it. Tiny, panic-stricken Phylans were leaping out of the windows and racing away across the adjoining rooftops. "Beat it! If you know what's good for you, scram!"

Gertie favored him with a Cheshire grin, and the sphinx licked its lips. A tiny gyroplane ascended along the side of the towering edifice, but when it reached the higher level, the sphinx merely soared into the air. When it came down, the sphinx came down with it and scratched its ear thoughtfully.

"Calling all space," announced Gertie. "If the thermometer falls any below two-forty minus I'll order out a special suit of underwear."

"It doesn't make sense!" muttered Irma. "Even if it does receive Hert-zian waves!"

"Gertie never did!" agreed Jeff Sanderson gloomily. "I suppose the transformed messages are garbled up in its memory with similar ones!"

"At least she's smart enough not to get caught by these little demons," added Irma thoughtfully. "I wonder what they're going to do with us."

Jeff looked down at the congregated Phylans. There was an odd manner about the horde of midget creatures. Some of them were kneeling and others were lying prostrate. Still others seemed to be undergoing various stages of extreme rapture, although no single individual approached within the distance of their tiny arm's length.

"Thunder god good!" offered Gertie, yawning and stretching. The sphinx slapped playfully at a venturesome gyroplane and returned to its musing. "Thunder god good!"

"It must have got its signals mixed," said Irma moodily. "I'm so

cramped, I can't move. Have you thought of anything yet?"

Jeff couldn't meet her eyes. Rage welled up within his being that such infinitesimal creatures could have effected his capture.

"If I had my hand on a disruptor!" he growled desperately. "I'd make them dance. Even if I had a few moments to myself, I might wrench free. But not with more bonds arriving at every instant."

"Thunder god good!" chanted Gertie. "Thunder god good!"

"Blazing Novae!" exploded Sanderson suddenly, frowning at the sphinx. For the reproduced tones had seemed to come from a multitude of chanting voices. Again came the weird chant.

"Thunder god good! Thunder god good!"

And the accents came in regular rhythm with the tiny, swaying bodies. There was something intensely exhilarant in the attitude of the dancing, Lilliputian mob.

"It's picking up their lingo!" burst out Sanderson wonderingly. "It must be an emanation similar to a radio pulsation, or its own radiant type used among fellow sphinxes. Great Space!—a brain-storm just struck me, Irma. Are you a good screamer?"

His rising excitement was audible in his hopefully spoken words. The dejected girl turned her eyes inquiringly.

"The Phylans are of a civilization that is on the down-grade," explained Jeff Sanderson hurriedly, as is evidenced by the crumbling ruins of their former cities. When the Phylans flourished, their population must have spread all over Wonthon's entire surface, yet at that time the asteroid was a different place. Volcanos belched, winds formed and

screamed. There were storms, thunder and lightning.

"There was lots of sound. Yet today, as the Phylans deteriorate, this is a silent world. The thin air is moveless. Silence—as of a tomb—descended on Wonthon. The Phylans, who are blind to solar light, were bereft of their own life-giving emanation.

"They have no eyes, Irma! Sound is a wave vibration. They see by sound waves, and the reflections of sound waves."

HE explained hurriedly. Sound would be their life-giving energy, just as solar light is essentially the life-giving energy for human beings. There would be uncanny physical differences to account for such a condition. But if this were so, it was the reason why humans and larger creatures were captured and left to die slowly.

Living bodies were their 'luminaries' in a world of soundlessness. Voices, the heart beating, the thrumming of the pulses, even the sound of breathing would send off vibrations that gave life to the Phylans.

"And if they're sensitive to the tiniest, normal sounds," reasoned Jeff, "then a scream would have a stunning effect upon them. They'd be stunned, blinded, just as a man is blinded who stares into the sun."

When the startled girl peered down at the ecstatic revelry of Phylan multitudes, his reasoning appeared credible.

"We can give it a try," she whispered.

"If it works," he said prayerfully, "I'll try to wriggle free."

Drawing deep breaths, they both let out sudden screams that rattled deafeningly in their own ears. The Phylans ceased their dancing.

As their bellowing tones trumpeted forth, reverberated from one crumbling spire to another, the little people began writhing backward, striving to retreat. Shrill echoes rebounded far above along the bleak wastes that stretched around Wonthon, the silent world, desecrating the upper sepulchral silences.

Mob panic seized the Phylans. The tiny creatures staggered blindly about, clawing and trampling each other in an effort to escape.

Tears of triumph flowed from Sanderson's eyes. His pain-wrenched muscles writhed. His face was a contortion of agony as he worked and tore at the tendons. At last one snapped on his wrist.

It was easy to scream now with hurt flaming through every cell of his being. One arm was coming free, though it felt as if it were yanked loose at the socket. He reached for the other, gave a tremendous surge.

That was easier. Desperately, goaded on by a thousand pricking needles, he tore himself upward.

His disruptor gun came free from its holster, nestled in his palm. Turning it down the tortuous channels, he blasted thousands of the squirming Phylans to nothingness.

At last he had cleared a circular area about the prostrate girl. He stooped hurriedly and began to rip the strands free. Irma was still yelling at the top of her voice. He tore the last fibers away, groped for the flash-beam. She was so exhausted that he picked her up in his arms, staggered away.

Urged on by fear, he carried her back through the night gloom in the dead silence of a dying world.

Juno's gleaming disc had changed hurriedly to a crescent that fled into the distance. Dawn came with the suddenness of solar light slashed through gases of little diffusion. Dense shades formed patches on the desolate horizon. The four-hour night ended before Big Jeff Sanderson deposited his burden upon a swinging couch in the big front compartment of his spacer.

Gertie stirred sleepily on a cushion-stone that lay near the controls, having arrived ahead of them.

"Calling all ships in space," the sphinx muttered. "Blasted universes, Lieutenant, but we went through that storm like a streak of blue. You should have felt the controls jerk around. But everything's under control."

IRMMA BATES lifted her jetty lashes. Her star-blue eyes turned up to Big Jeff Sanderson, squatting on the edge of a table, and then shifted her puzzled gaze toward the drowsy sphinx.

"Just a radio cat!" said Irma, and there was a trace of the eternal woman in her tone. "Gertie must be a lot of comfort to you in space. Do you think anyone could ever take her place?"

Sanderson laughed. The sphinx did look effeminate, curled up on the cushion-stone, but "Gertie" had been a misnomer.

"Golly, no," he said. "She's a he!"

"ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE"

Someone has said that anything conceivable by the human mind is possible. As a matter of fact, many predictions—fantastic at the time they are made—fall far short of actuality. Most science-fiction authors place the advent of space-travel a century or more in the future. Perhaps they, too, are underestimating the advance of science. Even now, some scientist may be planning a ship of the void that will successfully span the ether to other worlds.

AN INVADING SUN

(The Story Behind The Cover) by EANDO BINDER

THE law of chance, operating through eternity, can do twice what it did once. Once, billions of years ago, it brought a wandering star (or a pair of stars, as in the Lyttleton Theory) close to our sun, ripping from it the balls of molten matter that cooled down to become the planets. Another star could blunder upon our doorstep, as artist Paul has depicted, with results that mankind would remember for ages to come.

It would appear first as a nova—a "new" star. But instead of dimming again, as novae do, it would brighten steadily until astronomers would become aware that it was plunging straight for the Solar System. Approaching the orbit of Pluto, it looms like a bloated red moon, already casting its own set of shadows on Earth.

What type of star is it? the astronomers ask, and set about to determine. It is not a yellow medium star, spectral class GO, like Sol. It is not a class B star, blue and hot. It is not a White Dwarf, with a surface temperature of 50,000 degrees Centigrade and so dense that a thimbleful would weigh a ton.

The observers quake. It is a Red Giant, with a diameter of about 300 million miles, huge enough to engulf the Solar System out to the orbit of Mars! At first this seems to assure the destruction of Earth, but then it is seen that the course of the red intruder will carry it no closer to our sun than the orbit of the Asteroids, 250 million miles out. Still, won't the gargantuan star pull Earth and the other planets from their orbits and carry them away, like a cosmic thief?

No, inform the astronomers. It is a peculiar fact that though millions of times larger in volume, the Red Giant actually has less mass than our sun, and therefore less gravitational force. In composition, it is like a rarefied gas, or ball of smoke. Its surface temperature is little more than that of a red-hot iron. Therefore, for all of its formidable size and appearance, it is likely to do little harm. Humanity breathes a sigh of relief.

In accordance with the astronomers' predictions, the great tramp of the void wanders no closer than the orbit of the As-

teroids, looking then like an oversized crimson moon. Big though it is, there is plenty of room out there. All the major planets are fortunately well away, except Saturn. In passing the latter, the red sun perturbs its orbit to the extent that later the ringed planet is several million miles nearer the sun. The only real casualties are a few dozen Asteroids, which fall into the red sun with splashes of burning light.

Humanity cheers up. What had seemed likely to be a frightful doomsday is now only a fascinating celestial show. But there is a price to pay, after all. No one had suspected until too late, though there had been several clues—for one thing, the peculiar behavior of magnetic needles, which all pointed to the Red Giant. Then, one day, an all-metal airliner, cruising in the lower stratosphere, had gone higher and higher and finally vanished altogether, as though the pilot had set his course for the red sun! The radio pilot at the last moment had reported a mysterious "force," stronger than their engines, pulling them up.

○ THER aircraft disappeared, and even several ocean liners were plucked into the sky. The cruising Graf Zeppelin, despite frantic efforts by its crew, rose higher and higher, finally exploding in the rarefied air ten miles above Earth. But its metal framework did not fall back to Earth—it kept on going outward!

Scientists finally accounted for the phenomenon. The red sun was a super-magnet! The sunspots of our own sun are tremendous magnetic pits, exerting their influence on Earth's weather, the Aurora Borealis, and radio reception. But the red sun, with its vaster surface, had proportionately greater "spots," radiating a terrific and dangerous magnetic force.

One night the people of Manhattan are awakened by an ominous cracking sound underneath. The whole island, with its millions of tons of iron buildings gripped by the magnetic forces from space, breaks loose from its foundations as a single rock and soars away, bearing two million residents to their doom, into the maw of the mighty red sun as it careens back into the outer space from which it came.



Where Editor and Readers Exchange Thoughts

SCIENCE FICTION invites you to write letters to this department, giving your views and criticisms. Address your letters to EDITOR, SCIENCE FICTION, 60 Hudson Street, New York City. Write us today!

Dear Reader:

Well, here we are in the third edition of SCIENCE FICTION! That fact alone is an indication of your approval of my selection of stories. Many of you have written to me, giving your favorites for the first two issues. Your letters have been a great help to me in selecting subsequent stories for future numbers. I have a better idea now about your likes and dislikes. I know, for instance, that you don't care much for detective stories based on science, because they lack the element of fantasy. It's more evident to me now than ever before that human interest, exciting intrigue, fantastic atmosphere to stimulate imagination, and logical scientific theories based on sound fact are the qualities that are most necessary in science-fiction stories—and I mean *all* of these in *all* the stories. I realize that a tale lacking any one of these qualities is only a second rate story, and I am doing my best to fill the magazine with yarns containing "all four."

I'm particularly anxious to get your comments on this issue. I want to know what you think of the two new departments, "The Fantasy Fan," and "The Eternal Conflict," (and by the way, why not make *your* contribution to these features? If you do, I'll know that you approve of them.)

As for the little science articles in our pages (two in this number), you'll notice that they're aimed at being thought-provoking, rather than technical discourses.

The essays for the Cash Prize Contest are piling up daily, and I expect

to announce the results in a couple of issues. In the meantime, why not write me a letter? I want your suggestions for improving SCIENCE FICTION as well as your comments and criticisms.

Send me your thoughts via "The Telepath."

CHARLES D. HORNIG
Editor, SCIENCE FICTION
60 Hudson Street
New York City

ANNOUNCING: "FANTASY NEWS"

Dear Charlie:

I expect big things out of SCIENCE FICTION once you get going. I still remember the swell stories published in the old Gernsback Wonders you edited. Just between you and me, I was surprised to find the level of story value in the first issue so high. But hop to it, Charlie, and give us a real good mag, AND don't forget, pep up your format a little—you have a good artist (Paul) to work with. Let him do a few cuts for the Contents Page, Editorial, etc. O. K.?

I'm sorry you weren't down at the last meeting of the Queens club; we had quite a good time, but I would have felt better if you'd been there. I expect you down at the next meeting. Right??

Readers of SCIENCE FICTION will be interested to know that there is being published weekly, a four-page mimeographed newspaper, giving you the latest up-to-the-minute science-fiction and weird fiction items and news. "Fantasy News" is its name and I'm sure that you'll find it a gold mine, as far as science-fiction

news items goes. We were the first to announce SCIENCE FICTION to the science-fiction fans. Besides giving you the latest news on science-fiction magazines and books, we publish a steady movie column titled "Scientifilms" by the able movie-news-getter, Mario Racic, Jr. We also review all the worthwhile fan magazines. Send in a 3-cent stamp for a trial issue, and I'm sure you'll be a lifetime subscriber.

JAMES V. TAURASI
137-07 32nd Ave.
Flushing, N. Y.

(Sorry I couldn't get around to your last science-fiction meeting, Jimmy, but I'll do my best to attend as many as I can. I enjoy the spirit of your group—you've got a fine bunch of science-fiction fans there in Flushing!

I'm now giving you several of the things you suggest in your first paragraph. How do you like the idea of "The Fantasy Fan" department?

I hope that this insertion about "Fantasy News" will secure you many new readers, because your weekly paper is almost indispensable to the active science-fiction fan.—EDITOR)

AN AVERAGE READER

Gentlemen:

While I don't claim to be an authority on what the public wants in its "science-fiction" stories, I do believe that my tastes are those of the average reader. To say that a story should stick to science facts as we know them is foolish, as we have no knowledge of what scientific developments or discoveries may be made in the future. In my opinion, your fans read SCIENCE FICTION in order to be entertained, and not educated. Stressing scientific facts instead of fiction would make very dry reading indeed, so please stick to fiction and don't swing over to educational data in your stories. For those of your readers who like discussions of a purely scientific nature, you could reserve a certain amount of space in your book for that purpose. In that way, I believe all your fans would be getting what they like in a magazine,

and you would not have to stick to pure fact, nor pure fiction in your issues.

In your March issue, I enjoyed all your stories, but the one I liked best was "Leeches from Space," by Ephraim Winiki. Let's hear more from him.

FRANK J. CAMERON
1929 Washington Ave.
Bronx, N. Y.

(I agree with you that the primary purpose of science-fiction is to entertain, and that science should not be dominant. However, the scientific facts used in the stories must be accurate, and the theories propounded must not conflict with the facts of science as we understand them today. Otherwise, the stories become just illogical fairy tales.—EDITOR)

"WELL-PLANNED"

Gentlemen:

Being conscious of the fact that the first issue of a new science-fiction magazine always presents a puzzle to the editors as to what it shall contain and what policies it should emphasize, your first issue of SCIENCE FICTION was well-planned.

I never dreamed that the field of science-fiction would ever maintain seven advocates of a fine type of leisure (with a possible two more to appear soon). Incidentally, one good thing about the science-fiction fan, or say one like me is: He will endeavor to purchase every mag in the field, on the market. Thus, there is always room for a fine magazine, a magazine that furnishes the best. So, in the best interest of this magazine, let me suggest that you discontinue your policy of Ten Stories per issue and include as many as might make the magazine interesting. Without that "Ten Stories" idea, you are not limited to accept stories of a conditioned length and you have the chance to include only the best. . . . Another thing, I hope that you will obtain stories from Williamson, Schachner, Binder and other favorites.

Might I inquire as to the names of the members of the editorial staff of this, the seventh magazine in the

science-fiction field? I would appreciate a reply to this request.

No doubt you will inaugurate a reader's column which is very essential in a magazine of this kind. I hope that it will appear in the second issue.

Paul's cover does not display his best work; the background of the picture was fine, but the two figures were abominable.

Until the next issue of "our" may appears—

RICHARD I. MEYER
3056 Cambridge Ave.
Chicago, Ill.

(You will be glad to note that the "ten stories per issue" applied only to the first number and did not become a policy. Of course, we want to give you the very best in the field regardless of length. So you never can tell how many stories there will be in the next issue—probably anywhere from five to ten, but the average seems to run about seven.

I hope that the reader's column satisfies you, as well as the other departments, features, and articles.

Charles D. Hornig is SCIENCE FICTION'S—EDITOR)

WANTS LOTS OF SCIENCE

Dear Sirs:

I have been reading science-fiction for a matter of around six years. Quite recently I have noted a large increase in the number of science-fiction magazines and have been almost elated but again depressed from the fear that their fiction may not reach the heights of bygone years.

But here in a short word I may be able to impress you with what I believe reaches the tops in this type of story.

I like a story which has lots of science that is based on immutable facts and not fantasies about ogres and fairies. I want stories that have a soul and not an endless dribble of foolish trash.

For instance, in one story in which I was impressed in this issue of your new magazine was the one of the thinking machine. There is a picture of something fine when a sacrifice is made yet finely scattered throughout the story are true scien-

tific facts as well as a love interest which is inescapable in order to have a well rounded-out story.

I believe therefore, if you abolish from your stories these fairy tales and other stories which are just relating of inconsequential facts and reach a happier medium, you will find me your ardent friend. Regardless of whether your stories suit my taste, I shall go right on reading them, for I have cultivated what I believe to be a worthwhile pursuit.

DALE WAYNE EMGE
Lincoln Hotel
East Palestine, O.

(You ask for lots of science, and it seems, from what you say in this letter, that the average science-fiction tale we print contains a sufficient amount of scientific fact to satisfy you. Of course, we will carefully avoid the fairy-tale type of stories.

You seem to have a true appreciation of real literature, and I want you to know that the first requisite of stories I accept for SCIENCE FICTION, is that they must have literary value.—EDITOR)

A VERY GOOD START

Dear Sirs:

I think that your first edition of SCIENCE FICTION is a very good start in determining your editorial policy. The very name of the magazine implies your editorial policy, or should. That is, your stories should be a combination of Science and Fiction. What you should have is a balance between the two, strike a medium between the two, a merger of act and theory in an interesting, stimulating manner. As you know, you have a rather good competition, so your aim should be to enlarge your scope of themes, widen the field of science-fiction and appeal to a greater mass of people than your competitor. Be very diversified in your stories. You may think this is impossible in this particular field, but it isn't, when you consider the huge resource of material in the past which can be drawn on to guide your steps into the future. You can be particular about your authors, their style of writing and their settings and the types of characters they create. Al-

ternate the highly improbable with the rather probable stories. In this way, you automatically widen your field of science-fiction. You widen your appeal to the public eliminating repetition of the same old thing in stories.

As to complete stories in every issue, that is fine, but I would continue it until I felt the need of a "change," then I would occasionally issue a continued story, studying the reaction.

CHARLES N. CONNER
352 Melwood St.
Pittsburgh, Penna.

(Your letter contains much food for editorial thought. Diversity in stories is important. There are varieties of writing styles as well as themes and plots. SCIENCE FICTION is trying to avoid hackneyed ideas, and feature novelty and fresh brain food.

For the present, we will not use serials in the magazine.—EDITOR)

THEY ARE "DIFFERENT"

Dear Editor:

The stories in your first issue were fine, although I think the most of us would prefer ones of greater length even if fewer in number. Above all, please don't ruin your mag, by trying to make a science text-book out of it, but give us long, and really interesting stories of the future with just as little science as possible to make the story interesting and plausible. Of course, as you well know, science adds interest to some few stories, but for the vast majority, too much of it detracts vitally from their interest. I think the larger portion of your readers will agree with me that what we all really prefer in this line is stories that stimulate the imagination, as most of us read them for the relaxation they afford and because they are "different."

A. VON BELL
222 S. Main St.
Winston-Salem, N. C.

(I believe the current issue of SCIENCE FICTION will meet with your approval as to lengths of stories. Let me know what you think of Binder's novel.

It is impossible to satisfy all the fans in regards to just how much actual science should be in the stories, but I try to hit a medium.—EDITOR)

THE WORST STORY

Dear Editor:

The first issue of SCIENCE FICTION, although stressing the adventure side of the story a little too much, was quite enjoyable. I consider the best stories to be "Under the White Star" by Edmond Hamilton, "Valley of Pretenders" by Dennis Clive, and "Death by Fire" by Amelia Reynolds Long. The latter story, incidentally, does not live up to your by-line, "Fantastic Stories of the Future." The story was neither fantastic, nor does it take place in the future. Still, it was very enjoyable.

I suppose I may as well mention those stories I especially did not like. First of all, "Martian Martyrs" was definitely the worst story in the issue. The ending was probably the most illogical I have ever read—I wonder who the author of that was? "The Sea Things" and "Leeches from Space" did not exactly solicit my whole-hearted approval either. The remainder of the stories were neither outstanding nor poor stuff; they just made interesting reading.

Congratulations on the name you have chosen for the magazine! It is just the title a "science-fiction" magazine should have, but it took thirteen years before an editor buoyed up enough nerve to use it. Again; congratulations!

The cover and interior drawings were good in most cases, but I would rather you use Paul exclusively. Binder's stuff wasn't any too good, but Paul was okey-doke.

Anyway, I wish you luck with the magazine and hope you soar to hitherto unknown heights.

ROBERT A. MADLE
333 E. Belgrade St.
Philadelphia, Pa.

(Your letter is definite proof that no editor can please all of the fans. "Martian Martyrs," which you list

THANK YOU, READERS!

An Editorial by **CHARLES D. HORNIG**

NOWADAYS, there are so many pulp magazines on the newsstands that a publisher has to make a very careful analysis of the pulp-reading public before he dares risk issuing a new book of this type. After all, it takes a large sum of money to publish each individual magazine, and it is only proper for the publisher to be reasonably sure that the new venture will find a sufficient market both through newsstand and subscription sales.

Many science-fiction fans probably wonder why there are so many dozens of "western" and "detective" titles on the stands, and so very few science-fiction magazines. The publishers of fantasy magazines have a very good explanation for this: the majority of pulp readers know how to enjoy exciting adventure stories, but relatively few have the wonderful gift of God known as a "vivid imagination" to appreciate tales that anticipate the future, that propound astounding theories of Mankind's destiny, that delve into the inner secrets of Nature and the Universe.

Imagination is the one quality that has raised Man above the beasts. Every advancement in culture and science had first to be imagined by some forward-looking individual before it could become part of reality. It is the type of imagination possessed by science-fiction fans and authors that will lead us into the super-civilizations of the future.

As I said, relatively few people are endowed with this superlative mental appreciation of Things to Come, and therefore the magazine market can support but few science-fiction publications. The publisher of SCIENCE FICTION did not venture into the field simply because he wanted to add another magazine to his string. There was made a very careful analysis of conditions before it was advisable for SCIENCE FICTION to take form.

THIS analysis revealed that not one currently published science-fiction magazine presented a proper balance of science and fiction, according to the results of a

nation-wide survey of fantasy enthusiasts, prior to the publication of SCIENCE FICTION. This survey revealed that one magazine leans too much on the technical, textbook side for the average science-fiction fan; another often disregards logic so that many of its stories become fairy-tales; still another calls itself science-fiction but presents several stories out of the field, etc.

In the belief that science-fiction is read primarily as entertainment, we issued the first number of SCIENCE FICTION last winter on a policy of "more entertainment—less technicalities of science." You will find science in every story in our magazine, but much of it will be absorbed without conscious perception, for the authors have cleverly camouflaged science facts in the midst of thrilling escapades. You will find no long-winded, drawn-out scientific discussions in the stories of SCIENCE FICTION. The articles of non-fiction and the various departments are not filled with algebra and difficult scientific problems that can be understood only by college graduates.

We are endeavoring to give you fiction that excites your love for adventure, and science that excites your creative imagination.

SO YOU see, SCIENCE FICTION is published because we feel that there is a definite need for a magazine in this field that neither insults the reader's intelligence by omitting logic, nor clutters up his mind with useless technicalities of science—hence a magazine of human interest, logical theories, science that makes you think.

Anyway, you now know what we're trying to do, and we think we've succeeded in a measure, if steadily increasing sales are any indication. We feel that we have the support of all fantasy followers who want well-balanced science-fiction — and to all who have shown their appreciation of our effort to supply this long-awaited need, by their enthusiastic reception of SCIENCE FICTION—to all those who are making our magazine the all-time leader in the field, we say, simply, "Thank you, so much!"

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THE TELEPATH

(Continued from Page 116)

as worst in the issue, was listed by many as the best—one reader even claiming it to be the best story he ever read! But I'm glad you found so much else to please you in the first number.—EDITOR)

"THERE YOU GOT ME!"

Dear Sir:—

I like the way your stories are started and I like the characters and the plot up to the climax, and after that it's disgusting. I can make my imagination go just so far and when something gets too impossible, I am stuck and can't believe it. You get the people involved in an impossible situation and in one or two paragraphs everything is solved, and everyone is happy and the story ends. All I can say is "There you got me."

JOE KOMARMY
428 S. Water St.
Kent, Ohio.

(Many science-fiction stories get themselves into predicaments that necessitate rapid unraveling, due to their short lengths. Most stories have happy endings—but in our first issue, you will notice that "Martian Martyrs" did not have a solution for its heroes, their problem was not solved, and everyone was not happy when the story ended. This was true to life, but met some reader objection.—EDITOR)

PAUL'S COVER

Dear Editor:—

Just read your first issue. The cover is fair. One thing in its favor is that for once Paul didn't draw a man with his mouth wide open. On the other hand, why did he have to picture three different episodes as taking place at the same time? And why include the space-ship? It wasn't even mentioned in the story. And the story itself was not too good, but then he hasn't written a good one in years.

"Martian Martyrs" was one of the best in the issue. "The Valley of Pretenders" and "The Machine That Thought" were the best of the bunch by far.

SCIENCE FICTION

On the whole, I don't think you have anything to be ashamed of, especially for a first issue.

RUSSELL J. HODGKINS
1903 W. 84th Pl.
Los Angeles, Calif.

(As for Paul illustrating three episodes at once on the cover, why that just means you were given three times the illustrating in the place of one! But if you consider that a poor excuse, you'll just have to mark it down to "artistic license." What do you think of the idea for this month's cover?—EDITOR)

RATHER DISAPPOINTED

Dear Sir:

I was rather disappointed in your first issue. Besides the preponderance of short stories, there was too much emphasis on fiction and entirely too little on science. I believe you could do much better by cutting out 5 or 6 of the short stories and substituting one or two long novelettes.

LOUIS VAN DEVEN
Route 4, Box 310
St. Louis, Mo.

(The June issue, with Binder's novel, should please you.—EDITOR)

NO COMPLAINT

Dear Mr Hornig:

Taking into consideration the rush conditions under which your first issue was issued, I have no complaint to make. Surely, no one can call "Valley of Pretenders" and "Outlaw of Saturn" poor stories by any stretch of the imagination. And most important of all, the magazine has atmosphere. I can see with half an eye that the mag is going to be a success. If you can reach a quality of fiction anywhere's close to what you attained in the old Wonder, there's little more to be desired.

SAM MOSKOWITZ
603 S. 11th St.
Newark, N. J.

(As you are one of the most active fans in the New York area, I find your moral support of considerable value to me.—EDITOR)

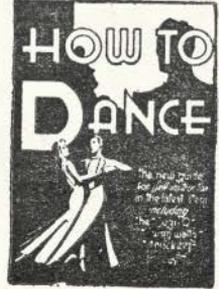
(Continued on Page 120)

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SCIENCE FICTION

(Continued from Page 119)

JUST "THANKS!"

Dear Editor:

I am very favorably impressed by your first issue and if it is an indication of your following issues, you have a regular customer. I have read one or more issues of almost every stf. mag. out to date and would say yours compares very well with any of these mags.

F. W. THOMPSON
168 St. Clair Ave. E.
Toronto, Ont., Canada

(All I can say to the above is just one word—"Thanks!"—EDITOR)

CANDID COMMENTS

"SCIENCE FICTION is an excellent revival of the adventure idea in this type of literature. It resembles the old Astounding Stories in that respect. Scientales have not been published as often as I had wished—but I hope that that lack is now remedied." —Thos. S. Gardner, 903 John Jay Hall, Columbia University, New York City.

"May I say that the March SCIENCE FICTION is outstanding in a field where competition is keen and quality high. Continue as you have started and you can be assured of success."—P. J. Searles, Navy Yard, Boston, Mass.

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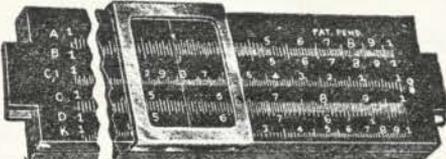
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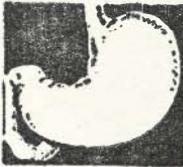
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(Continued on Page 122)

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ADDRESS 8

SCIENCE FICTION

(Continued from Page 121)

"To improvise on an old maxim, I think that 'an ounce of sincerity is worth a pound of flattery,' consequently, if **SCIENCE FICTION** continues the initial high standard of entertaining reading established with the inaugural issue, I feel certain it will have a long life and a prosperous one."—Roy W. Schutzmann, 628 Nashville Ave., New Orleans, La.

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THE END

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Neil R. Jones
Leslie F. Stone
Philip J. Bartel
John Russell Fearn
Thorp McClusky
Frank B. Long, Jr.
Eando Binder
Nancy Wade Wellman
Raymond Z. Gallun

"AFTER MAN, WHAT?"

Mankind is the king of all animals—the ultimate perfection of Nature. That theory is generally accepted by the world at large. But might not this conclusion be one built mostly of egoism and ignorance?

We do not, at present, know of any creature whose intelligence and evolutionary development surpasses that of Man. Most people would deny that anything superior to Man *could* exist.

Reason and science have already shown us the ridiculousness of the supposition that the world and the surrounding universe were created for the benefit of Mankind. We know now that the Earth is but an insignificant mote in the galaxy, a speck of cosmic dust lost in the immensity of the Cosmos. We know also that the entire history of Man has occupied less than a second of Eternity, that any uncontrollable upheaval of Nature can terminate his future at any time.

So we see, Man is not so mighty in comparison to the forces of the Universe. One scientist has theorized that Man, and all life, is but a cancerous disease to a heavenly body, eating away its surface!

The imaginative mind cannot conceive Mankind as Nature's ultimate achievement. Somewhere, on planets perhaps beyond the range of our most powerful telescopes, must exist intelligence far ahead of our own, past all conception.

Happily, Man has not yet reached his apex. Barring cataclysm, he will advance for unpredictable eras, achieving marvels of science that will allow him to explore the Universe Beyond, and perhaps he shall meet these Greater Races that Nature has perfected throughout the limitless expanse of Infinity. We can only guess at the consequences.

Let our faith in the Future keep Man on the road to Advancement, ever progressing toward his unknown Goal.

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30x4.50-21	21	2.40	1.15	30x4.50-20	2.95	1.25	3.65 1.65
28x4.75-19	19	2.45	1.25	30x5.00-20	3.05	1.25	3.75 1.75
29x4.75-20	20	2.50	1.30	32x4.50-22	3.35	1.45	3.95 1.75
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28x5.25-18	18	2.95	1.35				
29x5.25-19	19	2.95	1.35				
30x5.25-20	20	2.95	1.35				
31x5.25-21	21	3.25	1.80				
6.50-17	3.35	1.40	3.25				
28x5.50-18	3.35	1.40	3.25				
29x5.50-19	3.35	1.40	3.25				
6.00-17	3.40	1.40	3.25				
30x5.00-18	3.40	1.40	3.25				
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38x7.00-26	26	6.25	\$11.00	40x7.50-28	7.25	\$12.50	\$4.75
40x7.50-28	28	7.25	\$12.50	42x8.00-30	8.25	\$14.00	\$5.25
42x8.00-30	30	8.25	\$14.00	44x8.50-32	9.25	\$15.50	\$5.75
44x8.50-32	32	9.25	\$15.50	46x9.00-34	10.25	\$17.00	\$6.25
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Television will be the most radical change in the entertainment world since the advent of radio itself. For one thing, it looms up as a dark threat against the very existence of the theater! With television, it will be possible to have movies in the privacy of your own home—so why go to the neighborhood theater any more? While it is not for us to be dogmatic, it seems very much as though the advent of practical television may be the death-knell of the motion picture house.

Can You Write?

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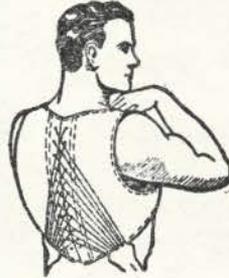
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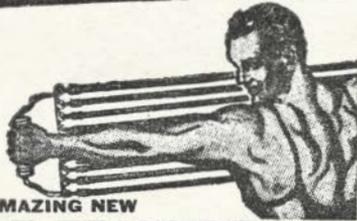
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Simple logic will bring us to the conclusion that this constantly increasing population will continue to grow at ever greater proportions—for our present manner of living and the advances made in medical science has increased the life-span and is effectively aiding and safeguarding a multiplying rate of propagation.

Apparently, there will be around six or eight billions of persons a century from now, barring any cataclysmic wars and disasters. Will our present civilization be able to expand apace and care for these added billions? Will this increase of beings cause a gradual lowering in the standard of living, even in the most progressive countries, or will our social systems modify themselves sufficiently to provide a happy existence for all?

It is evident that the next hundred years will find Mankind expending much capital and labor in the reclamation of arid lands and the developments of intensive cultivation, conservation, and chemiculture—the growing of crops in chemical solutions with much greater intensity than is possible with soil.

But even in a crowded world of six billions, there will still be room for open fields, verdant mountains and valleys and lonely forests—open, wild vistas. For it will take a much vaster crowd than even six billions to cover the landscape of the entire globe with human habitation—and perhaps, when the day arrives that Mankind has conquered the forces of this world, space-travel will once again renew the spark of rugged adventure and provide new worlds to conquer!

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EIGHT DRAMATIC SHORT STORIES

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| (6) | MURDER MASQUERADE | Cyril Plunkett | 30 |
| | <i>To prove that his client was murdered, Bill Harmon baited a trap . . . with the ravishing body of the girl he meant to marry!</i> | | |
| (7) | THE SHRIEKING POOL | G. T. Fleming-Roberts | 53 |
| | <i>Was this some pre-historic monster come back to earth, or was this murder . . . caused by some very lovely woman who didn't love her husband, and wasn't above loyng somebody else?</i> | | |
| (8) | TOMBSTONE PATTERN | Charles Molyneux Brown | 72 |
| | <i>Would three plug-uglies shoot a cemetery caretaker, just to swipe a photograph off a tombstone?</i> | | |
| (9) | AS SIMPLE AS DYING | Dana Platt | 80 |
| | <i>Murder is easy . . . just so long as it doesn't back-fire!</i> | | |
| (10) | BLUE PRINT FOR MURDER | Wilbur S. Peacock | 83 |
| | <i>All he had to do was keep his mouth shut . . . because if he talked, he fried!</i> | | |
| (11) | DEATH ON THE MENU | H. J. Carr | 86 |
| | <i>"Will you have a cup of coffee, sir, or a belly-full of hot lead?"</i> | | |
| (12) | CREAM-PUFF PUSHOVER | Mat Rand | 97 |
| | <i>Women these days must sure write sizzling love letters. Imagine a dame offering a guy five grand, and killing a man, just to get one back!</i> | | |

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